

PROPEL WEEK 1

Before Jesus became famous for being, well, Jesus, He had a job. And I'm not talking about being Savior of the world—though He was certainly that. But for a period of time, Jesus had an actual trade job.

Now there's a good bit of debate about exactly which job He had. From what I've seen, the argument comes down to four professional titles that Jesus possibly held:

1. Carpenter
2. Mason
3. Engineer
4. Handyman

So which is the correct answer? I have no idea. But one thing we can be sure of is that Jesus was in the construction business—which makes sense in light of a story He told about building a house.

But before we get to that story, consider what it means to follow God. Does your mind immediately go to *rules*? You know, all the stuff you should and shouldn't do? All the people you should avoid hanging out with? Or maybe the ones you should be nice to, forgive, encourage, help and love?

🕒 TAKE A MINUTE TO NAME SOME THINGS YOU THINK GOD WANTS YOU TO DO OR NOT DO:

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Here's another question: Why *should* you do (or not do) these things? With Jesus' experience in construction in mind, listen to this excerpt. It will help us answer that question:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. . . . But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand" (Matthew 7:24, 26).

Jesus goes on to say that a storm came. The house on the rock took it like a champ. The house on the sand? Crumbled. Destroyed. Woodpile for a bonfire.

Jesus' story tells us:

1. **What we should do.** He makes it as obvious as possible—build your life on Jesus' words. Put them into practice.
2. **Why we should do it.** Not just because our parents or church leaders say so, but because it's smart. This isn't about a list of rules—this is about creating a foundation that will hold.

Jesus' words reveal God's heart. When you study the words of Jesus, it will help you know God more. But Jesus' words won't really do much until you apply them. When the storms come, you'll be happy you built your homes (lives) on the rock (Jesus' words). It won't keep the storms from happening, but it will make us better equipped to handle them.

📌 **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BUILD YOUR LIFE ON? HOW DO YOU PLAN ON DOING THAT?**

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PROPEL WEEK 2

Emperor penguins huddle together when it gets too cold. Cute, right? What's odd is that normally penguins are very territorial—they don't really like hanging out with each other. But huddling is what allows them to survive the brutal winter in Antarctica. Scientists have calculated that by huddling, these little guys use about half the energy they would otherwise use. As a result, they don't starve to death, and their baby chicks live to see the spring.

Even penguins understand that when times get tough, they need each other. Maybe we could learn a thing or two from them.

On your journey to know God, you're going to run into tough times—setbacks, distractions, mistakes, relational drama, and doubt, just to name a few. Maybe you're in the middle of one of those times right now.

Whatever you're facing, you need other people. **We all need support from good friends.** The writer of the book of Hebrews knew the importance of finding support in others during tough times. He knew that in order to keep going, stand strong, and persevere, his readers—the early followers of Jesus—would have to huddle together:

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

This verse highlights our need for community with other Christians. The author of Hebrews calls it “meeting together.” As you get to know God more, you'll encounter confusing aspects of Christianity, church, and the Bible along with the everyday, normal challenges of life. You *need* people with whom you can process these situations and emotions.

Emperor penguins know it—there is safety in numbers. You need support. You need conversations with and encouragement from other Christians. You need people in your life who want to know God, and who want *you* to know God.

Otherwise, you may find your relationship with God frozen like an emperor penguin standing solo on a glacier in Antarctica in the middle of the winter. Okay, that's a little dramatic.

👇 HERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS TO DIRECT YOU TOWARDS CREATING YOUR OWN HUDDLE OF BELIEVERS:

Do you have 1-2 Christians you like to hang out with? List them here.

1.

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2.

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How do you know the friends you listed care about your relationship with God?

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Would you be comfortable talking with them about things you're dealing with in your relationship with God? Why or why not?

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We'll talk more about the idea of community in the next couple of days. For now, take some time and ask God to put the right people in your life to support you.

PROPEL WEEK 3

A team of scientists determined that Tau Ceti, the star that is most similar to our sun and closest to the Earth, may have a habitable planet in its orbit. They believe the temperatures of the planet could provide an atmosphere similar to earth's.

Tau Ceti is only 12 light years away. So you could basically jump on a spaceship (that went as fast as the speed of light) and 12 short years later you could literally be walking around in a different world.

I don't know if this planet *really* has life, but it's fun to think about—to wonder what life would be like if we could forget all we know and start over. Maybe their cars move sideways. Maybe they don't have cars at all. Maybe their cavemen invented something much cooler than the wheel and that's what all modes of transportation run on. Maybe they have figured out how to teleport and don't need transportation at all! Maybe . . . maybe I'm getting a little off track.

The point is Jesus actually talks about this idea with His 12 disciples. He talks about discovering a new way to live, and we don't even have to go to another planet to find it. It's called serving. He says:

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39).

In other words, **the way to find your life is to give it away.** *How?* You give your life away by giving away your time and talents to help someone else. You give your life away by serving.

And when you give your life away by serving, you will gain:

1. **Joy.** In 2011 there was a scientific study that focused on two groups of people who were exactly the same except for one factor—one group served regularly in their church or community. That group registered significantly higher levels of satisfaction and happiness. In fact, brain scans showed higher activity on a weekly basis in the pleasure center of their brains.
2. **Community.** Few things bring people together more effectively than serving. It has a way of deepening relationships around a common passion.
3. **Significance.** God has a way, through serving, of making our insignificant contributions significant. Serving is one way God answers the question, “*Why do I matter?*” Serving gives people purpose.

The invitation to serve is an invitation to find life like never before. It’s an invitation into joy, community, significance, and intimacy with your Heavenly Father. It’s an invitation to a greater existence.

📌 NAME THREE WAYS YOU CAN SERVE. REMEMBER, SERVING CAN BE ANYTHING FROM HELPING YOUR MOM WITH THE DISHES TO VOLUNTEERING IN A WEEKLY CAPACITY IN YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY.

1.

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2.

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3.

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PROPEL WEEK 4

My dad grew up in the Florida Keys. When he was 16, he was snorkeling by his boat when a 7-foot lemon shark began to circle him. Now *that's* a problem because circling usually leads to eating. A bit of good news—the shark didn't eat my dad. Call me selfish, but I'm glad.

Not long after that, my dad became a Christian. Although it was the most frightening experience of his life, it was the very thing that turned him to Jesus.

I still remember the first time my dad told me that story. I was young, and—as you can imagine—fascinated. But I also saw that God went to great lengths to get my dad's attention. It had a profound impact on my view of God.

Some of you may be thinking, "My dad doesn't even go to church. A shark would have to bite him on the face to get him to care about God." Well, maybe you should pray for that to happen. (I'm kidding.) My point is not to highlight the fact that my dad is a Christian—it's to highlight the importance of remembering what God has done in your life and in the lives of people who have lived before you.

In the Old Testament, King David led the Israelites in a celebration because they were moving the Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of God's presence) to Jerusalem. This had great significance, but for now just know that it was a big deal, and they were excited. So they sang about it:

"Remember the wonders he has done" (1 Chronicles 16:12).

David understood how passionate about God people were in that moment. But he also knew there would come a day when the excitement would wear off. And he wanted people to *remember* **this moment** when they got to **that moment**.

That's important for us to do as well because there will be days, events, experiences, and moments when we *feel* closer to God than others. And in the moments when God doesn't seem as close, God wants us to hold on to the moments when He did. **Remembering what God has done builds our faith.**

God also wants us to *talk about what He has done* because talking about it helps us remember. Like my dad and his shark story, talking about what God has done builds faith in others, too.

As for today, here are a few things I want you to do:

📝 WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU IN THE PAST, OR WRITE DOWN THREE TIMES YOU FELT REALLY CLOSE TO GOD IN THE PAST.

1.
2.
3.

- » Thank God for those moments.
- » Come back and read them in the moments you feel most distant from God.
- » And here's another verse you might want to remember in those difficult times:

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"
(Hebrews 13:8).