

UPSIDE DOWN :MEET THE NEED FIRST

Bible Study Outlines

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Upside Down: Meet the Need First exists to give courage to Christian believers who seek to “Meet the Need First”. Our aim is to inspire, encourage, and resource Christian believers with healthy strategies to serve in challenging communities.

The Bible study outlines in this document are designed to introduce your church, small group, mission team or Sunday School class to *Upside Down Principles*. *Upside Down Principles* are crucial to healthy missional effort; they help believers to “think right” so they can “do right.”

You can learn more about Upside Down: Meet the Need First by accessing information and resources at www.upsidedownlife.org. A suggested companion resource for preparation and group study is *Upside Down Devotion* by Taylor Field which can be purchased on the website.

Thank you to Paul Langston and *Baptists on Mission/NC Baptist Men* for embracing Upside Down Principles and developing these Bible studies for use in churches across North Carolina.

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Preparation

For the Bible Study Leader

In preparation for leading your group through the Bible studies, take some time to review and understand the core concepts of *Upside Down: Meet the Need First*. A brief overview is below and on subsequent pages. More information and resources can be found at www.upsidedownlife.org.

Each Bible study outline is divided into three sections: Intro, Story, and Application. They can be used for a sermon, small group, mission team or Sunday school class.

A Brief Overview

Our Goal

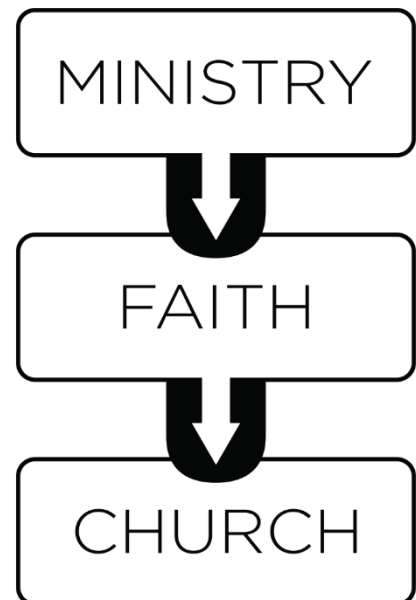
Upside Down: Meet the Need First exists to give courage to Christian believers who want to Meet the Need First.

Inspired by Jesus's teaching, we aim to help others see what he saw and do what he did—to Serve the Unserved, See the Unseen, and understand that Small is Big.

From city streets to back country roads, we strive to help those who want to begin ministry know where to start, encourage those already pouring out their lives, and inspire an upside down approach to spreading God's Kingdom.

Our Hope

Our aim is to encourage Christians to turn their thinking about community engagement upside down. So often, Christians think "church" first, then people come to faith, and then they do ministry in their communities. But Jesus taught another way. He started with ministry, meeting the need first in his community. His ministry grew people's faith, and then He built the church on that faith.



*This flow chart summarizes
Upside Down strategy*

Our Focus

We believe Jesus sends us to Meet the Need First in communities that face the most challenging circumstances.

Consider Jesus's first sermon:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. (Luke 4:18-19)

Just as in Jesus's day, today there are places in cities, towns, and the countryside where people are particularly vulnerable to damaging outcomes. Jesus sends His followers to these communities of need to do what He did, to meet needs, grow faith, and build the church.

Our Approach

We teach principles and best practices to help people Meet the Need First in communities of need.

Here are our core principles:

MEET THE NEED FIRST

As humans, we all have needs. Needs that go unmet become hindrances to life and faith. Almost every culture has a saying something like this: "The hungry person has no ears." Unless we deal with immediate needs, a person is not able to move to a more whole and integrated place in life. However, if we only focus on addressing tangible needs, we end up giving away our own emptiness. Therefore, we've learned, it's "Meet the Need First," not only "Meet the Need."



Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one helpful way to understand the range of human need. In Upside Down training, we talk how we minister to immediate needs through Relief work, and deeper needs through Release work.

SERVE THE UNSERVED

Jesus teaches us to look for those who are falling through the cracks or those who live in the shadows.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, because they can't repay you (Luke 14:13-14).

In Jesus' upside down world, you look for people who can't pay you back. We are to look for those who aren't influential "connectors" or "gatekeepers."

SEE THE UNSEEN

Faith is having eyes to See the Unseen. The apostle Paul reminds us to

Fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

In other words, the inside stuff is more important than the outside stuff.

SMALL IS BIG

Jesus saw ministry in terms of starting small. He taught that one small seed planted eventually provides shelter and cover for many.

What is the Kingdom of God like? How can I illustrate it? It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in a garden; it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds make nests in its branches. Luke 13:18-19

Jesus's teaching and example helps us understand three stages in ministry:

Stage 1: A time to bless the many

Stage 2: A time to invest in the few

Stage 3: A time when things get out of hand

Lesson 1

Be Light Not Lightning

- I. Intro
 - a. As followers of Christ we want to make an impact on the lives of people around us. Some of the heroes of the Bible inspire us and we would love to be part of amazing miracles like these:
 - i. David killing Goliath
 - ii. Moses parting the Red Sea
 - iii. Elijah calling down fire from heaven
 - b. But maybe that's not how God will choose to use us
 - i. Spectacular moments catch everyone's attention
 - ii. Usually in a life of service it is more important to keep plodding along
 - c. Example: Light or Lightning?
 - i. Imagine: A dark night where you cannot even see one star. Pitch black. A piercing bolt of lightning illuminates the whole sky. A moment later, there is the loud "boom" of thunder. Impressive! In an instant, your surroundings move from darkness to light. Nevertheless, just as quickly the lightning disappears.
 - ii. A simple light is not nearly as impressive. It doesn't shake things up the same way. However, it endures much longer than a momentary flash.
 - d. Consider that followers of Christ are to "Be Light Not Lightning"

II. The Story

- a. “You are the light of the world”— Matthew 5:14
 - i. Light dispels darkness – consistently
 - ii. It doesn’t just touch one spot, it permeates an entire room
 - iii. We intentionally use light to allow us to see in darkness
 1. Headlights on automobiles
 2. Flashlights
 3. Porch lights
- b. It is visible at a distance if left out in the open – Matthew 5:15
 1. Think of how you can see the glow of an illuminated city at night
 - a. You can see individual lights at great distances
 - b. The entire city glows over treetops and mountains
 2. During WWII London taped every window and door so that German airplanes could not see the city to bomb
- c. Our lives are seen by others—Matthew 5:16
 - i. Like it or not, people are watching
 - ii. Church fights – True stories
 1. One church had police called to break up the arguments at a business meeting
 2. At another two deacons were fighting on the front steps
 3. How many reasons have you heard for churches splitting?
 - a. Music style
 - b. Buildings
 - c. Even furniture
 4. How does this bring glory to God?!!
 - iii. On the other hand – when believers ARE light
 1. Disaster relief volunteers are often asked, “Why did you bother to come here?”
 2. Biblical example
 - a. Elisha and Naaman— 2 Kings 5:1-19

III. Application

a. Your community needs a lighthouse

- i. Our world is dark and often seems to be getting darker
- ii. The tide may seem to be turning against goodness and light

b. Your primary role as a believer is to be a lighthouse

- i. Shine on and on, not just a momentary flash like lightning
- ii. There may be a place for the grand stuff
- iii.* Let's focus on the things that will remain long after the lightning and thunder are gone: *quiet things, little things*
- iv. What will you commit to do to light your community?

Lesson 2

Big Change Not Big Numbers

- I. Intro
 - a. In our churches many times we focus on crowds, big numbers
 - b. The metrics we use
 - i. Buildings
 - ii. Budgets
 - iii. Bodies - attendance
 - iv. Baptists
 - c. Numbers are helpful many times, but they do not necessarily measure change
 - d. Our perspective is limited by
 - i. The time frame we use as our reference
 - ii. The context in which we live
 - iii. Our own opinion or expectations
 - e. Perhaps we need to reevaluate what we are looking for

II. The Story

- a. There are many biblical examples that are upside down from how we usually evaluate success
 - i. A small lad who kills a giant—David
 - ii. An army of 300 defeats thousands—Gideon
 - iii. A lad's lunch to feed thousands— John 6
- b. Jesus often spoke to crowds but focused on individuals— Luke 5:1-11
 - i. Crowds were attracted to Jesus— Luke 5:1
 - ii. He taught them— Luke 5:3
 - iii. He did not ignore the opportunity to address crowds
 1. Sermon on the Mount—Matthew 5-7
 2. John the Baptist sends disciples to question Jesus as He addressed crowds—Matthew 11:7
 3. The day He fed thousands - John 6
 - iv. However, He usually focused on individuals and led them to make deep change - Peter as one example
 1. In the midst of the crowd Jesus singled out Peter—Luke 5:4
 2. His request was very personal—Luke 5:4
 - a. Launch out into the deep
 - b. Let down your nets
 3. A personal response was required—Luke 5:5
 - a. Acknowledged the situation
 - i. They had tried already tried
 - ii. They had failed
 - b. Displayed trust leading to obedience: “nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net”
 4. Jesus responded with a miracle—Luke 5:6
 - a. They caught a remarkable number of fish
 - b. They called others to join (v.7)

5. Peter's life changed as a result—Luke 5:8-11
 - a. Worship - v. 8 - he fell down: "*O Lord*"
 - b. Repentance - v. 8 - "*I am a sinner*"
 - c. An Obvious Testimony - v.9 - "*astonished*"
 - d. A new direction - v. 10 - "*you will catch men*"
 - e. Complete surrender - v. 11 "*forsook all*"

III. Application

- a. What do you find is your focus for evaluating success?
 - i. Do you judge your success based on numbers?
 - ii. Identify ways you have seen big change:
 1. In your life
 2. In the lives of those you influence
- b. How will you focus on big change as opposed to big numbers?
 - i. What do you need to stop counting?
 - ii. What are some ways you sense God wants you to change?
 - iii. How do you sense God calling you to be a part of change?
 1. In Your church
 2. In Your community

Lesson 3

It's the Inside Stuff Not the Outside Stuff

- I. Intro
 - a. We tend to focus on “outside stuff”
 - i. What we can see
 - ii. What we can measure
 - b. Tangible factors often guide our decisions
 - i. How much money we have
 - ii. What talents we possess
 - iii. The size of our group or team
 - iv. How quickly we can succeed
 - c. Things that are “unseen” are often far more critical
 - i. Termites destroying a structure are not easily seen
 - ii. Heart disease and cancer are not always obvious
 - iii. Farmers prepare soil before expecting a harvest

- II. The Story
 - a. Jesus disciples focused on the same things we focus on
 - b. Focused of food rather than a lonely woman—John 4:1-42
 - i. Sitting at a well in the middle of the day—John 4:6
 - ii. A woman is there to get water—John 4:7
 - iii. The disciples go into town to buy food—John 4:8
 - iv. They can't figure out why Jesus talks to her—John 4:27
 - c. Focused on measurable resources—John 6:1-14; Mark 6:30-44
 - i. Same story in both Gospels highlights different aspects
 - ii. Thousands came to hear Jesus—John 6:2
 - iii. They have no food to offer the crowd—Mark 6:35
 - 1. It's late in the day—Mark 6:35
 - 2. There is no place to get food—Mark 6:36
 - 3. They do not have enough money—Mark 6:37
 - iv. Even when they found some food they were skeptical
 - 1. The person with food is just a lad—John 6:9
 - 2. It's not enough—John 6:9
 - d. Jesus' focus was different
 - i. He had a plan they didn't know about—John 6:6
 - ii. He was looking for complete surrender—John 6:9
 - 1. It's all the lad had
 - 2. Others may have had food they refused to surrender
 - 3. Have the people sit down—John 6:10
 - 4. Jesus blesses the puny resources—John 6:11
 - 5. Thousands ate—John 6:12
 - e. The key offering was not large, but was significant
 - i. Just 5 small loaves of bread and 2 fish
 - ii. It was nothing compared to the need at hand
 - iii. It's all Jesus sought
 - iv. It pointed the participants to Jesus, not to the lad—John 6:14

- III. Application
 - a. God already has a plan to impact your community
 - i. What needs do you see in your community?
 - ii. Jesus desires to include His followers
 - b. What are the obstacles that have distracted you?
 - 1. Money?
 - 2. Location?
 - 3. Skills?
 - 4. Number of people on your team?
 - c. What resources are in your hands?
 - i. What are the “five loaves” you hold?
 - ii. Will you surrender them to Jesus?
 - d. Pray a prayer of blessing over the “puny” resources you have
 - e. Journal how you see God work and celebrate Him

Lesson 4

It's About Kingdom Not Castles

- I. Intro
 - a. "What's it all about?"
 - i. What do you hope to accomplish at your job?
 1. Successful sales or achievements?
 2. Accolades from your boss or coworkers?
 3. Raises or promotions?
 - ii. What do you hope to accomplish in your personal life?
 1. Fame or recognition?
 2. Friendships?
 3. Wealth?
 - iii. What does your church hope to accomplish?
 1. Numerical growth?
 2. More money?
 3. Expansion of facility or sites?
 4. Multiply ministries?
 5. Expand influence?
 - iv. Our goals are often centered on castles
 1. "Castle" is temporary and in our own realm
 2. Though not always bad, castles often center on "us"
 - a. Our little corner of the world
 - b. Our own desires
 3. They will pass away
 - a. You will
 - b. Your church will
 - c. Our nation will
 - d. The earth will
 - v. God's plans are different, from a much broader realm

1. Not limited by geography or location
2. Not limited by race or ethnicity
3. Not limited by socio economic status
4. Not limited by training or intellectual prowess

II. The Story

- a. Jesus focus was the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven
 - i. Matthew 4:17 - "from that time Jesus began to preach, saying. 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"
 1. God's kingdom is present where we are
 2. The focus of His preaching was God's kingdom, not His own status or identity
 3. What is our focus?
 - a. Do we have a singular focus of our activity?
 - b. Do we ignore the impact Jesus has on our town?
 - c. Do we ignore the impact of the gospel today?
 - ii. Mathew 6:9-10 - "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'"
 1. Our prayer focus should be on kingdom things
 2. That things happen on earth to reflect God's kingdom
 - a. Will only be an imperfect reflection
 - b. But will show what God is like
 - c. A precursor to heaven
 3. Is that what we pray?
 - a. Personally?
 - b. In church prayer times?
 4. Or do we pray for what we want? Our "castles?"

- iii. Matthew 6:33 – “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
 - 1. Our heart’s desire should be God’s kingdom
 - 2. For His glory and righteousness to be evident to all
 - 3. Other things will then be given by God
 - a. Our desire will have changed
 - b. So different gifts from God will quench our thirst
 - 4. What do you seek from God?
 - a. Kingdom?
 - b. Or castles?

III. Application: Don’t Miss the Kingdom Looking for Castles

- a. Even the strongest castles don’t last forever
 - i. Every castle eventually falls into ruin
 - ii. Or, it becomes the focus of an intensive preservation effort
 - 1. Restored castles are quite expensive (like antique cars)
 - 2. Castles have entire societies to maintain them
 - iii. Jesus said His Church would endure forever
- b. What do you desire?
 - i. Preserving your earthly “castle”
 - ii. Do you focus on those inside your circle of influence?
- c. What does your church desire?
 - i. Preservation?
 - ii. Security or comfort?
 - iii. Something much broader than that? Kingdom things?
- d. What changes are necessary for you to become more Kingdom oriented?

Lesson 5

The Two Hands of Christ: Release Work and Relief Work

- I. Intro
 - a. It's easy to overlook things, even obvious things
 - i. Travel in a herd and everything looks the same:
 1. The people around you
 2. The way you dress
 3. The hobbies or activities you enjoy
 4. The way you talk
 5. Even political and religious views
 - ii. We also can ignore the uncomfortable
 1. Avoid difficult tasks
 2. Answering the hard questions
 3. Dealing with painful situations
 - b. It's also easy to ignore people who are not like us
 - i. We do not have much in common
 - ii. Their choices are very different from ours
 - iii. We may have no idea how to relate
 1. What to do
 2. What to say
 3. How we can relate
 - c. Do we ignore those in need who are in our own community?

- II. The Story
 - a. We define worship as what we do in a corporate setting
 - i. The songs we sing
 - ii. The message we hear
 - iii. Maybe the gift we give
 - b. The “Conference Mentality” can deceive us into thinking we are devoted when we are not
 - i. The bells and whistles do not define worship
 - ii. True devotion means being the body of Christ
 - iii. True devotion means acting out the heart of God
 - c. Not a “Works” righteousness but there **will be** a result to our faith
 - i. We are appointed to be the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12
 - ii. We are His hands
 - d. God despises worship that is only surface
 - i. Isaiah 1
 - 1. Sacrifices have no purpose—Is. 1:11
 - 2. God has had enough of them—Is. 1:11
 - 3. He hates our appointed times of worship: hateful and a bore—Is. 1:14
 - 4. He will not listen to our prayers—Is. 1:15
 - 5. He desires that we . . .
 - a. Cease doing evil— Is. 1:16
 - b. Do good—Is. 1:17
 - c. Seek justice—Is. 1:17
 - d. Correct oppression—Is. 1:17
 - ii. Matthew 23:23-24
 - 1. Pharisees focused on the small things
 - 2. They missed the big things

- iii. James 2:1-7 (Warnings)
 - 1. Honored people with money
 - 2. Gave them places of honor
 - 3. The rich oppress the poor
 - 4. This blasphemes the name of Christ
 - 5. Our faith should bring us to action—James 2:24-17
- iv. Matthew 25:31-46 (Inasmuch passage)
 - 1. We will do the right things
 - 2. Not a manufactured or planned behavior
- v. The Two Hands of Jesus
 - 1. Relief
 - a. the immediate response to need
 - i. disaster relief does this
 - ii. response springs from prior readiness
 - b. there will be time for more details later
 - c. acts of immediate generosity
 - d. in times of need the needy instinctively come because they know we will respond
 - e. eliminating this makes us calloused and hard
 - 2. Release
 - a. Setting people free from bondage
 - b. From bondage to:
 - i. Sin
 - ii. Destructive habits
 - c. Immediate component
 - d. A longer term component
 - i. A retreading of the way we think
 - ii. Transformation of the way we see things
 - e. Brings transformation of life

III. Application

- a. How do you offer relief to those in need?
 - i. Locally
 - ii. Farther away
- b. What are some ways you can offer relief to your community?
 - i. Barriers you will face?
 1. Your barriers
 2. Barriers of your church
 3. Barriers of the community
 - ii. What can you do to remove or overcome those barriers?
- c. How do you (can you) offer release to your community?
 - i. It begins with those who live in your community
 - ii. You may partner with other organizations or agencies
 - iii. What are the biggest unmet needs?
 - iv. 2 Cor. 5:17 – a new creation
 1. Jesus intends believers be different
 2. “any” – no one is beyond Jesus’ power to transform
- d. What has God revealed to you that you should do differently to offer two hands: relief and release?
- e. Begin now!
 - i. Yourself
 - ii. Build a team