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REPEAT

**OTHER-CENTERED LIVING
IN A SELF-CENTERED WORLD**

SESSION 1



Finding Your Big "Why?"

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

(MATTHEW 5:16)

————— **Video: Finding Your Big “Why?” (23 minutes)** —————

Play the video teaching segment for session one. As you watch, record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you in the outline that follows.

NOTES

One of the oldest questions known to humans might very well be, “Why am I here?”

Summum bonum is a Latin expression meaning “the highest good”—an end in itself that also encompasses all other goods in life.

Karen’s mentor believes that we are on Earth for two reasons: to have a relationship with God, who offers us a place in heaven, and to take every opportunity to point others to Jesus so they will spend eternity in heaven too.

Although Jesus was the Son of God and on a very big mission, Jesus was never too busy to notice. He lived alert.

Jesus wasn't about doing *big things*. He was about doing the *right thing*. And often for him, the right thing was noticing one simple soul. Mark 5:21–34 tells the story of the synagogue ruler Jairus and the woman with the bleeding disorder. We learn from this story the following:

- ♥ Jesus didn't draw attention to himself. Scripture simply says, “So Jesus went with him.”
- ♥ The simple, frantic touch of the woman did not escape Jesus' notice.
- ♥ The woman in this story wasn't important, as Jairus was. We aren't told her title or even her name.
- ♥ Jesus is calling us to live alert. For Jesus, ministry usually was the person he found standing right in front of him.

We need to make relationships our big “Why?” We need to learn to value people over possessions. And value people over positions.

“When you are in the final days of your life, what will you want? Will you hug that college degree in the walnut frame? Will you ask to be carried to the garage so you can sit in your car? Will you find comfort in rereading your financial statement? Of course not. What will matter then will be people. If relationships will matter most then, shouldn't they matter most now?”—Max Lucado

How do we behave if relationships are our “Why?” for being alive?

We need to learn to hear a heart drop: to listen between the lines when someone is speaking, to really hear their heart.

When loving others, we must keep in mind Matthew 5:14–16: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

We don’t do good works in order to be noticed. We don’t do them to say, “Look at me!” We do them in order to say, “Well, will you look at him!”

Here is an upside-down truth: if you want to find your life, first you need to lose it. Matthew 16:25 urges, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. “Pooh!” he whispered. “Yes, Piglet?” “Nothing,” said Piglet, taking Pooh’s paw. “I just wanted to be sure of you.”

A. A. MILNE, *THE HOUSE AT POOH CORNER*



Group Discussion (8 minutes)

Take a few minutes to discuss what you just watched.

1. What part of the video teaching had the most impact on you?

2. Have you ever heard of the philosophical concept of *summum bonum*? It is a Latin expression meaning “the highest good”—an end in itself that also encompasses all other goods in life. What do you think of the idea of deciding your own *summum bonum* in life?

3. Discuss your thoughts on the two reasons why Karen’s mentor thinks we are on earth: to have a relationship with God, who offers us a place in heaven, and to take every opportunity to point others to Jesus so they will spend eternity in heaven too.

Cluster Group Discussion (8 minutes)

If your group is comprised of more than twelve members, consider completing this discussion in smaller groups of three to six people each.

4. Grab your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter 5. Have someone read verses 21–34 aloud to the group. In the space below, record as many observations as you can about the following:

♥ List all the people (or groups of people) who were physically present in the story, even if they never spoke a word but only observed.

♥ Next, list any adjectives (excited, angry, etc.) that describe how each of the people (or group of people) must have felt watching this scene unfold.

♥ Are there any guidelines you can draw out of this passage for living alert? Who was Jesus most concerned with when this scene took place—the crowds or the unnamed ill woman? What does this teach us about how we should behave today?

————— **Group Discussion (15 minutes)** —————

Gather back together as one large group and answer the following questions.

5. What is one insight you gained from the small group activity on Mark 5?

6. What people in the Mark 5 passage were mentioned but not physically present? (See verses 23 and 26.) How might the news of this story have affected them when they heard it?

7. In the video segment, Karen talked about the concept that for Jesus, often his greatest ministry was the person he found standing in front of him. Who are some people you often find standing in front of you on any given day? Do you tend to see them as someone to minister to or someone who is an interruption or even a nuisance? Be honest.

8. Karen talked about how often we tend to value possessions over people or place position over people. Why do you think we do this—placing a higher value on our stuff or our status than on our relationships?

9. In the video, we were introduced to the concept of hearing a “heart drop”—listening between the lines. Can you think of a time when someone you know heard you give a “heart drop” and did something special to cheer you up or encourage you? Share it with the group.

10. BONUS QUESTION: Only when we love and share and serve, as Scripture commands us, can we live life on purpose, embracing the big “Why?”—the reason God brought us to Earth in the first place. Discuss the concept of upside-down living. This type of living says, “If you want to feel significant, you need to embrace obscurity and instead make others feel significant.” How have you found this to be true?

11. BONUS QUESTION: Have someone read Matthew 5:14–16 aloud. Do you know of a situation in which someone’s good deeds glorified God in such a way that another person was led to have a relationship with Christ? Share with the group what happened.

12. BONUS QUESTION: What did you think of the story of “J”—the elderly man who interrupted Karen’s writing of this very Bible study? Has there ever been someone in your life like this, maybe a lonely neighbor or a needy coworker?

Share honestly with the group what happened and how you felt when that person seemed to take up a lot of your time.

Knowing what you have learned today during this study, how might you react differently if the same scenario happened today? What can you say to yourself in the future when you are trying to get work done—or even just trying to relax—and another soul seems lonely or in need of some help or encouragement?

— **Individual Activity: What Is God Asking Me to Do? (5 minutes)** —

Complete this activity on your own.

Take a moment to think through your current relationships—both inside and outside your home. The relationships may be with an individual or with a group—such as your students (if you are a teacher) or the neighborhood kids. List these people, and groups of people, in the spaces below.

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<hr/>	<hr/>
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Now, go back and put a star before the one or two people or groups you most tend to view as an interruption or even a nuisance rather than someone to whom you can minister. Ask God to help you change your perspective in the future.

Session 1 Memory Verse (1 minute)

Each session has a corresponding—and completely optional—Scripture memory verse or passage. Members may be interested in coming to the study five minutes early to practice reciting their verses with others; if so, coordinate that now.

Then, as a group, read aloud this session’s memory verse:

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

(MATTHEW 5:16)

Challenge Reminder and Closing Prayer (2 minutes)

CHALLENGE: LIVE ALERT! Remember this week to live alert. In your between-sessions study, write this on a sticky note, make it your computer’s screen saver or cell phone lock screen, or photocopy the ready-made reminder found on page 156. Then, make it your aim to live alert this week, listening for heart drops.

PRAYER: Have one person close in prayer, focusing on learning to live alert, hear those heart drops, and view people not as interruptions but as opportunities for ministry as Jesus did. Then, get ready to learn more in your between-sessions personal study prior to session two!

Between-Sessions Personal Study

SESSION 1

Challenge Reminder

LIVE ALERT! Remember this week to live alert. Take a moment right now to write that phrase on a sticky note and post it where you will see it often or make those two words the screen saver on your computer or lock screen of your phone. Or, for your convenience, simply photocopy the ready-made challenge phrase found on page 156. Then, make it your aim to live alert this week, listening for heart drops.

Session 1 Memory Verse

Below is the memory verse for this session. (For your convenience, designed versions of all verses are printed in the back of this study guide beginning on page 157.) You may photocopy those pages on card stock or colored paper. Then, cut out the verses and place them in a prominent place—purse, dashboard, desk, kitchen sink—where you can read, study, or memorize. (You may want to laminate them if posting them at your kitchen or bathroom sink.) Place each verse where you have easy access to it throughout the day. Set an alarm for at least two times a day when you know you will have a minute to look over the verse and commit it to memory.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

(MATTHEW 5:16)

Read and Learn

Read chapters 1–2 of the *Listen, Love, Repeat* book. Use the space below to record any insights you discovered or questions you may want to bring to the next group session.

Study and Reflect

1. Have you ever known someone who you would say lived alert—constantly on the lookout for anyone who might need encouragement? Jot down a few sentences about this person and what impact their actions had on others, including you.

2. In chapter one of *Listen, Love, Repeat*, Karen writes this about the story of Jesus, Jairus, and the unnamed ill woman in Mark 5:

Could we try to be more like Jesus, this perfect man who was never too busy to notice someone who needed his touch? Sure, we also have many things calling for our attention. Crowds of people and projects press in. Whether at work or at home, we are often on our way to do something grand. But Jesus is calling us to stop and notice. To live alert. To give a special touch that may heal a heart or cheer a weary soul.

I once heard it said that Jesus’ real ministry was the person he found standing in front of him. Who is that for *you* today?

LISTEN, LOVE, REPEAT, PAGE 19

- ♥ Have you ever been in the middle of something big when someone seemingly insignificant needed to be noticed? If so, describe the situation here:

♥ How does this concept of ministry being the person standing in front of you inspire, challenge—or even frustrate—you?

♥ Think back on Jesus' interaction with the synagogue ruler Jairus in Mark 5. Focus in on verse 24. What does the first phrase in that verse say? Write it out here.

♥ Next, write the following on a sticky note or piece of scrap paper and post it where you will see it often this week: “Who in my life needs me to stop what I am doing and ‘go with them’?”

♥ Finally, using a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being “never” and 10 being “always”), use the chart on the next page to evaluate each area of your life when it comes to being intentional to listen to the spoken—and unspoken—needs of those people. They may be family members, coworkers, friends, or an acquaintance you know from a church or community activity. Record your rating in column two. Jot a phrase or two about what might be a physical or emotional need of theirs in column three. (You may need additional space if you have more family or work relationships than allowed for on the chart.)

Area	Rating:	What they might need physically or emotionally:
Spouse:		
Child:		
Child:		
Child:		
Child:		
Child:		
Extended family member:		
Extended family member:		
Extended family member:		
Extended family member:		
Coworker:		
Coworker:		
Coworker:		
Friend:		
Friend:		
Friend:		
Friend:		
Neighbor:		
Neighbor:		
Acquaintance:		
Acquaintance:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

♥ What did you learn from the preceding exercise? Are there certain people with whom it is easier for you to be attentive than others? Why do you think that is?

♥ What people or projects call for your attention today, pressing in close? What is one thing you can remind yourself of in the future when you are feeling crowded but find someone in need of some encouragement standing in your midst?

People all around us every day are longing for someone to notice them. They may feel alone or ashamed. Afraid or apprehensive. The simple act of noticing someone as he or she journeys through life can lovingly mirror the behavior of God. But in order to behave like Jesus did, and spread the healing balm of his love, we must be willing to drop our agenda—or at least put it on hold—to reach out and touch those who need it most.

3. In chapter one of *Listen, Love, Repeat* (page 22) we read this passage of Scripture:

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

(HEBREWS 13:15–16)

Karen then writes:

I see in this verse three simple ways to spread love:

- 1. Praise God by professing his name with our lips.*
- 2. Do good.*
- 3. Share with others.*

*And what is the result of our performing these straightforward actions?
Pleasing God.*

Which of the above three steps comes most naturally for you? Which is the hardest? In which one would you most like to see improvement? Write your answers below.

4. Matthew 22:37 reads, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” In chapter two of *Listen, Love, Repeat* (page 39), Karen writes:

If we truly love God with our hearts and souls and minds, we will want to get to know him through the pages of Scripture. We will long to spend time with him in prayer. We will hunger to get to know his heart and mind as we seek to discover his will for our lives. And as we interact with God through prayer and experience his heart through studying the Scriptures, we will learn how to live properly.

Several spiritual practices associated with loving God are listed in the chart that follows. In the first column, look at the practice and think about your current consistency in this area. Then, in the second column, write a few words or phrases that describe your thoughts. One has already been done as an example for you:

Area of My Walk with God	Description
EXAMPLE: <i>Bible reading and study</i>	EXAMPLE: <i>Read Bible 2–3 times a week; in a weekly Bible study</i>
Bible reading and study	
Bible memorization	
Prayer—private and corporate	
Worship—private and corporate	
Serving others	
Giving money to God’s work	
Fasting (from food or something else I love in order to spend time focusing on God)	

IMPORTANT: We must realize that God’s love is not dependent upon our performance or how many things we “do” for him. However, we do show our love for the Lord by obeying his commands. Jesus said in John 14:23, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.” Look back over the chart and circle the spiritual practice (or two) in which you feel you most need to be more consistent. Next, in the space provided below write a “goal in a sentence” for the area or areas you circled. Be specific. For example, “I want to begin to get up fifteen minutes earlier each day to spend time memorizing verses or passages from the Bible.” Or, “I will begin to keep a prayer journal and spend fifteen minutes each evening recording prayer requests, praying, and also recording the outcomes of those prayers.”

One of the oldest questions known to humans might very well be, “Why am I here?” Something deep within us longs to know the meaning of life. Is there a point to it? And if so, what is it? Where do I fit in the grand scheme of things? And if I am on Earth for a purpose, how do I find it? We simply do not want to go through life having missed our cause and calling.

LISTEN, LOVE, REPEAT, PAGE 35

5. In chapter two of *Listen, Love, Repeat* (pages 50–54), Karen discusses the numerous “one another” commands in Scripture that tell us how we are—or are not—to treat each other. The proper treatment of each other is a visible way to reflect God’s love to the watching world. Look up John 13:34–35 and then rewrite it here using your own words:

6. Look up the following Bible passages that also use the phrase “one another.” After each, write the word or two that first popped into your mind when you read the verse. It may be an adjective that describes the difficulty or ease of carrying out that command. Maybe it will be the name of a person. Simply write down the first few words that come to mind about each verse.

♥ 1 Thessalonians 5:11

♥ Romans 12:10

♥ 1 Peter 3:8

♥ James 5:9

♥ 1 Corinthians 1:10

♥ Hebrews 13:1

♥ Ephesians 4:32

♥ Romans 12:16

♥ X marks the spot! Based on the “one another” verses you just read in Scripture, how are you doing in the proper treatment of your fellow humans? Place an X on the continuum below that best describes your behavior toward others:

I rarely have an issue treating others properly.

I do an average job treating others as the “one another” commands instruct.

I have a long way to go when it comes to obeying “one another” commands.

♥ Now, are there any adjustments you need to make to your behavior in order to align it more closely with the above verses? If so, what are they?

Scripture Memory Verse of the Week Reminder

Don't forget to work on your memory verse for this week (see page 20). Consider pairing with another study group member to help you stay accountable to memorize all six verses in the *Listen, Love, Repeat* study. You could come a few minutes early to each meeting—or stay a bit longer—to practice your verses with each other.