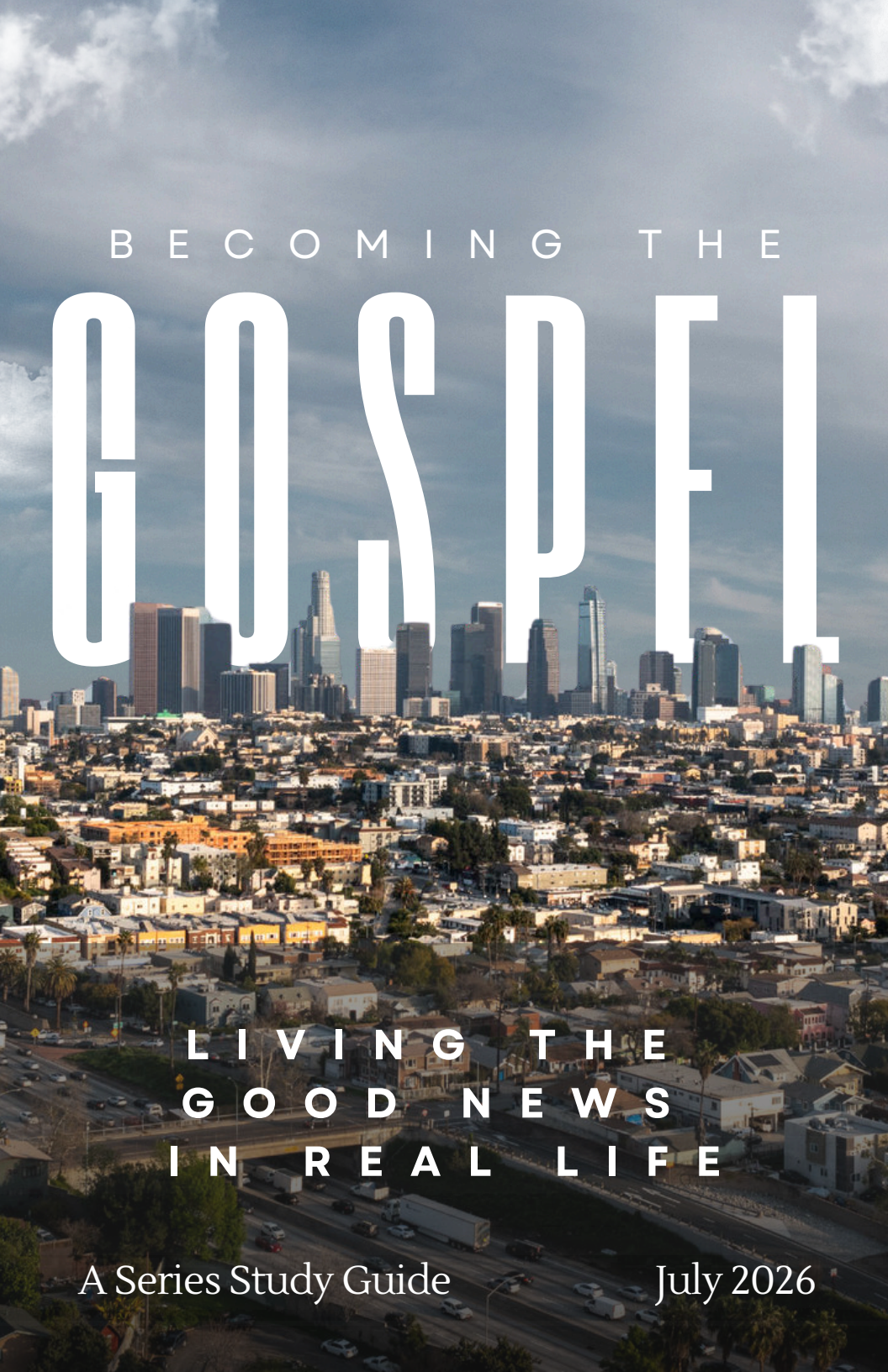
BECOMING THE
GOSPEL
LIVING THE GOOD NEWS IN REAL LIFE
A Series Study Guide
July 2026

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

SERIES INTRODUCTON

Week 1 –
Philippi: Becoming the Gospel
Philippians 2:5-11, 4:13; Acts 16:11-40

Week 2 –
Galatia: Becoming Free
Galatians 5:1, 13-26

Week 3 –
Rome: Becoming Welcome
Romans 14:19-15:6

Week 4 –
Corinth: Becoming Humble
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

NEXT STEPS



Becoming the Gospel

Most of us know the gap.

We believe Jesus brings peace, but we still carry anxiety. We believe grace is real, but we still feel the pressure to prove ourselves. We believe God makes us family, but relationships can still feel fractured, lonely, or hard. We believe the gospel is hope for the world, but we do not always know what that hope looks like on a Tuesday afternoon.

That gap is not new.

Paul wrote his letters to churches living in that same space. They were real communities (house churches) in real cities, learning to follow Jesus in the middle of pressure, conflict, suffering, temptation, division, spiritual confusion, cultural compromise, and everyday life.

Philippi, Galatia, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, and Thessaloniki were not abstract Bible places. They were neighborhoods, households, workplaces, marketplaces, and

cities where ordinary people were learning what it meant to belong to Jesus.

And Paul does not respond to them by giving religious ideas detached from reality. He keeps bringing them back to Jesus — crucified, risen, present by the Spirit, and forming a new family. Paul's letters are full of theology, but that theology is never meant to stay in the clouds. The gospel Paul proclaims is meant to become visible in a people. It takes shape in humility, freedom, welcome, resilience, peace, holiness, hope, endurance, and love.

That is the heart of this series.

Becoming the Gospel is about the Good News of Jesus taking on flesh in ordinary people, in ordinary places. It is about the life of Jesus becoming the shape of our lives. The gospel is not only a message we believe. It is a reality we receive, embody, and display (we "practice" the way of Jesus). By the Spirit, Jesus forms His people into a living witness that the Good News really is good news.

Over these nine weeks, we will walk through several of Paul's letters and ask one central question: **What would it look like for the gospel to take on flesh in us?**

In Philippians, we will see that the story of Jesus becomes the pattern of our shared life. In Galatians, we will be invited into the freedom of the Spirit that sets us free from proving ourselves and frees us for love. As we move through the series, though, we're really talking about how to live the gospel right here in the Inland Valley.

This study guide is not designed simply to help us learn more information. The goal is not just to understand Paul's letters better, though we hope that happens. The goal is to follow Jesus more faithfully together - right here and now.

Each week, we want to engage Scripture with an obedience-

based posture. That means we are not only asking, “What does this passage mean?” We are also asking, “What is Jesus inviting me to trust? What is the Spirit revealing in me? What needs to change? What step of obedience can I take this week?”

In other words, we are learning to read the Bible as disciples.

A disciple is not someone who only studies Jesus from a distance. A disciple is someone who hears from God and does what He says. We will listens to Jesus, follows Jesus, and learns to live the life of Jesus in real life. So as you read, pray, discuss, and practice your way through this guide, pay attention to the places where the Spirit is making the gospel personal and practical.

Do not rush past that invitation. That may be the very place where the gospel is becoming visible in you.

This summer, let’s not only study the gospel. Let’s become good new right here in the cities that fill our valley. The Good News becomes visible when it takes on flesh in us.

Additional Resources

Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission, Michael Gorman

Flesh: Bringing the Incarnation Down to Earth, Hugh Halter

Renovation of the Heart, Dallas Willard

Why the Gospel, Matthew Bates

Paul for Everyone, N.T. Wright

The King Jesus Gospel, Scot McKnight

Becoming the Gospel -Week 1

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: Phil. 2:5-11; 4:13; Acts 16:11-40

SERMON TITLE

Philippi: Becoming the Gospel

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quotes:

“The only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.”
- Lesslie Newbigin

“Christ crucified needs to be not only the source, but also the shape, of the Christian life.”
- Michael Gorman

Week 1: Reflect and Discuss

1. Where do you currently feel the gap between the gospel you believe and the life you actually live?

2. In Acts 16, the gospel takes root in ordinary and unexpected places. Where might God already be at work in the ordinary places of your life?

3. Paul says, “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). What does that mean beyond simply “thinking better thoughts”?

3. What does it mean that the gospel is not only the message that saves us, but also the story that shapes us?

4. Paul says, “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). What does that mean beyond simply “thinking better thoughts”?

5. Is there a relationship where you need to lay down rivalry, defensiveness, resentment, or comparison? What would obedience look like?

6. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

7. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: The Status Fast

"Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father."
Phil. 2:11

At the center of Christian faith is the simple, world-shaking, life-changing confession: Jesus is Lord.

This is not just something Christians believe about Jesus. It is the foundation of discipleship. To say "Jesus is Lord" means His way becomes our way. His story becomes our story. His life becomes the pattern of our life together.

That is why Philippians 2 is so important. Paul is not simply calling the church to be nicer, more polite, or less selfish. He is showing us the way of Jesus. The One who is Lord does not cling to status, grasp for position, or use power to protect Himself. He humbles Himself in love.

So if Jesus is Lord, I am not. If Jesus is Lord, status and ambition are not.

That is where discipleship gets very practical. We may not call status "lord," but it often shapes us more than we realize. The need to be noticed. The need to be right. The need to be admired. The need to control how others see us. The need to compare, compete, defend, or prove ourselves.

Philippians 2 invites us into freedom. Because Jesus is Lord, we do not have to be.

Practice: The Status Fast
This week, choose one form of status-seeking to fast from.

You might fast from needing the last word.
You might fast from correcting someone when it does not really matter.
You might fast from bringing up your own accomplishment in conversation.

You might fast from checking whether people noticed, liked, affirmed, or appreciated you.
You might fast from comparing your life, family, work, ministry, or faithfulness to someone else's.
You might fast from defensiveness and choose curiosity instead.
You might fast from being seen and choose to serve quietly.

The goal is not to become invisible. The goal is to become free.

As you practice, pay attention to what rises up in you. When you do not get credit, what do you feel? When someone else is celebrated, what happens inside you? When you are misunderstood, overlooked, interrupted, or corrected, what do you reach for?

In those moments, pause and pray:

Jesus, You are Lord.
I do not have to prove myself.
I do not have to protect my image.
I do not have to grasp for status.
Teach me the freedom of Your humility.

Then take one small step of obedience. Listen instead of defending. Serve without announcing it. Celebrate someone else without comparison. Ask a question instead of proving your point. Choose peace over winning. Choose love over being noticed.

As you practice this form of fasting, make space to reflect:
Where do I feel the pull of status?
Where did I practice the humility of Jesus?
Where did I resist His way?
What is one step of obedience for tomorrow?

This week, let the confession become a practice: Jesus is Lord.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 2

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: Galatians 5:1, 13-26

SERMON TITLE

Galatia: Becoming Free

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“We don’t believe something by merely saying we believe it or even when we believe that we believe it. We believe something when we act as if it were true.”
- Dallas Willard

“Christian liberty is freedom not to indulge the flesh but to control the flesh, freedom not to exploit our neighbor but to serve our neighbor.”
- John Stott

Week 2: Reflect and Discuss

1. What are some subtle ways religious performance can replace trust in Jesus?

2. Galatians 5 says we are not only set free from something, but set free for love. What is the difference between freedom as “doing whatever I want” and freedom as “serving one another humbly in love”?

3. Which fruit of the Spirit feels most needed in your life right now: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control?

4. What is one “old pattern” you need to refuse this week — defensiveness, comparison, anger, resentment, control, or self-justification?

5. Who is one person you can serve humbly in love this week?

6. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

7. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: Serving Others

“It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don’t use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do... Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows.”
— Psalm 34:1 (MSG)

Christian freedom is not the freedom to center ourselves. It is the freedom to stop proving ourselves, protecting ourselves, and living for ourselves. In Jesus, we are set free from the exhausting need to earn our worth, secure our place, justify our existence, or make sure everyone knows how much we are doing.

And that freedom has a direction: love.

This is one of the surprises of Galatians 5. Paul says we are free, and then immediately tells us to serve. That may sound like a contradiction, but in the kingdom of Jesus, service is not the opposite of freedom. Service is what freedom makes possible.

When we are still trying to prove ourselves, even our love can become tangled up with the need to be noticed. We serve, but we hope someone sees. We help, but we want appreciation. We give, but we quietly keep score. We love, but we still want it to say something about us.

The Spirit frees us from that old way of life. He forms in us the life of Jesus: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Slowly, one act of obedience at a time, we become free enough to love without needing it to center around us.

Practice: Serve in Secret
This week, practice freedom by serving someone in secret.

Choose one ordinary act of love that blesses someone else without drawing attention to yourself.

Do something kind, helpful, generous, or thoughtful without needing to be noticed, thanked, praised, or repaid.

You might clean up a mess you did not make.
You might leave an encouraging note.
You might pay for someone's coffee or meal anonymously.
You might take a task off someone's plate.
You might pray for someone every day without telling them.
You might give quietly to meet a need.
You might make space for someone else to rest.

As you serve, pay attention to what happens inside you. Do you want someone to know? Do you feel disappointed if no one notices? Do you feel free, or do you feel the old pull of recognition?

Jesus celebrates what is done in love, even (especially?) when no one else sees it. When we serve in secret, we are not serving for applause or repayment; we are offering our love "unto the Lord," trusting that what is hidden from others is seen and received by Him.

Before you serve, pause and ask:
Holy Spirit, who are You inviting me to love today?
What would love look like in action?

Then serve quietly and joyfully.

Afterward, resist the urge to manage the outcome. You do not need to hint at what you did. You do not need to make sure it was noticed. You do not need to rehearse whether they deserved it. Simply offer the act to Jesus as worship.

At the end of the week, take a few minutes to reflect: How might the Spirit be freeing me to love with less pressure and more joy? This week, let freedom take the shape of love.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 3

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: Romans 15:5-7; 1:16-17; 3:22-24

SERMON TITLE

Rome: Becoming Welcome

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.”

- Henri Nouwen

“The church is not meant to call men and women out of the world into a safe religious enclave but to call them out in order to send them back as agents of God’s kingship.”

- Lesslie Newbigin

Week 3: Reflect and Discuss

1. Who has helped you experience the welcome of Jesus through their welcome of you?

2. What changes when we remember that Paul wrote Romans to real house churches trying to live together across deep differences?

3. When you hear the word “welcome,” what comes to mind? How is biblical welcome deeper than friendliness, politeness, or tolerance?

4. Paul says, “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you” (Rom. 15:17). What did it cost Jesus to welcome you? What does that mean for our welcome of others in the church?

5. What is one practical way you can make room for someone else’s story, perspective, presence, or need this week?

6. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

7. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: Welcome One Another

"The church…is meant to be a
fellowship of difference and differents…
bringing unlikes and differents to the table
to share life with one another as a new kind of family."
– Scot McKnight

Every church gathering has empty seats.

Some are easy to see: the chair beside you, the open spot at the table, the space at the end of the row. Others are harder to notice: the person standing alone in the courtyard, the new family trying to figure out where to go, the longtime member who feels quietly disconnected, the student who is present but feels overlooked, the person carrying a story that hurts.

An empty seat is more than just unused chair. It can become a doorway of grace.

In Romans, Paul is writing to a church learning how to become family across real differences. Their divisions were not theoretical. Different backgrounds, different practices, different consciences, different stories. Some were tempted to judge. Others were tempted to pull away. Into that community, Paul gives a simple but costly invitation: welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.

This is not just friendliness. Friendliness says hello. Welcome makes room.

Welcome notices the edge of the circle and opens it. Welcome pays attention to who is missing, who is new, who is quiet, who is standing alone, who might not yet know they belong.

Welcome treats space, time, conversation, and attention as gifts to be shared. Remember: the goal of the gospel is not just forgiven individuals, but a reconciled people whose life together makes God's mercy visible to the world.

Practice: Welcome One Another

This week, practice welcome by paying attention to the empty seat.

When you walk into a church gathering, sit down with your house church, gather for a meal, or step into a ministry space, pause and look around.

Who could be included here?
Who might need to be noticed?
Who is standing alone?
Who is new, uncertain, or on the edge?
Who could I invite into this circle?

Then take one simple step.

Move over. Save a seat. Pull up a chair. Text someone they were missed. Introduce yourself. Ask someone's name. Invite someone into the conversation. Walk across the courtyard. Sit with someone new. Invite someone to lunch after church. Notice who is missing and send a text.

This does not need to be dramatic. The welcome of Jesus often becomes visible through small acts of attention: a name remembered, a chair opened, a question asked, a circle widened, a person seen.

Before you gather with the church this week, pray:
Jesus, thank You for making room for me.
Open my eyes to the edges of the room.
Show me who needs to be seen.
Make our church a family where Your mercy is visible.

Afterward, reflect: Who did I notice? Where did I make room? What might love invite me to do next?

This week, let the empty seat become an invitation to practice the gospel.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 4

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

SERMON TITLE

Corinth: Becoming Humble

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“Worship does not satisfy our hunger for God—it whets our appetite. Our need for God is not taken care of by engaging in worship—it deepens. It overflows the hour and permeates the week.”

- Eugene Peterson

“There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred.”

- Madeleine L’Engle

Week 4: Reflect and Discuss

1. Where is your life currently declaring something other than God’s goodness, for example, hurry, fear, control, resentment, self-protection, comfort?

2. Psalm 145 moves praise from a moment into a way of life. What would it look like for worship to continue after the gathering ends?

3. If worship is a whole-life response to God, what part of your ordinary week needs to become more worshipful?

4. How might worship reshape the way you respond to interruptions, difficult people, or ordinary responsibilities?

5. “What fills your life will eventually flow from your life.” What do you want to be more filled with, and what would help you make room for that?

6. What is one ordinary thing you already do that could become an act of worship if done with God and for God?

7. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

8. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: A Cross-Shaped Audit

The Corinthians were surrounded by a culture obsessed with status, success, influence, and image. And without realizing it, they began bringing those same values into the church.

Paul calls them back to the cross—a completely different way of measuring what matters. The cross reveals a God whose power is expressed through weakness, whose wisdom looks like foolishness, and whose glory is revealed through humble, self-giving love.

But the values of Corinth are still alive in us. We compare. We compete. We protect our image. We want to be noticed, valued, and admired.

This practice is an invitation to examine the values shaping your life and allow the wisdom of the cross to reshape them.

The Practice: A Cross-Shaped Values Audit
Set aside 10–15 minutes in a quiet place. Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal where you've been shaped more by the values of Corinth than by the way of Jesus.

Prayerfully reflect on these five areas:

1. Success
How do I measure a successful life? Am I more concerned with achievement, recognition, and results—or faithfulness to Jesus?

2. Influence
How do I use the influence, gifts, or opportunities God has given me? Am I using them to build myself up or to lift others up?

3. Image
Where am I tempted to manage how others perceive me? What weaknesses or struggles am I afraid to admit?

4. People
Who do I naturally admire, prioritize, or overlook? Am I giving greater value to people based on their position, accomplishments, or what they can offer me?

5. Church
Where might comparison, competition, or personal preferences be shaping how I relate to others in the church? Am I contributing to a community of humility and love—or bringing the values of Corinth into the family of Jesus?

Choose One Cross-Shaped Response
As you reflect, pay attention to one area where the Holy Spirit may be inviting you to change.

Don't try to fix everything. Choose one concrete act of obedience that reflects the way of the cross.

Maybe that means:

- Honoring someone who often goes unnoticed.
- Serving in a way that brings no recognition.
- Being honest about a weakness you've been hiding.
- Releasing your need to be seen, praised, or proven right.
- Praying for someone before criticizing them.
- Choosing ordinary faithfulness over impressive results.

Remember, the goal isn't to become more impressive at being humble. It's to become more like Jesus.

Jesus, give me the wisdom of the cross. Expose the places where I am shaped by status, image, and comparison. Teach me to value what You value. Make me humble, faithful, honest, and free to love.
Amen.

Next Steps
As we wrap up our series, what's your next step in the direction of Jesus?

Sent Saturday
Sent Saturday is a simple way for us to practice being a church sent into the city with the love and presence of Jesus. We'll gather briefly, then walk and pray through our neighborhood, asking God to open our eyes to where He is already at work, bless the people and places around us, and form us as everyday disciples who carry good news into ordinary spaces.

This is not about having all the right words or doing something complicated—it's about slowing down, listening to the Spirit, and joining Jesus in love for our city.

Saturday: June 27 | July 25 | August 8
9-11am | Meet in the courtyard

House Church
Community is a family of House Churches scattered across our valley. House Churches are simple communities designed to help us practice the way of Jesus: being with Jesus; becoming like Jesus; doing what Jesus did.

Find your House Church: www.findcommunity.com/housechurch

WinShape Day Camp || June 29-July 3
WinShape Camp is one of the most tangible ways we get to love our city together. For one week, our campus fills with kids laughing, learning, and experiencing the kind of joy and belonging that reflects the heart of Jesus.

There are two simple ways to be part of what God is doing. First, you can serve: showing up with presence, energy, and care to help create an unforgettable week for these kids. Second, you can give: helping remove financial barriers so more families in our community can say yes to camp.

More info: findcommunity.com/winshape

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