



TRUE NORTH

WEEK 1 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGEMAN

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

Do you remember a time when you got really lost? How did you get lost and what was that experience like for you?

SHARE

Welcome to our new series entitled, "True North."

In leadership lingo, there is a well-known term used when we talk about living with integrity and staying the course. We like to say that we are headed..."True North." Regardless what happens around us, despite what changes we see and differing opinions we hear, the real leader stays the true course. So how do we know if we are headed true north?

America is known as a land of opportunity. We are known as the country with the bravest military in the world, a self-sacrificing people who believe in freedom and just causes around the world. Some of the finest people you will ever meet wear the uniform, have a badge on their chest, standing ready to respond in our fire stations or prepare the lesson in classrooms across this great land.

America has been a beacon of light for so many in the world, a country where people can come regardless of race and be welcomed with great opportunity to work hard, get an education, and contribute as an American citizen. We are a country made up of generations of immigrants who came here for religious freedom and opportunity. Belief in God, personal responsibility, and morality was, for the most part, important to society and reflected in the memoirs of our founding fathers and in the Declaration of Independence. Prayer was commonplace in the halls of Congress, in judicial backrooms and in schools. Some generations lost sight of what was most important, while others championed great and godly causes. Over time, we have seen an eroding of moral values, personal responsibility, and care for our neighbors; at times it feels like we have lost our moral compass.

As followers of Christ, we live in what feels like a post-Christian society in America. It is way more common to meet people who don't believe in God or absolute truth than to find some-

one who does. Culture is drifting in another direction and we are becoming a less godly people. As Christians, how do we respond with love, truth, grace, and compassion on those we so strongly disagree with? How do we live heading 'true north' in a society that seems morally adrift? Scripture would say that it starts with us.

Let's read 2 Chronicles 7:14

Solomon asked God to help his people and the Lord responded with four conditions. What were they?

What does it look like to 'humble' ourselves?

These days, how do you think the American culture determines morality? Is there a morality compass?

GROW

As Chad pointed out in his message, sometimes we are unable to control our circumstances. In this week's message, Chad talked about the responsibility of the church to lead the way in society, to actually do the things we preach. Now when we talk about 'the church,' we don't mean just the pastor, but we mean the biblical definition of The Church ... the actual body of Christ, the people of God. All of us who are followers of Jesus are God's people and are called to live an authentic faith-filled life. Which means that we admit when we are wrong, own our mistakes, ask for forgiveness, turn from sin, and live differently. It sounds great on paper, but to do it, we desperately need God's power.

Barna did a study in a book called *U-turn: Restoring America to the Strength of Its Roots*. Citing the book, Paul Strand wrote:

"This is a hope that in revival, God's people -- who hold the key -- will in obedience say, 'We are the problem. We have walked away from You and the culture has followed us, not the other way around,'" Rohrer explained. Christians may doubt they're a part of the problem, but Barna and Barton found in their research over and over again that church people -- just as much as their government, just as much as secular people -- are guilty of the same kind of ruinous behaviors that are taking the nation down.

"In a country where between 78 to 80 percent say they're Christian, only 34 percent say they believe in absolute moral truth," Barton said. Barna regularly asks Christians and non-Christians about 70 moral categories -- and these days he's finding no substantive statistical difference between Christians and non-Christians when it comes to most moral issues. You can't find a difference in behavior between Christians and non-Christians anymore, and that's not good," Barton warned.

Statements like the one we just read are scary. It can cause us to feel defensive or worse, but the reality is that we need to drop the defenses and open our eyes, ears, and hearts to what God might be telling us individually. Maybe there is a some way of living that God has put his finger on in your life and now is the time to respond?

What do you think the most common perception of Christians is in today's culture?

Why do you think people have that perception?

Is there something you think would make a big difference in unbeliever's perceptions of Christ followers? If so, what would it be and why?

MOVE

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, the Lord tells us that if we would humble ourselves, pray, turn from sin and seek God, then he will hear from heaven, forgive the sins of the people and “will heal their land.” We all desire for God to heal our morally broken land, to fix corrupt systems, to bring relief to those who are oppressed, to put an end to racism and violence, but it begins with the people of God. Before God changes the hearts of an entire nation, the people of God need to look into the mirror and ask God to change our hearts. This isn’t something we can do on our own, but something that God does in and through us. We need the Lord’s great strength, the power of the Holy Spirit and his unfailing love to help us change individually; then we can see him move in our families, our neighbors’ lives, our cities and change our nation.

Read Psalm 33:10-22

Regardless of how things might appear to us, who is ultimately in control? Why is this so important to remember?

According to Scripture, who can save us?

When you think about your lifestyle and day-to-day interactions with people, where do you need to return to trusting in God?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the struggles that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women’s groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is the disgrace of any people.