



# DEEPEN DISCIPLESHIP

A 6-MONTH, COMMUNITY-BASED DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE



**imb** / Equip





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International Mission Board  
3806 Monument Avenue  
Richmond, Virginia 23230

[www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org)

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# INTRODUCTION

It was a simple sentence when Jesus said it to the men who would become his first disciples—“Come, follow me.” But those three words were anything but small.

When he invited those men to become disciples, he was inviting them into something that would completely transform every aspect of their lives when they placed their faith in him. It was an invitation to die to themselves and surrender everything to him.

It was an invitation to a completely different life.

And it’s an invitation that hasn’t lost any steam as it’s been passed down through the generations. Right where you sit, those words are still ringing in your heart. They’re inviting you to come along on the journey of discipleship—to spend the rest of your life becoming more and more like Him and leading others to do the same.

That’s what this course is about—to dive into the depth of meaning and relationship those three words from Jesus have to offer. This may be your first time exploring what it means to be a disciple, or you may have been following Jesus for years. Either way, every bit of time we can spend strengthening the basics of our lives as disciples only makes us spiritually richer.

Our hope is that this course will help you:

- Develop or deepen habits of obedience in many areas of your Christian life—habits like daily Bible reading, prayer, Scripture memorization, evangelism, discipleship, and church involvement.
- Be better equipped to know, apply, and explain the main themes of each New Testament book.
- Develop or deepen understanding of how the gospel affects all of life and practice intentionally crossing cultural barriers to share it.
- Assess and address the health of current relationships—family, friends, local church relationships, coworkers, and neighbors.

As a disciple, you’re on a journey, just like all the disciples who have gone before you. Over the next six months as you walk through this guide, you’ll read through the entire New Testament and get a fresh look at Jesus’ plan for His followers.

The study is split into 25 weeks with 5 days’ worth of content per week. Each day, you’ll spend time reading and meditating on Scripture and using key questions for self-reflection. You’ll also get a chance to engage in some activities that will help you apply what you’re reading about.

This course was designed with the understanding that biblical discipleship happens in the context of a local church. For that reason, you’ll do this course with at least one other person from your church. This may be done one on one with a spiritually mature mentor, or you may walk through it with several people in a small group. Either way, it is expected that a lot of growth will happen in this setting as you have accountability and talk openly with others



about the way the material is challenging you.

In the appendix, you will find a tool that you may choose to use when you're finished with the course to help you evaluate if your life demonstrates some of the basic characteristics of a disciple of Jesus.

Ready to begin? We're praying that as you embark on this journey, God will bless you and lead you into a life of deeper discipleship with Him.





# SECTION ONE

WEEKS 1 - 6



# Introduction to Luke

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke's Gospel presents an "orderly account" of Jesus' birth, life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection. Fundamentally, it answers these questions: Who is Jesus? What has He done? How should a follower of Jesus live the life of faith?

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Luke, the beloved physician   |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Theophilus  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | A defense of the Christian faith, useful for both evangelism and discipleship |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Jesus brings universal salvation in fulfillment of OT promises to Israel      |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Luke 19:10  |

# Luke 1-3 WEEK 1 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord, work in my heart that I may be quick to submit to Your will and say, like Mary, ‘I am the Lord’s servant.’ I exalt and magnify You, Lord, for You have done great things, and You have come and redeemed your people! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 1-3

### Luke 1–2

By the time we get to Luke 1, God hadn’t spoken to Israel in 500 years. But now, a prophet named John the Baptist shows up and calls people to turn from their sins and be baptized. Then Jesus arrives on the scene. Jesus is miraculously conceived, born of Mary who is a virgin. Clearly, this is a unique time—the turning point of all history.

Luke tells us that God favors Jesus (2:40). He’s given many titles and descriptions in these opening chapters: “the Son of the Most High” (1:32), one raised up “in the house of David” (1:69), a Savior (2:11), “Your salvation . . . a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (2:30–32), the one who will “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (3:16), and the “beloved Son” in whom God is well-pleased (3:22).

### Luke 3

At Jesus’ baptism, all three persons of the Trinity are present: God the Father speaks, God the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, and God the Son is baptized. As a 12-year-old boy, Jesus had amazed the Jewish teachers of the Law in the Jerusalem temple (Luke 2:41–52). But at His baptism, God affirms him as a grown man.

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*Ordinary shepherds and lesser-known people like Simeon and Anna praise God when they see the Savior. How often do you simply praise God for Jesus? Do you ever feel too ordinary for Him to use you?*

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

As you read and interpret the Scriptures, remember these general rules:

- 1/ Approach the Bible in prayer.
- 2/ Remember that God is the only Hero.
- 3/ Read the Bible as a book that points to Jesus.
- 4/ Let Scripture interpret Scripture.
- 5/ Read the verses in context.
- 6/ Always ask, “What is the point of this text in its context?”
- 7/ Assume your interpretation is suspect if you’re the only person ever to take that position.

*Are you willing to do whatever it takes to get the good news of Jesus to your neighbors and all the peoples of the world?*

John the Baptist baptizes Jesus. John is a bit of an unusual character; he’s a wilderness preacher who proclaimed truth to growing crowds, tax collectors, soldiers, and kings. He understands the story isn’t about him; it’s about Jesus the Christ whose sandals he is not worthy to untie.

Luke 3 ends with Jesus’ ancestry. Luke begins with Jesus’ earthly father Joseph and traces His genealogy all the way to Adam. This genealogy is vital because it illustrates Jesus’ identity as the Promised King from the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12–13) and Abraham’s descendant who will bless all nations as the Savior of all peoples (Genesis 12:1–7).



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>10</sup>And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’*

/ Luke 2:10-11

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

As explained in the introduction, you’ll be going through this course with a mentor or small group from your church. You will meet with them at least every other week throughout the next 6 months. If you haven’t already, find the person or people you will do this course with and work with them to set up regular times to meet.

In addition, look for a 10-minute discipleship opportunity this week. Your goal isn’t necessarily to develop a formal discipling relationship with someone, but to share with others what you’re learning through this study and your church. In just a few minutes, you can encourage someone and help them to grow in the Lord.

# Luke 4-6

WEEK 1 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord God, thank You that Jesus, the Son of God, resisted every temptation of the devil, so that in Christ I also can resist temptation, especially as I memorize and meditate on your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 4-6

### Luke 4

Like Adam in the garden of Eden and Israel in the wilderness (Genesis 3, Deuteronomy 6–8), Jesus is tested by the devil. But unlike Adam and Israel who had previously given in to temptation, Jesus defeats Satan by standing on the Word of God. In no way would He compromise the Father’s plan by giving in to the devil’s lures.

Teaching in the synagogue, Jesus identifies Himself as the Savior-Messiah-Lord, the One who is full of the Holy Spirit and the fulfillment of God’s promise to come and preach the good news of deliverance. And yet, the Jews will reject Jesus even in his hometown of Nazareth. In fact, it’s the demons who recognize Jesus (4:34), while the religious leaders remain blind.

### Luke 5

Jesus then calls His first disciples. When He calls them, they leave everything to follow him (5:11). They follow the one who cleanses lepers, heals paralytics, and eats with sinners and outcasts. In short, Jesus associated with the “bad people” of His day, those traditionally deemed “unclean” by Jewish standards

### Luke 6

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, and He alone brings true rest.

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*How often do you lose the battle of temptation? What can you learn from Jesus about the best strategies to fight temptation?*

*Jesus expects His followers to love their enemies. Who in your life is the most difficult person to love? Pray for him or her now.*

After a night of prayer, Jesus calls His twelve apostles—a group of untrained, uneducated men (see Acts 4:13). His teaching on the plain includes four blessings and four warnings or “woes,” followed by an announcement of radical values of the coming kingdom of God, a way of living very different from the world’s that requires God’s help.

Even people in His hometown reject Him, especially when He reminds them that God met the needs of Gentiles in the Old Testament. God’s concern for the Gentiles—watch for this theme in Luke’s book—seemingly frustrates the religious leaders.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>31</sup>Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup>I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

/ Luke 5:31-32

#### REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Jesus defeated temptations by quoting the book of Deuteronomy. Followers of Jesus must know the Bible well enough to recognize when the enemy lures them with his lies. Do you know the Bible well enough to defeat temptation from the devil?

- I think so.
- I’m not sure.
- I doubt it.

This study will help you grow in this area.



# Luke 7-9

WEEK 1 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father God, You are the Lord of all creation, worthy of all worship and obedience. Today I ask You to give me ears to hear Your Word, as well as the grace and desire to listen and obey it. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 7-9

### Luke 7

Jesus heals many people of diseases and demons, and He raises a widow’s son from the dead. And yet, it seems that faith in Him doesn’t come easily; even John the Baptist needs assurance of God’s plan. We also see how the message of Jesus provokes surprising responses. For example, those whom we’d least expect it—including a Roman centurion and despised tax collectors—respond rightly to Jesus. Meanwhile, those whom we expect to be lovers of God—the Pharisees and experts in Jewish Law—reject God’s plan. A Pharisee host is astonished that Jesus would allow a sinful woman even to touch Him.

### Luke 8

Jesus’ followers include women who had been healed of sickness and evil spirits. Among these prominent women is Mary Magdalene, who had been freed from many demons.

Jesus’ parable of the soils illustrates four responses to Jesus. It illustrates how the devil, the difficulties of life, and the pleasures or riches of this world may affect one’s response to the Word. Jesus wants His followers to hear and listen well with a good and honest heart; He wants them to hold on to the Word, to endure, and to bear fruit, trusting that some will respond positively.

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*Like John the Baptist, do you ever struggle trusting God and His plan for your life? What assurances has God given you that He is with you?*

Moreover, Jesus shows His authority as Lord in various ways. He redefines true relationships and then expresses His rule over nature (the stormy sea), demons (Gerasene demoniac), sickness (woman with blood disease), and death (Jairus' daughter).

### Luke 9

Jesus demonstrates the coming of the kingdom of God by sending out the twelve apostles to heal and preach, by miraculously feeding 5,000 people, and then by rebuking an unclean spirit.

Peter recognizes Jesus as God's Messiah, and for the first time Jesus clarifies His mission as the suffering Son of Man. Not only does He twice predict His coming death, but He also discusses His "departure" with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. He is God's Son, "the Chosen One," the One to whom we must listen.

This chapter also reminds us of the importance of prayer. Jesus allows His disciples to be near Him when He prays (9:18), and He takes them to the mountain to pray (9:28–29). It's no wonder, then, that the disciples will later ask Jesus to teach them to pray.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Look for 10-minute segments of time to spend with the Lord or another believer. Read the Word. Pray. Memorize Scripture. Pray with someone. You'll need longer times with the Lord, but you can accomplish a lot if you use brief times intentionally.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>47</sup>Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.***

/ Luke 7:47

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Scripture memorization helps disciples defeat temptation. This week, work on memorizing Matthew 4:4: "He answered, 'It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Spend at least five minutes today working on memorization.

# Luke 10-12

WEEK 1 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, remind me again and again that You are a kind Father who knows how to give good gifts to His children. I pray today that You, the Lord of the harvest, will send out more workers. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*



## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 10-12

### Luke 10

Jesus sends out many to preach and bear witness to the kingdom of God. They are to trust God and pray for more laborers as they go—and as they do, God blesses them with His power.

Quite often, Jesus answers questions with questions, surprising answers, or even perplexing parables. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37) teaches that Jesus’ followers should offer mercy even to those of despised ethnic or religious groups. Rather than asking “Who is my neighbor?” as a way to rid ourselves of responsibility (10:29), we ought to be godly neighbors to everyone.

Martha and Mary both welcome Jesus as a guest, but Mary chooses to sit at Jesus’ feet rather than trying to serve Jesus by staying busy like Martha. Jesus is clear that Mary’s response—listening in an attitude of worship—is the right one.

### Luke 11

Jesus teaches His followers a model prayer, and then tells them a parable about prayerful persistence. This points to God’s fatherly kindness toward His children. It was the disciples who first asked Jesus to teach them to pray—a challenge to us to pray so

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*Are you so busy with activity and doing “stuff” that you have little time to sit at the feet of Jesus? How often do you just focus on Jesus?*

ferently that others want to learn from us how to pray.

Then Jesus yet again shows His power over demons as opposition to Him rises—both from the crowds (11:15) and from the religious leaders (11:37–53). Though Jesus attracts growing crowds, He knows this seeming popularity doesn't reflect belief. Instead, the crowd is proof of an evil generation that seeks “signs” from Him.

### Luke 12

Jesus warns His followers that following Him will be dangerous, but they should fear God rather than people. Disciples are to trust His care, always being willing to follow Him as Lord—even if it causes division in relationships.

If we truly follow Him in faith, then even in difficult hours we have nothing to fear, for God will send the Holy Spirit to teach us what to say (12:12).

The rest of this chapter deals a lot with life under God's rule, with the understanding that He may return any moment. Further, disciples are to live as followers of Jesus under God's reign.

- Greediness has no place in the kingdom of God.
- They are to seek first the kingdom of God rather than things that wear out and perish.
- Worry has no place in their heart if they trust Him.
- They must be ready for Jesus to return, knowing that He will come unexpectedly and bring judgment.

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*Do your actions and your words communicate your love for Christ—or do they implicitly deny Him? Do you live for Him or for possessions?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

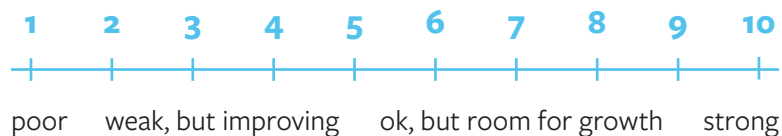
*<sup>2</sup>And he said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’*

/ Luke 10:2



## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Being a disciple of Jesus means learning to pray. Using this scale, rate the health of your prayer life. Be ready to discuss your evaluation with your group and/or mentor.



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# Luke 13-15

WEEK 1 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, help me respond to Jesus with humility, always embracing by faith the values of the kingdom. Give me grace to be willing to pay the price for following You, to live out your values in preparation for His return. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 13-15

### Luke 13

Some people suggest to Jesus that tragedies are proof of God’s judgment on people who are more sinful than others, but Jesus warns that all people are in danger of judgment unless they repent.

Jesus’ parable of the fig tree recalls Isaiah 5, where God condemns Israel for being a barren vineyard. God has done everything for His people, but they still reject Him and have no fruit. Proving their spiritual blindness, some of the religious leaders condemn Jesus when He heals a Jewish woman, a fellow descendant of Abraham, on the Sabbath Day. Opposition continues to grow, even as some rejoice at Jesus’ mighty works.

Jesus reminds them that the kingdom will start small—like a mustard seed or yeast in dough—but it always grows and spreads. At the same time, things are not always as they first appear in God’s kingdom. Some people acquainted with Jesus are actually workers of unrighteousness who will be shut out from the kingdom. Case in point: the Jews, His own people. Their large-scale rejection causes Jesus to lament over their fate (13:34–35).

### Luke 14

Conflict continues between Jesus and the religious authorities.

*If you were discipling another believer, how would you teach him or her to define “repentance”?*



They yet again condemn Him for healing on the Sabbath Day, and He warns them through a parable about a great banquet that they too would be shut out of His kingdom. And then He offers an even more surprising truth: many Gentiles, though not originally invited, would attend and enjoy the banquet. In other words, Gentiles would be saved!

Crowds continue to follow Jesus, but He reminds them that following Him would be costly. We must be ready to give up everything for Him, even “hating” our family in comparison to how much we love Jesus.

## Luke 15

This collection of parables centers around a theme: God seeks out and finds the lost. Therefore, followers of Jesus must do the same. Like the angels, we must celebrate when sinners return to God. We must be different than the jealous older brother—and thus different from the Pharisees and scribes—who is angry when his younger brother returns because he received no celebration for his service. The heart of a Christian rejoices when any lost sheep, lost coin, or lost son returns home.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***27**Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

/ Luke 14:27

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*Disciples love others without jealousy. Like the older brother in Luke 15, do you ever get frustrated when others get recognition? Are you willing to give up your desire for recognition?*

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Set aside prayer time today, and use Jesus’ model prayer:

- Honor His name as holy.
- Ask for His kingdom to come and His will to be done.
- Ask Him to meet your daily needs.
- Ask Him to forgive your sins even as you forgive others.
- Ask Him to deliver you from temptation today.

# Luke 16-18

WEEK 2 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me remember there is nothing I can do to earn forgiveness or merit salvation; it is all a gift of your mercy, purchased at the cost of my Savior’s life. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 16-18

### Luke 16

Luke includes more parables about the values of God’s kingdom, with particular attention to possessions and wealth. In the parable of the dishonest manager, Jesus encourages believers to act smartly to bless others and so receive a future reward. Followers of Jesus should be faithful in using God’s present gifts, including money, to provide for others. The rich man in Luke 16:19–31 is an example of the opposite: one who lives for wealth rather than God.

### Luke 17

Jesus follows up this parable by teaching His disciples that sin is a seriously destructive force, and yet we must not stop forgiving those who turn from their sin. Because sin against God is so evil and destructive, we must be careful never to cause new followers of Jesus to stumble and turn from God’s ways. On the other hand, even a little faith can accomplish great things if we are living under God’s rule.

By healing ten lepers on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus teaches that we ought to be grateful for His gracious care for us, just like the one leper from Samaria.

God’s kingdom has already come into existence via Jesus’ first coming. However, Jesus will come again, and His second coming

*Sometimes, believers let their guard down around other believers. Are you ever a stumbling block for somebody else?*





will be both sudden and unexpected

## Luke 18

The point of the parable of the unjust judge is that God listens to prayer. Like the widow, His followers should pray in faith with persistence because God will provide justice for His people in His time.

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector shows us that those who trust in their own righteousness will ultimately be humbled, but those who recognize they are only sinners will be exalted. Being a follower of Jesus requires humility, dependence, and trust, as illustrated by Jesus' welcoming children around Him (18:15–17).

Following Jesus means we must give up our idols, deny ourselves, and take up our cross every day. For some, like the ruler who came to Jesus, riches are a barrier to the kingdom of God.

The chapter concludes as Jesus explains for the third time that His death will happen as the Old Testament predicted. Luke tells us that among the Twelve, none of them understood because it remained hidden from them (18:34). And yet, in the very next story, a poor, blind, and socially outcast man sees Jesus for exactly who He is—the Son of David, and the Lord. So he responds rightly and asks for mercy. And Jesus grants his sight as all the people gave praise to God.

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*Are you ever like the Pharisee, comparing yourself to others to show your righteousness?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>29</sup>And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, <sup>30</sup>who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.'*

/ Luke 18:29-30

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### GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Be sure to block out time to meet with your small group and/or mentor this week.
- Review your memory verse from last week (Matthew 4:4), and begin learning this week’s verse: *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).”*
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Luke 19-21

WEEK 2 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord, change my heart and wean me from desires that aren’t glorifying to you. Help me be a faithful steward, holding loosely to all the gifts you’ve entrusted to me and using them to advance your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 19-21

### Luke 19

Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem where He will suffer and die. When Zacchaeus, a rich man, repents and receives salvation, Jesus says it’s as though a camel has gone through the eye of a needle. But this is what Jesus came to do—to “seek and save the lost” (19:10).

The underlying point of the parable of the minas (about three months’ wages) is that in the kingdom of God, the more we steward well what God has given us, the more opportunities He will give us to serve Him. Those who do not wisely use their talents and resources for His glory will suffer loss.

Luke 19:28 marks a turning point in Luke’s Gospel. From this moment forward, Jesus, the Messiah-King-Savior, is resolved to go to Jerusalem just as the prophets predicted He would—as the anointed Ruler-King (Zech. 9:9). Some welcome Him gladly with praise, but others—namely, the Pharisees—reject Him. Indeed, Jesus is saddened that Jerusalem and many of its people do not recognize Him as the long-awaited Savior.

### Luke 20

This whole chapter is devoted to the religious leaders’ various

attempts to find fault in Jesus, so that they could kill Him.

First we see the religious leaders seek to entrap Him by quizzing Him in the temple. He answers them indirectly, responding to questions with questions of His own. For example, they ask about the authority He has to do and say what He does, but He responds with a question about John the Baptist and baptism. Luke then records Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants, which is designed to show that God was going to take the kingdom from Israel for rejecting God's prophets in the past and His Son in the present.

More fruitless arguments begin—about the legitimacy of paying taxes, about marriage in the after life—but the chapter ends with Jesus giving the religious leaders a theological quiz about Psalm 110, which speaks of the coming Messiah-Savior as David's Son and Lord, that is, as God. This Messiah will be so great that even King David said of Him, "My Lord!" The point of these verses is both to celebrate Jesus as the fulfillment of Psalm 110 and to out the religious leaders as hypocritical guides who lead people toward condemnation.

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*As a follower of Jesus, do you give sacrificially to His work? Or, do you give that which doesn't cost you much?*

### Luke 21

Jesus sees things differently than the world. Sacrificial, devoted giving of even small amounts is worth more in His kingdom than a large amount that requires little to no sacrifice.

By predicting the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Jesus invites questions about the future and the end of history. As the end approaches, it's clear that Jesus' followers will face much suffering and trials as God brings judgment on the world. But God will grant them endurance, and they will be rescued from coming judgment.

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

If giving is difficult for you, set a goal—and increase your giving by one percent regularly until you reach your goal.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>3</sup>And he said, 'Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. <sup>4</sup>For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'*

/ Luke 21:3-4



## **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Review your spending and giving patterns, and determine if you give sacrificially to your church like the widow who gave her mite. If you don't, commit to increasing your giving.

- Do you live within your means, or do you tend to spend more than you have?
- Do you struggle with paying off debt?
- What is your current monthly giving to your local church?
- What would your monthly giving be if you were giving sacrificially?
- What is your renewed commitment in giving to your local church?

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# Luke 22-24

WEEK 2 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, open my eyes again that I might see Jesus in all of the Bible. Give me grace to understand the cross and resurrection in a fresh way that is life-changing and will propel me to announce the good news to all peoples. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Luke 22-24

### Luke 22

This chapter shows us that fear of the people leads the religious leaders to seek to kill Jesus during Passover. They enlist His friend Judas to betray Him, and Satan leads the apostle to carry out that task.

Jesus celebrates Passover with His twelve apostles and explains—with a cup, with bread, and with words—how His death will establish a new covenant between God and people.

Meanwhile, the disciples still don’t grasp Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God; they’re busy arguing over who’s the greatest. Jesus corrects them and explains that leadership in God’s kingdom isn’t about dominating others.

Peter responds by saying he will die for Jesus. And yet, mere moments later (22:45), three of the disciples—Peter among them—fall asleep after Jesus tells them to watch and pray. Then Judas betrays Jesus; the religious authorities arrest Him, and Peter eventually denies Him.

As all this is happening, Jesus is in great anguish, even as He commits Himself to doing God’s will by facing death and experiencing God’s judgment against sinners. Jesus’ anguish

*Jesus gave us the Lord’s Supper so that we will remember what He has done for us until He comes again. When you observe the Supper, do you examine your heart and turn from your sin?*



intensifies as His people mock Him, beat Him, and blaspheme against Him. The religious leaders grill Jesus about His identity, but He refuses to play by their rules.

**Luke 23**

Jesus is brought before both Pilate and Herod but they find no reason for Jesus to be crucified. Nonetheless, the crowd demands His death, even at the cost of a criminal’s release.

In verse 25, Luke tells us that Pilate released Jesus over to the will of the crowd. That’s true, but it’s also true that everything has gone precisely according to the Father’s plan (Acts 4:27-28).

As they led Jesus away to crucify Him, Jesus condemns Jerusalem for failing to recognize the Messiah while He was in their midst. On the cross, He talks with His heavenly Father, pleading for the same people who are calling for His crucifixion.

As Jesus dies and commits Himself to His Father, the temple curtain is torn in two, symbolizing that access to God is now possible through Christ, the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin. Remember, all of this is happening on the Passover.

**Luke 24**

Luke highlights women as the first ones to discover Jesus’ empty tomb. They report the news to the eleven disciples. They don’t believe the women—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others—but Peter runs to the tomb and confirms that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus then appears to two men we’ve not met in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus walks with them and explains how Moses and the prophets had all spoken of Him. Then He shares a meal with them.

The book ends with Jesus reuniting with His disciples. He tells them to announce the good news to all nations, even as they wait for the Holy Spirit to empower them. As Jesus is lifted through the clouds to heaven, the disciples return to the temple and worship Him as Lord.

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DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>19</sup>And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’<sup>20</sup>And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’*

/ Luke 22:19-20

**GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY**

Disciples live—and die—to share the gospel of Christ. Take a few minutes now to write some bullet points about what Jesus means to you. Then tell somebody this week about Jesus. Trust the Holy Spirit to empower you. Be ready to talk with your group and/or your mentor about this encounter.



# Introduction to Acts



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Luke, the beloved physician   |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Theophilus  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | A defense of the Christian faith showing the expansion of the early church from a Jewish sect to a worldwide movement |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Salvation history: the birth and mission of the early church  |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Acts 1:8  |

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## THE BOOK OF ACTS

In Luke's Gospel, Luke explains to Theophilus and others how God has worked out His plan through Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. In Acts—the second book that Luke wrote—we pick up the story of Jesus' followers as they gather into churches that reflect the character of God through their love for each other and their proclamation of the gospel to all people.

# Acts 1-4 WEEK 2 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, in order to live and work in the power of the Holy Spirit, we desperately need Jesus. Fill us with your Spirit who provides fellowship with You and gives us power to live as Jesus’ followers. In Jesus’ name, amen”*

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*How much do you do daily without seeking the Lord’s power? You can use an evaluation of your prayer life to help determine your answer.*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 1-4

### Acts 1

Luke picks up his next book where his first one ended: Jesus is teaching His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension to heaven. Though we read briefly about Jesus’ ascension in Luke 24, here Luke slows down and gives us more details about what Jesus did in those 40 days.

The apostles then prayerfully replaced Judas—who had killed himself—with Matthias, bringing the number of apostles back to the original twelve.

### Acts 2

It’s hard to exaggerate the significance of Acts 2, when the Spirit of God falls on the early believers and fills them with the power that Jesus had promised in Luke 24.

Much of Peter’s Pentecost message (2:14–36) is directly from the Old Testament. This fits perfectly with what Jesus said in Luke 24 when He explained how the Old Testament points to Him. Peter calls the people to repentance and urges them to follow Christ. God works mightily through the power of the Spirit in the preaching of His Word, and about 3000 people are saved and added to the church!



The latter part of Acts 2 (vv. 41–47) describes early church life. What did these early Christians devote themselves to? Teaching, fellowship, prayer, worship, service, and evangelism. At the center of all this work is the Word of God.

### **Acts 3–4**

After healing a lame man at the temple, Peter calls the gathering crowds to repentance. Only then would their sins be “wiped out” (3:19).

For the first time in Acts, the early believers face strong opposition. The religious leaders put Peter and John into custody for proclaiming resurrection from the dead. Then they ask them by what power they’d healed the lame man.

They don’t like his response (4:8–12), so the religious leaders forbid the disciples to preach or teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John say they will continue to teach anyway. It’s as if they cannot help but speak about Him (4:20). When the believers pray for even more boldness, the very place where they are meeting shakes under the power of God.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.***

/ Acts 1:8

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

To pray with more intentionality, determine a primary focus for each day’s prayer (e.g., family, missionaries, neighbors, church leaders, etc.). You might even plan each week ahead of time.

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***If someone required you to stop talking about Jesus, what would you do? Do you talk so little about Jesus that nothing would change? Would fear stop you? Would you speak about Him anyway?***



# Acts 5-8

WEEK 2 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, give us the boldness, courage, and wisdom of Stephen. Give us the faithfulness of Philip to make Jesus’ name known. May we always be peacemakers in the church. Remind us that You are in control and You are good! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 5-8

### Acts 5

The early church was characterized by generous and sacrificial giving in order to meet real needs (2:42–47). Ananias and Sapphira, however, deceive the church, lie to the Holy Spirit, and suffer God’s judgment as He stresses His expectation for the church to be pure. Nonetheless, Luke tells us, “Believers were added to the Lord” (Acts 5:14).

We also see that persecution seems to have become a normal part of church life. But rather than keep quiet amid pressure from authorities, they assert, “We must obey God rather than men” (5:29). Nothing can keep them silent. Gamaliel is correct: because this work is of God, no opposition can stop it.

### Acts 6-7

In Acts 6, internal conflict threatens to turn the church’s focus inward. As their numbers increased, some worried that Greek widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. This could have fractured the early church’s unity, but the apostles wisely respond by expanding the ministry team to include servants who restore unity by specifically caring for both groups of widows (6:1). This enables the apostles to focus on their tasks: the ministry of the Word and prayer.

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*Sometimes, believers must confront others about their sin. How comfortable are you in taking this step?*

*How does Stephen's prayer for his murderers reflect the heart of Jesus? How do you think you would respond if you faced persecution?*

Meanwhile, Stephen, one of the seven added to the ministry team, boldly evangelizes in Jerusalem. He's then seized and brought before the authorities who accuse him of speaking against the temple and the Law (6:12–13).

Stephen preaches a spectacular sermon—a tour through the Old Testament that explains their own sinful rejection of Jesus. These words “enrage” his hearers, and the mob stones him to death. Among the approving witnesses of Stephen's murder is a man named Saul.

While being stoned to death, Stephen sees “the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (7:56). His prayer is not only for Jesus to receive him, but also for Him not to charge his murderers with their sin!

### Acts 8

In Acts 8, opposition and persecution increase, often led by Saul. Luke also introduces us to men like Simon the magician who professes belief and is baptized. But in short order, we see that in reality he is envious and bitter, coveting the spiritual gifts of others.

Luke is clear that God uses persecution to drive believers from Jerusalem to share the gospel (8:4). Philip goes so far to take the story of Christ to a city in Samaria—to a region Jewish people often looked down upon—and to an Ethiopian official whom God had prepared to believe the good news. The gospel that the disciples are to proclaim to all nations is on the move, and Acts 1:8 is coming true.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>29</sup>But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’***

/ Acts 5:29



## **GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY**

Get together with your group and/or mentor, and use the time to:

- discuss what the Lord has taught you this week
- discuss your answers to the reflection questions this week
- discuss any struggles you've faced as a follower of Jesus this week
- share about any 10-minute discipling opportunities you had this week
- set personal and study goals for next week
- pray together

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# Acts 9-11

WEEK 3 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“God, we praise You for transforming persecutors into preachers. We praise You for preparing both those who share the gospel and those who hear the gospel. Help me to trust You more as I see you exalted in these chapters today. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 9-11

### Acts 9

Jesus Christ miraculously appears to Saul and transforms him from persecutor to preacher. At the same time, Ananias displays bold obedience in approaching this chief persecutor of the church. Jesus appoints Saul as “my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites” (9:15).

The rest of the chapter shows the great deeds the Lord is accomplishing through Peter, resulting in many people believing in the Lord.

### Acts 10

This chapter begins with two men—Peter the apostle and Cornelius the centurion—and two visions. The visions lead to Peter explaining the gospel to Cornelius and his household. The Lord used Cornelius’ dream as a means to a specific end—so that he would hear the gospel. Now, Cornelius is not a Jew; he’s a Gentile. Luke wants his readers to know that the gospel is God’s good news for all people!

Then something amazing happens: Gentiles hear the gospel, the Spirit fills them, they speak in tongues as a sign, and are baptized—just like what happened to the Jews in Acts 2! Keep in mind how revolutionary this would have been (Acts 15 will remind us).

*God doesn’t always grab our attention as dramatically as He did for Saul, but His reaching down to us is no less miraculous. How did God get your attention?*





## Acts 11

When the Jewish Christians hear of the Gentiles' conversion, they begin to rebuke Peter. But Peter explains his vision of the animals and the events that happened at Cornelius' house. The Jewish Christians believe and affirmingly say, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (11:18).

As persecution scatters believers, some Jewish believers end up in Antioch. Crossing a cultural barrier, these ordinary followers proclaim the Lord Jesus to that Greek city—and a large number grow strong in faith. In fact, Paul and Barnabas teach these believers for one year. Some in the city apparently don't like that, as they derogatorily call the believers "Christians" for the first time.

Again, though, Luke's point is clear: as the gospel is proclaimed, God's church is strengthened.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>42</sup>And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*

/ Acts 10:42-43

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Plan to fast for one meal this week, and instead give the cost of that meal to someone in need. Hold yourself accountable to your group and/or mentor.
- Use this week to review your two memory verses: Matthew 4:4 and Luke 19:10.
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Loving people you don't want to love often means simply doing acts of love for them. Serve somebody, and your heart may change toward them.

*Is it hard for you to develop friendships with people of a different ethnicity? Of a different socio-economic level? From a different country? Followers of another faith?*

# Acts 12-15

WEEK 3 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“God, thank You that You have purposes for each of our lives. Please guide us and give us grace to obey You. Help us walk in step with Your Spirit and to have boldness in sharing Your truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 12-15

### Acts 12

There are no guarantees God will rescue His followers from danger. James and Peter are both arrested in Acts 12. James is beheaded, but Peter is miraculously rescued by an angel. The believers struggle to believe that Peter is free, but God had indeed worked another miracle!

This chapter begins with Herod persecuting the church, and it ends with his gruesome death under God’s judgment. God is zealous for His glory because He alone is worthy of man’s praise (12:22–23).

### Acts 13

Acts 13–15 records Paul’s first missionary journey. These stories highlight the power of prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit, starting when the church at Antioch sends out Barnabas and Paul.

In Paphos, Paul’s team faces opposition from Elymas, but that doesn’t stop the work of the gospel in saving the proconsul, a man named Sergius Paulus. In Antioch, Paul summarizes the gospel message as a fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture (13:16–41). Some Gentiles believe, but some Jews drive Paul’s team from their district. Despite this persecution, Paul and Barnabas clearly teach that salvation is being extended to the Gentiles—and with it, both

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*How do you think you would have responded had you heard Peter’s voice at the door? Are you ever surprised when God answers your prayer?*

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*If you had three minutes to summarize the story of the Bible for a non-believer, could you do so?*



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DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>46b</sup>Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup>For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ <sup>48</sup>And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.*

/ Acts 13:46b-48

**REFLECT & CHANGE:  
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

The book of Acts tells the story of how God used His people to reach the nations for His glory. As you look around, you might see that God is bringing the nations to you, so that you might reach them. Evaluate your own knowledge of your community:

- How many nationalities are represented in your community?
- How many are represented in your church?
- How many are represented in your children’s classrooms?
- How many are represented on your street?

# Acts 16-18

WEEK 3 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, as I read today, help me remember You are in control and that the Holy Spirit may lead your people in unexpected ways. God, give me patience, persistence, and faith in the face of closed doors. Help me multiply disciples for your glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 16-18

### Acts 16

Paul begins his second journey by returning to the churches he started on his first trip. He then attempts to go into the province of Asia (probably Ephesus) and Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit forbids him because He wanted them to go to Macedonia (16:6–10). Clearly, closed doors and waiting on God’s guidance were normal for believers, even in the first century.

In Philippi, Paul works with a diverse group of people. Lydia, a businesswoman, receives the gospel and is baptized with her household. The girl from whom a spirit is cast out is a slave. The jailer who listens to Paul and Silas singing at midnight is a working-man. The gospel reaches all types of people.

### Acts 17

Paul does not plan to leave as quickly as he does, but he’s forced out of the city by an angry mob. While the exact length of Paul’s stay isn’t clear, we know a church is planted (1 Thessalonians 1:7).

After a brief stay in Berea where the people hear him gladly and test his teachings thoroughly, Paul waits for his teammates in Athens (17:15–16) and speaks of Jesus in the synagogue and the

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*When God seems to close a door for you, how likely are you to try to push it open? Reflect on a time when, looking back, you were thankful for a time God hindered your desires.*

marketplace. In his presentation to a group of Gentiles, Paul wants his hearers to know that the true God created everything and is greater than any of the false Greek gods who resided in their temples. The proper response to the true God is to repent (Acts 17:30).

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

In sharing the gospel, be ready to include the creation story for non-believers who know nothing about God.

### Acts 18

Luke describes Paul's missionary tent-making (working a job while taking the gospel to new places). Paul invests in Aquila and Priscilla, a couple who would eventually host house churches in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19) and Rome (Romans 16:5). They would also invest themselves in Apollos when he needed more guidance and clarification in his faith journey (18:24-28).

Many in Corinth believe after hearing Paul's message, despite ongoing opposition from the Jews. In fact, God promises Paul that He would protect the apostle from harm while he was in Corinth (18:9-10). After his time in Corinth, Paul returns to his sending church in Antioch before beginning his third missionary journey.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>30</sup>The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.*

/ Acts 17:30-31a

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Work with someone to review your memory verses: Matthew 4:4 and Luke 19:10. Don't forget, too, that you are planning to fast one meal this week.

# Acts 19-23

WEEK 3 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, show me today how important it is to include others as I seek to follow Jesus. Help me notice the people You have placed around me who will make be a bolder witness for You. God, we praise You for your wisdom and power! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 19-23

### Acts 19

In Ephesus, Paul shares the gospel with a group of John’s disciples who believe and receive the Spirit. After three months of sharing in the synagogue, he withdraws to a school and teaches daily for two more years (19:10).

The gospel then spreads from Ephesus. Epaphras probably heard the gospel and was trained in Ephesus. He was from Colossae (Colossians 4:12), and he took the gospel back home (Colossians 1:7) and to Laodicea. In Ephesus, Paul and his co-workers trained others who in turn planted churches and trained others.

At the beginning of his third journey (18:23), Paul revisits churches from his first journey. He then returns to churches planted during the second journey (20:1–6). But even in this, Paul never works alone; he mentors or disciples men from all three journeys as they travel and work with him (20:4).

### Acts 20

After a near riot in Ephesus (19:21–41), Paul travels throughout the regions of Macedonia and Achaia, and he raises from the dead a young man who falls asleep while Paul is preaching. The bulk of the

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*Paul’s experience with Timothy (Acts 16:1–3) suggests that he was continually looking for young men to invest in. Are you constantly praying and watching for people to disciple?*

chapter focuses on Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders:

- He had been faithful in his proclaiming the whole counsel of God, despite opposition.
- They must be ever alert for false teaching, for “wolves” would come in to try to mislead the “sheep” (20:29–30).
- He is going to Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit told him to expect persecution. They will never see him again.

### Acts 21–23

These chapters cover Paul’s journey to Jerusalem and his witness in that city. During his travel, believers repeatedly warn Paul about impending danger (21:4, 11–12; see 20:22–23). And sure enough, soon after his arrival, he’s arrested in the temple. This begins an imprisonment that continues throughout the remainder of Acts and is the means by which he eventually goes to Rome.

Just before he’s taken to the barracks, Paul offers a defense for his faith as he tells how Christ met him on the way to Damascus. The Jewish crowd, however, reacts angrily when Paul speaks of his commitment to reach the Gentiles (22:22–24). God sovereignly protects Paul from a mob as he leaves Jerusalem, for God intended for Paul to testify about him in Rome.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>28</sup>Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.***

/ Acts 20:28





# Acts 24-28

WEEK 3 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“God, give me discernment to recognize opportunities this week to turn conversations toward spiritual topics, as well as boldness to clearly share the gospel and call for response. I praise You for being the God who will never leave or forsake His people. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Acts 24-28

### Acts 24

Jesus promised that His disciples would “be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake” (Luke 21:12). So it’s not surprising that Paul is brought before Felix the governor and accused of stirring up riots among the Jews as the “ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (24:5). Felix apparently finds no offense in Paul but nevertheless imprisons him for two years in Caesarea.

### Acts 25-26

After two years, Paul is still in prison (24:27), but a new governor Festus is now in power. Paul defends himself before Festus. Eventually, before he gets to Rome, Paul shares his testimony before King Agrippa.

Paul’s testimony clearly includes a description of his life before meeting Christ (26:1-11), how he met Christ (26:12-18), and how meeting Christ changed his life (26:19-23). Acts 26 ends with a Roman authority—for the third time—declaring Paul innocent of the charges against him (26:31 [Agrippa]; 25:25 [Festus]; 23:29 [Lysias]).

### Acts 27-28

Acts 27 and the beginning of Acts 28 relate the details of Paul’s

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*How is your life different after you met Jesus?*



voyage to Rome, a trip that includes a shipwreck and time on Malta. Despite the difficulties, God is with Paul all along the way.

The book of Acts ends with Paul safely in Rome—just like the Holy Spirit indicated would happen (Acts 19:21). At this point, we should not be surprised at God’s strategy for advancing the gospel: putting His best preacher in prison. Yet even in this difficult circumstance, Paul “welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (28:30–31).

And so, the story pauses with Acts 28—but it doesn’t end. You and your church are here today because someone followed the Spirit’s leadership to make disciples and plant churches among all the nations.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>22b</sup>I (Paul) stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: <sup>23</sup>that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.***

/ Acts 26:22b-23

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Learn to tell your story based on the outline Paul followed: my life before Christ, how I came to know Christ, and how Christ has changed my life.



# Introduction to Romans



|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Author:</b>      | Paul   |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Several congregations in Rome<br><i>(written to)</i>   |
| <b>Occasion:</b>    | Preparation for Paul's journey through Rome to Spain   |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To promote Jewish-Gentile unity in the church by setting forth Paul's gospel   |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | The gospel proclaims that God acquits both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus on the basis of Jesus' sacrificial death |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | Romans 1:16–17; 3:21–26  |

## THE BOOK OF ROMANS

The book of Acts ends with Paul in a Roman prison, sharing the good news to his guards and other officials. The book of Romans was probably written from Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey, just a few years before he ended up under house arrest in Rome. Paul had never been to Rome when he wrote this letter, which means he'd never met most of these Christians.

# Romans 1-2

WEEK 4 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, You are the God who made me, and You deserve my worship and obedience. Too often, I make You out to be less than You are, and I put my trust in created things rather than You. Forgive me for my idolatry. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Romans 1-2

### Romans 1:1-17

Paul is writing to Christians in Rome. The most immediate occasion for the letter is that Paul wants to come to Rome to minister among the believers, and he hopes for their support in his eventual ministry to other unreached places (15:23–24). However, before they can partner in this work, Paul wants to make sure they’re on the same page regarding the gospel. This is what he spends the rest of the letter unpacking.

### Romans 1:18-32

Paul begins his explanation of the gospel by highlighting humanity’s fundamental problem: the coming wrath of God against sinful man. Paul offers two reasons why God’s wrath on sinful people is just. First, sinful people suppress the truth of God (1:18–20). We know from creation that He exists, but we reject Him. Second, sinful people are idolatrous (1:21–23). When we choose not to worship the Creator, we inevitably worship created things like false gods, people, ideas, stuff, and feelings.

Paul highlights sexual immorality in 1:26–27. This kind of sin still marks our world. That said, God’s judgment isn’t limited to sexual sin. In fact, it reaches into every area of life because sin reaches into every area of our life—from our relationships, to our words,

*Do you have idols? Ask yourself these questions before you answer.*

- “What’s more important to me than following God?”
- “What do I do even though I know God is displeased with my actions?”
- “What would I most struggle giving up if God required it?”



to our hearts, to our actions.

## Romans 2

Paul now turns from the unbelieving Gentile world to the Jewish world. Rather than obeying all of the Law, the Jewish people have relied on outward markers of religion like circumcision, observing feasts, and abstaining from foods. And yet, Paul is clear that such markers cannot bring salvation to anyone, not even Israel (2:25–29). True salvation comes through the work of the Holy Spirit who changes our heart—and whose inward work is evident in our outward obedience.

In short, the first two chapters of Romans make two simple, yet connected points: Gentiles have rejected the true God, and Israel has always failed to keep God’s Law. This bad news has resulted in God’s righteous wrath against Gentiles and Jews alike, for God has no favorites (2:11).



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’*

/ Romans 1:16-17

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Memorize this week’s verse: “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Spend at least five minutes reviewing the verse today.
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

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# Romans 3-5

WEEK 4 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, You are the great and loving God. Thank You for Your great love, which has been poured out through Jesus Christ. Help me grasp this love even more through Your Word. Use me to speak of this love to others. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Romans 3-5

### Romans 3:1–20

Paul sums up Romans 1–2 with a simple, yet uncomfortable idea: all humanity is under the wrath of God. Using multiple verses from the Old Testament, he shows that no human being is righteous on his own. At our core, we do not fear God—and the whole world is guilty under God’s judgment according to His law.

### Romans 3:21–31

But . . . the good news of the gospel is that now God has provided a different righteousness—one that comes as a gift “through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (3:22). At the cross, Jesus made atonement for our sins and in the process upheld the justice of God in justifying those who believe.

### Romans 4

Here, Paul is at pains to defend the point that justification must come not from works but from faith alone. Quoting the Old Testament, Paul shows that neither Abraham nor David could boast of his own works. Neither “earned” his salvation, for no one does.

In 4:9–17, Paul makes the case that faith is possible not only for Jewish people, but also for the world. Even Abraham himself was not yet circumcised when he was credited with righteousness, so

*Sometimes we forget our own guilt toward God because we compare ourselves to others and their sin. Do you recognize the depth of your sin?*





faith cannot be limited to the Jewish people. According to 4:18–25, this faith rested particularly on God’s promises. It’s the same faith that is the means by which we accept and receive God’s promises, especially the gospel promises given in His Word.

## **Romans 5**

Having laid out this argument for justification by faith, Paul now unpacks the results of this salvation. We have “obtained access . . . into this grace in which we stand,” and “we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (5:2). Even in times of suffering, God is producing hope in us, and we know this hope is real because He has given us His Spirit.

Paul exhorts these Christians to rejoice because they’ve been reconciled to God in Christ. How did the work of Christ accomplish this? To answer this question, Paul makes an analogy between Adam and Jesus. Just as Adam brought death into this world through his sinful disobedience, so Christ by His perfect obedience brings life to all who are united to Him by faith. The law reminds us that sin and death reign, but grace abounds even more than sin. The gift of Christ’s dying for the ungodly makes all the difference.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>3</sup>Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

/ Romans 5:3-5



# Romans 6-8

WEEK 4 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, You have accomplished so much more for us in Christ than simply providing a ticket to heaven. Help us see how our salvation transforms us as disciples of Jesus. As we grasp the gospel, may Your Holy Spirit free us to live holy lives and grant us boldness as we share the gospel. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Romans 6-8

### Romans 6

After spending Romans 3–5 explaining salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, Paul now deals with an important objection: “If forgiveness and righteousness come entirely by grace, and if our law-keeping has nothing to do with our justification, then shouldn’t we keep on sinning, since that means we get more grace?” Different Bible versions translate Paul’s response differently, but all of them answer negatively: “By no means!” (ESV); “Absolutely not!” (CSB); “May it never be!” (NASB).

Just as Christ has died to sin and been raised to new life, so we in Christ are now to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. As a result, what God has already accomplished in Christ changes us and causes us to live new lives unto God. We’ve been freed from our slavery to sin and are instead slaves of God, serving Him fully and receiving His gift of eternal life.

### Romans 7

Because we have been united to Christ in His death, we have also been set free from the law. We now don’t live according to the law, but by the Spirit. Does this mean the Law is evil? No, Paul is clear that the law itself is good because it does the good work

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

If you deal with a recurring sin in your life, confess to someone and seek prayer support. Don’t fight the battle alone.

*When was the last time you prayed an honest prayer like this one: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”? (Rom. 7:24–25)*

of revealing what sin is. The problem is not with the Law; the problem is the sin that dwells in us, continually seeking to make us a prisoner. Even for those who want to do right, evil still lurks.

### **Romans 8**

And so we come to this wonderful declaration: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1). What good news! God has set us free from our bondage to sin and placed us under a new “law” where we live by the Spirit, not the flesh. In fact, God’s Spirit, whom Paul mentions multiple times in this chapter, lives in us!

Because of this, we remain confident that in spite of suffering, accusations, and death, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. We are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (8:37).



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

/ Romans 8:1-4



# Romans 9-11

WEEK 4 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, You are the sovereign God. We pray You will cause us to find our confidence in Your righteous rule over this world, remembering that nothing happens apart from Your sovereign will. May that confidence give us boldness to give our lives for the advance of Your gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Romans 9-11

### Romans 9

Paul now looks backward into biblical history and addresses apparent confusion and anticipated objections related to God’s plan for Israel. If salvation is through Christ alone, then what was the point of the nation of Israel, the temple, the covenants, and all the rest? Has God somehow failed in His promises to Israel?

To answer these difficult questions, Paul points to God’s sovereignty in salvation. Even for the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, family relationship alone was not sufficient for God’s grace; rather, salvation depends on God’s merciful choice in election. God is always just, and no one has the right to talk back to Him about His choices.

### Romans 10

And yet, God’s sovereignty over the hardening of Israel does not mean Paul no longer cares about them. In fact, he so deeply grieves the spiritual condition of the Israelites that were it possible, he would even suffer God’s judgment so the Jews would be saved (Romans 9:1-3). He knows the free gift of righteousness is available to them if they would only believe.

*How deeply do you grieve the spiritual condition of people who don’t have a personal relationship with Jesus? If it were possible, would you, too, offer to be accursed so others might be saved?*

Paul knows preaching is necessary because apart from the proclamation of the gospel, people will not call upon the Lord. But they can be saved if they confess Jesus as Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead; the offer of salvation is to all. Nevertheless, Paul is grieved as he sees what the prophet Isaiah had seen: Israel's rejection of the Word of God.

### **Romans 11**

But even now, despite their rejection, God has not rejected ethnic Israel. There remains a remnant within ethnic Israel who are faithful. In part, Paul says his ministry to the Gentiles is motivated by his desire that Jews will see the salvation of the Gentiles and repent.

In the meantime, Gentiles ought to be humbled by the hardening of the Jews, because this is all part of God's plan in bringing about the salvation of His people. He has the power to "graft" them in again if He wishes.

In the end, both Jews and Gentiles will be saved in a way that highlights God's mercy. Paul concludes this portion of the letter by praising God for His unsearchable judgments, ascribing to Him all glory forever.



### **DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION**

*<sup>13</sup>For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' <sup>14</sup>How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup>And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'*

/ Romans 10:13-15





# Romans 12-16

WEEK 4 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, having believed the gospel, I pray I would not live after the patterns and values of this world. By your Spirit, transform my mind so I no longer think as I once did; give me the strength to live for You and be about Your mission in the world. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Romans 12-16

### Romans 12

From now until the end of the book, Paul explains how the power of the gospel should transform followers of Jesus. This section begins with a very important “therefore”: therefore, in light of the mercy we’ve received, we live entirely for God. This appropriate response of worship can happen only as the Spirit who dwells in us transforms us.

Paul explains how these truths should transform how Christians love one another in the church. Because the church is indeed the body of Christ, it should function according to the various gifts God has given to each of us. However, even more important than our various gifts is our mutual task to love one another.

### Romans 13

The transforming work of the Spirit also affects how we live in the world. First, Christians should live in recognition and submission to the authorities God has instituted in the world—insofar as that submission does not contradict God’s commands. Second, Christians should love their neighbors as themselves. Finally, Christians ought to live holy and distinct lives because the day of the Lord is drawing near.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Ask leaders of your community (e.g., a school principal) how you might help them. Serving with them will help you to pray for them.

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*Is there a situation in your life where you need to sacrifice your own preferences for somebody else?*

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*Who is at the top of your list of people who have most influenced your spiritual life?*

### **Romans 14:1–15:6**

Paul now turns to a particular challenge the Roman church is facing: Jewish and Gentile Christians learning to love one another. Paul's principle is clear: believers should accept one another, whether a fellow Christian has a weak or strong faith. At the same time, Christians must be careful to place no stumbling block in front of their brothers or sisters. Instead, every Christian should be willing to sacrifice his or her preferences for the sake of others.

### **Romans 15:7–16:27**

The promise to Abraham—that through him God would bless the nations—was the gospel announced in advance. Through Paul's proclamation of Christ to the Gentiles, it's already being fulfilled. The God of peace is fulfilling Genesis 3:15 as He crushes Satan through the Word. In fact, the gospel compels Paul to go where it had never been preached, so he plans to press on into Spain, hoping the Roman church would join and support him.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>7</sup>For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup>For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.*

/ Romans 14:7-8



# Introduction to 1 & 2 Thessalonians

## THE BOOKS OF 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS

Acts 17:1–9 recalls Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. Upon his preaching of the gospel, some Thessalonian Jews and God-fearing Gentiles believed in Jesus as the Messiah. But trouble followed when another group of Jews accused these new Christians of sedition. Paul and Silas were forced out of the city, but he wrote back to the Thessalonian believers from Corinth to encourage them as they endured persecution.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Author:</b>      | Paul   |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Church at Thessalonica in Macedonia<br><i>(written to)</i>   |
| <b>Occasion:</b>    | Persecution of the Thessalonians and confusion regarding the end times                                 |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To encourage persecuted believers, defend Paul’s integrity, and clarify Paul’s eschatological teaching |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | Persecuted believers should be encouraged by the anticipation of Jesus’ return                         |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18  |

# 1 Thessalonians 1-2

WEEK 5 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“God, we pray we would love others so much that we would be delighted to share with them not only the gospel but our lives as well. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Thessalonians 1-2

### 1 Thessalonians 1-2

First Thessalonians 1-2 is intensely autobiographical. We learn about Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians in a number of ways. In the process, we learn five marks of true ministry:

- 1/** Joys of true ministry (1:1-10): Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians’ faithfulness and fruitfulness, which has shown itself in their turning from idols and waiting on Jesus.
- 2/** Motivations of true ministry (2:1-6a): Paul simply wants the Thessalonians to know the truth of God’s Word. His motivation to please God hasn’t changed since they first met.
- 3/** Way of true ministry (2:6b-12): The apostle deeply loves the Thessalonians. He lived righteously among them and led them as a father leads his own children.
- 4/** Suffering of true ministry (2:13-16): God’s work can be costly, as when some Jews in Paul’s day objected to taking the gospel to the Gentiles.
- 5/** Affections of true ministry (2:17-20): Paul longs to see the Thessalonians, the “glory and joy” of his ministry. But Satan, God’s adversary, seeks to keep Paul from getting there—perhaps through continued persecution in the area.

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*Do you have a father/son or mother/daughter relationship with someone discipling you or with someone you’re discipling? It’s amazing how God connects the hearts of His followers.*

Paul is so confident in his walk with God that he declares God and the Thessalonians as witnesses to how “devoutly, righteously, and

blamelessly” he had lived among them (2:10). Only someone who models transparency in his relationships and has tried to live a blameless life would write this way.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Pray informed prayers for missionaries and unreached people by spending time at [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net) and [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org).



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>4</sup>but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup>For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed— God is witness. <sup>6</sup>Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.*

/ 1 Thessalonians 2:4–6

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Use this week to review your previous memory verses: Matthew 4:4, Luke 19:10, and Romans 5:8. Ask a friend to verify your accuracy with the verses.
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# 1 Thessalonians 3-4

WEEK 5 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“God, please use us to encourage others so they will live lives that please You. Thank You for the joy we can have when we see others following You. Give us more and more joy! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Thessalonians 3-4

### 1 Thessalonians 3-4

Paul deeply desires to learn of the fate of the Thessalonians because he fears that Satan might have led them astray under the pressure of persecution. That’s why he sent Timothy to Thessalonica—to strengthen and encourage the believers there (3:2). But thankfully, Timothy returned with a good word about their faith, their love, and their affection for Paul (3:6).

When Paul hears that they’re standing firmly in their faith, he rejoices. In fact, he prays night and day that he might be with them, teach them, and help them continue to grow.

Paul’s particular prayer for the Thessalonians is that they would have abounding love for others and would grow in holiness until the return of Christ. Paul is not content with them only being converts. Rather, he challenges them to please God with their lives, particularly in the area of sexuality. Paul then continues to encourage the believers to love each other and model Christian living in such a way that unbelievers would see their testimony. What you’ve been doing, he says, keep doing (4:10).

And now, finally, after three and a half chapters of encouragement, Paul arrives at his correction. The Thessalonians were living with the urgency of Christ’s return, but some were apparently

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*For whom do you pray “night and day” because you care so much about their spiritual condition? If you can’t name anyone, ask God to give you that kind of burden.*





# 1 Thessalonians 5

WEEK 5 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“God, we thank You that we can wait eagerly for Your coming because You did not appoint us to suffer wrath but instead to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Please help us live in light of Your coming. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Thessalonians 5

### 1 Thessalonians 5

1 Thessalonians 5 shows how important it is for followers of Jesus to think and live in light of the future. Christianity teaches that there’s a definite end to the world. When Jesus comes again, unbelievers will be judged and punished, and believers will be saved to everlasting life. Christians, Paul says, are children of light. Therefore, they should live in the light and look forward to Christ’s coming.

In this chapter, Paul encourages two responses to Christ’s coming:

- 1/** *Think rightly about Christ’s coming (5:1–11).* Jesus’ coming will be sudden and unexpected. Believers are children of light who must always be alert and prepared for His coming.
- 2/** *Live rightly because Christ is coming (5:12–28).* This preparation is most readily seen through the community life among believers. Paul tells the Thessalonians to take care of their church leaders, to strive for relational peace among the believers, to exhort and encourage others as needed, and to pursue what is good. Believers have joy that the world does not have; they pray, give thanks, follow the Spirit, cling to what is good, and avoid evil.

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*Are you more encouraging or discouraging to other believers? Do they see joy or pessimism in you?*

Paul concludes this letter with a prayer similar to 3:11–13. He prays that God will make the Thessalonians holy as He completes His work in them. He is a faithful God who will not let them down.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>5</sup>For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. <sup>7</sup>For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup>For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

/ 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9

### GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

We've seen that Paul had a deep love for the Thessalonians. Take time today to write an email or note to at least one believer who has influenced your life positively for Christ. Let them know how grateful you are for their witness.

# 2 Thessalonians 1-3

WEEK 5 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“God, You are awesome, and all people will marvel at Your majesty when You return in power. We pray You will help us stand firm until the end. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Thessalonians 1–3

### 2 Thessalonians 1

In 2 Thessalonians, we see how the Thessalonian church responded to Paul’s earlier letter and how he continues to love them in spite of their difficulties and confusion. In particular, this letter follows up on a concern Paul addressed in the previous book: the church’s need to have a proper view of the future. More practically, 2 Thessalonians features several prayers that we can easily pray for others (1:11–12; 2:16–17; 3:1–2; 3:16).

The Thessalonian believers were still facing persecution, so Paul encourages them with the promise of Christ’s return. The timing is in God’s hand, and believers can trust that God will eventually reward the faithful and punish the unjust. He will grant them grace to endure any persecution, and thus magnify His name through their testimony.

### 2 Thessalonians 2

Apparently, someone was teaching that the Day of the Lord—that is, the day of judgment and reward that happens when Christ returns—had already occurred, or that it was imminent. Paul assures them that it hasn’t yet come. Why? Because other signs, including apostasy and the rise of evil, must occur first. These details aren’t easily interpreted, but Paul’s mandate to the Thessalonians is clear: don’t be shaken by what you’re hearing;

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Plan weekly times of prayer for your church’s pastoral staff. When you go to your church, go knowing that you’ve covered the leaders in prayer.

*Trusting God “in the meantime” is not always easy. How well do you trust Him while you’re waiting for Him to respond to your prayers?*

hold on to the truths you know.

**2 Thessalonians 3**

It seems that some of the believers were so focused on the return of Jesus that they stopped working. Paul corrects this misunderstanding and commands the church to hold them accountable to get back to work. In the end, Paul prays for the Thessalonians to have God’s peace even as they pray for his work and the quick spread of the gospel.



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>4</sup>Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. <sup>5</sup>This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— <sup>6</sup>since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us.*

/ 2 Thessalonians 1:4-7a

**REFLECT & CHANGE:  
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

As believers, we should do everything for God’s glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). This includes how we do our jobs. Are you ever lazy in your daily work? Do you give maximum effort as a matter of Christian faithfulness?

If you know you need to improve in this area, prayerfully write one change you will make, and hold yourself accountable to someone:

# Review & Catch Up

WEEK 5 / DAY 5



Discipleship requires daily discipline, but even the most disciplined people need days to catch up. Today is one of those days. Here are your assignments for today:

- 1/** If you're not caught up with your Bible reading, work to get up to date.
- 2/** If you need some time just to pray, use your free time for that purpose.
- 3/** Connect with one believer and one non-believer and let them know what the Lord's teaching you through this study. If you've already finished your 10-minute discipleship this week, you may omit this assignment.

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Having an accountability partner or group is one way to help you stay focused in following Christ. Let somebody speak into your life.

# Introduction to Philippians

## THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

According to Acts 16, the church in Philippi started during Paul's second missionary journey. A vision led Paul and his traveling companions to Macedonia, where Lydia, a jailer, and his family came to faith. This created the core of this small church (Acts 16:1–40; 1 Thessalonians 2:2). Paul writes to both members and church leaders in Philippi, seeking to warn, comfort, and challenge them.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Paul   |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | The church at Philippi   |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | Paul writes to thank the Philippians for their partnership in the gospel and to warn against disunity and false teaching |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To promote gospel-centered unity for the sake of advancing the gospel  |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Partnership in the gospel and walking worthy of the gospel   |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Philippians 1:27–30  |

# Philippians 1

WEEK 6 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord, help my love to abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so I might discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day You return. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 1

### Philippians 1:1–11

The early churches had two types of people to serve and guide them: overseers and deacons. Among other responsibilities, overseers taught and shepherded the church. Deacons served the church to free the overseers to do their work. Philippians 1:1 is the only place where Paul addresses a letter to these groups.

Paul expresses how much joy their gospel partnership brought him, and he reminds them that their sovereign and faithful God is able to keep until the end all those who are His. He prays that God would cause their love to increase so they would stay pure and blameless, full of the fruit of righteousness. That’s what the gospel does: it transforms us!

### Philippians 1:12–18

Paul continues to encourage these believers by explaining that God is using even Paul’s imprisonment for the spread of the gospel. God’s purposes are moving forward, even when some who are preaching the gospel are doing so with envy and strife toward Paul. Paul keeps on rejoicing even in imprisonment because he knows that Jesus is being preached.

### Philippians 1:19–30

Whether he’s released from prison or dies under persecution,

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Last week, you were challenged to pray weekly for your church’s pastoral staff. Add to that list your church’s deacons, and pray for them as they serve.

*Paul told the Philippians that he wanted them to be “standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel” (1:27). Is there anything that keeps you from serving well with other believers? Jealousy? Frustration? Impatience? Something else?*

Paul will rejoice because he knows the goal and passion of his life are to serve Christ alone. As a result, he encourages the Philippian church to live a life worthy of the gospel.

Paul confidently prays for the Philippians’ continued growth even amid suffering. In fact, their suffering is for Christ’s sake. Again, he reminds these Christians that his current difficulty is advancing the gospel. He assures them that he will continue to work with them for their progress in the faith.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>6</sup>And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

/ Philippians 1:6

#### GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Begin to memorize this week’s memory verse: *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves”* (Philippians 2:3). Spend at least five minutes simply reading the verse.
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.



# Philippians 2

WEEK 6 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others as more significant than myself. Help me look not only to my own interests but also to the interests of others. Open my eyes that I might see wonderful things in Your Word today. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 2

### Philippians 2:1–5

In the beginning of Philippians 2, Paul reminds the Philippians of the example Christ gave them. Those who come to Christ must walk as He walked—on a road of humility and suffering. They must take up their crosses and follow Him.

### Philippians 2:6–11

Here, Paul reflects on the divine nature of Christ. In six beautiful verses, Paul makes several significant statements about who Christ is and what He did. Jesus is the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity; He is equal with God. And yet, He saw fit to humble himself and take on human likeness, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human.

Jesus humbled Himself even to death, but all will eventually recognize Him as Lord. One day, everyone in heaven and on earth will bow their knee to Christ.

### Philippians 2:12–18

Believers are to follow God’s commands, knowing that it is God at

*Whose spiritual well-being most burdens you today? Who do you need to contact to make sure that he or she is serving the Lord well?*

work in them even as they work out their salvation by striving for obedience and persevering in faithfulness. Christians should not complain or argue, but instead give themselves to humble service as lights in a dark world. In that way, Paul wants to look back on his ministry and see from the Philippians that he did not work in vain.

### **Philippians 2:19–30**

Paul plans to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippians. Timothy and Epaphroditus are both faithful men who, like Paul and Jesus, care about the interests of others. Timothy is Paul's son in the faith, a young man who shares Paul's heart for the gospel. Epaphroditus is Paul's "brother, coworker, and fellow soldier" (2:25). Godly people take a genuine interest in others' spiritual welfare, a trait well-worth imitating.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

/ Philippians 2:3–4

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Paul made the point that if Jesus, the divine Son of God, was willing to live selflessly to serve sinful man, even by dying for them, then how much more should we be willing to live for others rather than ourselves? Evaluate your own life, and mark whether each statement is true or false:

- I live for the sake of other people.
- I need to do better at serving others.
- I am growing in living selflessly.
- I am not certain I would give my life for someone else.
- I am selfish.

# Philippians 3

WEEK 6 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me learn to count everything as a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing You. Help me to know You and the power of Your resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in Your sufferings. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 3

### Philippians 3:1–11

In Philippians 1, Paul spoke about the enemies who put him in prison. But now he turns to a different threat: false teachers. They preached a different gospel, one that trusts not only in the work of Christ but also in Jewish rituals like circumcision.

Paul explains that true followers of Christ are those who “boast in Christ” and “worship by the Spirit” (3:3). There’s nothing, Paul reminds the reader, that can save except the work of Christ and His righteousness received by faith. All other “works” of religion and tradition—like the ritual of circumcision—don’t profit anything in the search for salvation.

In fact, Paul considers them a loss rather than a help. If anyone could have trusted in his own works, Paul could have. In fact, he even persecuted the church in defense of his Judaism. But his religious heritage and zeal prior to knowing Christ did not gain him salvation. Nothing matters to him apart from knowing Christ. Compared to that, everything else is “rubbish” (3:8).

### Philippians 3:12–21

Paul then tells the Philippian church to follow his example, to press

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*Suppose a friend tells you that she knows she’s a believer because she “walked the aisle at church” and “was baptized.” How would you guide her to consider her own spiritual walk?*

on toward the prize, and to imitate him and others who live as he does. Many so-called followers of Christ were living as enemies of the gospel, and Paul pleads with the Philippians not to follow them. They are living for themselves and are nothing less than enemies of the cross.

Christians, on the other hand, are citizens of heaven who eagerly wait for the return of Christ. The salvation He gives us includes a glorified body in resurrection (3:21).

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Begin every day by praying, “God, thank You for this day. Help me to make godly choices today, knowing that Jesus could return today.” Let this truth change the way you live.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

/ Philippians 3:8–9

## GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Following Christ means “forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead” (3:13). “What lies behind” might be not only our past failures, but also our past successes—things that still shame us, and things that make us proud.

Write here anything you need to leave behind as you press forward in following Christ. Hold yourself accountable to your group and/or mentor.



Past failures that still burden you:

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Past successes in which you still glory:

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# Philippians 4

WEEK 6 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Lord, You are great and worthy of my trust at all times and in all situations! Help me not to be anxious but instead to bring my cares to You with thanksgiving. Father, help me train my mind to dwell on what is true, pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 4

### Philippians 4:1–9

In Philippians 1–3, Paul warns the believers about several threats to the gospel: those who would imprison them, those who would require them to be circumcised, and those whose gods are their stomachs and who live with their minds on earthly things. He wants the believers to stand firm in the Lord, so he encourages them to pursue unity and reconciliation by remembering the way Christ lived as a humble servant who poured out His life as a sacrifice for others.

Paul then calls the church to “rejoice in the Lord always!” (4:4). They could think back to Paul’s example of singing hymns in the jail in Philippi, still rejoicing in the Lord after being flogged and put in chains (Acts 16:22–40). They also ought to be known for “graciousness” (4:5) and self-denying kindness.

And yet, Paul says, while we wait for our Savior from heaven, we should think about what is true and noble, excellent and praiseworthy. Whatever these Christians have seen in him or learned from him, they should put into practice, imitating either his life or the lives of people like Epaphroditus and Timothy.

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*Are you at odds with anyone today?  
Do you know of anyone who is at odds  
with you?*







# Review WEEK 6 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me as I reflect on what I’ve learned these past six weeks. Thank You for all I’ve seen in Your Word. Thank You for how You have helped me put that Word into practice with others. May I not forget how You’ve challenged and encouraged me and others in our group. By Your Spirit, You are always with us. May I live for Your glory alone. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## Review of the First Six Weeks

Use this guideline as you connect with your group and/or mentor this week:

- 1/ What specific things has God shown you from His Word? From your scripture memorization work? From the “Reflect and Change” questions?
- 2/ Review the “Go and Do Discipleship Activities.” How has God helped you grow in faithfulness? Which activities do you want to continue? Anything you want further help on? Any new relationships to keep pursuing?

## Celebrate

- Celebrate how the Lord has helped you these past six weeks.
- Celebrate the truths He has shown you and others in His Word.
- Celebrate any new acts of obedience He has helped you with, as well as any areas of growth.
- Celebrate any new relationships you’ve made.





# SECTION **TWO**

WEEKS 7 - 12



# Introduction to Matthew

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew, also known as Levi the tax collector. A key word in this Gospel is “kingdom.” Matthew also uses a number of titles for Jesus, including Son of David, Son of God, Immanuel, and Lord. Written primarily to Jewish readers, the book reveals Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews from the line of David.

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Author:</b>      | Matthew   |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Jewish audience in unknown location<br><i>(written to)</i>              |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | Jesus is Immanuel, the Messiah, and the Savior of God’s people          |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | Matthew 1:27–30, 28:18–20   |

# Matthew 1-3

WEEK 7 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, thank You for fulfilling all Your promises of salvation in Your beloved Son Jesus. Thank You for sending Jesus to save people from their sins. Help me daily repent of my sins and trust in Jesus as my Savior, who is always with me. Help me tell others about the Lord Jesus. In His name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 1-3

### Matthew 1:1–17

Why does Matthew begin with a long genealogy? To show that, according to God’s sovereign plan, Jesus is the promised Christ, the Davidic King, and the offspring of Abraham through whom all nations will be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3). We should also take note that in Jesus’ genealogy are men, women, Gentiles, kings, adulterers, prostitutes, and military heroes—all who need a Savior. And He has now come!

### Matthew 1:18–25

God miraculously makes clear His salvation plan with the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The child Mary carries is a miracle of the Holy Spirit. The angel of the Lord says His name is Jesus “because He will save his people from their sins” (1:21) and also Immanuel, which means “God with us” (1:23). This same Jesus will promise to be with the disciples when He sends them out at the end of the Gospel of Matthew (28:18–20).

Though their reputations and eventual marriage were compromised, Joseph and Mary submit to God’s plans and obey every detail of His instructions.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

One way to study the Gospels is to compare the similar accounts in the books. They often tell the same stories (though sometimes with different details).

*Even at the start of His life in a stable in Bethlehem, Jesus was identified with the lowly. Who are the “lowly” in your community? Who are those you are least likely to want to spend time with?*

### Matthew 2

Throughout Jesus’ life, God sovereignly ordains events to fulfill past promises about the coming Messiah. Matthew records three fulfilled prophecies surrounding Jesus’ childhood: His birth in Bethlehem that Micah prophesied (Micah 5:2), His time in Egypt that Hosea prophesied (Hosea 11:1), and the killing of children that Jeremiah prophesied (Jer. 31:15). Like the wise men, we should worship Jesus as the Messiah foretold by the Old Testament.

### Matthew 3

In Matthew 3, we meet John the Baptist, an important figure who prepares the way for the Lord Jesus through his ministry of preaching repentance and baptizing. When Jesus comes to be baptized, John recognizes Him and, after baptizing Him, both the Spirit of God and the Father confirm Jesus’ deity (3:16–17). John understands that his role is to point to Jesus.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the prophet <sup>23</sup>Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel which means, God with us.*

/ Matthew 1:22–23

### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Take at least five minutes today to begin reviewing each of the verses that you have memorized so far. Write out at least two of them, and be prepared to share them with your group and/or mentor this week:
  - Matthew 4:4
  - Luke 19:10
  - Romans 5:8
  - Philippians 2:3
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Matthew 4-5

WEEK 7 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord Jesus, thank You for defeating Satan on my behalf. Thank You that the kingdom of heaven is available to people from all cultures, backgrounds, and nations. Help me accurately reflect Your perfections in my life. Help me live as salt and light in this world, so all people would glorify the Father. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 4-5

### Matthew 4:1–11

As we read of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, we should remember the past failures of God’s representatives. In the garden, Adam failed; in the wilderness, generations of Israel failed; even Israel’s greatest kings failed—every one of them.

But Jesus is God’s beloved Son, and He succeeds in the battle. He shows the enemy what kind of Messiah He will be: He wouldn’t use His power for Himself. He wouldn’t make a spectacle of Himself before others or fall prey to Satan’s lures. Amid every temptation, Jesus quotes God’s Word to fend off the enemy.

### Matthew 4:12–25

Finally, Jesus’ public ministry begins. And He has a simple, solitary message for all people: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17). Jesus calls people to follow Him, and some immediately leave everything to be with Him. These disciples ultimately become ambassadors who reach more people. In a summary statement of Jesus’ work, we learn that He teaches, proclaims, heals, and casts out demons (4:23–25).

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*Matthew 5:29-30 includes intentional hyperbole to show the importance of eradicating sin from our lives. What steps do you need to take to overcome ongoing temptations?*

### **Matthew 5:1-16**

Matthew 5 kicks off Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, one of the book's five major teaching segments (chs. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25). Those who follow Jesus are "blessed," which refers not to temporary happiness but to the ongoing joy of following Christ. The beatitudes (a word meaning "blessedness" that refers to Jesus' statements in 5:2-11) highlight what it looks like to follow Jesus, including remaining faithful even when persecution occurs.

Jesus is clear: God's blessing doesn't end with the blessed. Instead, followers of Jesus are to be God's instruments to bless others. Using images of salt and light, Jesus calls His followers to influence the world for good and thus glorify the Father.

### **Matthew 5:17-48**

The entire Old Testament points to Jesus Christ as its fulfillment. In these verses, He declares Himself as the one who fulfills the Law and then refutes faulty interpretations of certain Old Testament teachings on anger, lust, divorce, oaths, and retaliation against enemies. In every case, Jesus raises the moral expectation.

At the end of this teaching, any reader would feel crushed by the weight of sin. But thankfully, Jesus offers His righteousness to all who trust in Him—and only in that way can we meet God's standards.





# Matthew 6-7

WEEK 7 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Help us seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness—for the glory of Your name. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 6-7

### Matthew 6:1–18

Jesus’ teaching on the Christian life continues. God’s children must practice righteousness—not for our own glory but for God’s glory alone, which leads to reward from God our Father. It’s easy, though, to seek praise from men, particularly in giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus warns against doing these things so that others might see us. Jesus is clear: for those who want praise from men, there will be no reward from God.

*Be honest—do you ever seek the praise of men? When you receive praise, do you find that you want to get more?*

Then Jesus models prayer for His people. The first three petitions focus on God, and the latter three focus on personal needs. Because the pronouns in the prayer are plural, it’s likely Jesus is emphasizing corporate prayer. Nothing in the Lord’s Prayer suggests our prayers should be only about us.

### Matthew 6:19–34

Many of us tend to worry, but Jesus tells us that believers shouldn’t be anxious about this current life. Instead, we should focus on living in accord with the values of God’s kingdom. The heavenly Father takes care of all His children. In Matthew, Jesus



warns us that our heart will follow our treasure, so we need to be careful where our treasure is.

### **Matthew 7:1–12**

Kingdom living results in both kingdom community and kingdom power. Kingdom community is humble, not characterized by self-righteous judging. This requires wisdom and discernment. To do any of this, we need kingdom power, which comes through prayers in faith. Jesus’ words about prayer are a call to keep on asking, keep on searching, and keep on knocking—that is, to keep on depending on God and seeking Him at all times.

### **Matthew 7:13–29**

There are only two ways to live. Believers should beware of false prophets and false professions, and they must choose to obey Jesus’ words. Not everybody who claims to be a follower of Jesus truly is. We will recognize true followers of Jesus by the good fruit that they produce (7:19–20). The truly wise person builds his life on Jesus’ teachings. After all this paradigm-shifting teaching, it’s not surprising that the Sermon on the Mount concludes with people amazed by Jesus’ unique authority.

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*Based on Jesus’ teaching in this section, how would you answer this question: “How do I know if my profession of faith is genuine?”*



#### **DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION**

***<sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.***

/ Matthew 6:33

### **GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY**

Are you usually in control of your emotions, or do your emotions control you? If you tend to worry, meditate on this verse: “*Look at the birds of the sky: they don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they?*” (6:26). Be prepared to talk about these issues with your group and/or mentor this week.

# Matthew 8-10

WEEK 7 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, we praise You for Jesus and His authority over illness, nature, demons, death, and every curse that stems from man’s sin. Thank You for sending Him not to call the righteous, but sinners. Help us follow Jesus by faith and spread His gospel to all. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 8-10

### Matthew 8:1–9:34

Jesus Christ has authority over all things. He demonstrates power over disease, illness, nature, demons, and death; in doing so, He fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy about Him (8:17). Jesus also defines true discipleship (8:18–22; 9:9–13), explaining plainly the costs of following Him.

In these verses, we observe several aspects of Jesus’ authority and expectations:

- **He is compassionate:** Jesus touches the shunned and unclean leper when He could simply heal him through His Word. Jesus calls outcast sinners to follow Him (8:1–4; 9:9–13).
- **He has cleansing power:** When Jesus touches the unclean, they are cleansed (8:1–4).
- **His authority is comprehensive:** Jesus doesn’t need to be physically present to heal (8:5–13).
- **He expects His followers to follow Him and trust Him in faith (8:24–27; 9:9):** Following Him requires surrendering all to Him and daily growing in trust.



- **His authority is divine as He recognizes and commends genuine faith (8:10–13; 9:1–2; 9:18–26; 9:27–30):** He also knows, though, when motives are wrong (9:3–4).

### Matthew 9:35–10:42

The apostles to whom Jesus gives authority (Matthew 10:1–4, Mark 3:16–19, Luke 6:14–16) include some fishermen, a tax collector, and likely a political zealot—in other words, not exactly the renowned religious leaders of the day. Jesus’ disciples are called to follow Him in a variety of ways, regardless of the circumstances or cost.

The rest of Matthew 10 introduces some of these ways:

- **In praying:** We are to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers (9:37–38). The first step in reaching the crowds is praying for the Lord to raise up workers.
- **In witnessing with gospel power:** Believers must proclaim the gospel of the kingdom with Jesus’ authority, trusting Him to provide (10:1–15). God uses diverse people to do His work, but it’s all in His power.
- **In expecting and enduring persecutions:** As our Lord was persecuted, so will persecution come to all who follow Him faithfully. We must take up our cross and follow Him (10:16–25; 10:34–42).
- **In trusting God’s care:** Despite persecutions, we have nothing to fear because our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ protect us in love (10:26–33).
- **In prioritizing Him above all other relationships:** Even when the gospel divides families, God must be first (10:34–37).

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*What relationships, if any, are more important to you than your relationship with God?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’*

/ Matthew 9:37–38



# Matthew 11-12

WEEK 7 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for sending Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Lord of all, the Davidic King, the strong man who defeats Satan, the conqueror of death, the One who invites us into His family, and the giver of rest to our souls. Help us do Your will by faith, as we seek to follow Jesus. In His name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 11-12

### Matthew 11–12

At this point in Matthew’s Gospel, opposition to Jesus mounts. In these chapters, we can observe at least three types of negative responses:

- **Some people who heard Jesus express disappointment and confusion (11:1–15).** Even John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, struggles with Jesus’ identity when he finds himself in prison for standing up for righteousness. His questions are honest ones, though, from a Christ-follower now paying a price for his convictions.
- **Some hearers listen, only to reject and find fault with Jesus or His disciples (11:16–24).** Like spoiled children, they don’t listen to John or Jesus. Even Jesus’ miracles don’t bring them to repentance.
- **Another group of Jewish leaders actively and willfully oppose Jesus and His ministry (12:1–14, 22–42) even though they should have seen Jesus as the Messiah through a correct reading of the Old Testament.** They accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath, and they want Him to grant them signs to prove that He is who He says He is. They

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Have someone hold you accountable to this question: “What do you know more about God and following Him today that you didn’t know last year?” Always keep learning.

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*To be yoked to Jesus is to go wherever He requires and to do whatever He demands—and to find rest in it all. Do you find joy in following Jesus fully?*

claim He casts out demons only by the power of “Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons” (12:24). Their words reveal the evil of their hearts (12:34).

Amidst these various negative responses to His ministry, Jesus graciously gives an invitation for all to find rest in Him. Those who follow Him and do the will of His Father in heaven are those who truly belong to the family of God.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

/ Matthew 11:28–30

#### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Reach out to someone today who seems to be weary. Talk to him or her about the peace Jesus gives. Pray with that person.



# Matthew 13-15

WEEK 8 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing the secrets of the kingdom in Your Word. Thank You for revealing Jesus as the focal point of Your revelation, the new and better Moses, the Son of God, the Great I AM. Help us have ears to hear Your Word; help us believe in Christ and worship You with a clean heart. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 13-15

### **Matthew 13:1–14:12**

Matthew 13 begins the third of five major teaching sections in Matthew’s Gospel. Jesus also explains why He teaches through parables so often: because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven are revealed only to those who are ready to hear them (13:9–17).

Even to His followers, Jesus’ depiction of the kingdom is radical and unexpected. The kingdom may start small and seem insignificant, but it will indeed grow through the lives of believers. And yet, smallness doesn’t mean insignificance. The kingdom is in fact of such value that we ought to be willing to give up anything in order to gain it. People of the kingdom must live alongside people who follow the evil one—but we can trust that God will ultimately judge.

In fact, kingdom living is not without opposition. The people of Nazareth refuse to accept Jesus as Messiah, and John the Baptist lost his head because he stood up for righteousness and criticized the king. As believers sow the seed of the gospel, we should assume that many will not believe, but some will believe and bear much fruit.

*Like Peter walking on the water, what step of faith have you taken that has still brought fear or struggle? What does this reading tell you about trusting Jesus?*

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

God is bringing the world to North America, so be alert to the nations living around you. Intentionally get to know them. Ask them about their home, their family, and their religion.

### Matthew 14:13–36

Jesus is the center of this new kingdom. He's the new and better Moses who teaches and provides abundant bread in desolate places. He is the Son of God, the Great I AM who has authority over all creation. His care, provision, and authority are real and sufficient for believers.

### Matthew 15:1–20

Jesus explains that God is most concerned with people's hearts, intentions, and motives. External religion and rule-keeping can never make someone right with God. Christ changes His people from the inside out; even their words reflect a transformed heart.

### Matthew 15:21–39

Jesus compassionately extends His healing power outside the Jewish people, demonstrating that His new kingdom family includes people from all places and backgrounds. His grace is not limited to the Jewish people. He's also patient with His disciples as they question how He fed the 4,000, even though Jesus had already fed 5,000 in a different setting.



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>10</sup>Then the disciples came and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' <sup>11</sup>And he answered them, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.'*

/ Matthew 13:10–11

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Begin memorizing this week's verse: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Matthew 16-18

WEEK 8 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus, who saves sinners through His suffering, death, and resurrection. Help us discern and turn away from any teaching that seeks to move us away from the cross of Christ. Help us deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow You. In Jesus name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 16-18

### **Matthew 16:1–27**

Jesus, the Son of God, walks among the religious leaders of His day, and they fail to recognize Him for who He is. The Pharisees and Sadducees unite in their opposition to Jesus.

Jesus’ disciples continue to show much room for growth. They worry they have no bread, having somehow forgotten or ignored Jesus’ previous feeding of the thousands. Even the highs are quickly followed by lows: just after Simon Peter rightly recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, he rebukes Jesus for His prediction about His coming death.

From this point in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus focuses on preparing His disciples for His coming death. He tells them that they must follow Him with total surrender, knowing that He is the Son of God who builds His church.

### **Matthew 16:28–17:27**

Jesus’ death was not the end of the story, and the cross was simply the path toward His coronation as King of His kingdom. The Transfiguration offers a glimpse of what’s to come. It reveals

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*As a child of God, do you live to please the Father? Would He say of you today, “I am well pleased”?*

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*Have you ever seen church discipline carried out in a biblical, redemptive way?*

Jesus as the Son who pleases His Father, the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets, the One who is greater than Moses and Elijah. He is the final Word of God, so we should listen to Him and interpret all Scripture in a Christ-centered manner.

By His Word, Jesus defeats Satan (even when His disciples are themselves failures because they lack faith and prayer), and He reigns over the rules of the temple. He will be crucified after someone betrays Him, but “on the third day He will be raised up” (17:23).

### **Matthew 18**

Matthew 18 begins the fourth major teaching segment of Matthew’s Gospel. When believers come into the new covenant family, they are transformed and should live differently from the world. Humility should mark their lives. They radically reject their own sin and work to help others walk with God.

Because God the Father lovingly pursues straying sinners, God’s church must love sinners and hate sin enough to practice church discipline toward those who are unrepentant (18:15–20). Prayer should cover the entire process, and the goal must ultimately be the restoration of the offender (see 1 Corinthians 5 for more information on the topic of church discipline).

Because of the Father’s great mercy and forgiveness toward us, we ought to quickly forgive someone who sins against us (18:21–35). An unwillingness to forgive others raises questions about whether our own heart has been transformed by the gospel.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’***

/ Matthew 16:24–25



# Matthew 19-20

WEEK 8 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, thank You for your generosity in bestowing immeasurable treasure upon all who enter Your kingdom through childlike faith in Jesus. Help us joyfully follow Christ without comparing ourselves to others. Help us pursue true greatness by serving others like Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 19-20

### Matthew 19:1–12

God’s design for marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. He permitted divorce in the past only because of man’s sinful and hard heart of rebellion, which brought much sin and abuse into marriage. Jesus permits divorce because of sexual immorality only, and He reinforces a high standard for marriage—so high that His disciples wonder if anyone should marry. According to Jesus, the only alternative to heterosexual marriage is celibacy.

### Matthew 19:13–29

Jesus welcomes children brought to Him, and He blesses them. Coming to Him requires a childlike, humble approach. On the other hand, some want eternal life without surrendering all to Christ. For the rich young man who comes to Christ with questions, his love of possessions and unwillingness to sacrifice all keep him from gaining eternal life. What Jesus offers, though, is much greater than anything else.

### Matthew 19:30–20:16

Why is following Jesus worth everything? Because those who

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

If you are married, make a commitment to pray with your spouse at least once per week (preferably each day). If you’re single, enlist at least one prayer partner to pray with you weekly.



follow Him will receive the immeasurable treasure of the kingdom of heaven, regardless of how long they've been a disciple. Since the treasure of salvation comes only by God's merciful grace, all should rejoice in the King's generosity. Jealousy and envy have no place among forgiven people.

### **Matthew 20:17–34**

The disciples, though, still deal with jealousy, too. The mother of James and John asks Jesus to give her sons seats of honor in His kingdom, and the other disciples are indignant—probably because they wanted the same seats. Greatness in God's kingdom, however, comes from being a servant to others.

Jesus models this servanthood by His willingness to die for others. He came “not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (20:28). Therefore, those who want to be truly great in following Jesus must be a servant and slave to all.

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*Do you tend to be a jealous person?  
Would others who know you best  
agree with your personal assessment?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>26</sup>But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup>even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

/ Matthew 20:26b–28

## **GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES**

Even Christian marriages require intentional attention for growth. Write here one way you can work to strengthen your relationship with your spouse, and be sure to share the commitment with your spouse:

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If you're single, write here one way you can strengthen your commitment to godly relationships:

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# Matthew 21-24

WEEK 8 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Jesus, we praise you for being the promised Davidic Messiah, the King with authority over all. Father, we praise You for Your mercy in sending a Savior, and for Your justice to punish unrepentant rebels. We thank You that in the midst of great tribulations, Christ will return again to consummate His glorious kingdom. Help us be prepared and faithful until that time. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 21-24

### **Matthew 21:1–27**

Jesus is God’s promised Davidic Messiah (2 Samuel 7:10–16; Psalm 2 and 110; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 11; Jeremiah 23:5–6; Micah 5:6). King Jesus is sovereign over all details, yet He loves the world so much that He comes to Jerusalem to die to save sinners. He has authority to cleanse the Temple, heal the sick, curse a fig tree as a sign of judgment, and even refuse to answer those who question His authority.

### **Matthew 21:28–22:14**

While questioning and debating the religious leaders, Jesus continues to show His authority. His parables teach them that tax collectors and prostitutes are more likely to enter the kingdom than they are, that the gospel is now going to “other farmers” (21:41), and that only those who genuinely turn to Him in faith and repentance will enter the kingdom. The reality of God’s judgment ought to challenge us to pray more for those who are destined for “outer darkness” (22:13).

*For what non-believers are you praying? If you can't name them, ask God to burden you about particular people?*

### **Matthew 22:15–46**

Sadly, despite knowing that Jesus speaks the parables against them, the religious leaders refuse to repent and instead try to trap Jesus. Jesus escapes all three traps and then silences His opponents with His understanding of Psalm 110.

### **Matthew 23**

Jesus has compassion for lost sinners and condemnation for the willfully rebellious. In pronouncing several “woes” (or condemnations), He denounces the religious teachers for their hypocrisy. Jesus had longed to gather them to Himself, but they would not follow Him. His patience is running out; judgment will come.

### **Matthew 24**

When the disciples ask specifically about when the end will come, Jesus gives a long response that marks the fifth major teaching section of Matthew’s Gospel (24:1–25:46). While some signs of the end are clear, the precise timing is unknown. Christians are to be alert and prepared, proclaiming this gospel as faithful followers of Jesus.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>37</sup>And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: <sup>39</sup>You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’*

/ Matthew 22:37–40



# Matthew 25-28

WEEK 8 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross as the true Passover Lamb; His shed blood brings forgiveness of sins once for all. Jesus, thank You for conquering sin and death. Help us worship You and obey You by making disciples of all nations. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 25-28

### Matthew 25:1–26:16

Again, Jesus’ life and teaching prove to be divisive. When Jesus comes again, the salvation of the righteous and destruction of the unrighteous will be complete. There are only two kinds of people: those in the kingdom and those outside.

### Matthew 26:17–29

Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. His sacrificial death, that is, the shedding of His blood, sets people free from sin and death. We regularly remember His sacrifice when we share the Lord’s Supper together.

### Matthew 26:30–27:61

Though crucifixions were commonplace in Jesus’ day, He dies a unique death—as evidenced in all the careful details about His trial, death, burial, and resurrection.

At Jesus’ death, darkness comes in the middle of the day just as the Son cries out to the Father in agony: “My God, why have you forsaken me?” (27:46). Jesus’ voluntary death in the place of sinners pays the punishment for sin—and opens a way into relationship with Him, signified by the tearing of the Temple curtain.

*Which of these statements best describes the way you think of the Lord’s Supper?*

- 1/ I don’t think much about it
- 2/ I take it for granted
- 3/ I look forward to it
- 4/ I’m deeply grateful for it
- 5/ Other:



## Matthew 27:62–28:20

The good news is that King Jesus has risen victoriously from the dead! He has all authority in heaven and earth. With His power and presence, He now sends us out to make disciples of all nations. As we go, we are to baptize new believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

*What other language(s) do you speak that might help you reach the nations—both among you and around the globe?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’*

/ Matthew 28:18–20

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Get together with your group and/or mentor, and use the time to:

- discuss what the Lord has taught you this week
- discuss your answers to the reflection questions this week
- discuss any struggles you’ve faced as a follower of Jesus this week
- share about any 10-minute discipling opportunities you had this week
- set personal and study goals for next week
- pray together

# Introduction to Hebrews

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Hebrews was written most likely to Jewish Christians who were under pressure to abandon, or at least compromise, their faith. The author of Hebrews, who is unidentified, was writing to a group of Christians under severe persecution. Because some were considering a return to Judaism, the book's primary theme is the superiority of Jesus.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Author:</b>      | Unknown  |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Jewish-Christian congregation(s) in Rome<br>( <i>written to</i> )  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>    | Persecution of Christians causing some to revert to Judaism  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To warn people in these Jewish-Christian congregations against reverting to Judaism in order to avoid being persecuted as Christians |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | The supremacy of Christ over Old Testament antecedent figures and other intermediaries   |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | Hebrews 12:1–2   |

# Hebrews 1-2

WEEK 9 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You that Jesus is both fully God and fully man and that He is able to help us in times of need. We praise You for our great Savior who is greater than any man and even greater than the angels. Open the eyes of the lost to see Jesus as your Son whose salvation they desperately need! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 1-2

### Hebrews 1

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were dealing with persecution and trials. The author’s purpose is to encourage them to persevere in the face of persecution and not return to Judaism. If these early believers are going to do that, however, they must see Jesus in all His glory.

So the author begins by reminding them that Jesus is not just the latest revelation of God; He’s not merely the next step in the plan. Rather, Jesus is the unique revelation of God to which all previous revelation pointed. The writer of Hebrews uses seven statements to describe who Jesus is (e.g., He is the heir of all things and the creator of the universe—1:2).

As the divine Son of God, Jesus sits at the right hand of God and is superior to the angels, who had been instrumental in giving the Law at Mount Sinai. In fact, “all God’s angels just worship Him” (1:6).

### Hebrews 2

If Jesus is the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (1:3), then believers must hold on

*If you were to graph your spiritual walk since you became a Christian, would your life show times when you drifted from following God fully? Even as you do this study, are you drifting in any way?*

to the message He taught. This warning against drifting from God's Word is the first of several warnings throughout the letter of Hebrews.

Unlike the angels, the Son of God became a human being to bring about "the world to come," that is, the new age of God's kingdom. He is the pioneer of our salvation, not only leading the way but actually setting us free from the rule of sin and death in which we're by nature enslaved. He is both the high priest representing His people and the sacrificial lamb who dies as a substitute, satisfying God's wrath toward sinners.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

/ Hebrews 1:1-4

#### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Spend a minimum of five minutes reviewing your memory verses. Consider asking a friend (maybe even a non-believing friend) to test your memorization.
  - Matthew 4:4      ■ Luke 19:10      ■ Romans 5:8
  - Philippians 2:3      ■ Matthew 15:8
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.



# Hebrews 3:1–6:12

WEEK 9 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, as I read today, help me see how Jesus is the perfect Savior for me, for Israel, and for anyone who will believe. Make me firm, strong, and steadfast in Christ so I will not look back to my old life but cling to Jesus and the life only He provides. Help me persevere in loving obedience and faithful living all the days of my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 3:1–6:12

### Hebrews 3

Having explained the superiority of Jesus to the angels, the author directs our attention to Christ as the “apostle and high priest” of our faith (3:1). In calling Jesus an apostle, he reminds us that God sent Jesus to accomplish a mission. Jesus is superior to Moses, since Moses’ mission was merely an anticipation of Jesus’ greater mission.

The readers of Hebrews should guard their hearts, encouraging each other so they do not grow hardened by sin and unbelief. Judgment awaits those who do not trust God and persevere.

### Hebrews 4:1–13

Promises are important in the book of Hebrews, and this section focuses on the promised “rest” that God gives believers. This rest is better than that promised through Old Testament prophets like Joshua; this rest is the peace Jesus gives us as we rely on Him both for life today and life eternal. We don’t earn it by our works, but still we must persevere to enter it by trusting and following the Word of God.

That Word is powerful. It reads our heart, comforting the

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*What benefits do you gain from being a part of a small group Bible study or discipleship group?*

obedient and exposing the disobedient. We hide nothing from God—and His Word pierces us to call us to repentance and rest.

### Hebrews 4:14–5:10

Some of the Hebrews were struggling, so the writer calls them to “hold fast to the confession” (4:14). Jesus identifies with us because He was tempted like we are, but without sin. He is the perfect High Priest—greater than any earthly high priest who was himself a sinner—who suffered in our place to provide eternal salvation. We can approach Him boldly.

### Hebrews 5:11–6:12

The author concludes this section with a strong warning against turning away from this teaching about Christ. His readers are still immature in their faith, even though they should have grown by now. They should already know the basics, but they still need the “milk” of the Word. Some are apparently in danger of falling.

This warning, though, does not mean that those who are genuinely saved can lose their salvation. Instead, the strong warning is a means God uses to cause His people to persevere in faith. The writer is even convinced of “better things” (6:9) from his beloved friends. He wants them to remain diligent in their service for Christ.

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*Perseverance isn't about “gritting it out” or “letting go and letting God.” Are you guilty of either presuming upon your salvation or thinking it's all up to you?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>14</sup>Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

*<sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

/ Hebrews 4:14–16



# Hebrews 6:13–8:13

WEEK 9 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You that You do not lie, and Your promises are certain. Thank You, Jesus, for being our high priest who understands us, is able to save us completely, and lives to intercede for us. What an amazing truth! We praise You for sending such a wonderful Savior! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 6:13-8:13

### Hebrews 6:13–20

The author picks up and expands on Jesus’ identity as the “high priest of our confession” (3:1). But first, having warned his readers against turning away, he assures them of God’s faithfulness.

God’s trustworthiness is grounded in His character. When He makes a promise or swears an oath, we can be certain He will keep it. And in both of these things—the promise and the oath—He cannot lie. Abraham is the example par excellence of a man who trusted and hoped in God.

### Hebrews 7

The author returns to the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood. He explains that the priesthood after Melchizedek—an Old Testament character who was himself a type of Christ (Genesis 14:17–24)—is superior to the Levitical priesthood. In the second half of the chapter, the author then argues for the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood in the order of Melchizedek based on the prophecy of Psalm 110:4.

All of this is in contrast to the Levitical priesthood, which could neither save itself nor those who came to it for salvation.

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*We usually know whether we’re trustworthy. As a follower of Jesus, how trustworthy are you? Do you reflect the character of Jesus?*



But Jesus, the high priest and guarantor of a new and better covenant, offered Himself as a sacrifice “once for all” (7:27) as the obedient Son of God. He now intercedes for His own.

## Hebrews 8

Having established Jesus as the high priest of a new and better covenant, the author turns to the new covenant prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31–34. He points out that the old covenant, with its temple and altar, was just a shadow—or type—that pointed forward to the superior heavenly reality of the new covenant. The old covenant could not save sinners through its endless sacrifices, but Jesus was the ultimate, final sacrifice.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>26</sup>For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. <sup>28</sup>For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.*

/ Hebrews 7:26–28

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Using a calendar, identify one different person for whom you’ll pray each day during one month. That way, you’ll pray for at least 30 people in several weeks.

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

For at least five minutes, intercede for a brother or sister in Christ. Model Christ as the intercessor.

# Hebrews 9-10

WEEK 9 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Dear Father, You alone could have made a way for me to be forgiven. I praise You for the sacrifice of Christ. Help me draw near to You today in full assurance of my faith, knowing Christ has made a way for me to come into Your presence. Strengthen me to hold fast to my hope, because I know You are faithful. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 9-10

### Hebrews 9:1–10

The author continues to make his case for the superiority of Christ’s ministry as the high priest of the new covenant. The whole point of worship restrictions in the old covenant, the author says, was to illustrate that something better was needed. Old covenant worship was external and ceremonial and thus could not “perfect the worshiper’s conscience” (9:9). In other words, it couldn’t save sinners.

### Hebrews 9:11–28

In contrast to the temporary earthly tabernacle and its repeated, imperfect sacrifices, Jesus Christ entered the heavenly presence of God and there offered Himself as a perfect and eternal sacrifice. His blood purified the members of the covenant, because “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (9:22).

The author refers to Christ’s appearing three times in this chapter: in the past, to obtain our eternal redemption (9:11–12); in the present, as our mediator before God (9:24); and in the future, to consummate the salvation of all “who are waiting for Him” and persevering in faith (9:28). We look back to what Christ did,

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*Do you ever trust in something other than Jesus for your salvation? Your good works? Your Christian heritage? Your church membership? None of these can save you.*



depend upon Him now, and look forward to His return.

## Hebrews 10

The long argument for the superiority of Christ's ministry now reaches its climax. All that came before in the old covenant was simply a shadow of the better things that have arrived in Christ.

The author again exhorts the Hebrews to persevere in their faith in Christ, knowing there is no other sacrifice for sin to which they can turn. He wants them to draw near to God, hold fast to their hope, and spur one another on in love and good deeds.

For those who don't heed this warning, there's no other hope of salvation. And yet, the author is hopeful that "we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and obtain life" (10:39). Again, he warns them in order to encourage them.

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*Is it easier for you to give your dollars or your time to your church? Pushing one another to follow Christ well means we have to give both.*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>27</sup>And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, <sup>28</sup>so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

/ Hebrews 9:27-28

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

As you've read the book of Hebrews, have the warning passages caused you any spiritual discomfort? Do you have complete confidence that you are a genuine child of God? Would others who know you well express confidence in your spiritual walk? Prayerfully consider these questions and be sure to share your thoughts with your group and/or mentor this week.

# Hebrews 11-13

WEEK 9 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, glory be to You, to Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit. Thank You for the many faithful men and women who have lived out the story of Your faithfulness. Help me to fix my focus on Jesus and to love my brothers, sisters, and neighbors. Help me run my race well. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 11-13

### Hebrews 11

In Hebrews 10, the author exhorts his readers to persevere in light of Jesus’ perfect sacrifice. Now the author turns to the Old Testament to offer examples of persevering faith. As you read this famous chapter, pay attention to these truths:

- Faith is most often expressed in our actions as well as our beliefs. Notice the verbs in the chapter.
- Faith is confidence in God. It is believing that He is who He says He is.
- Faith is trusting the promises of God, even when those promises are not fulfilled in our lifetime.
- Faith sometimes brings rescue and protection, but sometimes it requires us to die while still trusting.
- The stories of faith in the lives of others ought to encourage us to live by faith, too.

### Hebrews 12

Reflecting on these examples of faith (the “large cloud of witnesses” in 12:1) and Christ as the One who endured the cross, the author urges the Hebrews to keep “our eyes on Jesus” (12:2)

*Which of the faith stories in Hebrews 11 is most powerful to you? Why?*





and persevere in hope rather than “grow weary and lose heart” (12:3). Rather than turn away from God when persecution hits, they should trust their Father’s loving discipline, walk in godliness, live with gratitude, and worship God with reverence and awe.

## Hebrews 13

In the last chapter of Hebrews, the writer challenges his readers to live out their faith in practical ways. The final benediction in 13:20–21 then summarizes the entire letter. It’s a prayer that the God who resurrected Jesus from the dead and made peace with us through His blood would also give the Hebrews all they need to persevere in faith.

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*How much do you think about your pastor’s responsibility to care for your soul? Do you pray regularly for him?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

/ Hebrews 12:1–3



# Introduction to James



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | James, son of Joseph, half-brother of Jesus   |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Diaspora Jewish Christians outside Jerusalem  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | A circular letter to believers who had fled Jerusalem because of Agrippa's persecution  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To exhort Jewish Christians to live their Christian lives in keeping with wisdom, to act on their faith, and not to show preferential treatment to the rich |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Faith that works  |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | James 2:21-22   |

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## THE BOOK OF JAMES

The Apostle James, the half-brother of Jesus and the leader of the early church in Jerusalem, wrote to encourage mostly Jewish believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire to endure persecution with joy. In fact, James himself died a martyr's death in roughly A.D. 62.

Some have characterized the book of James as an extended commentary on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. You might want to go back and review the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) in preparation for reading this book.

# James 1

WEEK 10 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, I know every good gift comes from you, the unchangeable One. Thank You for all Your good gifts. Thank You for using trials to make Your people mature and complete. Thank You for giving wisdom when we ask for it. Help me persevere today in whatever circumstances come my way. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read James 1

### James 1:1–8

James tells his readers to rejoice because their trials are refining their faith, making them steadfast so they would be complete and perfect on the last day. They should seek God’s wisdom in handling trials, and if they ask in faith He will generously give them guidance.

### James 1:9–18

Both the poor believer and the rich believer face trials. The Christian in low circumstances should boast in his eternal riches in Christ. The Christian in high circumstances should boast instead in “humiliation” (1:10)—that is, his humbling by trials. All earthly riches will pass away, and all of us will die. But those who love God and remain steadfast in trials will receive eternal life.

Although trials come from God to refine our faith, temptation does not come from God but from our own desires. Our evil desires lure us in the wrong direction. Every good thing in our lives, including the refining of our faith, comes from our heavenly Father who never changes.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

For scripture memorization, choose scriptures that convict you or encourage you as you do your daily Bible reading. You’ll be more likely to memorize verses that grab your attention.



## James 1:19–27

James focuses this section on Christian conduct, with particular focus on the tongue. Christians should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Instead of pridefully doing what we think is good for us, we should humbly accept God’s way. After all, the Word implanted in our hearts is able to save our souls.

We should be not only hearers of the Word, but doers of it. Doing the Word includes bridling our tongues, caring for orphans and widows, and resisting the temptations of the world.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>19</sup>Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

/ James 1:19–20

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*Which of these is most difficult for you: being quick to listen? Being slow to speak? Being slow to get angry?*

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Spend at least 5 minutes memorizing this week’s verses:  
*“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness”* (James 1:2–3).
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# James 2

WEEK 10 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord, forgive me when I show favoritism. Help me to see it and repent. Strengthen me today to live out my faith with my deeds—all to Your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read James 2

### James 2:1–13

There should be no distinction in the church, and any favoritism indicates evil thinking. It’s easy, though, to favor the rich over the poor because of what we perceive they can offer. James condemns this thinking by showing that the rich were sometimes oppressing the poor in his day. He indicates that such sin will bring judgment. On the other hand, believers must show mercy to others because God has first shown mercy to us.

### James 2:14–26

Here, James continues his previous thoughts about being doers of the Word. Works do not save us, but true faith is evidenced through works. If we say we believe but do not live in accordance with those beliefs, our faith is useless; even the demons “believe” that God is one and Jesus is His Son (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24). James points to Abraham and Rahab as two Old Testament examples whose faith was evidenced by their actions.

Elsewhere, the apostle Paul wrote, “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:28). Does the Bible now contradict itself? Not at all. James is not arguing that faith plus works leads to salvation. He’s explaining that saving faith, the kind that Paul wrote about, leads to works. Works are evidence of a faith that justifies.

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*As you disciple a young believer, how would you explain the relationship between faith works?*



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>18</sup>But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! <sup>20</sup>Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?*

/ James 2:18–20

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

A primary question of this chapter is whether your actions show your professed faith. Consider both your private world and your public world—that which nobody sees, and that which others see. Are your private and public actions consistent with your professed faith? If not, decide what needs to change.

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# James 3

WEEK 10 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Heavenly Father, I know I have sinned with my tongue. Please forgive me and grant me the humility that comes from wisdom. By Your strength, help me to grow in wisdom from heaven and in peacemaking. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read James 3

### James 3:1–12

Apparently, some of these believers were speaking in ways that were ungodly and divisive. So James reminds them that our tongue is powerful; it may be small, but it has a mighty influence. We can use it to praise God or to curse those made in His image. But Christians, James tells us, should not be contradictory in their speech. That’s one reason why those who use their tongues to teach must take special care: God will judge them by a greater standard.

### James 3:13–18

Good speech and good conduct come from a wise and understanding heart. James wants his readers to know that truth. Wisdom is from God, and it bears much fruit in the church. It’s evident in the way believers live; it is “peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense” (3:17).

On the other hand, earthly “wisdom” is marked by jealousy and selfish ambition. It leads to disorder and immorality in the church. Internal conflict in a congregation is an almost inevitable result. Genuinely wise teachers who seek wisdom from above, however, can lead toward unity and order.

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*What does James 3:1 imply about how churches select teachers? Why is it so important that teachers are held to a high standard?*





## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>2</sup>And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.***

/ James 2:2b

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Beginning today, be especially careful about your speech. Spend at least five minutes in prayer, asking God to show you any areas where you need to improve.

Maybe these steps will help you as you move forward:

- Stay away from ungodly criticism. Halt the conversation before it starts.
- Don't brag about yourself.
- Avoid ungodly humor or sexual references.
- Praise God continually for who He is.
- Build up others with your speech. Don't tear them down.
- Tell others about Jesus. Keep your focus on Him.

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# James 4

WEEK 10 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Lord, I want to live for You; I want to love and desire what You love and desire. Change my heart, that I wouldn’t be a friend of the world in any way. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read James 4

### James 4:1–12

Clearly, division and fighting plagued the people to whom James wrote. Selfishness and pride created turmoil, and James wants them to know that this is happening primarily because of their wrong motives. Even their prayers are marked by selfish motives (4:3).

James gets down to the basics: some of these people simply love the world more than they love God. James is clear that this cannot be: “Friendship with the world is hostility toward God” (4:4). They’re spiritual adulterers, but thankfully God offers grace even to the unfaithful. If we submit to Him and resist the devil, the devil will flee and God will draw near. We do this through mourning our sin and humbly repenting, while choosing not to be sinfully critical of others.

### James 4:13–17

In light of eternity, our lives are short. This passage warns both businessmen and us that we have no control over the future so we should hold our plans lightly and trust the Lord to do what is best. To assume our future and our success, in fact, is nothing less than boastful. Our responsibility is to trust God and always seek to do the right thing, particularly toward others in the church (see Galatians 6:10).

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*Do you love God or the world?*



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***1What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?***

/ James 4:1

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Some believers tend to quarrel with others. They tend to focus on the negative, think only pessimistically, and rarely see wrong in their own opinions. Evaluate yourself. Are you that kind of person? If you're not sure, ask someone who knows you well.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 = "definitely not quarrelsome" and 10 = "definitely quarrelsome"), rate yourself here:

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# James 5

WEEK 10 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, You are so patient with us. Help me be patient as I wait for Your coming. And for any who have wandered from the truth, use me to bring them back. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read James 5

### James 5:1–12

James now rails against the rich who are exploiting and defrauding people in the church. Living in luxury and self-indulgence is like fattening oneself for the day of slaughter, and the corrosion of those riches will one day testify against the rich man.

In light of the rich oppressing poor believers in James’ day, James says Christians should be patient like farmers, waiting for their crops to grow. They should have steadfast hearts, waiting expectantly but patiently for Christ’s return when He will make all things right. We should persevere, focus on Him, and not complain about one another. Our lives are to be marked by integrity.

### James 5:13–20

The last part of James’ letter emphasizes prayer and worship. Believers should pray amidst suffering, sing praises when cheerful, and call the elders to pray and anoint with oil persons who are sick. This oil is likely medicinal, like the oil used by the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:34, though the cause of the healing is clearly prayer. The prayer of faithful, trusting believers—like Elijah (5:17)—can bring both physical and spiritual healing. As we confess our sins to one another and pray for each other, God may choose to use our prayers to heal the sick or even bring someone to repentance and faith.

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*Are you praying more as a result of this study? Do you still need to improve in this area?*



James concludes his letter by challenging the believers to seek out those who are wandering. If anyone in the church turns from the truth of the gospel and begins to live in sin, we should go after him and bring him back.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***16Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.***

/ James 5:16

### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Get together with your group and/or mentor, and use the time to:

- discuss what the Lord has taught you this week
- discuss your answers to the reflection questions this week
- discuss any struggles you've faced as a follower of Jesus this week
- share about any 10-minute discipling opportunities you had this week
- set personal and study goals for next week
- pray together

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# Introduction to 1 Corinthians

## THE BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

The Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians to address immorality and divisions within the young church. He thanks God for the church in the first chapter and expresses his love for them in the last chapter. But in between, he strongly addresses them.

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|--|--|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Paul   |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | The church at Corinth  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | Oral reports and a letter from the Corinthians   |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To address practical issues such as schisms in the church, lawsuits in local courts, the exercise of church discipline, questions related to idolatry, Christian marriage, the ordinances, spiritual gifts, and theological issues such as the nature of salvation and the doctrine of resurrection. |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | 1 Corinthians 13:1–3   |

# 1 Corinthians 1-4

WEEK 11 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me explain the simple message of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. Help me humbly trust in the power of Your Holy Spirit to give others spiritual understanding. And as I read your Word today, I ask for your wisdom so I can understand spiritual truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 1-4

### 1 Corinthians 1

Paul rejoices in God’s faithfulness to the Corinthian church, but from the beginning he draws attention to a serious problem: disunity. Paul calls these believers to be unified because they had experienced salvation and baptism through one name—Jesus Christ.

The Corinthians foolishly assume that godly wisdom and worldly wisdom are the same. Paul addresses this error by reminding his readers that the gospel itself—what he calls “the word of the cross”—sounds foolish according to the world. This should surprise no one, since God often chooses those who appear foolish, weak, and lowly to communicate His deepest wisdom.

### 1 Corinthians 2

Paul reminds the Corinthians how he first shared the gospel with them: simply, clearly, humbly, and in the power of the Holy Spirit—not with eloquent speech or slick arguments. As a result, those who believed put their faith in God, not him.

Paul then explains how God’s Word contains truth beyond the gospel message. The spiritually mature can discern these truths

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*Paul tells the Corinthians that he came to them in “weakness, in fear, and in much trembling” (2:3). What does that description say to you about God’s willingness to use you as His disciple?*

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### PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Here are some hints for teaching the Bible to a group:

- Study well. Preparation calms nerves.
- Enlist people ahead of time to read the Scriptures, pray aloud, etc. Give them time to get ready.
- Know clearly the central truth and applications you want the group to learn and do.
- Don’t just lecture. Use good questions to encourage group discussion.

as the Holy Spirit transforms their minds and gives them wisdom and insight into God’s Word.

#### 1 Corinthians 3

Although the Corinthians have what is necessary to grow in Christ, they’re still spiritual babies. This is evident by their “fruit”: jealousy, strife, and division. Paul reminds them that we’re all fellow workers, building on the same foundation of Christ. Our responsibility is to live humbly with eternity in mind, following Christ fully, doing works that can endure God’s judgment, and playing our role in God’s church.

#### 1 Corinthians 4

In this light, how should we view church leaders? We should see them as servants and stewards. They’re called to serve the church humbly and teach the church clearly, using the insight God has given them into His Word. They’re called to faithfulness, not spiritual super-stardom.

In fact, Paul thanks God for the poor treatment he and other church leaders experience because any success that comes through such apparent “weakness” is clearly a result of God’s power—so God alone receives the glory. In conclusion, Paul asks the Corinthians to imitate his life, not because he’s successful but because he’s their spiritual father.





## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>26</sup>For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’*

/ 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Spend this week reviewing your memory verses. Take five minutes now to write out at least three of them:
  - Matthew 4:4    ■ Luke 19:10    ■ Romans 5:8
  - Philippians 2:3    ■ Matthew 15:8    ■ James 1:2-3
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# 1 Corinthians 5–7

WEEK 11 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father, help me run fast and far from temptation. I don’t want to use my body for sin because I know my body doesn’t belong to me. You bought it with the precious blood of Jesus, and now it’s the temple of the Holy Spirit. As I make decisions, help me not just consider what’s “allowed,” but what’s helpful, so I will glorify You in all I do. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 5-7

### 1 Corinthians 5

Paul shifts to another complaint against the Corinthians. Instead of mourning sexual immorality in the church, they’ve become arrogant, perhaps even interpreting sexual sin as “freedom” in Christ. Paul contends that the church must take a strong stand toward professing believers living in such open, unrepentant sin:

- 1 / For the good of those sinning.** If the church ignores or accepts sin, believers living in sin have no incentive to repent.
- 2 / For the good of the church.** Unaddressed sin tends to spread within the body, and the entire church is soon affected.

### 1 Corinthians 6

Corinthian Christians were also suing fellow believers in civil court. Paul says disputing believers should either seek godly mediation within the church or drop the matter completely—putting the good of the church above financial fairness.

The deeper issue here involves a Christian’s freedom in Christ. Paul teaches that Christian freedom doesn’t give believers license to do whatever they want. Instead, believers must rely on the Holy Spirit and use godly wisdom. People whose lives are marked

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

If you struggle with particular sin issues, ask God to help you hate your sin. Grieve it. Turn from it.



by sin will not inherit God’s kingdom, but God’s power and grace changes sinners, so the Corinthians must live rightly as believers.

## 1 Corinthians 7

The next sections of 1 Corinthians address issues that the Corinthians had asked Paul about in a previous letter. All things considered, some Corinthian believers wondered if it was better to just avoid sex completely. Paul responds by affirming celibacy and encouraging those who are unmarried to remain celibate if they’re gifted to do so. Married believers, however, should maintain a selfless sexual relationship with their spouse. All in all, believers—whether married or unmarried—should be content with their life circumstances, always living for the Lord’s glory.

Paul continues to clear up some common misconceptions about marriage. Single believers can be more single-minded than married believers, especially when it comes to their affections and time. Simply put, marriage is not a sin—and it’s far better to marry than to give into sexual temptation outside of marriage. Single or widowed believers contemplating marriage must count the cost of marriage. Should they choose marriage, they must marry someone who is “in Christ” and always maintain their primary allegiance to Christ.

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*God had dramatically changed some of the Corinthians. How might you use this truth when you tell others about Jesus?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,  
<sup>20</sup>for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

/ 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

**REFLECT & CHANGE:  
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

What appetites threaten to control you? Mark all of the following statements that accurately describe your life:

- I'm living a life of sexual purity.
- I live with the bad images of pornography use in the past.
- I do not view pornography in any form, including pictures and images that others may not consider pornographic.
- I'm currently losing the battle with pornography.

# 1 Corinthians 8-10

WEEK 11 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Dear Father, As I learn more about You and your Word, please help me to resist the temptation to be puffed up with pride, or to think I know something when I really don’t. I want to use what I learn to love others and build them up. Please keep me from living in a way that hurts the conscience of other believers or tempts them to sin. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 8-10

### 1 Corinthians 8

Paul builds on the theme of living for both the glory of God and the good of others. In ancient Corinth, meat sold in the market often came from animals that had been sacrificed in pagan temples. Corinthian believers apparently disagreed about whether they should eat this meat, so they asked Paul about his position on the matter.

Paul affirms that eating such food doesn’t spiritually benefit the eater (as the pagans believed), nor does it contaminate them spiritually (as the Jews believed). To the Corinthian believers, Paul warns: Don’t be prideful about your spiritual knowledge, and don’t use your freedom in Christ selfishly. Instead, lovingly choose to do what’s best for each other, including not eating the meat if doing so might cause a weaker brother to stumble. Love means willingly sacrificing our “rights” rather than compromising our witness or tempting others to sin.

### 1 Corinthians 9

Anticipating the Corinthians’ response to his answer, Paul uses his own life as an example. He defends his right to be supported

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*Are there areas of your life where you’re allowing your liberty to be a stumbling block for someone else? Any areas where you’re tempted to “fight” to defend your liberty?*

by the church financially but also says he had not and would not exercise this right. Why not? For the sake of the gospel.

Paul is willing to sacrifice personal preferences for the sake of communicating the gospel clearly to all people. Appropriately, Paul likens the Christian life to a race that requires discipline and self-control to not be “disqualified” (9:27).

### 1 Corinthians 10

Paul reminds the Corinthians of God’s power and faithfulness to help them resist temptation and avoid disqualification. Using various Old Testament examples, he challenges them to avoid evil and idolatry in all its various forms. Amidst trial and tribulation, believers must remember that God will always provide them a way of escape when temptation comes.

This chapter concludes with a reminder that believers should make every decision based on what brings the most glory to God. Even if something is “allowed,” we should consider three things:

- 1 / Is it helpful?** Does it help the lost hear and believe? Does it help other believers walk in holiness?
- 2 / Does it build up?** Does it build up God’s kingdom and not my own? Does it build up others?
- 3 / Am I seeking the good of my neighbor?** Do I have the best interests of others in mind?



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>23</sup>‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things build up. <sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.*

/ 1 Corinthians 10:23–24



# 1 Corinthians 11-14

WEEK 11 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Lord, may my love, especially for my family and church, be characterized by patience, kindness, selflessness, joy, hope, and forgiveness—not envy, arrogance, pride, or rudeness. Help me not insist on my own way, rejoice at others’ failures, or quit loving when loving gets tough. May Your love continually flow through me to others. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 11-14

### 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Paul can confidently tell the Corinthians to follow his example because he first follows Christ. He then affirms the Corinthians’ efforts to obey him and addresses three areas where they needed to grow in obedience, particularly in relation to corporate worship.

In a discussion about public worship, Paul first instructs believing women to wear head coverings when they pray or prophesy publicly as a symbol of their submission to God-given authority. While it’s likely Paul is referring to first-century cultural traditions, he wants the believers to understand that God created distinctions in men and women from the beginning. Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman—like God is the head of Christ, who willingly submitted to the Father’s will (11:3).

### 1 Corinthians 11:17–34

The Corinthians’ celebration of the Supper also needed correction. Apparently, it resembled a party complete with drunkenness, over-eating, fighting, and selfishness. Paul thus rebukes the church and reminds them of the meaning behind the bread and wine. When believers participate in the Lord’s Supper

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*If the members of your group imitated your life, would they be imitating Christ?*





flippantly, they're asking for God's judgment.

## 1 Corinthians 12–14

Finally, Paul helps the Corinthians better understand spiritual gifts—the various spiritual abilities given to individual believers for the church's benefit. The Corinthians were creating division over gifts, and Paul reminds them that these gifts shouldn't be a source of pride. Compared to love, which lasts forever, spiritual gifts are only temporary.

All spiritual gifts come from God, and believers must exercise them in love. In worship, the church should give priority to gifts that best build up the church, and they should set boundaries for the exercise of those gifts. Paul urges the Corinthians to prioritize prophecy during worship because of its potential for building up the church and helping unbelievers come to faith.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>24</sup>But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.***

/ 1 Corinthians 12:24b–27

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Have you evaluated what your spiritual gifts are? If so, are you using them for God's glory through your local church? If not, talk with your pastor about doing a spiritual gifts inventory.

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

You might use a spiritual gifts inventory to discover your gifts, but don't limit your understanding of God's expectations to the inventory's results. Inventories are only one tool to help you evaluate God's work in your life.

# 1 Corinthians 15-16

WEEK 11 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for giving me victory over sin and death through Christ’s death and resurrection. And thank You for the hope I now have, knowing You will one day raise me from the dead. Help me serve You with all of my life, because I know any sacrifice I make or suffering I endure will be worth it. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 15-16

### 1 Corinthians 15:1–11

As Paul nears the end of his letter to the Corinthians, he directs their focus back to the heart of their faith—the gospel itself, as passed on to them by the apostles.

His summary of the good news is short and simple: In the exact fulfillment of everything promised in the Old Testament, Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead—a fact supported by many eyewitnesses.

### 1 Corinthians 15:12–34

Though the Corinthians claimed to believe the gospel, some of them didn’t believe people could be raised from the dead. Paul pushes these supposed believers to follow this stated belief to its logical conclusion. If they didn’t believe God raised people from the dead, then they couldn’t believe that God raised Christ—and if they denied Christ’s resurrection, then they denied the gospel itself.

### 1 Corinthians 15:35–58

Paul recognizes some were still struggling with the idea of resurrection, and he wants to help them. First, he describes our current body, noting how it will die and one day be transformed



into a body that is incomparably more amazing—eternal, glorious, and powerful. Second, he speaks of Christ’s resurrection body. Our natural bodies bear the mortal image of Adam, but our resurrection bodies will bear the immortal image of Christ.

## 1 Corinthians 16

Paul’s final remarks demonstrate practical ways to “do church” beyond weekly worship services:

- *Give generously.* Paul instructs the Corinthians to prayerfully set aside money for believers in another city.
- *Value people the way God does.* Paul instructs the church to serve and love others, to stand firm in the faith, and to recognize those who encourage others.
- *Exhibit humble leadership.* Paul loves the Corinthians as a father, and he humbly communicates his genuine desire to spend time with them.

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*The promise of a glorified body doesn’t give us permission to ignore taking care of the body God has given us. Are you maintaining prior commitments to take care of yourself physically?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>54</sup>When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup>O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ <sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup>But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup>Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

/ 1 Corinthians 15:54–58



# Introduction to 2 Corinthians



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Paul  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Churches in Corinth and throughout the province of Achaia   |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | Titus's report on the condition of the church followed by additional information regarding the intrusion of false apostles  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To defend Paul's apostolic authority, explain the nature of the new covenant, encourage sacrificial giving to the relief offering, and challenge the claims of false apostles |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | 2 Corinthians 5:16–21   |

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## THE BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Paul wrote his second letter to the church at Corinth to defend himself from personal attacks by some within the church and to warn against false teachers who were spreading heresy.

# 2 Corinthians 1-3

WEEK 12 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, teach us to root ourselves in Your kingdom reality, not this world’s. We want to grow in our confidence of the gospel’s greatness, so that we’re untouched by our circumstances as we walk with your Spirit doing your work. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 1-3

### 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

After his greeting, Paul begins this letter by praising God for His mercy and comfort. Even when Paul faced opposition and trouble, those difficulties only deepened his faith in God’s goodness and prepared him to minister to others. Because of this, he intimately experiences God’s grace and understands that God is his strength—a recurrent theme of this book.

### 2 Corinthians 1:12–2:13

Paul had wanted to come to Corinth, but he chose not to in order to spare the Corinthians another hard visit. Paul’s opponents are questioning his character, but he defends himself and challenges the believers to understand the bigger kingdom picture. He urges them to forgive one another and stay unified so Satan couldn’t compromise them further.

### 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:18

Despite the world’s mixed reception of the good news, Paul knows that God’s kingdom was progressing and spreading. He rejects any personal benefits of doing God’s work and operates with deep spiritual values—pleasing God, seeing the Spirit change people, mediating God’s Word to people, and bringing life by sharing the Spirit.

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*What trials have you faced that have paved the way for you to minister to others dealing with the same kind of trial?*



# 2 Corinthians 4-5

WEEK 12 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father, because we’re a part of Your family, we want to adopt Your values and perspective. Teach us to root ourselves in the invisible yet absolutely real kingdom. Grow our faith stronger and deeper when opposition comes. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 4-5

### 2 Corinthians 4:1–15

Paul and Timothy find their identity in God’s invisible kingdom, and they see themselves as messengers of God’s plan to bring light. Though people accuse them of confusing and hiding truth, they explain that the good news makes sense only when receivers’ hearts and minds are opened to it. They set forth the truth plainly, preaching Jesus Christ and not themselves.

### 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10

A Christ-centered ministry has many benefits over a man-centered one. For example, Paul and Timothy are undeterred by personal attacks, obstacles, or death threats because their ministry is about God, not them. They know God is planning a new, fuller life for them in His coming kingdom. Physical bodies are temporary, but in the new earth, neither spirits nor bodies will break down or die. God guarantees believers new bodies and, in the meantime, He gives us his Spirit.

### 2 Corinthians 5:11–22

Believers have a responsibility to be ministers of reconciliation between God and the world. Paul sees believers as the voice and mouth of the invisible God in the world, so he spends his life sharing everything he has heard and known.

*Does anything keep you from doing God’s work? If so, what?*





# 2 Corinthians 6-8

WEEK 12 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, help us respect the amazing gift of the gospel by doing whatever we can to be respectable and honorable in our city. We know you have accepted us fully through Jesus, so teach us now to validate our faith in our everyday actions and lifestyles. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 6-8

### 2 Corinthians 6:3–7:1

Paul and Timothy realize their lifestyle choices either help or hurt how people respond to God’s words, so they work to show godly character in all circumstances. They open their hearts to the Corinthians and ask them to reciprocate that care and trust. Paul warns believers about the foolishness of attaching their lives to unbelievers because God calls all believers out of their old identities into a new family, calling them “my people” (6:16).

### 2 Corinthians 7:2–16

While Paul and Timothy suffered in Macedonia, they were encouraged as they heard about the Corinthians’ faithfulness, loyalty, and obedience. The Corinthians received the previous difficult letter from Paul with appropriate sorrow and earnest commitment to change. Their response proved their faith was genuine. Paul risked upsetting the believers and knew his words would hurt them (7:8–9), but he values the outcome more than their comfort.

### 2 Corinthians 8:1–15

The Macedonian believers were an example to the Corinthians of living and growing in faith. They particularly exhibited the gift of generosity, which Paul commends to the Corinthian church.

*Are there places in your life where you are connected with non-believers in an unhealthy way? Where non-believers influence your life more than you influence theirs?*



Paul gives specific advice about how they can better view their money and surrender it to God so that all the believers are equally provided for.

### **2 Corinthians 8:16–24**

Since Paul and Timothy couldn't visit Corinth themselves, they recommend Titus and the other teachers as Paul's own colleagues. Meanwhile, Paul encourages the Corinthians to show themselves to be above criticism in all areas of their work and life.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>16</sup>What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup>Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, <sup>18</sup>and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.'***

/ 2 Corinthians 6:16–18

## **PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP**

If you want to give more sacrificially to God's work, learn to budget and spend well in the first place. We often have less to give to God because we waste much of what we have.

### **GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY**

Being a disciple means using your time wisely to follow God—especially because this world is just temporary. List here the two biggest “time wasters” in your life and make plans to correct at least one of them this week. Be sure to discuss your commitment with your group and/or mentor.

# 2 Corinthians 9-11

WEEK 12 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Lord, please protect us from being impressed by people who promote their human values and standards, and teach us to root our identities only in things that matter to You. We want to develop faith and obedience in all areas of our lives so we can validate the gift of faith we received from Your Spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 9-11

### 2 Corinthians 9

Paul brags on the Corinthians’ past generosity and sends Titus to help them meet their giving goal with enthusiasm. Paul and Timothy see believers’ financial support of others as evidence of their faith.

Notice Paul’s concern that the Corinthians not embarrass or shame his and Timothy’s trust in them. In much the same way, Paul and Timothy know they’re obligated to honor God’s words by keeping pristine reputations. They teach the Corinthians to honor the gospel investment they’d received.

### 2 Corinthians 10

Paul rejects the attacks that had been made on his and Timothy’s character and re-establishes his authority over the opposing Corinthian voices. Paul and Timothy live by God’s spiritual standards, not the human values of their opponents; they even refuse to compare their lives with others’. Instead, Paul offers the quality of his commitment and sincerity of his life as proof of his God-given authority.

### 2 Corinthians 11

Even though he feels ridiculous discussing his own credibility, Paul

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*Do you give cheerfully to support God’s work? Or do you give begrudgingly just because you know you need to give?*



# 2 Corinthians 12-13

WEEK 12 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Lord, we value our relationship with You and want to honor You above everything else. So we open ourselves to receive correction and teaching from those who can help us grow in faithful obedience. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 12-13

### 2 Corinthians 12:1–19

Paul is upset that the Corinthians valued more prestigious teachers who forced their allegiance and support. He defends his ministry, not in an effort to prove anything about himself but to help the Corinthian believers re-establish their confidence in the truth.

Paul knows God allowed a specific difficulty in his life—described in 12:7 as a “thorn”—to keep him weak enough to rely fully on God. Paul accepts this difficulty to grow his humility. He even values his weakness because God displays grace and provision through it. God’s strength is most evident in Paul when Paul is weak.

### 2 Corinthians 12:20–13:14

About to return on his third visit to the Corinthians, Paul worries both he and the Corinthians will be humiliated by how the Corinthians’ lifestyles are dishonoring God’s name. Paul is ready to confront people who refuse to live God’s way, because living God’s way proves the reality of their faith both to themselves and each other. Paul begs them to test themselves before he arrives so they could see if they were in the faith.

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*Do you have a “thorn” in your life? If so, how are you responding to it? Have you learned to be thankful for it?*









# SECTION **THREE**

WEEKS 13 - 18



# Introduction to Mark

## THE BOOK OF MARK

Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four, and it's the fastest moving. Some scholars believe that this Gospel is actually Peter's recollections that Mark recorded.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | John Mark, "interpreter" of Peter                      |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Gentiles in Rome                                       |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | Apology (defense) for the cross, discipleship          |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Jesus is the authoritative, miracle-working Son of God |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Mark 10:45; 15:39                                      |

# Mark 1

WEEK 13 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me live a life marked by the gospel. May my life be a living witness, and may my voice speak much of the gospel. Help me understand more clearly the height, depth, and breadth of Your mercy and grace. Open my eyes that I might see wonderful things in Your Word today. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Mark 1

### Mark 1:1–8

Unlike the other Gospel writers, Mark doesn’t focus on the events leading up to Jesus’ ministry. Instead, he gets straight to the gospel in his action-packed book.

In Mark 1:4, John the Baptist calls people to repent and be baptized. Repentance is both turning away from sin and seeking God’s forgiveness. God is clearly working in the hearts of the people to call them to confess their sins and turn back to Him. All of this work prepares for and points toward to Jesus, the Messiah.

### Mark 1:9–11

Though He does not need to repent, Jesus is baptized by John—thus identifying Himself with the sins of the world and foreshadowing His death and resurrection to come. Furthermore, His willingness to be baptized by John is an example of humble obedience. At the same time, Jesus’ deity is demonstrated when the Spirit descends on Him and the voice of His Father declares, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased” (v. 11).

---

*Where do you need to repent in your life? Share that need with someone who will pray for you.*

*If God calls you to leave everything behind and follow Him to the nations, how willing would you be to obey?*

### Mark 1:12–15

Notice how quickly Mark’s Gospel moves. Almost in passing, he mentions Satan’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and John the Baptist’s arrest. He moves straight to the fact that Jesus goes into Galilee proclaiming the gospel. He captures Jesus’ opening words: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15)—and this gospel will not fail.

### Mark 1:16–45

In this section, Jesus calls His first disciples, and they immediately respond. His authority is on full display. He has authority over men as they respond to His call. He has authority over sickness as He heals many. He has authority over evil spirits as they cower before Him and flee. He has the authority of a teacher as He teaches in the synagogue.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>15</sup>The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*

/ Mark 1:15

### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Use today and the next few days to review your memory verses:
  - Matthew 4:4      ■ Luke 19:10      ■ Romans 5:8
  - Philippians 2:3      ■ Matthew 15:8      ■ James 1:2–3
  - 2 Corinthians 10:17–18
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Mark 2-5

WEEK 13 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me live as one under Your authority. Would You, by your grace, conform me more to Your image and likeness? Help me know Your will more clearly and to follow You. Help me, as I open Your Word, to see the things You desire to teach me. Give me a heart to respond to Your Word, Lord. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Mark 2-5

### Mark 2:1–17

In these verses, we see Jesus teaching and proclaiming the kingdom of God. This is His primary concern: that the Word is taught and people are brought to repentance and faith—like the paralytic whose sins Jesus forgave as He healed him.

When Jesus calls Levi, it becomes clear that He deliberately surrounds Himself with sinners and tax collectors. Jesus, full of mercy, takes the most broken, the weakest, and the most unsuitable and turns them into gospel-saturated ministers of His Word.

### Mark 2:18–4:41

Jesus begins to teach in parables, a medium Jesus’ audience understood. Jesus, however, uses them as a means by which He judges those outside the kingdom—those with no ears to hear—and instructs those inside the kingdom—those with ears to hear.

### Mark 5

In this section of Mark, Jesus’ compassion is on display. He casts out a man’s demon, heals a woman with a bleeding problem, and even raises Jairus’ daughter back to life. In all three incidents,

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Make a running list of friends you want to bring to Jesus. Pray regularly for them.



# Mark 6-9

WEEK 13 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, would You lift my eyes to see where my help truly comes from? May I live in such a way that I forsake the things of this world and whatever hinders my fruitfulness in Your kingdom. Help me, as I open Your Word, to see the things You desire to teach me. Give me a heart to respond to Your Word, Lord. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Mark 6-9

### Mark 6:1–29

The opening scene of our passage depicts Jesus’ hometown not honoring Him. They see Him as merely one of them, and He doesn’t do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Jesus then commissions and sends out His disciples. As they go, He commands them to take with them only things that are necessary for them to fulfill their call to preach the gospel.

Then Mark interrupts the narrative to tell us how John’s life came to a terrible end. Even in today’s world, faithful Christian witnesses find themselves languishing in prison cells or at the end of an executioner’s axe.

### Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–21

God always provides what we need. Jesus miraculously feeds the 5,000 and then, not long after, another 4,000. Why do these similar miracles occur so closely to one another? What’s the point of the repetition? We can understand Mark’s intention when we realize that one miracle happened in a predominately Jewish area (6:30–44), while the other happened in a predominately Gentile area

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Spend some time studying about persecuted believers, and teach another believer what you learn.

(7:31; 8:1–21). Jesus cares for both Jews and Gentiles, and when He encounters them in a desolate place, He leaves them both satisfied.

Despite both of these miracles, the disciples still fret over their daily bread. They—like we—quickly forget God’s provisions.

### **Mark 7:1–23**

Conflict grows between the religious leaders and Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes elevate their traditions as religious teachings, but Jesus recognizes the hypocrisy of their hearts.

### **Mark 7:24–37, 8:22–26**

Jesus is the healer who exorcises demons (even from a distance), gives hearing to the deaf, and heals the blind. Crowds of people—as they often are in Mark’s Gospel—are astonished at Jesus.

### **Mark 8:27–38**

At the turning point of the book, Peter recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. But he still doesn’t fully understand what kind of Messiah He is, which is made clear by his refusal to accept that Jesus will suffer and die. Jesus knows, though, that His path of obedience is a path of suffering. As His disciples, we’re called to take up our cross and follow Him.

### **Mark 9**

Jesus takes three of His disciples to a mountain, where He is dramatically changed. When Moses and Elijah appear, the disciples are terrified. For a second time in Mark’s Gospel, the Father speaks, reminding them that Jesus is His beloved Son and they ought to listen to Him.

But Jesus’ disciples still lack faith. They pray too little, and they fail to cast out a demon. The father of the demon-possessed boy confesses his weak faith. This section makes it clear that one mark of a believer is not a perfect faith, but a growing faith.

Because the disciples expect Jesus to be a powerful and glorious Messiah, they wrongly measure greatness in the same way the world measures greatness. Jesus, however, makes it clear again that He would be a Messiah who also suffers as a servant.

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*What has Jesus done in your life that has amazed you?*





# Mark 10-13

WEEK 13 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me cling to the hope of the gospel. Help me have faith to believe the power of the gospel. Help me trust fully in the gospel and not be lured by lesser hopes. Help me, as I open up your Word, to see the things You desire to teach me. Give me a heart to respond to your Word, Lord. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Mark 10-13

### Mark 10

As Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem, He continues to teach His disciples on matters of marriage, wealth, and humility. He shows that God’s plan for marriage is evident from creation, and He does not take divorce lightly. From His encounter with a young man who depends on his own wealth and self-righteousness to attain acceptance before God, Jesus reminds us that we must give up our idols to follow Him. His children find “greatness” by serving Him and others.

### Mark 11

When Jesus finally arrives at Jerusalem, He’s welcomed by a crowd crying “Hosanna.” They believe their conquering Messiah would overthrow the Roman regime. But these Jews were focused on the wrong enemy and thought of Jesus as the solution to the wrong problem. Jesus symbolically illustrates their judgment by cursing a fig tree with no fruit and cleansing the temple that had lost its purpose.

### Mark 12

Conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders continues, though they’re afraid to arrest Him because of the crowds. He condemns them with the parable of the vineyard owner, and they try to trap

*How much Christian “fruit” does your life show?*



# Mark 14-16

WEEK 13 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me cling to the hope of the gospel. Thank You that You came to conquer sin and death. Help me have faith to believe the power of the gospel. Help me, as I open Your Word, to see the things You desire to teach me. Give me a heart to respond to your Word, Lord. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

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*Are you more like Jesus who followed the Father’s will or like Peter who allowed fear to lead to disobedience?*

## READ & LEARN

Read Mark 14-16

### Mark 14

Jesus moves relentlessly to the cross. He pauses to pray and ask God to take the cup of suffering away; however, even if the cup isn’t removed, He is willing to do God’s will.

This scene in which Jesus prays while His disciples sleep is soon disrupted by His betrayal and arrest. Chaos and confusion set in as a soldier’s ear is cut off and a young man flees—probably Mark, the author of this Gospel. Peter is quick to betray his Savior, but he’s also quick to weep over his sin.

### Mark 15

The scene moves quickly now to the crucifixion. Pilate, giving in to the demands of the crowd, releases Barabbas and sends Jesus away to be scourged and crucified. The whole time, Jesus, the innocent One, remains silent (Isaiah 53:7). His thoughts remain fixed firmly on the will of His good and loving Father. On the cross, the Son of God is forsaken so we could be forgiven (10:45).

### Mark 16

Jesus is buried, and on the third day He rises again—just like He promised He would. He appears to the women at the tomb and to



- Scriptures that address pastoral leadership and oversight imply a recognized congregation (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 13:17).
- Scriptures that speak of church discipline suggest some type of formal list or association (e.g., Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:11–13).

# Introduction to Galatians



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Paul  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Churches of South Galatia visited by Paul during first missionary journey               |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | False teaching (Judaizers' heresy)  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To defend the one true gospel   |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Both Jews and Gentiles are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works of the law |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Galatians 3:10–14   |

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## THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

It appears a group of Judaizers—people trying to impose Judaism on Christian converts—came in to the churches of Galatia and stressed that Christians needed to obey certain aspects of the law (e.g., circumcision) if they were to be justified. In response to this threat, Paul wrote this letter to deliver the Galatians from the spiritual danger they'd bring on themselves if they indeed accepted and believed the Judaizers' teaching.

# Galatians 1-2

WEEK 14 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, Give me the grace to believe that my only hope of being acceptable to You is the perfect righteousness You credit me through faith in the finished work of Your crucified and risen Son. Help me rest in the good news that Christ is enough. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Galatians 1-2

### Galatians 1:1–10

After his opening greeting, Paul expresses astonishment that the Galatians have so quickly turned away from the gospel that teaches that we’re justified before God through faith in Christ. He emphasizes that this other “gospel” they’ve turned to is no gospel at all. He commands them that if anyone begins teaching another means of salvation than the one Paul has preached, then he must be ignored and considered to be under God’s judgment.

### Galatians 1:11–2:14

Paul stresses the reason we are not free to tamper with and change the gospel message: the gospel isn’t man’s, but God’s. Paul isn’t preaching some message he made up, but the one given to him by the risen Christ.

Paul then recalls the time Peter acted hypocritically when he stopped eating with Gentiles after he saw men come from Jerusalem. His fear of man caused him to sin (2:12). Paul quickly and publicly rebuked him “to his face” so the gospel might not be misunderstood.

### Galatians 2:15–21

Paul’s word to Peter is one of the most precious reminders in all of

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*As you think about your non-Christian friends, what other “gospels” are they believing?*





Scripture. We're declared righteous before God not on the basis of our good works but through faith in Christ and His redeeming work. In fact, the main purpose of God's Law in the old covenant was to show people they needed a righteousness they couldn't provide for themselves. We now can rest in the truth that we've been approved by God, even declared righteous before Him, through faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>15</sup>We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; <sup>16</sup>yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

/ Galatians 2:15-16

*What friendships do you have with people who are different from you ethnically, socio-economically, religiously, or otherwise? If all your friendships are only with people like you, you're missing the heart of God.*

### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Begin memorizing this week's verse: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20).
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Galatians 3

WEEK 14 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord, I give You thanks today for Your Law and its demand of perfect obedience. By showing me I am hopeless in myself and my good works, You graciously point me to Christ, His penalty-bearing death, and His perfect life of righteousness. Help me to live each day resting in Your grace and striving to live honorably. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Galatians 3

### Galatians 3:1–9

Still astonished that the Galatians have so quickly abandoned justification by faith alone, Paul begins asking questions in order to drive them back to this truth. They became believers through faith, not by having obeyed the Law perfectly. They should understand that the Lord didn’t save them by faith in order to have them now seek righteousness on the basis of their good works.

### Galatians 3:10–14

Paul then shows why relying on good works as the basis for justification is hopeless. God demands perfect obedience. So if we seek to be justified on the basis of our good works, then we must understand that God demands absolute perfection.

If God demands perfect obedience, then what is our hope? It can’t be our good works, so the answer must be found in Christ. He took the penalty we deserved for our disobedience to God so we might trust Him and receive His righteousness.

### Galatians 3:15–29

If God did not give the Law to us that we might obey it and be saved, then why did God give us the Law? Paul asserts that God’s

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*How much does it mean to you that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (3:13)?*



**REFLECT & CHANGE:  
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Using this type of graph, graph out your walk with God from your conversion until today. Note the high points and the times when you followed God less fervently. If today is not a high point, ask God to renew your love for Him and your gratitude for His grace. Talk about your graph with your group and/or mentor.



# Galatians 4

WEEK 14 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, give me the grace not to put myself in a place where I try to merit Your acceptance on the basis of my good works; that would be submitting myself again to the hopeless enslavement I knew before I became your child. Rather, let me rest in faith, delight in the fact that I’m Your child. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Galatians 4

### Galatians 4:1–11

Paul reminds the Galatian believers that they used to be enslaved to “the elements of the world” (4:3). They used to be slaves of a mentality that says, “I must do this-or-that work in order to merit a right standing before God.” They’ve now been freed from this hopelessness. And yet, the Galatians are tempted to enslave themselves once again by turning back to the Law as their hope of justification.

### Galatians 4:12–20

Because we’ve experienced great freedom in the gospel, we should want others to know this freedom as well. The Galatians had once shown this kind of love toward Paul, even being willing to give him their own eyes if that were possible. Now, however, he wonders what’s happened because they no longer listen to him.

### Galatians 4:21–31

To illustrate the foolishness of relying on human effort, Paul explains the story of Hagar and Sarah. They’re symbolic of two realities. God had promised Abraham a son, but Abraham tried to bring about God’s promise himself by sexually uniting with Hagar.

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*What are some implications of our being children of God (e.g., does God discipline us)?*



# Galatians 5

WEEK 14 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, I know You have not only justified me through Christ but You’ve also given me Your Holy Spirit so I might desire righteousness in accordance with Your will. Give me grace today and empower me by the Holy Spirit to turn away from envy and arrogance and turn to my neighbor in love. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Galatians 5

### Galatians 5:1–15

Paul returns yet again to his main theme: if anyone attempts to be righteous on the basis of obedience to God’s Law, then that person is obligated to keep the whole Law. Either we’re righteous on the basis of Christ’s work alone, or we’re severed from Christ and must stand on our own righteousness. Paul speaks harshly against the teachers creating this confusion, telling them he wishes they would simply emasculate themselves!

Paul wants the Galatians to know the freedom offered to them in Christ. He longs for them to love others as they rest securely in the gospel. Furthermore, he wants them to see that even this desire to love comes from the Holy Spirit. The Father gives the Spirit to all those whom He declares righteous through faith in Christ.

### Galatians 5:16–26

Those who live according to the flesh are marked by sin: sexual immorality, selfish ambition, and divisive anger. On the other hand, those who live according to the power of the Spirit are marked by spiritual fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, and so on. God’s power is evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit in the believer’s life.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

When you want to work on rejecting sin and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit better, seek God through fasting in addition to reading the Word and praying. Express your longing for God through fasting.



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

/ Galatians 5:16–24

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Using the lists of Galatians 5:16–24, mark any of these works or fruit that characterize your life. Be honest.

- *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these*
- *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*



# Galatians 6

WEEK 14 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, You are so gracious to save me and equip me by Your Spirit to pursue holiness. I realize the pursuit of holiness is a pursuit, in large measure, to love my neighbor as myself. Help me today, therefore, to seek after others’ good and your glory in all I do. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Galatians 6

### Galatians 6:1–10

After exhorting the Galatian believers to submit to the Spirit and walk in holiness, Paul reminds them that holiness isn’t something we exercise in isolation. Holiness involves restoring our brothers when they fall into sin, bearing one another’s burdens, and caring for those who labor in teaching the Word.

Every Christian should pursue holiness, and as we do, we should be characterized by a desire to do good to others, especially to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

### Galatians 6:11–18

In these final verses, Paul reiterates his message. He wants the Galatians to understand that the false teachers who were telling them to be circumcised were themselves breaking God’s Law. These men didn’t have holy desires but wanted simply to boast that the Galatians were following them.

Paul, however, has no desire to boast in himself. He boasts only in that which is worthy: the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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*Does your church restore believers who’ve fallen into sin? What are some difficulties in taking this step?*



# Introduction to Titus, 1 & 2 Timothy

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Author:</b>      | Paul  |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Titus (Crete), Timothy (Ephesus)<br><i>(written to)</i>                               |
| <b>Occasion:</b>    | Instructions for apostolic delegates on how to deal with various issues in the church |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To instruct and equip Timothy and Titus in their role as apostolic delegates          |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | Establishing the church for the postapostolic period                                  |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | 2 Timothy 4:1–2   |

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## THE BOOK OF TITUS, 1 & 2 TIMOTHY

These three letters—1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus—comprise Paul’s “Pastoral Epistles.” Paul addressed the letter Titus to a Greek convert of the same name. His main aim in the epistle was to guide Titus in bringing order and sound leadership to the budding churches of Crete.

1 and 2 Timothy are intimate letters between close friends: Paul the great teacher and Timothy, his disciple and “true child in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). The second letter contains the “last words” of Paul, the great apostle, to his beloved co-worker Timothy.

# Titus 1

WEEK 15 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, help me hold firm to Your trustworthy Word as I have been taught. Help me stay sound in the faith so I will be fit for every good work. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Titus 1

### Titus 1:1–4

Paul planted churches purposefully. He worked so closely with Titus in these endeavors that he calls him his “true child” (1:4). Even after he and Titus split up, Paul influenced both Titus and the churches they’d planted by writing a letter with clear directions. It’s now Titus’ job to bring order and sound leadership to the budding churches on the island of Crete.

### Titus 1:5–9

Not only was Paul purposeful in his church planting, but he also boldly communicated the qualifications for elders. For the sake of a sound ministry, Paul is not afraid to speak bluntly and honestly.

Why is this? Paul believes that in order to give instruction in sound doctrine, church leaders must hold firmly to God’s Word and even be able to rebuke those who contradict it. God’s church is too important for disorder or unholiness of any kind to continue unaddressed. We should live in such a way that others have no grounds to accuse us of unholy living.

### Titus 1:10–16

Paul emphasizes the importance of holding firm to sound doctrine. He warns Titus of those who profess to believe yet live in such a way that denies Christ; according to Paul, they remain unfit for

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*The characteristics for elders are generally characteristics that should mark all believers. Where does your life meet these expectations? Not meet them?*



any good work. False teachers motivated by greed had arisen from within Judaism, and Paul was unafraid to confront them and challenge other church leaders to do the same.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***7Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, 8and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.***

/ Titus 2:7-8

### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- See how many of these verses you can quote without looking them up. Mark those that still need some work, and spend at least 5 minutes reviewing them.
  - Matthew 4:4
  - Romans 5:8
  - Matthew 15:8
  - 2 Corinthians 10:17-18
  - Luke 19:10
  - Philippians 2:3
  - James 1:2-3
  - Galatians 2:20
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

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# Titus 2

WEEK 15 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father, I long to better understand the roles You’ve given me. I want to be a model of good works in all respects. Help me daily conform more and more into Your likeness so that in everything I do and say Your doctrine will be made more beautiful. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Titus 2

### Titus 2

Paul first addresses Titus himself and says that what he teaches must reflect sound doctrine. God has set high expectations for everyone in the church, and the character of all believers should be a model of good works. Notice how Paul prioritizes both right belief and right action.

In the body of Christ, sound doctrine should be taught not only by the elders/pastors/overseers but also by all members as they encourage each other to live godly lives. Older men should teach younger men, and older women should teach younger women.

We should seek to be holy and blameless so the Word of God will not be reviled. God has saved us so we might “live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age” (2:12) even while we wait for Jesus’ return. We are His people, and we are called to proclaim His message.

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*If you are an older person, are you teaching younger believers? If you’re younger, do you have older believers who teach you?*



# Titus 3

WEEK 15 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me understand the gospel in a fresh way. Help me continue to develop a deeper understanding of what You did for me when You sent Your Son to die for my sins. Build in me habits and patterns of good works that are both excellent and profitable. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Titus 3

### Titus 3:1–8

Paul asks Titus to remind the church that members of the body of Christ are to be ready for every good work. We should speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, and show courtesy to all people. Through the grace of God, we can live differently than we once lived.

### Titus 3:9–11

Right before closing this letter, Paul makes it clear that after salvation, we can choose behaviors that are either excellent and profitable or unprofitable and worthless. Some controversies are foolish, and some arguments are worthless. We’re told to have nothing to do with a person who has been warned yet continues to stir up division. There’s just too much at stake.

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*If someone evaluated your Christian life on your private and public speech—that is, your words—what would he or she conclude about your Christianity?*

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

When investing in other believers, don’t let silly arguments get in the way of studying the Bible. The enemy wants to divert us from the Word.





# 1 Timothy 1-2

WEEK 15 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for loving me and for saving me though I, too, am a great sinner. Help me to love deeply those around me. Help us as a church to bless our neighbors and to lay down our lives so they might be saved. Please help our leaders and rulers work for justice and peace so the gospel can spread. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Timothy 1-2

### 1 Timothy 1:1–11

Timothy traveled extensively with Paul as churches were established and strengthened throughout Asia Minor. When a church needed help, Paul trusted Timothy to serve in his place.

Paul wants Timothy to remain in Ephesus to help people not teach false doctrine. Unfortunately, learning about the Bible and God can sometimes result in unending arguments and speculations. That’s not how it should be. Increased knowledge about God should purify our hearts, cleanse our consciences, and remove hypocrisy so that God’s love for us can overflow to those around us. Love is always evidence of growth in the gospel.

### 1 Timothy 1:12–20

Paul says that he was saved to prove a great truth: Christ Jesus is more than capable to save even the worst of sinners! He alone is worthy of our praise forever. Moreover, Paul wants Timothy to follow Christ fully, always fighting the good fight even when others aren’t faithful.

### 1 Timothy 2

Here’s the big question Paul addresses in 1 Timothy 2: What does

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*What person in your life most trusts your walk with God? Would your pastor trust you to lead some appropriate ministry in your church?*



a church ordered around the gospel look like? A gospel-centered church prays on behalf of all, exhibits holiness, submits to God's rule, and lives peacefully with others. Christian communities pray for the peace, blessing, and salvation of their neighbors. They pursue godly living and want to see people saved.

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*Do you pray for your local, state, and national political leaders?*



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>5</sup>The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

/ 1 Timothy 1:5

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

What area of your life is most keeping you from praying with "holy" hands (2:8)? Is it pride? Lust? Greed? Idolatry? Anger? Bitterness? Failing to read the Word? Immorality? Lying? Let the Holy Spirit show you your heart, and turn from sins that hinder your prayers. Ask your mentor or one of your group members to pray with you.

# 1 Timothy 3

WEEK 15 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for all the ways You’ve changed me through Your gospel and Your Spirit. Please help me bless the pastors and elders of my church. Please help us as a church to safeguard the truths of the gospel and to proclaim them with clarity in our city. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Timothy 3

### 1 Timothy 3

God’s people form a great family with a great Father. He has assembled them out of the world to be His church, a distinct people who have been changed by the gospel and will protect and proclaim that gospel. Paul wants Timothy to know that godly character should mark those in the Christian community.

In particular, God has gifted His church with leaders (elders, pastors, overseers) who will promote His purposes in the church. They should exemplify living that’s shaped by the gospel, and their character should demonstrate gospel change.

In short, they should be “above reproach,” that is, they should be without glaring moral deficiencies as Christians. Additionally, they should be able to “take care of God’s church” (3:5) by faithfully teaching God’s Word to His people, and they should manage their own household well.

Recognized servants (deacons) in the church should also model behavior and character that has been affected by the gospel. Anything less is inappropriate for the church and unworthy of the great gospel of our great God and Savior.

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*Is your life above reproach?*



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>15</sup>If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*

/ 1 Timothy 3:15

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Set aside one day each week to pray for your community and church leaders.

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Follow Paul's instructions to Timothy in yesterday's study (1 Timothy 2:1-2), and pray for the welfare of your city. Pray for the salvation of the leaders of your community. If you don't know their names, check to see if the community has a website with this information.

# 1 Timothy 4

WEEK 16 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, help me to be a good example to others through my speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Keep me from getting distracted from Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Timothy 4

### 1 Timothy 4:1–10

The Bible warns us that when people believe the gospel, God’s enemies work hard to deceive believers away from following Jesus. The most dangerous doctrinal deceptions seem close enough to the truth to look genuine. But they’re just different enough to ruin those who believe them. In this chapter, Paul discusses false teaching that emphasizes outward displays of religion, yet fails to flow from a sincere heart of worship and reverence.

We shouldn’t waste our energy with speculations and fruitless discussions about religion (1:4; 4:7). Instead, we should protect believers around us against the dangerous and inevitable onslaught of doctrinal deception.

### 1 Timothy 4:11–16

One of the best ways we can help those around us is by being a godly example. This will require single-minded attention, which Paul describes as hard work. According to him, a disciplined life of godliness requires paying “close attention to your life and your teaching” (4:16). We should be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (4:12).

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*Do you pay close attention to your life and your teaching so that you model and proclaim the gospel?*



# 1 Timothy 5

WEEK 16 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for the gift of elders that You have given to the church. I pray for (your pastor) and pray that You will help him to walk with You faithfully. I pray that You will help him to dedicate himself to sound doctrine. Preserve him in his faith. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Timothy 5

### 1 Timothy 5:1–16

Godliness is a key concept in 1 Timothy. It involves living submissively under God’s established order. In 1 Timothy 5, Paul shows how the gospel shapes the way churches should relate to widows (because God cares for the needy) and elders (because God has placed them in authority over us for our good).

For example, churches should not relieve believers of the responsibility to care for their own needy family members; this would be unwise (5:4) and bring reproach to the gospel (5:8). At the same time, the church should regularly aid needy persons, as long as:

- They have devoted themselves to gospel purposes.
- Aiding them brings no reproach to the gospel.

### 1 Timothy 5:17–25

In the same way, the church should generously honor its leaders, especially if they work productively in the ministry of the Word. This means joyfully caring for their needs (5:18) and not nitpicking everything they do (5:19). However, those who persist in sin should be rebuked openly. This step wisely discourages further sin

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*Who are some faithful widows in your church who might appreciate your care and ministry?*





and honors the gospel by putting an end to possible reproach. It also means being cautious about appointing elders before they've proven themselves to be faithful and humble.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>17</sup>Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.***

/ 1 Timothy 5:17

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Followers of Christ willingly minister to the needy—those who can give little in return. Which of the following statements most reflects your attitude toward the needy?

- “I love them and enjoy ministering to them.”
- “Sometimes I wonder if they’re not just using the system to meet their needs.”
- “I can’t always tell if they’re really needy.”
- “I’m growing in my desire to minister to them.”
- Other:

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Take good notes as your pastor teaches the Word, and determine at least one action step you'll take based on each sermon.

# 1 Timothy 6

WEEK 16 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, help me live so Your name and teaching are attractive to me. Guard me from empty arguments about religion. Instead, help me grow in godliness. Give me grace to labor for eternal treasures today! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Timothy 6

### 1 Timothy 6:1–10, 17–19

Paul has three main objectives in this letter, and he concludes it by reiterating them:

- 1/** To encourage Christians in the church to live gospel-shaped lives with godly, loving, and sincere relationships;
- 2/** To encourage Christians in the church to protect the integrity of doctrine;
- 3/** To praise and worship God.

*How well do you know the doctrine of your church? Do you know it well enough to recognize if teachers bring false teachings into congregation?*

One way the teaching of the church can be compromised is through men and women who illegitimately thrust themselves forward as teachers in order to gain material wealth. These false teachers’ love of money leads to false teaching, and they leave their faith behind. Following Jesus gives great advantages in this life, but only insofar as we are content with the possessions and positions Jesus grants to us.

Those whom God has blessed with wealth can pursue Christ single-mindedly by not becoming proud and not trusting in their wealth. After all, any wealth we have is from God. He gives it to us not so we would trust in riches, but so we would enjoy it with



thanksgiving and generously share with others.

### **1 Timothy 6:11–16, 20–21**

Paul says there is a better way than pursuing riches. But it requires us to flee our longings for wealth and, instead, to pursue godliness, righteousness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. We have nothing to lose when we devote ourselves with all solemnity, sternness, sobriety, and steadfastness to single-minded devotion to Christ until He comes again!

For Timothy, this commitment meant guarding the gospel that had been entrusted him. Paul wants his protégé to stay focused and faithful, and we should want the same for ourselves.

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*Do you have a single-minded devotion to Christ?*



#### **DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION**

***“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.***

/ 1 Timothy 6:11

### **GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES**

Paul calls Timothy to practice godliness with contentment. Compare your “prescription for contentment” to that of a missionary who served in Africa for more than 50 years, and make a commitment to change your attitude as needed:

- Never allow yourself to complain, even about the weather.
- Never picture yourself in any other circumstances or place.
- Never compare your lot with another’s.
- Never allow yourself to wish “this” or “that” had been otherwise.
- Never dwell on tomorrow—remember that tomorrow is God’s, not ours.

# 2 Timothy 1-2

WEEK 16 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for all who shared the gospel with me and for those who shared the gospel with them. May your Spirit be powerful in me today, and give me grace to be useful to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Timothy 1-2

### 2 Timothy 1

2 Timothy is the second letter the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his spiritual son. Because Paul is nearing the end of his ministry and life, his tone is personal and resolute.

He begins by thanking God for Timothy and for the uncommon blessing of Timothy’s spiritual heritage, experiences, and gifts. “Fan those gifts into flame!” Paul says (1:6), for the Holy Spirit enables boldness, love, and self-discipline.

Paul also tells Timothy to be ready to suffer disgrace for the sake of the gospel. He boldly and repeatedly challenges Timothy not to be ashamed. Paul uses himself as an example. He isn’t ashamed of the gospel, and he isn’t ashamed to be imprisoned for the gospel.

When we proclaim the gospel, some people will try to mock and shame us. Those who preach the gospel receive glory and honor, in spite of the shame the world heaps on them, because people are saved when the gospel is preached. We must guard and teach the same gospel Paul proclaimed, the same message for which he was imprisoned.

### 2 Timothy 2

We should be on the lookout for faithful men and women who

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Don’t follow Christ by yourself. Ask other believers who know you well to help you determine the spiritual gifts God has given you.



can carefully teach others. Paul intentionally reminds Timothy of the importance of multiplying faithfulness. Just as Paul benefited from a spiritual heritage passed on through faithful men in Israel, Timothy also had a rich heritage shaped by the sincere faithfulness of past God-worshippers. In turn, Paul writes, Timothy has a responsibility to teach those who would be faithful to teach others.

God's spokespersons are to serve faithfully like a good soldier, a strong athlete, or a hard-working farmer. Even if they're imprisoned for their faith, the Word they preach is not bound.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>24</sup>And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup>correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.*

/ 2 Timothy 2:24-25

### REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Do a self-assessment about the areas of your life where you most need to grow so you might teach others. List those areas here, and discuss them with your group and/or mentor.

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*When was the last time your actions suggested that you're ashamed of the gospel?*

# 2 Timothy 3

WEEK 16 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Lord, I praise You for giving us Your Word so we can truly be equipped for every good work. Help me not to leave my Bible on the shelf, neglecting this precious gift. Help me to hide Your Word in my heart so I can be equipped for Your mission. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Timothy 3

### 2 Timothy 3:1–9

At the close of 2 Timothy 2, Paul tells Timothy to patiently and gently persuade opponents to return and submit to God’s Word. But not everyone will be won this way. After all, Paul says plainly that difficult times are coming because these are the “last days” (3:1). In these last days, men and women love what they shouldn’t— themselves, money, pleasure—and fail to love what they should—God and His wisdom.

*Do you live for yourself? For money?  
For pleasure? For something else?*

Some people associated with the church seem to be godly, but they don’t have the power to live as citizens of Christ’s kingdom. These people should be avoided because they oppose the truth and can harm the church. God expects His people to be different, but here’s the good news: He provides the means to be different by equipping us with His Spirit.

### 2 Timothy 3:10–17

In addition to the indwelling Spirit, Timothy has two additional advantages that have guided him. He has the conduct of Paul that deserved imitation (3:10–11), and he has been taught to believe the Scriptures (3:14–17). With the Spirit of God helping him, the Word of God guiding him, and the people of God encouraging him, Timothy simply needs to keep following Jesus.



# 2 Timothy 4

WEEK 17 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, I long to prepare myself to teach and preach the gospel in season and out of season. Help me today to prepare both my heart and mind so I can be ready for every opportunity You place around me. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Timothy 4

### 2 Timothy 4

We come to the end of Paul’s second letter to Timothy, which he closes with seriousness and urgency. Paul gives Timothy a strong final charge, in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, to preach the Word. He exhorts him to be ready in season and out of season to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience. There will be times when others won’t listen; they’ll look for teachers who say what they want them to say.

Paul is near the end of his life and ministry, so he takes this opportunity to communicate a final heartfelt and urgent exhortation to his beloved friend. Paul has fought the good fight; he’s kept the faith. So it’s time to pass the baton to Timothy, so long as he hears this important charge: hold firm to the faithful preaching of the Word.

It’s interesting to note that even as Paul writes these things, he asks for his books and parchments. He’s sitting in a cold prison cell and knows he’s at the end of his life. But he doesn’t stop fighting. He intends to spend and be spent until his last hours (2 Corinthians 12:15). In fact, he continues to teach Timothy with his writings even through this letter. In the end, Paul wants God to get the glory forever and ever!

*How do you usually respond when others don’t listen to you when you talk about Christ?*

*Are you running your race with faith and perseverance? Are you investing in someone else who will run the race after you?*





# Introduction to Ephesians

## THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

The letter of Ephesians is addressed to believers who lived in the area of Ephesus. Paul unpacks the glories of God's mystery and His plan to overcome disunity and bring peace through Christ. He calls believers to live as servants of Christ in unity, to apply their faith in all their lives, and to prepare for spiritual battle.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Author:</b>      | Paul   |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Circular letter, or Ephesus<br><i>(written to)</i>               |
| <b>Occasion:</b>    | Not clearly identifiable   |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To declare and promote cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | The summing up of all things in Christ                           |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | Ephesians 1:3–14, especially 1:9–10                              |

# Ephesians 1-2

WEEK 17 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You that in Christ I’ve been given every blessing! Thank you for coming to my rescue and giving me grace when all I had earned was the opposite. As an act of thanks and worship today, help me to do every good work You have prepared for me. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Ephesians 1-2

### **Ephesians 1:1–14**

After a brief greeting, Paul praises God for all He accomplishes through Christ for our redemption (1:4) and restoration (1:10). Paul’s praise recounts God’s grace to choose a people from before the foundation of the world and to redeem this people through the forgiveness granted through Christ’s blood. This plan is unfolding through the Spirit of promise who keeps the saints for the last day. Three times—in verses 6, 12, and 14—Paul expresses the “why” behind this gracious activity of God: “to the praise of His glory.” God’s grace awakens songs of lavish praise like those Paul expresses here.

### **Ephesians 1:15–23**

Praise should lead to prayer. Therefore, Paul transitions to prayer in verses 15–23 with the words “this is why.” Paul’s first request is that the Ephesians would know God for who He is. He then goes on to pray that they would know the hope they have in Christ and the privilege it is to be the church. He also prays that God would give them spiritual strength.

### **Ephesians 2**

Apart from Christ, we’re all spiritually dead. But God, in His great

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*What’s your favorite praise hymn or chorus?*

*Is there another believer with whom you need to be reconciled?*

mercy, made His people alive together with Christ. The Holy Spirit graciously made them partakers of Christ's victory through no merit of their own.

Because of Christ, the Ephesian church—made of both Gentile and Jewish believers—can witness to the heavenly realms that God's plan to redeem and restore is underway. The coming peace is foreshadowed on earth through churches that serve Him in unity.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

/ Ephesians 2:8-10

#### REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Praise isn't merely a byproduct of receiving the wonderful grace of God. Is praise a natural part of your walk with God?

- If I'm honest, I don't think about it much at all.
- It's probably not a natural part of my walk; sometimes I have to make myself do it.
- I'm growing in this area, but I have room for more growth.
- Praise comes naturally to me.
- I need to stop and praise God now.

# Ephesians 3-4

WEEK 17 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, give me strength so that Christ can live richly in me today through my attitudes and actions. Help me understand how great Your love is for me and for all disciples of Jesus everywhere. Help me to live in humility and submission with other disciples, and help us to love and forgive one another. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Ephesians 3-4

### **Ephesians 3:1–13**

The realization that God’s “mystery” had been unveiled through Christ led Paul to pray and take action. In these verses, the main action Paul highlights is bringing the good news to all people. These people—both Jews and Gentiles—will be “coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). The church confounds the heavenly enemies of Christ as God’s wisdom is displayed through her unity amidst diversity.

### **Ephesians 3:14–21**

This led Paul to pray yet again for the believers in Ephesus. His prayer centers on two requests for the church: strength through the Spirit and deeper knowledge of Christ’s love, even though it “surpasses knowledge” (3:19). Paul knows he can ask these things in faith because God is able to “do above and beyond all that we ask or think” (3:20) so that it may bring Him glory.

### **Ephesians 4:1–16**

Ephesians 4 marks the last half of the book, which is full of practical application. Christians must walk worthily, according to

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*How united is your church?*

*Does your life reflect more the old man or the new man?*

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Proud people don't usually see themselves as proud, and humble people usually don't see themselves as humble. We need help from others to see our hearts from the outside. Make sure you have accountability in your life.

the calling outlined in the book's first three chapters. We protect this unity with humility and gentleness. All members of the church have been gifted to help the church grow as they speak the truth in love to one another and use their gifts in service.

### Ephesians 4:17–32

The transformation Christ brought involves a radical shift away from former ways. Christians have been freed from dungeons of deceit and are now being recreated in God's likeness. This new self puts off deceit, unrighteous anger, greed, stealing, unwholesome speech, and every manner of a harsh attitude that threatens relationships in the church.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>1</sup>I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

/ Ephesians 4:1–3

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Intentionally cross a cultural boundary to reach out to someone who is different from you. For example, invite an international student or a co-worker to have lunch with you. Learn about their culture.

# Ephesians 5-6

WEEK 17 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for saving me from a life of sin to a life that can truly please You. Help me reflect Your greatness in all of my relationships—as a spouse, parent, child, sibling, neighbor, church member, and employee. Give us strength to stand firm against the onslaughts of those who are Your enemies. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Ephesians 5-6

### Ephesians 5:1–16

Every new Christian has a new way of life—or, in Paul’s language, a new “walk.” The Ephesians were once marked by disobedience and opposition to God. But now, as followers of Jesus, God calls them to walk in a way that conforms to Him.

As God loved them in Christ, so should believers love one another. As Jesus is light, so the church should be an instrument of light in a dark world. Discernment and diligence will be needed as the church navigates the path that is “goodness, righteousness, and truth” (5:9).

### Ephesians 5:17–6:9

Time is precious, Paul writes, so the Ephesians must seek to understand the will of the Lord and “speak to one another” (5:19) in song with thanksgiving. They should also submit to each other out of reverence for Christ as Lord. This submission takes shape in three particular relationships: wives to husbands, children to parents, and employees to employers. Those in authority also don’t abuse their authority but lead as Christ did, putting others’ interests before their own.

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*If another believer hears your speech for one week, would he or she hear “obscene and foolish talking or crude joking” (Eph. 5:4)?*

*Are you wearing the full armor of God?*

**Ephesians 6:10–24**

Paul ends his letter by reminding the Ephesians that their spiritual war isn't over. Their church—and every church—finds itself in the middle of a struggle “not with flesh and blood” but with cosmic forces of evil in the heavenly places (6:12). By being “strengthened by the Lord and by his vast might” (6:10) and taking “up the full armor of God,” Christians will be able to stand against the devil’s scheming (6:10, 11, 13, 14).

Paul then encourages the church to pray for “troops” on the front line. The Ephesians should pray for these servants’ boldness as they proclaim the good news. After all, as Paul writes, Christian workers are messengers of peace during this war.



**DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION**

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup>And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

/ Ephesians 5:1–2

**REFLECT & CHANGE:  
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Rate the health of each of these relationships in your life. Pray about any that need strengthening:

|  | Strong                   | Not so strong            | Improving                |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Personal relationship with God:            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Church relationships:                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Marriage relationship, if applicable:      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friend-to-friend relationships, if single: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent-to-child relationship:              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child-to-parent relationships:             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Work relationships:                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



# Introduction to 1, 2, & 3 John



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | John the son of Zebedee  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Churches in and around Ephesus   |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | The recent departure of false teachers from the Ephesian church (1 John); itinerant false teachers (2 John); an autocratic despot named Diotrephes (3 John)  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To encourage believers to love God and one another and reassure them they are in the Son (1 John); instruct them not to extend hospitality to false teachers (2 John); and help Gaius deal with the autocratic Diotrephes (3 John) |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Christian reassurance and continuing to walk in truth and love   |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | 1 John 5:11–12; 2 John 9–11; 3 John 4  |

## THE BOOKS OF 1, 2, 3 JOHN

These letters are attributed to John, Christ's beloved disciple, and they bear his unmistakably simple and pastoral style. In the first letter, he writes to address influential false teaching that was plaguing early churches. In John's second letter, he reminds his readers how truth and love must walk together. In 3 John, the apostle continues to instruct Christians about how they should relate to and support one another. And again, John tells us that the test for whom we should encourage and support revolves around one thing: truth.

# 1 John 1-2

WEEK 17 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to be the incarnation of You. Through Your Word, please shape my understanding of Christ so that I may walk in His light. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 John 1-2

### 1 John 1:1–4

Rather than address the false teaching about Jesus by saying, “Hey guys, Jesus was fully God and fully human,” John begins his letter by establishing the Son’s “God-ness.” Obviously, no mere man has been “from the beginning” (1:1). Furthermore, John reminds his readers that the divine nature of Christ isn’t something Christians made up; Jesus was revealed as the eternal “Word of life” (1:1).

### 1 John 1:5–10

John quickly outlines how sinful human beings can be in a right relationship with God; in short, they must consistently ask for forgiveness and “walk in the light” (1:7). Not only does this establish our connection to God, it’s also the foundation of our connection to God’s people. Jesus is the One who gives us access to God and to the fellowship of His church.

### 1 John 2

Life in Christ is more than just an internal attitude; it always affects our actions. This means our relationship with God is demonstrated through both our obedience and our love for God and others. John reminds us of the simple truth that we must remain in Christ and be faithful to Him alone. If we sin, we have an “advocate with the Father” (2:1)—but those who know Him walk

*Do you quickly seek God’s forgiveness when you sin?*



# 1 John 3

WEEK 18 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord, You alone are worthy of our love and devotion. You bless us with Your righteousness, and You love through us. Protect us from the evil in our own hearts as we pursue life in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 John 3

### 1 John 3

John continues his defense against false teaching by equipping his audience to discern who is in Christ. He isn’t setting up Christians to judge one another, but rather to look at the love we have for one another as evidence of genuine faith. Christians will exhibit certain characteristics. No, they won’t be perfect. But they’ll be given to purity, they don’t continue in sin, and they keep God’s commandments.

Ultimately, the fruit of remaining in Christ is simple: love for God and love for others. John sets the love we have in Christ against the hatred the world has for Him and for us as His people. In fact, John says, we should expect the world to misunderstand us and even hate us for being in Christ. Nevertheless, we demonstrate God’s love with our actions and our belief in the truth.

*Is your life marked by purity?*



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>16</sup>By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

/ 1 John 3:16



# 1 John 4-5

WEEK 18 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord, thank You for sending Your Son to be the way for us to know You. I confess my faith in You and ask You to help my unbelief. May I learn from Your Word with an open heart, and may the knowledge I gain only serve to conform me more to the image of Jesus, Your Son. In His name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 John 4-5

### 1 John 4

John begins this chapter by reminding his readers to test the “spirits” (4:1) because many false prophets had arisen. Some, under the influence of demons, were denying that Jesus had come in the flesh. On the other hand, it’s through our relationship with God and His people that we’re able to discern His truth from the lies of the world. We know that the one who lives in us is “greater than the one who is in the world” (4:4).

Moreover, those who follow God love with His love. That love drives out fears and gives us confidence in judgment. If we claim to love God but don’t love other believers, we deny our own claim to love God.

### 1 John 5

In his concluding chapter, John speaks of overcoming the world through faith in Jesus. Jesus is the Christ—confirmed by the Father and the Spirit at His baptism and then through His death—and all true believers know that truth in their heart. When we abide in Christ, we can also pray with confidence, knowing our prayers align with God’s will. We can also correct one another in love and prevent ourselves from falling for the lies of the enemy.

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*Would you characterize your life as an “overcoming” life?*



# 2 John

WEEK 18 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“God, please help us love all Your true children simply because they, too, are in Christ. And help us be wise as we test all teaching and teachers by their faithfulness to Christ and His revealed Word. By this, may our love for You and Your children be made evident to all. In Christ’s name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 John

### 2 John

In this brief letter, the apostle John reminds a friend or local church—“the elect lady”—how to wisely evaluate itinerant workers. As you read, consider what John encourages, what he warns about, and how he advises that itinerant workers be tested. Through it all, one theme stands out as our guide and goal: the truth.

John is clear that regardless of what Christians have in common, our unity is built on the truth we share. John and his readers were all “in the truth,” and they all “know the truth” which “will be with us forever” (vv. 1–2). In fact, without shared Christian truth, there’s no such thing as distinctly Christian love.

But in a fallen world, only some who claim the name of Christ actually walk in the truth. So John warns about deceivers who deny the nature of Christ and go “beyond” Christ’s teaching. He finally declares that such a teacher “does not have God” (v. 9).

How should Christians respond to these false teachers? John gives an answer to that question when he instructs his readers not to welcome or support any teachers who are guilty of such things. Anyone who does, John writes, “shares in his evil works” (v. 11).

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

On a regular basis (perhaps each year or every other year), choose to study your church’s statement of faith as part of your quiet time.





These are words of warning to all who would wander “beyond” what God has written.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*“And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.*

/ 2 John 6

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*How would you determine whether or not to support a particular missionary and his or her work?*

#### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Repent of anything that keeps you from walking according to God’s commands.

# 3 John WEEK 18 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“God, help us desire that You would be honored—and not merely through us, but through all people. Protect us from the evil desire that is only excited about gospel fruit when it comes through our lives or our ministry. Help us to richly support others who labor for the truth, for Your name’s sake, not for ours. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 3 John

### 3 John

As in his prior letter, 3 John continues to instruct Christians about how they should relate to and support itinerant workers. And, again, the apostle tells us the test revolves around one thing: the truth. In so doing, John introduces us to three key persons: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

Consider Gaius, whom John loves in truth and to whom he wrote this letter. John is confident that Gaius is doing well spiritually. Why? Because for the sake of the truth, Gaius is willing to support workers he doesn’t even personally know, merely because he knows they were sent by someone he trusts (John’s church).

Consider also the two tests of support-worthy workers that John mentions. First, these workers must have gone out for gospel reasons; that’s what “for the sake of the Name” (v. 7) means. Second, they must not be motivated for the sake of gain from pagans. As Gaius inconveniences himself for such men, he proves himself to be “faithful” and a “coworker with the truth” (v. 8).

None of this, unfortunately, is the case for Diotrephes. He “loves to have first place” (v. 9). In the end, it seems he’s willing to openly



oppose legitimate gospel work merely because he won't get the credit for it. Because of Diotrephes' pride and competitive spirit, John pronounces that his work is evil.

And finally, there's Demetrius. He's an example of one who rejects evil and chooses what is good. Perhaps Demetrius was the bearer of John's letter or an example from a nearby church. In any case, he's clearly a model to be imitated as one who lives in keeping with the truth.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>7</sup>For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup>Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

/ 3 John 7-8

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***Do you ever love to have “first place”?  
Be honest.***

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

John wrote that everyone spoke well of Demetrius. Would the people who know you best—who spend the most time with you—speak well of your Christian walk? If you don't think so, what would cause them to speak less than well of you? What steps do you need to take to strengthen your walk?

# Review & Catch Up

WEEK 18 / DAY 5

Discipleship requires daily discipline, but even the most disciplined persons need days to catch up. Today is another one of those needed days. Here are your assignments for today:

- 1/** If you're not caught up with your Bible reading, work to get up to date.
- 2/** If you need some time just to pray, use your time for that purpose.
- 3/** Get together with your group and/or mentor, and use the time to:
  - discuss what the Lord has taught you this week
  - discuss your answers to the reflection questions this week
  - discuss any struggles you've faced as a follower of Jesus this week
  - share about any 10-minute discipling opportunities you had this week
  - set personal and study goals for next week
  - pray together



# SECTION **FOUR**

WEEKS 19 - 25



# Introduction to the Gospel of John

## THE BOOK OF JOHN

The Gospel of John explains who Jesus is. John explicitly appeals to the reader to respond in faith (20:31), and highlights the benefits of a life of faith in the Son of God. The book begins and ends with the assertion that Jesus is God (1:1, 20:28).

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Author:</b>      | John  |
| <b>Destination:</b> | Ephesus; ultimately, universal audience<br><i>(written to)</i>  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah so that people would believe in him and have eternal life (20:30–31) |
| <b>Theme:</b>       | Selected signs show that Jesus is the Messiah   |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>   | John 3:16   |

# John 1-2

WEEK 19 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, may Your Holy Spirit be so present in our lives that we immediately recognize the Lord Jesus. Like John and His disciples, may we leave our agendas and plans to follow You faithfully as beloved children. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 1-2

### John 1:1–23

Jesus is the eternal and embodied Word of God. What’s more, Jesus actually participated in creation; John tells us that God the Father made the world through His Son (1:3). This divine Word entered the world as a Galilean Jew named Jesus. He has dwelt among men, and He’s revealed God the Father in ways that surpass even Moses. Jesus has come to represent the new creation, and also to make possible a second birth.

### John 1:24–2:12

But before Jesus, there was John the Baptist, whose primary job was to pave the way for the Messiah. John anticipates Jesus and ultimately recognizes Him based on the signs God had given through Old Testament prophets.

John encourages his own disciples to follow Jesus. Why? Because Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (1:29). He knows that Jesus is God’s chosen and perfect sacrifice, the one to which the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed.

John’s Gospel is structured around specific signs that reveal Jesus as the Messiah. This first sign—turning the water into abundant

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## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Spend some time studying Old Testament prophecies about Jesus.

*Have you ever followed Jesus for the wrong reason? What was that reason?*

and superior wine—reveals His glory as the one who brings new and vibrant life.

### **John 2:13–25**

When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem for the Passover, He shows His prophetic and divine authority. He openly rebukes and resists those who had turned religion into a business—in the Temple of all places! As some began to follow Him because of His miracles, Jesus is clear that it's possible to believe for wrong reasons (2:24–25).



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

/ John 1:12–13

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Among the ten verses that you've memorized so far, which are the hardest for you to remember? Spend at least five minutes today reviewing those verses.
  - Matthew 4:4
  - Romans 5:8
  - Matthew 15:8
  - 2 Corinthians 10:17–18
  - 1 Timothy 4:12
  - Luke 19:10
  - Philippians 2:3
  - James 1:2–3
  - Galatians 2:20
  - 1 John 3:17
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.



# John 3-4 WEEK 19 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father, we want to know how to worship in Spirit and in truth, leaving religious debates and empty rituals behind. Show us how to live so we fully honor You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 3-4

### John 3:1–21

In John 3, Jesus teaches Nicodemus, a prominent religious leader, that God’s kingdom is accessible only to those who receive a new nature by God’s Spirit. In other words, it belongs only to those who have been “born again” (3:3). Indeed, God’s kingdom is mysterious, and only those whose hearts God has opened will understand how Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Notice how Jesus teaches even the religious teachers about the things of God, a subject they’re supposed to know expertly.

### John 3:22–36

The prophet John continues to teach and baptize, which prepares the people to follow Jesus. When Jesus Himself begins to teach, John sends his disciples to follow Him, publicly endorsing Jesus as the direct voice from God.

### John 4:1–26

In Samaria, Jesus talks publicly with a lower-class woman. The shock of this moment is likely missed by modern readers. But simply put, a Jewish man speaking directly to a Samaritan woman would have scandalized those in Jesus’ day. But Jesus is compassionate, and so He explains God’s kingdom to her, convincing her that He is the Messiah. This section of text provides Jesus’ first “I AM” statement in John, identifying Him as

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*Would your church welcome someone like the Samaritan woman? Would you?*



# John 5-6

WEEK 19 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, teach us to come to You simply with our needs, trusting that You desire to meet them. We want to see Your power in our lives, so teach us to rely on You even for the things we think we can solve on our own. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 5-6

### John 5:1-30

Back in Jerusalem on a Sabbath day, Jesus heals a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years by simply speaking to him. On that day, even a small thing like carrying a mat was considered “work,” according to religious leaders; therefore, they accuse both the man and Jesus of breaking God’s Sabbath law. Jesus addresses the healed man’s sickness and then his spiritual walk (5:14).

In these verses, Jesus uses His favorite title for himself: “Son of Man.” This Old Testament term is found in Ezekiel 2:1-3, Ezekiel 3:1-4, and in Daniel 7:13-14. He uses the “Son of Man” title to communicate His divine authority, His suffering, His death and resurrection, and ultimately His glorious second coming.

### John 5:31-47

Jesus offers evidence to validate claims about His identity: the prophecies about the Messiah, the testimony of the prophet John, and His own miracles. He then tells the religious leaders that their own religious systems and teachings will condemn them if they reject Him.

### John 6:1-40

When Jesus miraculously feeds several thousand people, the

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*If you have to suffer a long time before God heals you, do you think you could remain patient and faithful? Or would you get frustrated with God’s seeming delay?*

crowd's excitement grows to a fever pitch—so much so that they intend to force Him to be their political king. When Jesus sees this, He withdraws to spend time in prayer with His Father. Jesus is clear: what people need is not physical food, but to believe the words and works of Jesus, the “Bread of Life” (6:35).

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Plan to memorize all of the “I AM” statements in John’s Gospel.

### John 6:41–71

Jesus’ claim to be the “bread that came down from heaven” (6:48) leads to questioning and complaining—only someone who claims to be God would make such a statement. He is the “bread” that brings eternal life, which the manna of the Old Testament couldn’t offer. Because of this saying, many of His followers leave Him, but Peter recognizes that Jesus has “the words of eternal life” (6:68).



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

***<sup>25</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.***

/ John 5:25

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

We often think of Christian stewardship in terms of finances. 1 Peter 4:10 can be helpful in expanding our definition of Christian stewardship. It says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” What gifts has God given you to steward? If need be, make plans to exercise those gifts more to serve others.

# John 7-8

WEEK 19 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, it’s clear that Your way is entirely better than any lifestyle we would have chosen on our own. Thank You for making us your family, and teach us to bear well the responsibility of representing You faithfully in the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 7-8

### John 7:1–24

Rumors are swirling about Jesus. He even faces death threats from religious authorities, despite the peoples’ amazement over His teaching. Jesus challenges the religious leaders’ values and in the process resets their understanding of the Sabbath. He then exhorts them to stop judging nearness to God by mere surface behavior.

### John 7:25–53

During a key religious feast, Jesus announces Himself as the source of spiritual life. Anyone who believes in Him “will have streams of living water” (7:38) flowing from him. And yet, His teaching causes conflict over whether or not He is the Messiah. Nicodemus, the man who met Jesus in John 3, defends Him before the other leaders.

### John 8:1–11

Jesus has the authority to render appropriate judgments. He demonstrates this by preventing the stoning of an adulterous woman. The religious leaders wanted to trap Jesus into disregarding Moses’ law, but Jesus secures the woman’s release even as He encourages her to live God’s way.

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*What does it mean to be “at peace” with God? How would you describe it to a non-believing friend?*



# John 9-10

WEEK 19 / DAY 5



PRAY

*“Father, open our eyes to see You clearly in the Word, in our lives, and in the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 9-10

### John 9

Jesus tells His disciples that He is “the light of the world” (9:5), yet another “I AM” claim. Then He demonstrates His power by healing a blind beggar. Jesus distinguishes between those who accept God and see clearly from those who reject Him and remain blind to His kingdom.

The Pharisees expel the healed blind man from the Temple, but Jesus welcomes him. By contrast, Jesus rejects those who claim they can see God but remain spiritually blind. John fills this chapter with irony: those who claim to have sight are spiritually blind, while the man who can’t physically see is given the gift of spiritual sight.

### John 10:1–21

Jesus alone offers a legitimate way into God’s family; He is the “gate for the sheep” (10:7). God’s sheep recognize His voice. Jesus is the good shepherd who will willingly lay down His life for His sheep.

### John 10:22–42

Rather than choosing to defend Himself before His opponents, Jesus continually points to His deeds as proof that He is the Messiah. God’s people believe Jesus’ claims, and they have eternal life in the care of His hand.

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*The healed blind man couldn’t explain everything, but he knew Jesus had changed him. Can you say with integrity that Jesus has changed you, too?*





# John 11-12

WEEK 20 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, make us witnesses of Your character and power, and believers in everything You’ve taught. We want to know You and live fully with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 11-12

### John 11:1–44

When Jesus’ close friend Lazarus dies unexpectedly, He tells His disciples that He alone has control of both spiritual life and physical resurrection (notice the “I AM” statement in 11:25). Jesus calls Lazarus back to life, raising him from the dead by the power of His words.

### John 11:45–12:11

Religious leaders call for Jesus’ arrest and even plan to kill Him. As Jesus feasts with friends, Mary washes His feet with perfume. He then explains that this served as foreshadowing of His impending death and burial. Judas later sells Jesus’ trust and helps to kill Him. Why? Because he loved money (12:6).

### John 12:12–26

A large crowd in Jerusalem for Passover celebrates Jesus, even hailing Him as King. Jesus again predicts His death, explaining that without His death no one can experience true life and spiritual growth. He demands all true believers let go of their earthly lives in order to follow Him and enjoy true life with God.

### John 12:27–50

Jesus feels burdened by His imminent death. And yet, He knows that He has come to glorify His Father, and his “hour” has come

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*How much hold, if any, does money have on you? Do you tend to overspend or to waste money? Do you give sacrificially to God’s work?*



# John 13-14

WEEK 20 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Jesus, You have modeled and expressed ultimate love for God and people even in incredibly difficult moments. Grow Your Spirit’s presence in us, that we may better love both You and each other. In Your name we pray, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 13-14

### John 13:1–30

According to Old Testament Law, Jews had to wash themselves before meeting God. But here, Jesus the Son of God washes the feet of His disciples. This models for them both sacrifice and humility. Later, Jesus predicts that Judas will betray Him and help to kill Him. John tells us that Satan enters Judas to lead him toward his act of betrayal (13:27).

### John 13:31–14:17

Jesus instructs His disciples to show their faith by loving and serving one another, just like He did. As Jesus talks about leaving them, the disciples are both confused and anxious. But He assures them that if they’ve seen Him, they’ve seen God. If they believe He’s from God (“I AM” 14:6), they will have great power—and if they love Him, they will do what He asks.

Jesus also says that He will prepare their future home with God. What’s more, He will send the Holy Spirit to help believers and solidify their faith through obedience. And now, as part of God’s family, they’re guaranteed that God will meet their needs when they ask in Jesus’ name.

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*How much does the fact that the Holy Spirit indwells believers really affect your life each day?*



# John 15-16

WEEK 20 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, teach us to root ourselves in Your coming kingdom, not our present realities. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 15-16

### John 15

Jesus uses the metaphor of a vineyard—and another “I AM” statement (15:1)—to describe how believers stay in God’s protection and family. They do so by bearing spiritual fruit. What does spiritual fruit look like? It looks like divine love; it looks like acting on Jesus’ words and obeying His command to love each other. Jesus promises to send His Spirit as a teacher who will advocate for Christians as they walk along the path of God.

### John 16:1–24

Believers should expect opposition from those in the world who haven’t heard or seen God. Jesus explains that He will leave His first disciples to reunite with His Father. But while Jesus is away, the Spirit will guide believers to new levels of understanding and action. After a season of difficulty and suffering, Jesus will bring permanent, joyful contentment. Until then, believers can ask the Father in Jesus’ name for anything they need.

### John 16:25–33

When people love and believe Jesus, the Father accepts and loves them as co-heirs with Jesus. The disciples say they believe fully, and Jesus tells them to prepare to be scattered by suffering—first Jesus’, then their own. But they must not lose heart. Why? Because He has overcome the world.

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*Consider the miracle of this statement:  
“If you’re a follower of Christ, God the Holy Spirit lives in you.”*



# John 17-18

WEEK 20 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, help us understand the importance of our interdependence and unity in reflecting who You are to both each other and our neighbors. Help us to value Your presence in the world much more highly than our own preferences or petty disagreements. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 17-18

### John 17

This chapter records a powerful prayer of Jesus. Jesus honored His Father perfectly by both showing people what God is like and bringing God’s people back into relationship with Him. God has given those people His name, and He will protect them with His Spirit until they live with Him in person forever. Jesus asks His Father to keep His followers safe, unified, and faithful under attack and difficulty.

### John 18:1–27

Judas finally betrays Jesus to the religious leaders—just as Jesus predicted he would. As they arrest and violently interrogate Him, Jesus refuses to resist or ask His disciples to protect Him. As Peter tries to follow Jesus after His arrest, he denies being Jesus’ disciple—just as Jesus predicted he would.

Jesus’ spoken words “I AM He” (18:6) were powerful enough to knock the soldiers and officers to the ground. However, from this point on, Jesus chooses to speak very little and completely surrenders to their abuse. He is on His way to die.

### John 18:28–40

Jesus is dragged to the political court, where the Roman governor

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*Jesus prayed, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory...” (John 17:24). Jesus wants us to be with Him—how might that truth affect your life today?*

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

At least once per month, set aside 1-2 hours to simply meditate on God's Word in silence and solitude. Get away from people, turn off your music, and think about God.

Pilate finds Him legally innocent. But the religious leaders force Pilate to retain Him as a criminal. Jesus appears powerless, but that appearance is by design. It's because He's establishing a new spiritual kingdom that's not grasped by coercion or force of will.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>22</sup>The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

/ John 17:22-23

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

If you were to spend two hours alone with God, what would be the hardest thing to give up for those two hours? Your answer might reveal an idol in your life.



# John 19-21

WEEK 20 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Lord, we want to follow You faithfully, no matter what we see or encounter along the way. Teach us to live by Your teachings and Spirit wholeheartedly, without hesitation or distraction. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read John 19-21

### **John 19:1–16**

To satisfy the crowd on their holiday, Pilate has Jesus flogged and publicly mocked. But he still objects to crucifying Him. The crowd doesn’t like that, so they threaten him with treason until he handed Jesus over to them. The irony here is thick: Pilate, a Roman, apparently shows a deeper fear of God than the Jews who were bent on killing Jesus.

### **John 19:17–42**

The Jewish leaders have Roman guards nail Jesus to a cross. They hang Him up to die near the city limits. Down to the smallest detail, every prophecy about Jesus’ death is fulfilled. As He dies, Jesus entrusts His mother to a new family, a trusted disciple who received her into his home. With His last breath, Jesus announces that He has completed God’s assignment.

### **John 20:1–18**

After the Passover weekend, Mary Magdalene finds the tomb open and empty! She then tells Peter and John that she had seen Jesus alive, and she shares His message that He is going to now leave them and return to His Father.

### **John 20:19–31**

Jesus supernaturally appears in the disciples’ secret meeting. He

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*How much does the truth of an empty tomb affect your life today?*



# Introduction to Colossians



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Paul  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | The Church in Colossae  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | False teaching  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | Combat false teaching with the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ        |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Christ is complete in every way and thus believers are complete in Christ |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Colossians 2:6–10   |

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## THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to a group of Christians he had never met. Although he didn't personally begin the church at Colossae, a market city in Asia Minor, Paul was concerned when he heard about false teaching being spread there. He responded by writing this letter to remind the Colossian saints to hold onto—and live out—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

# Colossians 1

WEEK 21 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“God, help me to bear fruit. May my faith in the gospel be firm. May my love for all the saints be evident. May I be filled with real hope. Grant that Your Spirit will strengthen me with all power so that I can endure whatever trials come, so that I can have patience and joy. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Colossians 1

### Colossians 1:1–11

In Colossians 1, Paul encourages the church in Colossae for their growing maturity. He thanks God that the Colossians have faith, love, and hope because they’re grounded in the gospel. He prays they would be full of spiritual wisdom and would endure with patience and joyful thankfulness.

### Colossians 1:12–23

God has chosen the Colossians to share in His inheritance. He has taken them out of the darkness of their sins and brought them into the hope and joy of Jesus. As soon as Paul references Jesus, he can’t help but launch into a praise poem about Him (1:15–20).

### Colossians 1:24–28

Paul then reminds the Colossians of their mission: to proclaim Christ and to present all Christ-followers mature in Christ.

*Is there someone in your life who would enthusiastically pray Colossians 1:9-12 for you? If not, ask God to direct you to someone.*



# Colossians 2

WEEK 21 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father God, thank You for those who have labored to establish me in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray You will keep me from being deceived by seemingly plausible arguments about how to find wisdom and life apart from Christ. May I cling to Jesus today as the source of my righteousness and my growth. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Colossians 2

### Colossians 2:1–3

Paul had never met the Colossians, but he’s concerned about them. He doesn’t want them to get derailed by competing philosophical and religious ideas. Remember, he told them, don’t be tricked by nice-sounding arguments or impressive spirituality that places the focus on anything other than Christ.

### Colossians 2:4–15

Our human reasoning alone is incapable of leading to true wisdom because God has hidden His wisdom in Christ. We can begin to be wise only by trusting in Him. Furthermore, we can “walk in him” (2:6) because we know our sins and trespasses have been forgiven at the cross. Once dead, those who trust in Christ have been raised to life by the One who rules over all.

### Colossians 2:16–23

The problem with these seemingly wise and spiritual people is simple: they aren’t connected to Christ! They’re distracted by all these things that have the “appearance of wisdom,” but in reality they’re living in a world of shadows when Christ is right in front of them. Amidst this confusion, Paul gives the Colossian saints a simple encouragement: “Hold on to Christ.”

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*Since Jesus is indeed the One who rules over all, what needs to change in your life?*



# Colossians 3:1-17

WEEK 21 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Thank You, God, for raising me up with Christ and seating me with Him in victory over sin and deceit and death. Please help me today to put off my old ways of thinking and speaking and acting, and to put on the new ways of Christ. Clothe me today with love as I thankfully serve Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Colossians 3:1-17

### Colossians 3:1–4

The heart of Paul’s letter to the Colossians is a practical description of growth in the Christian life. Notice the three sets of commands in Colossians 3. The first is to treasure the things of the kingdom of God. Paul tells the Colossian saints to “set [their] minds on things that are above” (3:2).

### Colossians 3:5–10

The second command is to put off the old ways of sin. The Colossian saints must “put to death what belongs to [their] earthly nature” (3:5)—everything from sexual immorality, which defiles the body, to idolatry, which defiles the soul. Paul also instructs the Colossians to “put away” things like anger, slander, and obscenities.

### Colossians 3:11–17

Finally, Paul exhorts the Colossians to put on the character and habits of Christ: compassion, patience, and above all love (3:14). All of this is both the work of God and a gift from God. As a result, Christians should be marked by thankfulness.

*Is anger a problem for you? Slander? Obscenities? Lying? Malice?*





# Colossians 3:18-25

WEEK 21 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“God, today I submit myself to Your Word as I live out the roles You have placed me in. Please help me to willingly lay my life down as I consider how You have served me. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Colossians 3:18-25

### Colossians 3:18–25

If the first part of Colossians 3 explains the mechanics of growth for the Christian, these verses give practical examples of how to live it out. Paul begins with marriage, the central relationship in society (3:18–19), and moves outward from there to parenting and employment. We may not have a working concept of bondservants in our culture, but we can see how these instructions could apply to anyone who works for another person or manages the work of someone else.

All of Paul’s readers would see themselves in at least one of the categories described in these verses. Whatever they did, they were to “do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people” (3:23).

*Do you ever do things to gain approval from someone other than God?*



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

/ Colossians 3:23–24



# Colossians 4

WEEK 21 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Thank You, Father, for those who made the gospel clear to me, and for the brothers and sisters who have encouraged me in my times of discouragement and weariness. Make me a blessing to my brothers and sisters, and give me Your divine wisdom for my interactions with those who do not yet believe Your gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Colossians 4

### Colossians 4

Paul closes this section on the Christ-rooted life by discussing relationships with other believers and with outsiders. As in many of his writings, he urges the Colossian saints to persist in prayer. From this example, we see one way we should pray: that God would carry out His purposes by giving believers both the clarity and the opportunity to speak the gospel.

When it comes to outsiders, the Colossian saints must “act wisely . . . making the most of the time” (4:5). Paul says their God-given way of seeing and understanding life will enable the Colossians to live as Christ’s ambassadors to those who do not yet believe.

Notice how Paul concludes by listing the reasons he is thankful for his brothers and sisters. Paul’s specific greetings show that, in many ways, he is just like us. He cared about people, he missed them, and he relied on them for encouragement.

*Is somebody praying Colossians 4:2-4 for you? Is someone asking God to give you opportunities to speak about Christ?*



# Introduction to 1 & 2 Peter

## THE BOOKS OF 1 & 2 PETER

Peter wrote his first letter to encourage Christians who were suffering and to call them to personal holiness. A central focus of the letter is following Christ under persecution. Peter later wrote his second letter from a prison in Rome to warn churches in Asia Minor against false teachings and to equip them to defend the true faith.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Simon Peter  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Christians in Northern Asia Minor  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | Persecution of the church (1 Peter) and false teaching (2 Peter)                                   |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | Encourage these Christians to stay the course (1 Peter) and to combat the false teaching (2 Peter) |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Christians living in a hostile world (1 Peter) and the dangers of false teachers (2 Peter)         |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | 1 Peter 3:15–17; 2 Peter 3:17–18   |

# 1 Peter 1

WEEK 22 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for Your plan of salvation in Jesus Christ that gives us a living hope. Remind me that in Christ my future is secure so that I may rejoice even in the midst of present sufferings. Help me live as one who has been born again for obedience to my Heavenly Father and His Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Peter 1

### 1 Peter 1:1–9

Peter and Silvanus (5:12) write to followers of Jesus who have been scattered throughout Asia Minor. They’ve experienced persecution as a result of following Jesus Christ. What does Peter do? He invites them to praise God with him for the new birth and the living hope that the gospel provides. Even amid trials and suffering, these saints can rejoice because God Himself shields His chosen ones. In fact, Peter goes on to explain that their endurance proves their faith in Jesus is genuine.

### 1 Peter 1:10–12

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament prophets predicted a suffering Messiah whose life pattern was suffering first, then glory. That’s the pattern of Christian discipleship, too.

### 1 Peter 1:13–25

Because of Christ’s resurrection, God has guaranteed the future reward of all His people. This means believers must live differently even in times of trial and loss. Those whom God has chosen have been set apart by the Holy Spirit (1:2) for obedience, that is, to live holy and transformed lives since they’ve been bought with the precious blood of Jesus.

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*Have you ever suffered for Christ?*

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Keep a running prayer list in your pocket or on your phone. Use it to guide your praying during the day.

God's plan of salvation started before creation when the eternal Son of God was chosen to be the sacrifice for sins. Now, in Peter's day, God's eternal plan to bless all peoples through His Son has finally been revealed. These scattered believers should give themselves to a sincere love for their fellow Christians, remembering that only people and God's Word will last forever. Everything else perishes.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.*

/ 1 Peter 1:3-4

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Begin memorizing this week's verse: "*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*" (1 Peter 2:9).
- With that verse in mind, remember that you're seeking to share your testimony and the gospel with someone this week.
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.



# 1 Peter 2:1–3:7

WEEK 22 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Father in heaven, help me to love Your Word more, to read it more, and to long to have my thoughts and actions informed and corrected by it. Make my life a good advertisement for following Jesus. Help me live for the future. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Peter 2:1–3:7

### 1 Peter 2:1–10

Because Christians have been chosen to live holy lives, we must get rid of evil intentions and evil speech. Like babies, we should desire the milk of God’s Word, drinking and digesting it often so that it nourishes our souls.

Those who believe in Christ will be honored, not put to shame. In this life, it may not look that way, but in the end the unbelieving rebels will be shamed because they have stumbled over Christ. To Christians experiencing intense persecution, these promises would be especially precious.

As followers of Jesus, we are God’s chosen people, and like the King’s own priests we’ve been chosen to proclaim His praises. What else would we want to do? After all, He’s given us a new life. We’ve received mercy from God’s own hand.

### 1 Peter 2:11–17

Peter urges these Christians to embrace personal holiness and abstain from “passions of the flesh” (2:11). In fact, if we live well—by, for example, submitting to human authorities—our lives will show the emptiness of lies about Christians and may even lead to some being saved. That’s why Peter tells these believers to honor

*Do you know the people in your church whose spouses are not believers? Pray for those unbelieving spouses.*

everyone, even those who shame them.

### **1 Peter 2:18–3:7**

This gospel transforms how believers relate to other people—both good and bad. Peter encourages household slaves to endure both good and bad masters since suffering for doing good is frequently the lot of Christ-followers.

As the gospel is proclaimed, some wives may become Christ-followers while their husbands refuse to believe. Peter urges these wives to have gentle spirits, trusting God while serving their husbands and perhaps winning them over by living and serving well. Husbands, too, should honor their wives. Otherwise, a husband's prayers may be hindered by his harshness and failure to honor his wife.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup>Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

/ 1 Peter 2:11–12

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

There will always be opponents of Christ and His followers, but that never gives Christians an excuse to dishonor the gospel. In which of the following areas are you least likely to honor Christ? Seek God's forgiveness and grace as you reflect on this.

- your thoughts
- your actions
- your words
- your affections

# 1 Peter 3:8–4:19

WEEK 22 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, I thank You that You watch over all things and You see those who are doing good and those who are doing evil. Help me trust that You will act justly in Your timing, just as You did in Christ’s life and death. May I bless others and serve God’s people faithfully, living for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Peter 3:8–4:19

### 1 Peter 3:8–12

Peter prepares God’s scattered people to live well amid persecution by reminding them that God is in control. Because of this, believers should turn to and rely on Him, continuing to live well and do good to others even as they trust their Creator to rescue them in this life or the life to come.

Even Christ-followers can tend toward pride and divisiveness, particularly under stressful conditions. But the gospel calls them to be unified, loving, sympathetic, and humble as they bless others. God is watching over His people, and He hears their prayers. One day, He will punish and judge wrongdoers (4:5).

### 1 Peter 3:13–22

Christians may suffer for doing what’s good and right. When they do, they’re following in the footsteps of Jesus who suffered as our substitute and sacrifice, died in our place, and rose again to bring us to God. These truths enable Christ-followers to honor Christ in the midst of unjust suffering.

### 1 Peter 4:1–6

Christians should expect to suffer since Christ suffered. Ungodly

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*Do you truly believe that God is in control of all things?*

*As you continue to work through this study, are you also intentionally using your gifts through your local church?*

people may bring temporary pain and suffering upon God's people—they may even kill them—but at the resurrection, Jesus' true followers will live with God, forever free from all evil and suffering.

### **1 Peter 4:7–19**

The end is coming, and even though it's not easy to follow Christ in difficult circumstances, Christians should keep praying for and loving one another, showing cheerful hospitality. Don't be self-centered, Peter says, but use your gifts to serve one another and rely upon God's strength so He receives the glory.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup>but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*

/ 1 Peter 3:14–17

### **GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY**

Ask two fellow believers in your local church what they believe your strengths, weaknesses, and gifts are. Listen humbly and learn.

# 1 Peter 5

WEEK 22 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for raising Jesus to the place of authority over all things. When I face evil and temptation, keep me alert and give me the grace to resist the devil always. Make me more humble like my Savior, so that I may depend fully on You and stand firm in Your strength. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 1 Peter 5

### 1 Peter 5:1–9

The early church recognized certain persons as overseers, elders, or shepherds. These were identifiable men whom the apostle specifically addressed at the end of his letter.

In persecuted churches, the elders/overseers/pastor-shepherds often suffer first and most. These leaders may be especially tempted under trials. That’s why Peter—himself a witness of Christ’s sufferings—encouraged them to remain eager, faithful, content, gentle, and willing examples to the people they serve.

Young men in particular should submit to the elders, just as all God’s people are to be humble as they relate to one another. God opposes the proud, Peter says, but gives grace to the humble.

Finally, Peter sounds the alarm concerning the devil whom he compares to a roaring lion on the prowl looking for people to devour. Followers of Jesus must resist the devil and be firm in their faith.

While enduring persecution and hardship, God’s people might think their situation is unusual. Not so, says Peter. Throughout the

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*How often do you pray for the pastors of your church?*



# 2 Peter 1-3

WEEK 22 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, thank You for giving me, in Christ Jesus, everything I need for life and godliness. Add to my faith those things that make me useful and fruitful in Your kingdom. Protect me from false teachings, even as others are deceived. Come quickly, Lord, that all things will be made right for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read 2 Peter 1-3

### 2 Peter 1

Peter begins this letter with a beautiful and poetic reminder of our utter dependence on Christ. His intention is to remind God’s people that, in Christ, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

Peter was an eyewitness to Christ’s teachings, miracles, and resurrection. In other words, he’s an apostle. This gives him the right to speak authoritatively on matters of doctrine. So when false prophets infiltrated churches and began to lead people astray, Peter confronted these lies.

### 2 Peter 2

Peter is clear: God punishes those who teach a gospel other than Christ’s. Peter’s audience would surely remember the stories of those who had abandoned God’s truth in favor of pursuing fleshly pleasures. These evildoers may have started out professing Christ, but each believed something other than God’s truth and went so far as to lead others to believe those same lies.

### 2 Peter 3

Peter goes on to encourage believers in the face of “scoffers”

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*Peter wrote, “His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness...” (2 Peter 1:3). Do you really believe these words?*

(3:3-4). It seems at least some in the early church expected Christ to return within their lifetime. So when church members died, their hope in Christ's return was challenged.

Peter explains that God is not subject to time as we know it. He lives outside of time. The Lord isn't slow; He always acts exactly when He means to. The challenge for us, then, is to wait faithfully for Christ's second coming.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Live every day as if Jesus were going to return that day. Don't waste opportunities.

The key to recognizing and defeating false teaching is understanding God's Word. We gain right understanding by reading Scripture. In fact, Peter encourages his readers to learn even the most difficult of Christ's teachings by reading Paul's letters (3:15-16).



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>3</sup>His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.*

/ 2 Peter 1:3

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Get together with your group and/or mentor, and use the time to:

- discuss what the Lord has taught you this week
- discuss your answers to the reflection questions this week
- discuss any struggles you've faced as a follower of Jesus this week
- share about any 10-minute discipling opportunities you had this week
- set personal and study goals for next week
- pray together



# Introduction to Philemon



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Paul  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Philemon  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | Philemon's slave escapes, meets Paul, becomes a believer, and is sent back to his owner                               |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To encourage Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother and to send him back to Paul and possibly grant him his freedom |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Love and reconciliation in the body of Christ   |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Philemon 17-20  |

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## THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

Paul wrote Philemon from prison, requesting Philemon to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, who was a new believer. Running away was a serious crime in Roman law, and as a Roman slave-master, Philemon had the legal right to punish Onesimus severely. Paul, though, urged Philemon to treat Onesimus as his brother rather than as his slave.

# Philemon

WEEK 23 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Father, give me wisdom and grace to see all fellow believers as brothers and sisters, regardless of their economic or social status and regardless of their relationship to me in the eyes of the world. Enable me to forgive and accept even those who wrong me, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Philemon

### Philemon 1–10

It appears that Philemon is a Christian believer in Colossae (Colossians 1:1, 4:17; Philemon 1–2) who was wealthy enough to own at least one slave. Paul clearly knew Philemon well, and Paul may have led him to faith in Christ. Onesimus was Philemon’s runaway slave. Onesimus found Paul in prison in Rome and was converted to faith in Christ (Philemon 10–16).

Paul identifies himself as a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and he identifies Philemon as a beloved fellow worker. His prayer for Philemon stresses the love and generosity that Philemon habitually shows to the people of God, and the joy and comfort this has given Paul.

Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon. As a Roman slave-master, Philemon had the legal right to punish Onesimus severely, yet Paul writes this letter to urge Philemon to treat Onesimus as his brother in Christ, rather than a slave.

Paul is clear that what he’s asking of Philemon is his duty as a Christian. Paul says he would be well within his rights to command what he’s merely requesting. However, Paul makes a request

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*Have you ever stood up for a believer that others didn’t yet trust? Has anyone ever stood for you when others were skeptical?*



rather than a command, and he presents himself in ways that provoke sympathy rather than fear.

### Philemon 11–25

During his appeal, Paul employs a play on words by talking about the “usefulness” of Onesimus; the name Onesimus means “useful.” He calls Onesimus his child and says that in sending him back to his master, he’s sending his own heart. The core of Paul’s appeal is the changed relationship that now exists between Philemon and Onesimus. In Christ, Onesimus is now Philemon’s brother, and that trumps all other considerations.

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Get in the habit of sending words of encouragement to others whose Christian life is an example for you.



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>4</sup>I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup>and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.*

/ Philemon 4–6

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Which of your memory verses do you need to review? Spend five minutes reviewing those verses today.
  - Matthew 4:4
  - Romans 5:8
  - Matthew 15:8
  - 2 Corinthians 10:17–18
  - 1 Timothy 4:12
  - John 15:5
  - Luke 19:10
  - Philippians 2:3
  - James 1:2-3
  - Galatians 2:20
  - 1 John 3:17
  - 1 Peter 2:9
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Introduction to Jude

## THE BOOK OF JUDE

This letter, written by Jude the brother of James, refers to several Old Testament passages to warn Jewish Christians about spiritual rebellion as well as false teaching and its consequences. The book shares many parallels with similar warnings in 2 Peter and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus).

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | Jude, the brother of James  |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Predominantly Jewish Christian congregation (Asia Minor?)           |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | False teaching (antinomianism coupled with licentiousness)          |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To contend for the faith once for all entrusted to believers        |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Contend for the faith and reject the false teaching of the heretics |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Jude 3  |



## PRAY

*“Lord, strengthen our words with the power of Your Spirit, and teach us to live up to the glory of the gospel in our daily activities and choices. Protect Your people from division, and keep us alert for anyone that might try to twist Your amazing gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Jude

### Jude 1–4

False teachers had crept into the church, and they were twisting the gospel and approving of ungodly living. Jude wants the church to stand up for the true gospel. Believers cannot risk entertaining teachers who live loose or ungodly lifestyles because they will cause division and controversy in the church.

### Jude 5–16

These false teachers were relying on dreams for their authority, living sexually immoral lives, and denying the authority of Jesus. They’re greedy and selfish; they grumble. Jude’s concern is that their lives don’t match gospel standards; they may know God’s words, but they don’t have God’s Spirit. So Jude reminds his readers that they will suffer judgment, just like God judged rebellious angels and the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

### Jude 17–24

Jude reminds his readers that the apostles predicted the rise of scoffers in the church. One way to stand against them is for believers to live as followers of Christ who grow in their faith, pray in the power of the Spirit, deepen their love for God, and wait expectantly for Jesus’ return. Moreover, true believers show

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*Knowing the Word well helps us to recognize false teaching. Are you learning the Word through this study?*



# Introduction to Revelation



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Author:</b>                             | John   |
| <b>Destination:</b><br><i>(written to)</i> | Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea  |
| <b>Occasion:</b>                           | Persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, John's visions  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                            | To encourage Christians to faithful endurance by depicting the final judgment and the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth |
| <b>Theme:</b>                              | Jesus the slain and resurrected Lamb is coming again as the eschatological King and Judge  |
| <b>Key Verse:</b>                          | Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16   |

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## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The title of this book is actually “The Apocalypse,” which simply means, “the revelation.” In other words, in this book God revealed His plans to His people through a man named John. Because there are a variety of views on how to understand Revelation, hold your interpretations with humility, and don't build basic doctrines on debatable features of Revelation. Let this teaching about the end times encourage the afflicted and warn the unconcerned.

# Revelation 1

WEEK 23 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, I praise You as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the firstborn of the dead and the Faithful Witness. I praise You, too, for your unending care for Your church. Help me to love Your church in the same way You do; help me empower Your church throughout the nations of the world to proclaim Your gospel! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 1

### Revelation 1:1–8

The book of Revelation begins with a prologue that promises blessings for those who read this book and follow its teachings. John writes his work to “the seven churches in Asia” (1:4), which probably refers to the whole church since the number “7” symbolizes completeness. The focus is Jesus, the beginning and the end, the One who will come again in the clouds.

### Revelation 1:9–20

The book continues with an astonishing vision of Jesus. John tells us he first heard a voice and then turned to see a man of enormous power and authority. He’s clothed in a long robe and a golden sash—both symbols of kingly authority—and His hair, feet, and eyes shone with a bright light. Overwhelmed by the sight, John falls on his face, and it’s then that the man reveals Himself. He is the one who died and rose again, the conqueror of death. He is Jesus who stands among His churches.

Why are the churches symbolized by lampstands? Because God always intended His people to be a light for the world, a witness and testimony to Him. So, the churches are represented here by

*When was the last time you were so struck by Jesus’ presence and power that you could only fall on your face?*





# Revelation 2-3

WEEK 23 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“Lord Jesus, thank You for caring for Your church. Help us remain faithful witnesses to You, even in the face of terrible suffering and persecution. Protect us from cowardice and compromise, and let our light shine brightly in this darkened and rebellious world. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 2-3

### Revelation 2-3

At the beginning of Revelation 2, something amazing happens: Jesus the King speaks to the seven local churches represented by the seven lampstands. The letters are extraordinary not only because of their detail—Jesus knows everything about them—but also for the themes that run through them. Because these seven churches represent all churches, what Jesus says to them helps us see what He wants and expects from His churches today.

### *Have you lost your first love for Jesus?*

First, Jesus expects His church to faithfully witness to Him despite the world’s persecution. That theme runs through all seven letters, though it’s perhaps clearest in the letter to the church at Smyrna (2:10). Even in the letter to the church at Ephesus, the “first love” (2:4) they have lost doesn’t seem to mean merely heartfelt devotion to Jesus, but rather love for Jesus particularly borne out in witness to Him.

Second, Jesus also expects His churches not to compromise with the world. So the church at Ephesus is commended for zealously defending the truth (2:2), while the church at Pergamum is warned about following the ways of Balaam, that is, the way of idolatry (2:14). The same is true in Thyatira, where the church is sadly



# Revelation 4-5

WEEK 23 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, we praise You because You rule in unbreakable sovereignty over all the universe. And Jesus, we praise You because You are the Lord of history, and by Your blood You have purchased men and women from every nation of the earth to be a kingdom of priests unto Your God! In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 4-5

### Revelation 4

In Revelation 4, John receives another vision that launches the rest of the book. It’s a vision of heaven, of God’s throne, and of God seated upon His throne and receiving all of creation’s praise and worship. John sees a door standing open and is brought into the presence of God Himself.

At the center of John’s vision is the throne wrapped in colored light, which symbolizes God’s holiness and majesty. Surrounding the throne are 24 “elders” who represent the whole redeemed people of God and four creatures who represent the “kings” of all the realms of creation: domesticated animals (ox), wild animals (lion), birds (eagle), and humankind. All creation bows to God and worships Him.

### Revelation 5

John sees in the right hand of the One on the throne a scroll, rolled up and sealed with seven seals. As Revelation unfolds, it becomes clear that what’s written on this scroll is the purpose and plan of God for history.

No one can open the scroll, and so John weeps. But the Lion of the



Tribe of Judah, who is also the Lamb who had been slain, is worthy to open the scroll. He's the One who will execute God's purposes in the world, the One who will be proclaimed King at the end of it all. As the Lamb takes the throne, heaven explodes with praises that reverberate throughout the universe. Worthy is the Lamb!

*If for some reason you no longer had access to the Word of God, would you weep?*



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>9</sup>And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup>and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.*

/ Revelation 5:9-10

#### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

We have the privilege of telling the gospel as God draws to Himself a people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (5:9). Find out what your church is doing to reach the nations and ask what role you can play.

# Revelation 6:1–8:5

WEEK 24 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“Lord Jesus, You told us we will face hardship and difficulty and even persecution. But You also told us to take heart, because You have overcome the world. Help us, Lord, to take comfort in knowing You as our King, and that ultimately we will be victorious because You are victorious. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 6:1–8:5

### Revelation 6

Revelation contains three main sets of judgments—seals, trumpets, and bowls—with other visions mixed in around them. The big question has often been, “How do those judgments fit together?” Some have said they fit chronologically, that is, they follow one right after the other. Others understand them not in terms of a line but rather a kind of spiral which describes the same time period over and over again, each time with increasing intensity and drama.

At the breaking of the seals, judgments are unleashed for the first time. The first four seals bring judgment in the symbolic form of four horsemen: white for a conqueror who wants to rule the world, red for war, black for famine, and pale for death or disease. Some argue that the white horse represents Christ, but others see someone evil since the remaining horsemen represent terrible judgments.

The fifth seal shows martyrs under the altar crying out for judgment. Then in response to their prayer, the sixth and seventh seals are opened, and final judgment falls. The sixth seal, in fact, shows devastating destruction.



## Revelation 7:1–8:5

Between the sixth and seventh seals, however, is a pause in the action, and John is given another vision: the sealing of the people of God. Some argue that the 144,000 are Jews who will follow Jesus, but others see them as representative of all believers. What we know for certain is that a great multitude from every tribe, nation, and tongue will ultimately worship God who “will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (7:17).

The opening of the seventh seal brings judgments of greater intensity that accompany the prayers of God’s people. Silence and awe anticipate the judgment to come.

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*Do you let God wipe away your tears, or do you tend to let sorrow overwhelm you?*



### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>16</sup>They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup>For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

/ Revelation 7:16–17

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

- Using the words of Revelation 7:10–11 as a guide, spend a few minutes praising God. Sit in silence and meditate on His power.
- This week review the first six of the twelve verses that you have memorized in this study. Next week, you will review the final six.
  - Matthew 4:4
  - Luke 19:10
  - Romans 5:8
  - Philippians 2:3
  - Matthew 15:8
  - James 1:2-3
- Watch for 10-minute discipling opportunities this week.

# Revelation 8:6–11:19

WEEK 24 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“Lord Jesus, You are the crucified and resurrected One. Help us never to expect that we as Your people should be treated better than You were treated by this world. If we must suffer so that the gospel may be proclaimed, then help us to do it well, with perseverance and courage and hope. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 8:6–11:19

### Revelation 8:6–9:21

At the beginning of Revelation 8, the prayers of God’s people for vengeance rise to the throne, and God answers their request with final judgment. Then through the rest of Revelation 8–9, six trumpets are blown, and judgments are thrown against the world. Whether these are chronologically new judgments or a re-stating of previous judgments, we can’t be sure. But it’s clear that the judgments are more intense. They’re limited, though, to one-thirds, indicating that God is still restraining His wrath.

The “woes” are severe indeed, as one who appears to be Satan and his forces are released to bring torment to the inhabitants of the earth. Those who bear God’s seal are protected (9:4), but the remaining people refuse to repent.

### Revelation 10–11

Here, there’s another interlude in the story. Revelation 10 opens with a “mighty” angel coming out of heaven. Some view this angel as another great angel like the one described in Revelation 1:1, but others view him as Jesus. The angel offers John a “little scroll”—a smaller version of the scroll Jesus had taken from the Father’s hand. Just as the Father had given the scroll to the Lamb, so the





scroll now comes from John to the churches. The plan revealed in the scroll is good because it is God's, but it's bitter in the unfolding: "peoples, nations, languages, and kings" would reject Christ (10:11).

The vision in Revelation 11 develops this idea. John is told to carefully measure the temple, which symbolizes the people of God, the church. God promises to protect the faith of Christians but warns they will face intense persecution from the world. Two witnesses—patterned after either Moses or Elijah—bear witness and are killed but then are resurrected and vindicated. Again, this is the story of the church in a hostile world—but it's a church that will fall on their faces and worship God.

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*3 billion+ people have little or no access to the gospel, which means that multitudes will die without Christ unless we get the gospel to them. How much does that truth bother you?*



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.'*

/ Revelation 11:15

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Are you willing to pray today, "God, I give You a blank check with my life. You fill in where You want me to go and what You want me to do, and I will follow"? Why or why not?

# Revelation 12–14

WEEK 24 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Father, help us to remember there is more to life than what we can see. Help us to remember that our primary struggle is spiritual. We have a great enemy who is bent on destroying us, but we also rejoice because You have promised to destroy him and rescue us. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 12–14

### Revelation 12

The woman in the vision of 12:1–6 represents the people of God, including Mary the mother of Jesus, waiting in hope for the Messiah. The woman is threatened by the dragon, Satan, as he waits to destroy the coming King. But God rescues Him, while the woman—now representing the people of God who are faithful to the Messiah—flees into the wilderness under God’s protection.

In 12:7, the focus shifts to heaven. Revelation 12:13 then picks up where both visions left off. The dragon has been thrown down, Jesus is ascended and enthroned in heaven, and the dragon is enraged. He turns his fury against the woman—the church—and tries to destroy her.

### Revelation 13

The dragon calls on two creatures to help him in his war against Christ’s people. The first is a horrible beast rising out of the sea—the chaotic abode of evil. Some see this beast as a particularly evil political leader, while others view him as representing government power throughout history. A second beast connected with religious power seduces people to worship the first beast. All of society—religion, economics, entertainment, and politics—is used to pressure Christians to

*The dragon and his forces are not able to defeat God. How much does that truth affect you every day?*



give allegiance to something other than King Jesus.

### Revelation 14

The vision of the 144,000 singing a new song before God’s throne is a reminder that the Lamb has kept them in His care. Angels announce, though, that the hour of judgment has come, and evil society and its inhabitants will “drink the wine” (14:9) of God’s wrath. The Lord will finally reap those who follow Him and judge those who reject Him.



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup>And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*

/ Revelation 12:9–10

## PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

As you give to God’s work, prayerfully commit to increasing your giving by a certain percentage each year. Let your giving grow systematically.

## GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

With another believer or even an unbeliever, practice telling the gospel story using this outline:

- Creation (who is God, and what did He create?)
- Fall (what happened in the garden of Eden, and what were the results?)
- Redemption (what did God do through His OT people and Jesus to bring salvation?)
- Restoration (what is the future that God promises to His followers?)

# Revelation 15-16

WEEK 24 / DAY 4



## PRAY

*“O Lord God, sovereign and true, we thank You that You will not allow sin and rebellion to remain forever. We praise You because You are the great Judge of all the earth, and You will always do right. Because of Jesus You have promised to save us and bring us safely home to be with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 15-16

### Revelation 15

Revelation 15 is one of the most solemn and dramatic chapters in the entire Bible. Here, finally, we’ve come to the end, to the full measure and intensity of God’s judgment.

The chapter opens with a vision of a sea of glass mingled with fire. In the Bible, the sea often represents evil—a place of darkness and chaos. But now, there’s no chaos. The sea is like glass, completely subdued and even mixed with the fire of coming judgment. The people of God are even standing beside the sea, singing praises to God. They have “won the victory over the beast” (15:2), and theirs is a song of praise. This is an image of the ultimate defeat of their enemy.

In Revelation 15:5–8, the doors of the temple swing open. Seven angels dressed in priestly garb are given seven bowls full of judgment, and smoke fills the temple. God’s glory and power are so evident that no one can enter the sanctuary.

### Revelation 16

Now the seven bowls of judgment are poured out. What they describe is similar to the trumpet judgments, though the



destruction in this case is complete. Wrath is poured out on the throne of the beast, showing that his kingdom faces defeat. The people still don't repent, and God's wrath has come. As the third angel says, He has given them what they deserve.

Amid this description, Jesus calls people to spiritual diligence: "Look, I am coming like a thief" (16:15). Christians are to be ever alert and walking in godliness—regardless of what difficulties may come.

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*If God gave you what you deserve,  
what would He give you?*



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>3</sup>And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! <sup>4</sup>Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.'*

/ Revelation 15:3–4

### **REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Being alert means being ever aware of the possibility of being drawn back into idolatry and disobedience. Be honest—how close are you to turning back to an act or attitude that once controlled you? Are you living in light of Christ's return?

# Revelation 17-19

WEEK 24 / DAY 5



## PRAY

*“Father, we praise You today because You have rescued us out of the kingdom of darkness and qualified us to live in the kingdom of Your beloved Son. Deliver us, O God, from evil, and help us remain faithful to You even under the greatest pressures and most alluring seductions of the world. This we pray in Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 17-19

### Revelation 17-18

Revelation 17 begins a lengthy vision on the fall of Babylon, also known as the “mother of prostitutes” (17:5). Some believe Babylon represents first-century Rome, while others understand it to represent the whole economic, social, and even religious culture of humanity. Babylon is the symbol of human arrogance and rebellion against God, in league with the beast—and behind it all stands the dragon.

She’s decked in the finest clothes, drinking wine and offering her luxuries to the kings and merchants of the earth. In all this, she’s also bent on destroying the church. She wants people to worship her, not God. Even when the kingdoms of the world gather against the people of God, “the Lamb will conquer them” (17:14).

Depending on which side you’re on, Revelation 18 is an extended lament or celebration over the fall of Babylon. Kings and merchants who gained from Babylon’s ways mourn, but heaven is invited to rejoice.

### Revelation 19

The scene shifts to heaven where the people of God rejoice over



Babylon's fall. The multitudes cry out, "Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns!" (19:6).

Finally, in the second half of Revelation 19, the beast and the prophet are thrown down by Jesus, who returns on a white horse as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The lake of fire awaits those who do not follow God because Jesus, the Divine Warrior, has the final say.

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*Does God truly reign in your life?*



#### DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>1</sup>After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, <sup>2</sup>for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*

/ Revelation 19:1-2

#### GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Plan to fast for a full day next week, the final week of *Deepen Discipleship*.

# Revelation 20

WEEK 25 / DAY 1



## PRAY

*“O Lord, we praise You today because we know that history and its end are not in question. Every detail of the universe and of history itself is in Your hand. Our great enemy has already been defeated, and we look forward to the day when he will be fully and finally destroyed. Help us, O God, to press on in faithfulness to You until the dawn of that day. Amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 20

### Revelation 20:1–10

Revelation 20 envisions the final defeat of the dragon, Satan. The chapter begins with the binding of Satan and the reign of the saints with Jesus in 20:1–6. The details are debated, but the most important thing to see is that King Jesus will have final victory over the serpent.

The dragon will first be bound for 1,000 years—perhaps this is a literal number of years or perhaps it’s an indeterminate amount of time. Upon his release, he gathers his forces and surrounds God’s people—but the fire of judgment consumes his forces. The devil’s destination is the lake of fire.

### Revelation 20:11–15

At the final judgment, all the dead will be judged. Those whose names are not written in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire. Death itself will be defeated and thrown into the same lake. Believers will enter a new heaven and earth, which is described in the final chapters of Revelation.

So, what’s the whole picture? Satan cannot stop the church in its mission to preach the gospel to the nations. It is as Jesus said:

*Do you have worries about whether your name is in the book of life? If so, talk with your mentor or one of your church’s pastors.*





# Revelation 21-22

WEEK 25 / DAY 2



## PRAY

*“O God of Heaven, You have promised us that what You have laid up for us is more than we can ever imagine. You have acted through Jesus the Lamb of God to save all those who trust in Him, to make everything sad come untrue! We look forward eagerly to the day when You bring history to an end, and usher us into Your presence forever. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## READ & LEARN

Read Revelation 21-22

### Revelation 21-22

Today, in Revelation’s final major vision, we press forward entirely into the future with a glorious vision of what’s waiting for us when all is said and done.

First, these chapters promise the re-making of everything. The re-making of heaven and earth is a beautiful bookend to the whole of history, setting right everything that had gone wrong in the beginning.

Second, these chapters show us the end of suffering and fear. Every tear will be wiped away, death will be no more, and there shall be no more crying or pain or mourning. There’s no more threat, and there’s nothing left to fear.

Third, Revelation 21–22 promises us pure and unending life. The water of life flowing from the throne runs down the great avenue of the city, and the Tree of Life offers its fruit without limit to all the nations of the earth.

Finally, these chapters promise God’s people an intimate friendship with God. Perhaps the most glorious phrase in all the



Bible is from Revelation 22:4: “They will see His face.” Here, at last, God’s people look Him full in the face, and their joy is complete.



## DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*

/ Revelation 21:1–4

*John ends the book of Revelation with “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” (22:20). Do you truly want Jesus to return soon? Even today?*

## REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Think back over these chapters. How does this vision of eternity that the Holy Spirit gave to John fill you with the most longing? Pray, perhaps with someone from your group and/or your mentor, that God will give you a longing for Him.

# Final Review

WEEK 25 / DAY 3



## PRAY

*“Lord, help me as I reflect on what I’ve learned these past 25 weeks. Thank You for all I’ve seen in Your Word. Thank You for how You have helped me. Help me not forget how You’ve challenged me. Thank You that You are always with us. May I live for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## Review of this Deepen Discipleship study

Use this guideline as you connect with your group and/or mentor for the final time this week:

- 1/** What specific things has God shown you from His Word? From your Scripture memorization work? From the “Reflect and Change” questions?
- 2/** Review the “Go and Do Discipleship Activities.” How has God helped you grow in faithfulness? Which activities do you want to continue? Anything you want more help on? Any new relationships to keep pursuing?

## Celebrate

- Celebrate how the Lord has helped you these past six months.
- Celebrate the truths He has shown you and others in His Word.
- Celebrate any new acts of obedience He has helped you with, as well as any areas of growth.
- Celebrate any new relationships you’ve made.

## Pray

- 1/** Thank God for His Word, His people, and His Spirit who works in us.
- 2/** Pray for any new relationships that have begun during these six weeks.







# APPENDIX



# Discipleship Evaluation Form

**Sometimes it can be helpful for us to take stock of where we are, how we're doing, and where we'd like to grow stronger as a disciple of Jesus Christ.** This form is a resource that can help you do just that. You can use it at the end of the course to evaluate your level of discipleship, or you may wish to complete it before and after this 6-month course to see areas in which you have grown as a disciple of Jesus.

You might also involve your mentor or other church members who know you well who could affirm your self-evaluation and/or give you constructive feedback. There's a space in the right-hand column for church members to add their name and feedback.

When you've completed the form, you may sign and date the lines below as another way to hold yourself accountable to what you've written and where you hope to grow in the future.

**Name:**

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**Date:**

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Self Evaluation      Church Member Affirmation / Feedback

| <b>Personal Bible Reading</b>                              | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> |  |
|--|------------|-----------|--|
| I have read through the New Testament in the last 3 years. |            |           |  |
| My current Bible reading plan:                             |            |           |  |
| <b>Devotion to private and corporate prayer</b>            | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> |  |
| I pray and confess my sins regularly before the Lord.      |            |           |  |



|   |            |           |             |                 |
|---|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| I regularly pray for myself and others.   |            |           |             |                 |
| I regularly pray together with other believers.   |            |           |             |                 |
| I regularly pray for my local church and its leaders.   |            |           |             |                 |
| I regularly pray for concerns in my neighborhood, city, and the world.  |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Local church membership and participation</b>  | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| I am an active member of a local church.  |            |           |             |                 |
| I am involved in a specific ministry within my local church.  |            |           |             |                 |
| I can explain what the Bible teaches about the importance of local churches.  |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Evangelism ability and practice</b>  | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| Write the gospel (on a separate piece of paper) as you would briefly share it with a non-believer and attach it to this form. |            |           |             |                 |
| I can turn conversations toward spiritual things to share the gospel.   |            |           |             |                 |
| Please provide the names of non-believers with whom you've shared the gospel within the last 6 months:                        |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>General discipleship</b>   | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| I have experienced spiritual growth in my life over the past six months in the following area(s):                             |            |           |             |                 |

Self Evaluation      Church Member Affirmation / Feedback

|  |            |           |             |                 |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| Within the last six months, I have been actively involved in a small group, missional community, or some other smaller gathering for discipleship.                       |            |           |             |                 |
| I am actively discipling at least one other person.  |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Stewardship</b>   | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| I live within my means.  |            |           |             |                 |
| Out of my finances, I give regularly and cheerfully to my local church.  |            |           |             |                 |
| In addition to finances I give generously of my time and other resources.  |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Health and wellness</b>   | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| I engage in healthy habits (sleep, eating, exercise) and generally avoid harmful over-indulgence to steward my physical body.  |            |           |             |                 |
| I am generally of good emotional health (I am generally in control of my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and am able to cope with changes, challenges, and setbacks). |            |           |             |                 |
| I am currently not bitter towards a specific person and not withholding forgiveness from anyone (church members, family, coworkers).                                     |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Instructing others</b>  | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| I have taught the Bible to others in formal or informal settings.  |            |           |             |                 |
| I know how to lead others in Bible study.  |            |           |             |                 |

|  |            |           |             |                 |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| I can communicate the major components of the biblical story (i.e., creation, fall, Old Testament stories, redemption, restoration, etc.) to others. |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Accountability</b>  | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| During the last 6 months or more, I have had an accountability partner/group speaking into my life.  |            |           |             |                 |
| I regularly confess sin to trusted believers.  |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Relationships</b>   | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| With Self: I am living a life of sexual purity.  |            |           |             |                 |
| With Self: I do not view pornography in any form.  |            |           |             |                 |
| With Spouse: I have a healthy and growing relationship with my spouse.   |            |           |             |                 |
| As a Single: I have a healthy understanding of singleness and am living appropriately within that current calling.                                   |            |           |             |                 |
| With Family: I have a healthy relationship with my children.   |            |           |             |                 |
| With Family: I have a healthy relationship with my parents, which demonstrates honor and respect.  |            |           |             |                 |
| <b>Cultural competence</b>   | <b>yes</b> | <b>no</b> | <b>Name</b> | <b>Comments</b> |
| For purposes of the gospel, I seek to make friends who are not like me ethnically, socio-economically, religiously, or otherwise.                    |            |           |             |                 |
| I have friends who are not Christians.   |            |           |             |                 |