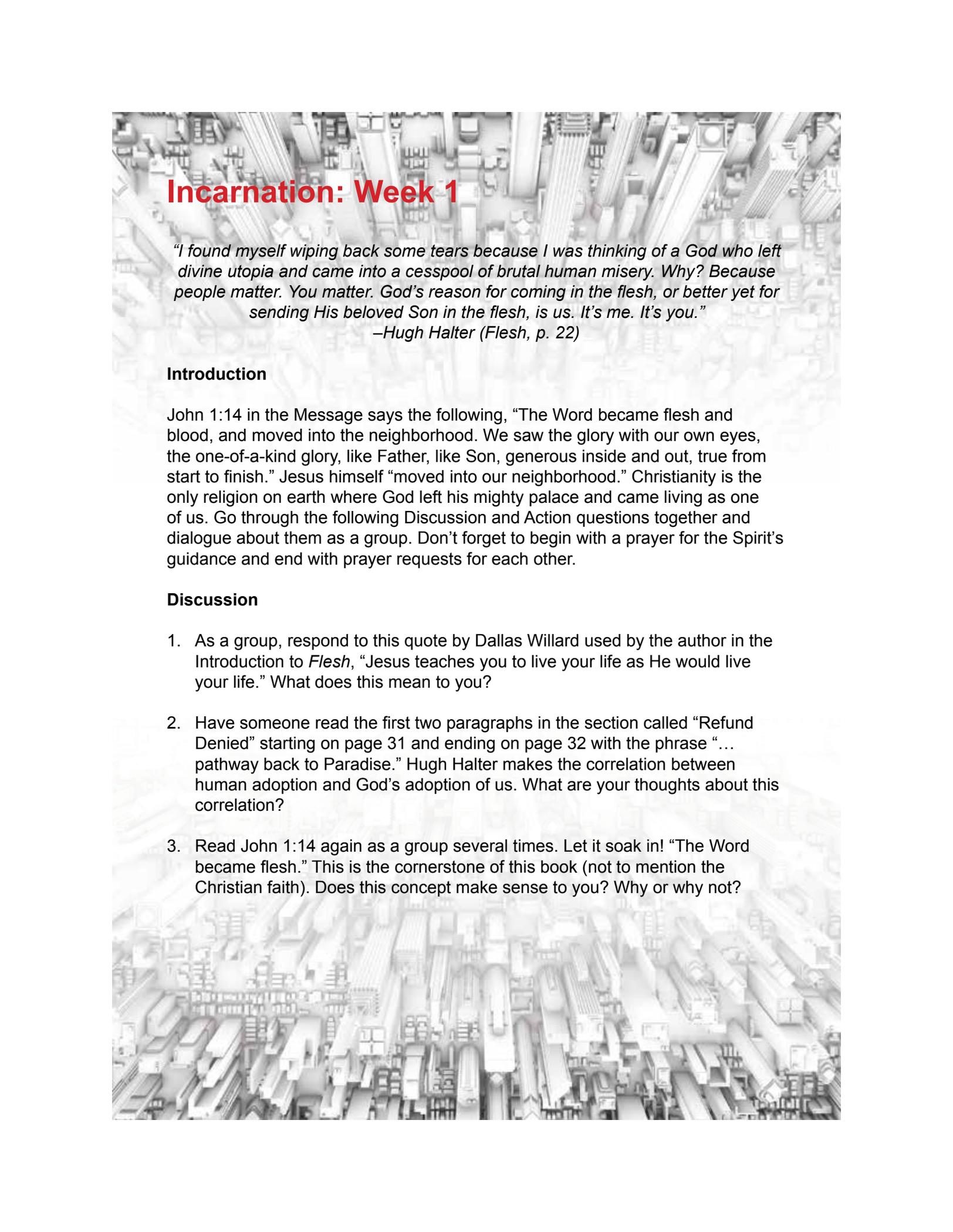


# Small Group Leadership Guide





An aerial, grayscale photograph of a dense urban landscape, showing numerous skyscrapers and buildings of varying heights and architectural styles, creating a complex geometric pattern of lines and shapes.

## Incarnation: Week 1

*"I found myself wiping back some tears because I was thinking of a God who left divine utopia and came into a cesspool of brutal human misery. Why? Because people matter. You matter. God's reason for coming in the flesh, or better yet for sending His beloved Son in the flesh, is us. It's me. It's you."*

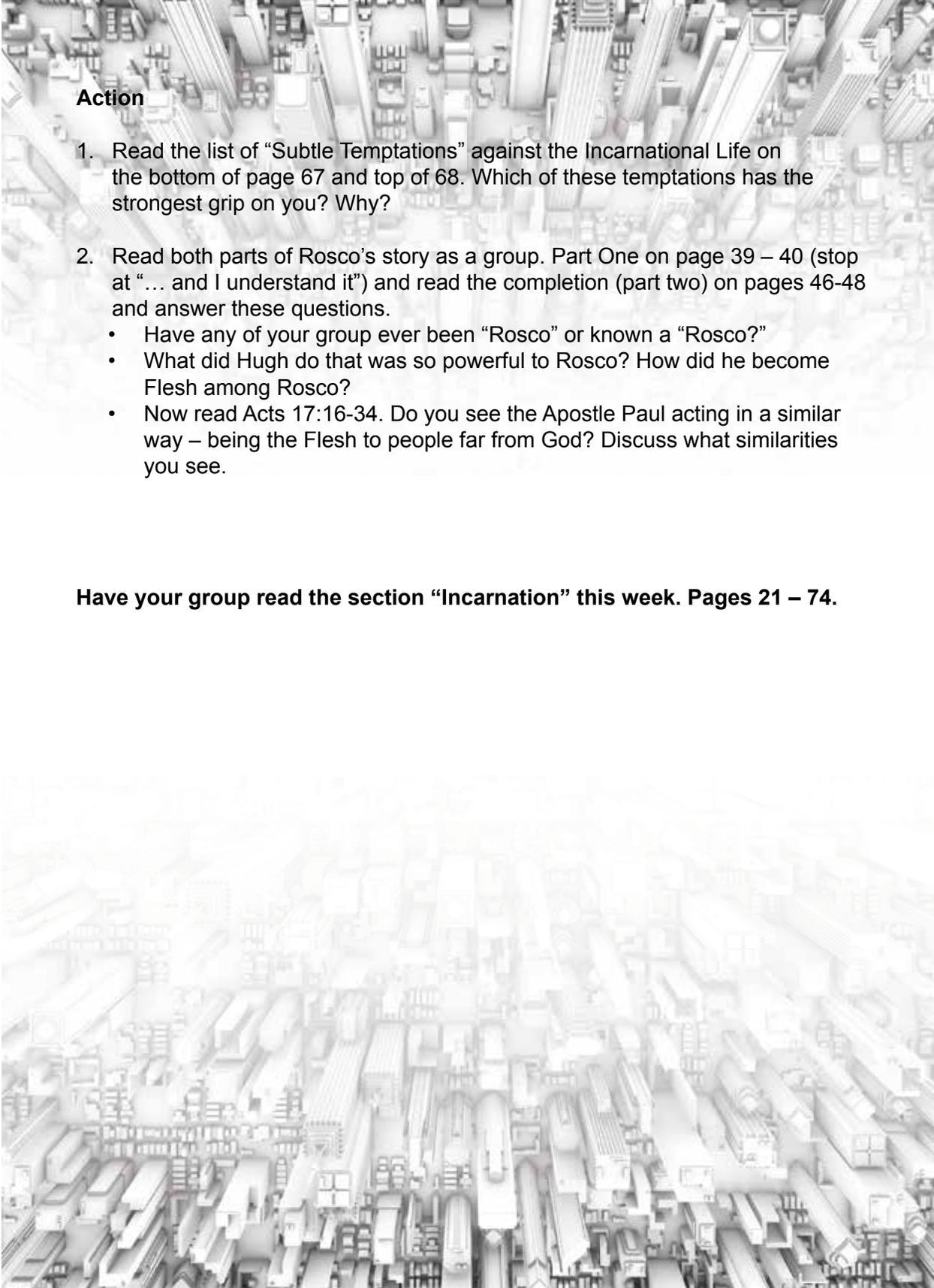
*—Hugh Halter (Flesh, p. 22)*

### Introduction

John 1:14 in the Message says the following, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish." Jesus himself "moved into our neighborhood." Christianity is the only religion on earth where God left his mighty palace and came living as one of us. Go through the following Discussion and Action questions together and dialogue about them as a group. Don't forget to begin with a prayer for the Spirit's guidance and end with prayer requests for each other.

### Discussion

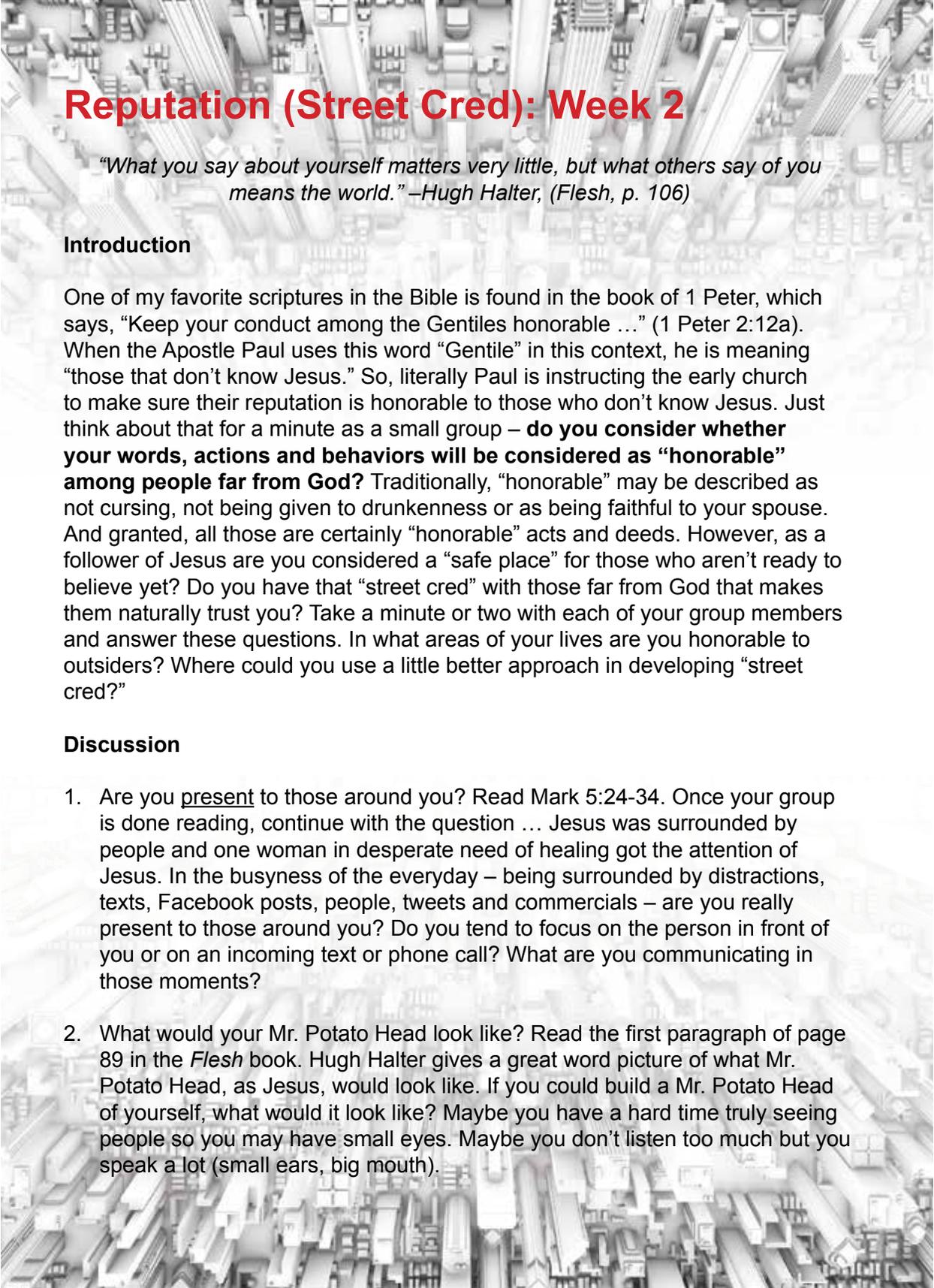
1. As a group, respond to this quote by Dallas Willard used by the author in the Introduction to *Flesh*, "Jesus teaches you to live your life as He would live your life." What does this mean to you?
2. Have someone read the first two paragraphs in the section called "Refund Denied" starting on page 31 and ending on page 32 with the phrase "... pathway back to Paradise." Hugh Halter makes the correlation between human adoption and God's adoption of us. What are your thoughts about this correlation?
3. Read John 1:14 again as a group several times. Let it soak in! "The Word became flesh." This is the cornerstone of this book (not to mention the Christian faith). Does this concept make sense to you? Why or why not?



### Action

1. Read the list of “Subtle Temptations” against the Incarnational Life on the bottom of page 67 and top of 68. Which of these temptations has the strongest grip on you? Why?
2. Read both parts of Rosco’s story as a group. Part One on page 39 – 40 (stop at “... and I understand it”) and read the completion (part two) on pages 46-48 and answer these questions.
  - Have any of your group ever been “Rosco” or known a “Rosco?”
  - What did Hugh do that was so powerful to Rosco? How did he become Flesh among Rosco?
  - Now read Acts 17:16-34. Do you see the Apostle Paul acting in a similar way – being the Flesh to people far from God? Discuss what similarities you see.

**Have your group read the section “Incarnation” this week. Pages 21 – 74.**



## Reputation (Street Cred): Week 2

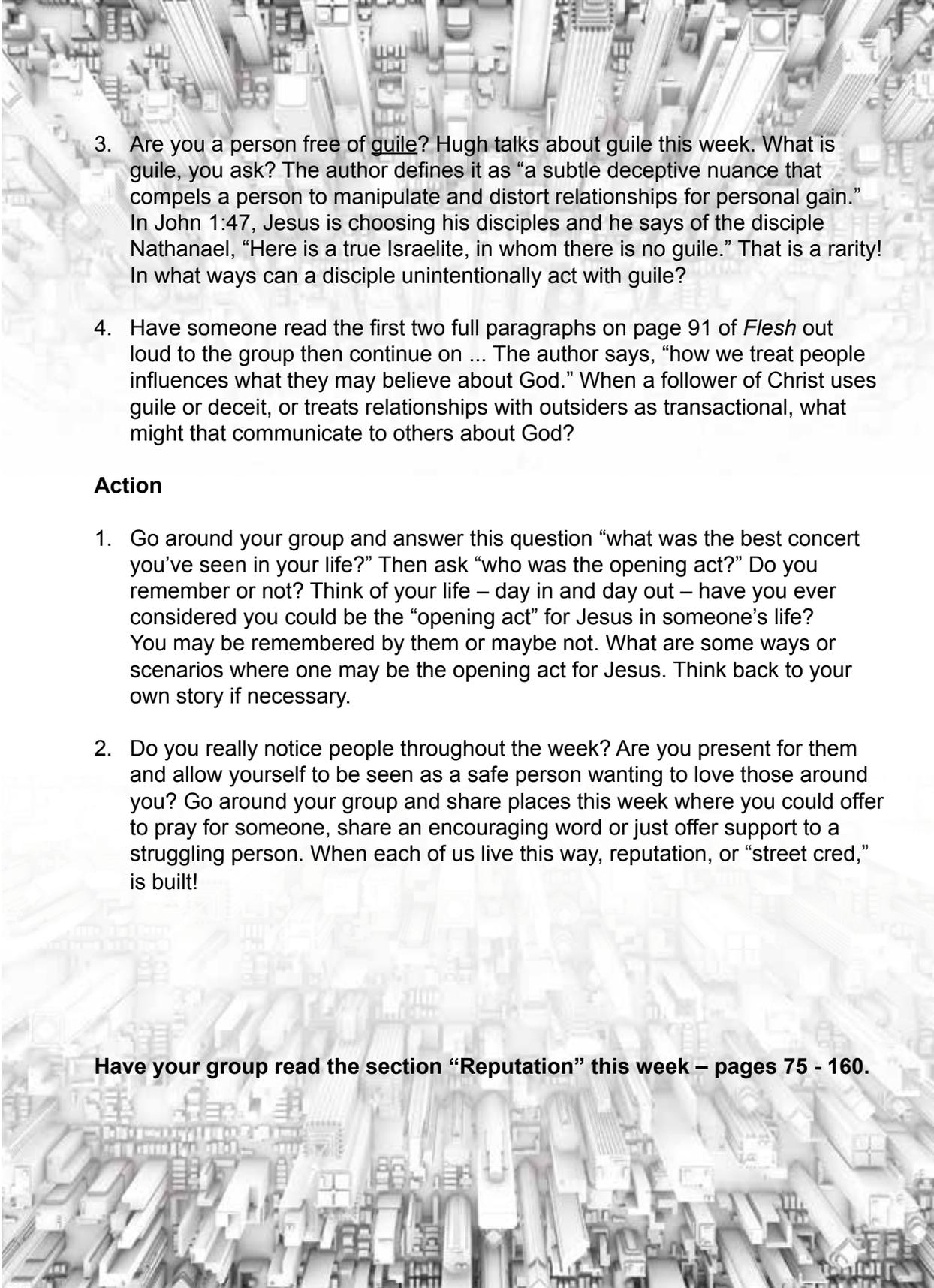
*“What you say about yourself matters very little, but what others say of you means the world.” –Hugh Halter, (Flesh, p. 106)*

### Introduction

One of my favorite scriptures in the Bible is found in the book of 1 Peter, which says, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable ...” (1 Peter 2:12a). When the Apostle Paul uses this word “Gentile” in this context, he is meaning “those that don’t know Jesus.” So, literally Paul is instructing the early church to make sure their reputation is honorable to those who don’t know Jesus. Just think about that for a minute as a small group – **do you consider whether your words, actions and behaviors will be considered as “honorable” among people far from God?** Traditionally, “honorable” may be described as not cursing, not being given to drunkenness or as being faithful to your spouse. And granted, all those are certainly “honorable” acts and deeds. However, as a follower of Jesus are you considered a “safe place” for those who aren’t ready to believe yet? Do you have that “street cred” with those far from God that makes them naturally trust you? Take a minute or two with each of your group members and answer these questions. In what areas of your lives are you honorable to outsiders? Where could you use a little better approach in developing “street cred?”

### Discussion

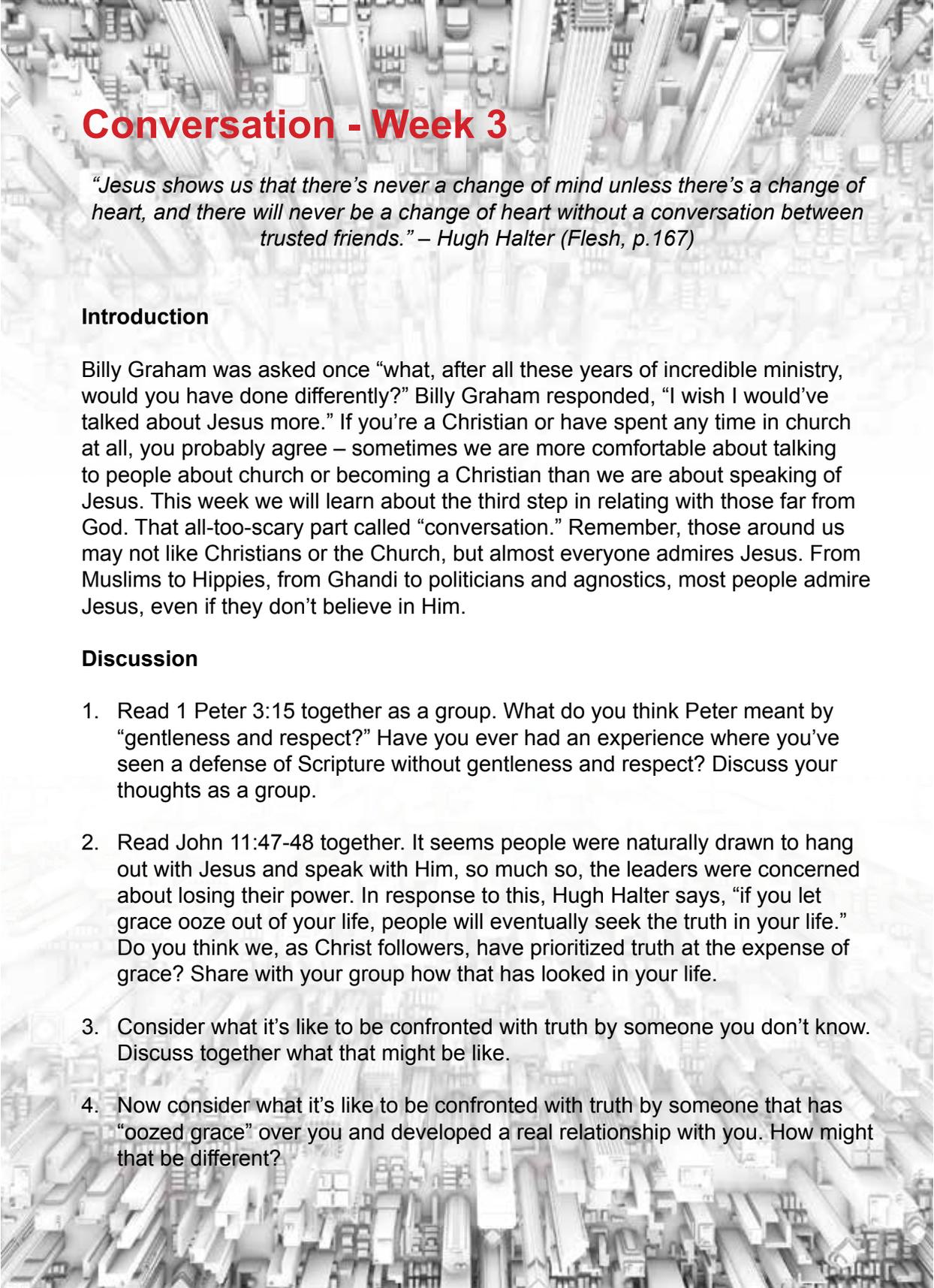
1. Are you present to those around you? Read Mark 5:24-34. Once your group is done reading, continue with the question ... Jesus was surrounded by people and one woman in desperate need of healing got the attention of Jesus. In the busyness of the everyday – being surrounded by distractions, texts, Facebook posts, people, tweets and commercials – are you really present to those around you? Do you tend to focus on the person in front of you or on an incoming text or phone call? What are you communicating in those moments?
2. What would your Mr. Potato Head look like? Read the first paragraph of page 89 in the *Flesh* book. Hugh Halter gives a great word picture of what Mr. Potato Head, as Jesus, would look like. If you could build a Mr. Potato Head of yourself, what would it look like? Maybe you have a hard time truly seeing people so you may have small eyes. Maybe you don’t listen too much but you speak a lot (small ears, big mouth).

- 
3. Are you a person free of guile? Hugh talks about guile this week. What is guile, you ask? The author defines it as “a subtle deceptive nuance that compels a person to manipulate and distort relationships for personal gain.” In John 1:47, Jesus is choosing his disciples and he says of the disciple Nathanael, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.” That is a rarity! In what ways can a disciple unintentionally act with guile?
  4. Have someone read the first two full paragraphs on page 91 of *Flesh* out loud to the group then continue on ... The author says, “how we treat people influences what they may believe about God.” When a follower of Christ uses guile or deceit, or treats relationships with outsiders as transactional, what might that communicate to others about God?

### **Action**

1. Go around your group and answer this question “what was the best concert you’ve seen in your life?” Then ask “who was the opening act?” Do you remember or not? Think of your life – day in and day out – have you ever considered you could be the “opening act” for Jesus in someone’s life? You may be remembered by them or maybe not. What are some ways or scenarios where one may be the opening act for Jesus. Think back to your own story if necessary.
2. Do you really notice people throughout the week? Are you present for them and allow yourself to be seen as a safe person wanting to love those around you? Go around your group and share places this week where you could offer to pray for someone, share an encouraging word or just offer support to a struggling person. When each of us live this way, reputation, or “street cred,” is built!

**Have your group read the section “Reputation” this week – pages 75 - 160.**



## Conversation - Week 3

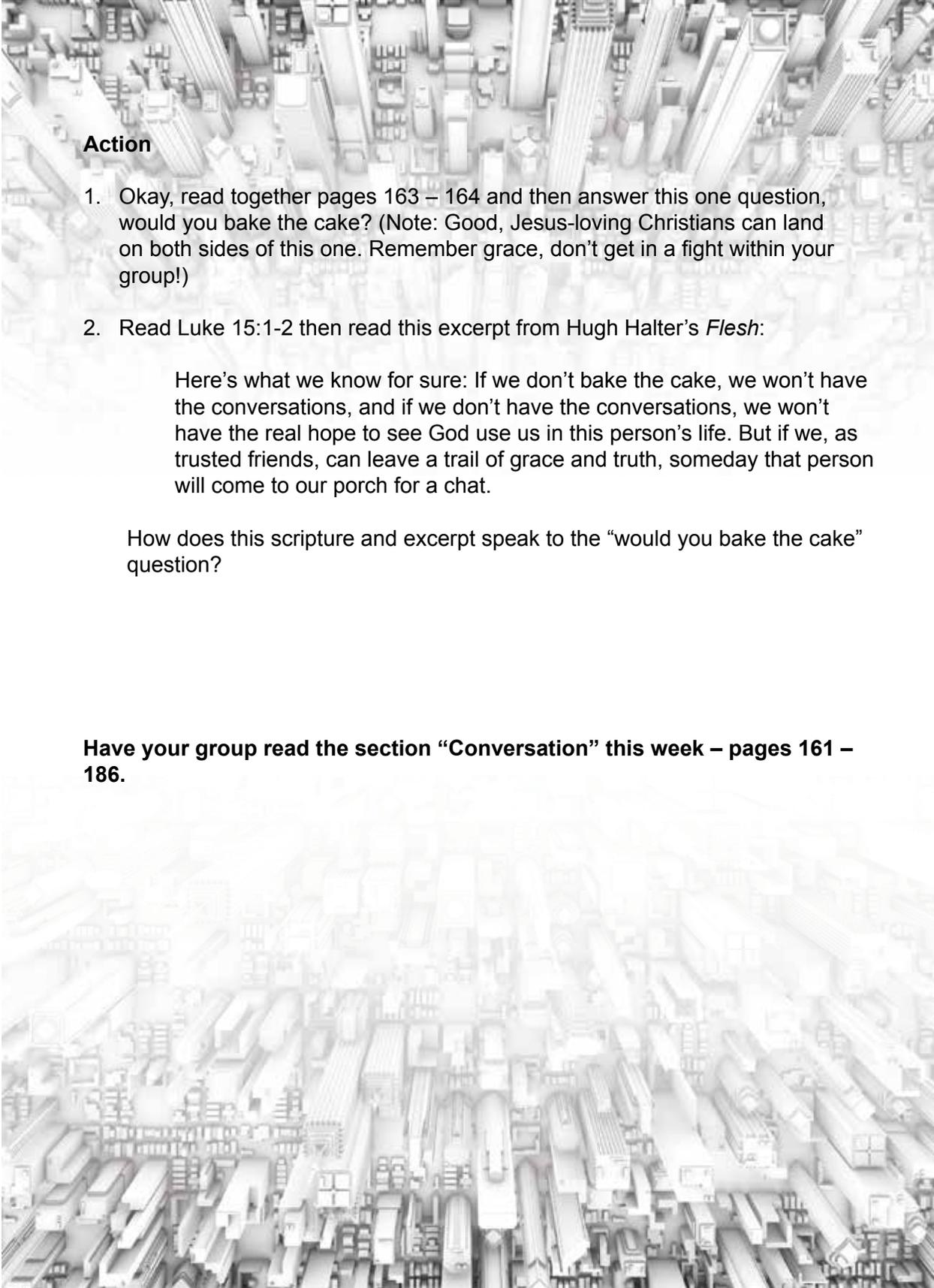
*“Jesus shows us that there’s never a change of mind unless there’s a change of heart, and there will never be a change of heart without a conversation between trusted friends.” – Hugh Halter (Flesh, p.167)*

### Introduction

Billy Graham was asked once “what, after all these years of incredible ministry, would you have done differently?” Billy Graham responded, “I wish I would’ve talked about Jesus more.” If you’re a Christian or have spent any time in church at all, you probably agree – sometimes we are more comfortable about talking to people about church or becoming a Christian than we are about speaking of Jesus. This week we will learn about the third step in relating with those far from God. That all-too-scary part called “conversation.” Remember, those around us may not like Christians or the Church, but almost everyone admires Jesus. From Muslims to Hippies, from Ghandi to politicians and agnostics, most people admire Jesus, even if they don’t believe in Him.

### Discussion

1. Read 1 Peter 3:15 together as a group. What do you think Peter meant by “gentleness and respect?” Have you ever had an experience where you’ve seen a defense of Scripture without gentleness and respect? Discuss your thoughts as a group.
2. Read John 11:47-48 together. It seems people were naturally drawn to hang out with Jesus and speak with Him, so much so, the leaders were concerned about losing their power. In response to this, Hugh Halter says, “if you let grace ooze out of your life, people will eventually seek the truth in your life.” Do you think we, as Christ followers, have prioritized truth at the expense of grace? Share with your group how that has looked in your life.
3. Consider what it’s like to be confronted with truth by someone you don’t know. Discuss together what that might be like.
4. Now consider what it’s like to be confronted with truth by someone that has “oozed grace” over you and developed a real relationship with you. How might that be different?



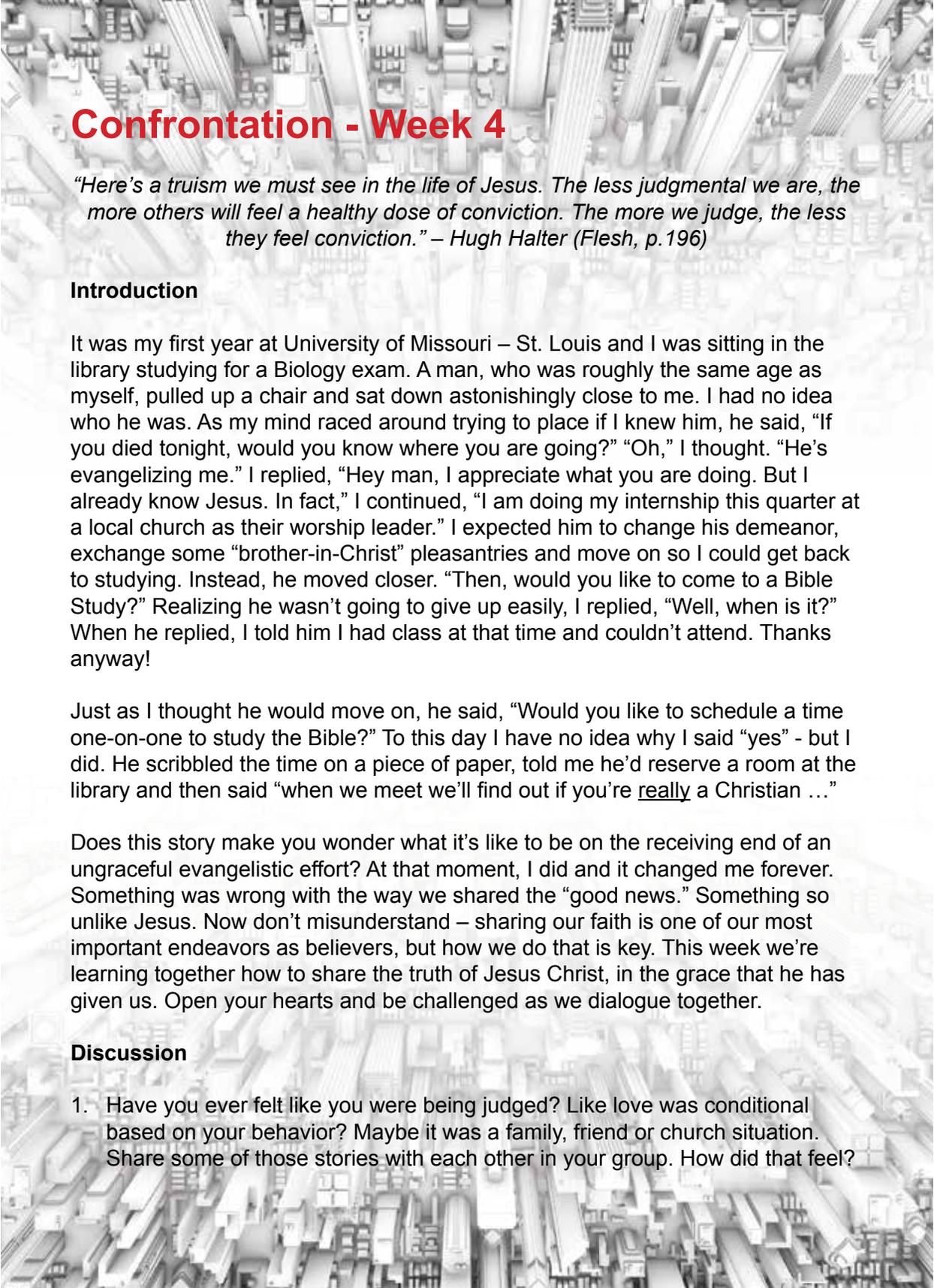
**Action**

1. Okay, read together pages 163 – 164 and then answer this one question, would you bake the cake? (Note: Good, Jesus-loving Christians can land on both sides of this one. Remember grace, don't get in a fight within your group!)
2. Read Luke 15:1-2 then read this excerpt from Hugh Halter's *Flesh*:

Here's what we know for sure: If we don't bake the cake, we won't have the conversations, and if we don't have the conversations, we won't have the real hope to see God use us in this person's life. But if we, as trusted friends, can leave a trail of grace and truth, someday that person will come to our porch for a chat.

How does this scripture and excerpt speak to the "would you bake the cake" question?

**Have your group read the section "Conversation" this week – pages 161 – 186.**



## Confrontation - Week 4

*“Here’s a truism we must see in the life of Jesus. The less judgmental we are, the more others will feel a healthy dose of conviction. The more we judge, the less they feel conviction.” – Hugh Halter (Flesh, p.196)*

### Introduction

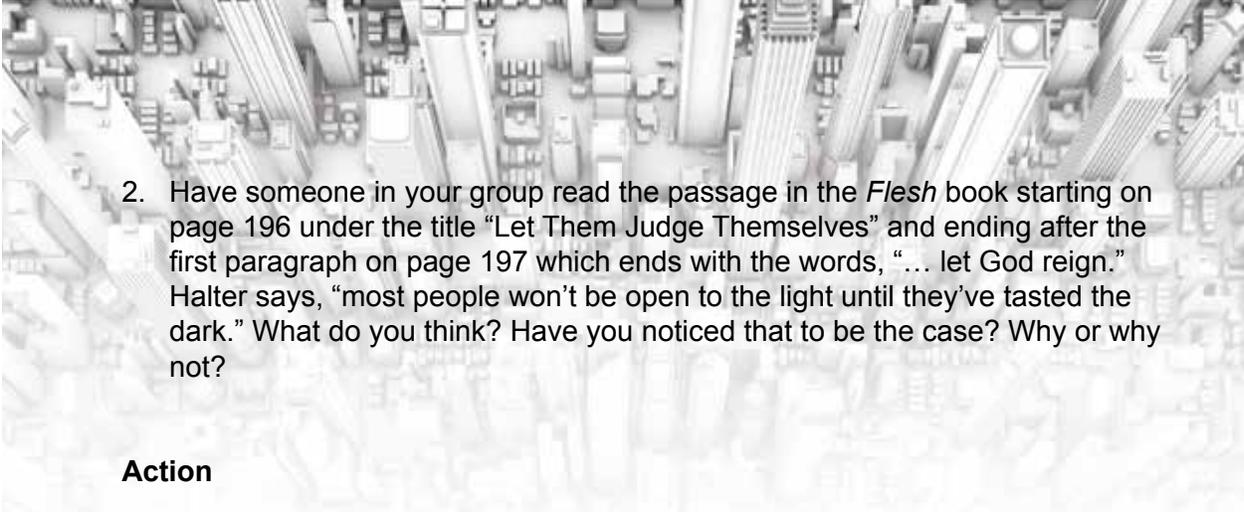
It was my first year at University of Missouri – St. Louis and I was sitting in the library studying for a Biology exam. A man, who was roughly the same age as myself, pulled up a chair and sat down astonishingly close to me. I had no idea who he was. As my mind raced around trying to place if I knew him, he said, “If you died tonight, would you know where you are going?” “Oh,” I thought. “He’s evangelizing me.” I replied, “Hey man, I appreciate what you are doing. But I already know Jesus. In fact,” I continued, “I am doing my internship this quarter at a local church as their worship leader.” I expected him to change his demeanor, exchange some “brother-in-Christ” pleasantries and move on so I could get back to studying. Instead, he moved closer. “Then, would you like to come to a Bible Study?” Realizing he wasn’t going to give up easily, I replied, “Well, when is it?” When he replied, I told him I had class at that time and couldn’t attend. Thanks anyway!

Just as I thought he would move on, he said, “Would you like to schedule a time one-on-one to study the Bible?” To this day I have no idea why I said “yes” - but I did. He scribbled the time on a piece of paper, told me he’d reserve a room at the library and then said “when we meet we’ll find out if you’re really a Christian ...”

Does this story make you wonder what it’s like to be on the receiving end of an ungraceful evangelistic effort? At that moment, I did and it changed me forever. Something was wrong with the way we shared the “good news.” Something so unlike Jesus. Now don’t misunderstand – sharing our faith is one of our most important endeavors as believers, but how we do that is key. This week we’re learning together how to share the truth of Jesus Christ, in the grace that he has given us. Open your hearts and be challenged as we dialogue together.

### Discussion

1. Have you ever felt like you were being judged? Like love was conditional based on your behavior? Maybe it was a family, friend or church situation. Share some of those stories with each other in your group. How did that feel?

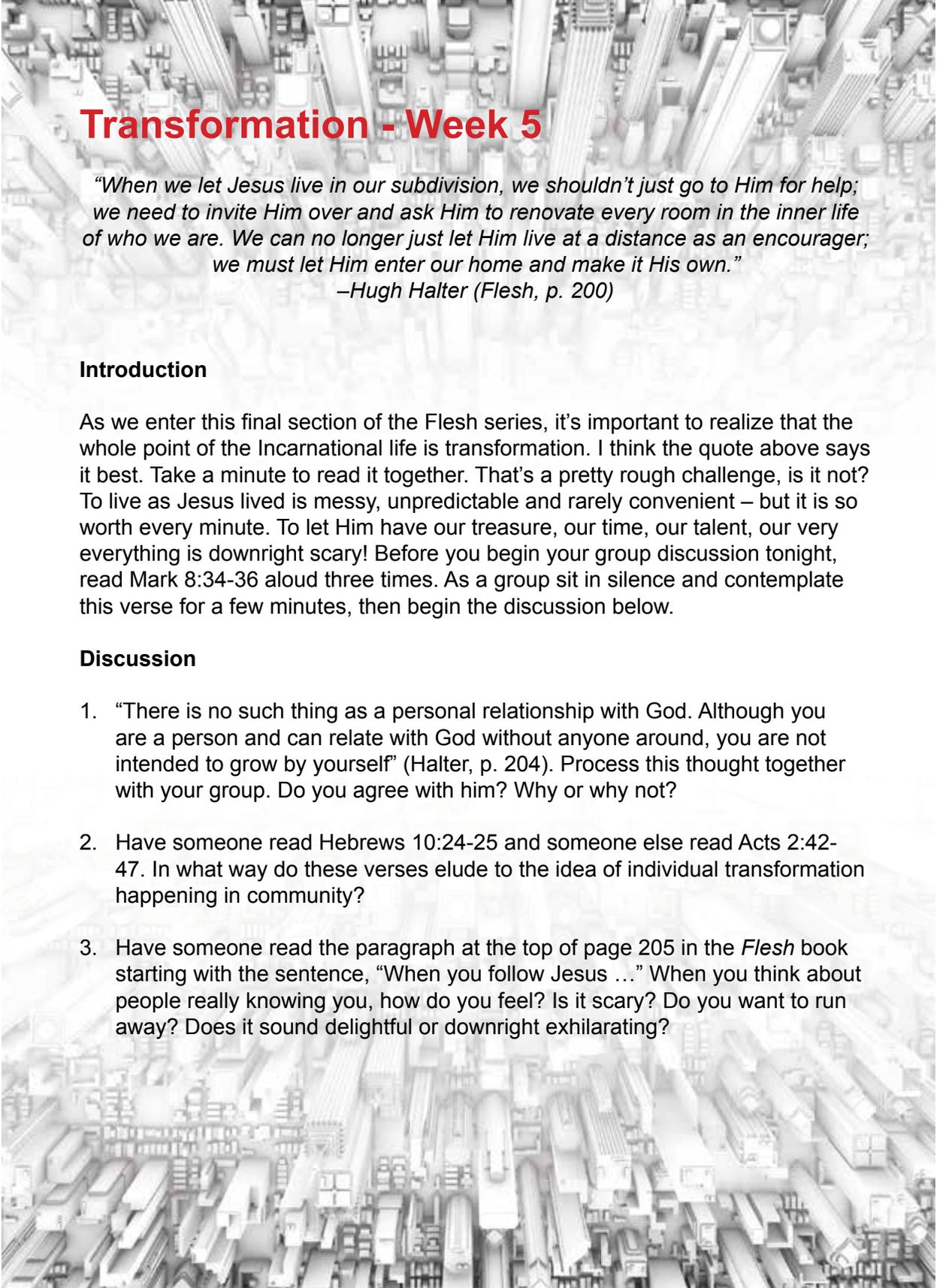
- 
2. Have someone in your group read the passage in the *Flesh* book starting on page 196 under the title “Let Them Judge Themselves” and ending after the first paragraph on page 197 which ends with the words, “... let God reign.” Halter says, “most people won’t be open to the light until they’ve tasted the dark.” What do you think? Have you noticed that to be the case? Why or why not?

### **Action**

1. Read Romans 2:1-3 and Matthew 7:1-5. How can these verses inform our “confrontation” of sin as believers?
2. Read the quote from Hugh Halter in italics at the beginning of this week’s questions. Do you agree?
3. Take a moment to share with each other a person in your life that may be far from Christ. It may be a friend, a co-worker, a spouse – hey, it may even be you! Take these last few minutes to pray as a group for these people and pray for wisdom in your relationship with them.



**Have your group read the section “Confrontation” this week – pages 187 – 198.**



## Transformation - Week 5

*“When we let Jesus live in our subdivision, we shouldn’t just go to Him for help; we need to invite Him over and ask Him to renovate every room in the inner life of who we are. We can no longer just let Him live at a distance as an encourager; we must let Him enter our home and make it His own.”*

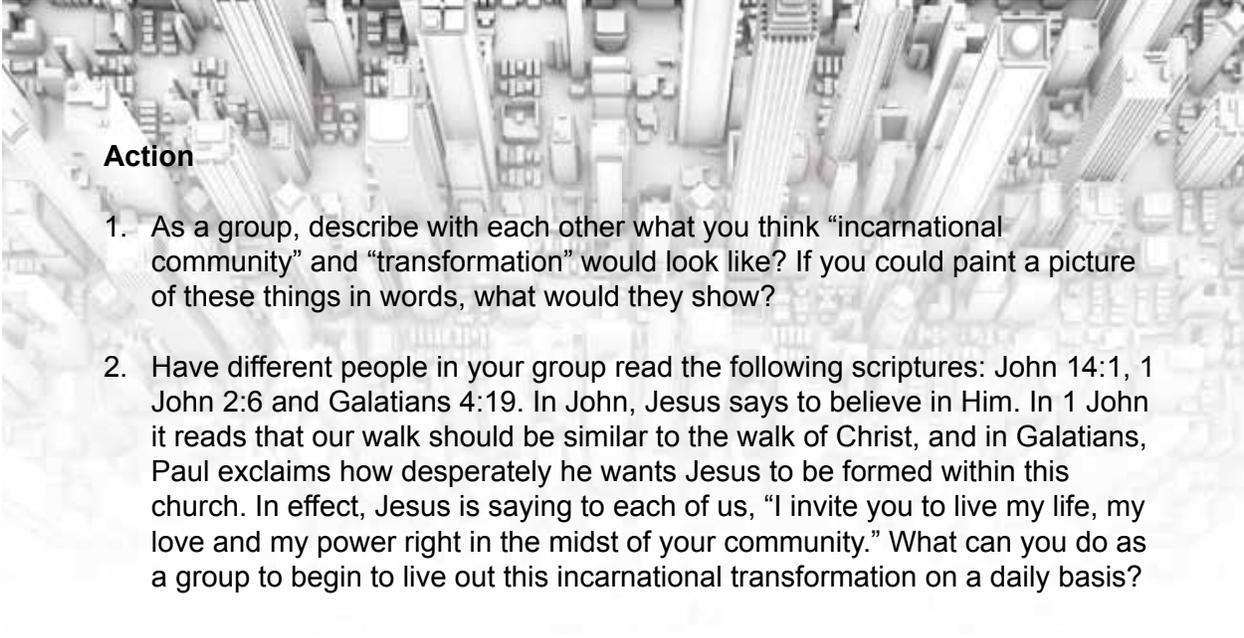
*–Hugh Halter (Flesh, p. 200)*

### Introduction

As we enter this final section of the *Flesh* series, it’s important to realize that the whole point of the Incarnational life is transformation. I think the quote above says it best. Take a minute to read it together. That’s a pretty rough challenge, is it not? To live as Jesus lived is messy, unpredictable and rarely convenient – but it is so worth every minute. To let Him have our treasure, our time, our talent, our very everything is downright scary! Before you begin your group discussion tonight, read Mark 8:34-36 aloud three times. As a group sit in silence and contemplate this verse for a few minutes, then begin the discussion below.

### Discussion

1. “There is no such thing as a personal relationship with God. Although you are a person and can relate with God without anyone around, you are not intended to grow by yourself” (Halter, p. 204). Process this thought together with your group. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
2. Have someone read Hebrews 10:24-25 and someone else read Acts 2:42-47. In what way do these verses elude to the idea of individual transformation happening in community?
3. Have someone read the paragraph at the top of page 205 in the *Flesh* book starting with the sentence, “When you follow Jesus ...” When you think about people really knowing you, how do you feel? Is it scary? Do you want to run away? Does it sound delightful or downright exhilarating?



**Action**

1. As a group, describe with each other what you think “incarnational community” and “transformation” would look like? If you could paint a picture of these things in words, what would they show?
2. Have different people in your group read the following scriptures: John 14:1, 1 John 2:6 and Galatians 4:19. In John, Jesus says to believe in Him. In 1 John it reads that our walk should be similar to the walk of Christ, and in Galatians, Paul exclaims how desperately he wants Jesus to be formed within this church. In effect, Jesus is saying to each of us, “I invite you to live my life, my love and my power right in the midst of your community.” What can you do as a group to begin to live out this incarnational transformation on a daily basis?

**Have your group read the section “Transformation” this week – pages 199 – 217.**



