



FUEL

**MY IDENTITY
IN CHRIST**

7TH GRADE



IDENTITY

LIFE AS I KNOW IT

Written and Edited by Ryan Jackson, Josh Fairbaugh, Kristen Fairbaugh, and Andy Ferguson

Graphic Design by Ryan Jackson

Produced for Carmel Baptist Church.

Commentary is from the ESV Study Bible

ABIDE IN ME

LIFE IN CHRIST ESSENTIALS

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Produced for Carmel Baptist Church.

Commentary is from the ESV Study Bible

PSALMS

SONGS OF PRAISE

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Commentary is from the ESV Study Bible

CRITICAL ISSUES

RELATIONSHIPS

Originally written by the InQuest Team

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Getting Started

We are so excited that you have chosen to be a part of Discipleship Community! It is our prayer that God will use this study to deepen your relationship with Him. The contents of this material include core truths that we want you to learn so that you will have a firm foundation in your faith. This book will lead you to take time each day to read God's Word and to pray.

Plan on spending 15 — 30 minutes each day of the week with God. This spiritual discipline will help you to grow to be more and more like Jesus Christ. In this book, we have used the English Standard Version of the Bible (ESV). Please keep this version of the Bible nearby while doing this study, or refer to an online Bible, such as the one at www.biblegateway.com.

This material is written based upon our Life in Christ Essentials and Milestone Strategy here at Carmel. The Essentials are the core principles and truths that we want every follower to live out in Christ. The Milestones and Essentials are as follows which help believers live an abundant Life in Christ:

Milestone 4: Purity for Life

ESSENTIALS:

Biblical Purity, Healthy Relationships, Identity in Christ, Biblical Sex

Milestone 5: Rite of Passage

ESSENTIALS:

Roles of Men and Women, Spiritual Gifts and Service, Catechism

Milestone 6: High School Graduation

ESSENTIALS:

Apologetics, Dating/Marriage, God's Plan for Me, Person of Influence, Life Skills

Life in Christ

ESSENTIALS:

Scripture, Prayer, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple-Maker, Generous Living, Biblical Community

We are confident that God will amaze you as you get to know Him through these studies. It has been a great joy to write these books, knowing that you will get to know the one true God in a deeper way!

IDENTITY

LIFE AS I KNOW IT

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CRITICAL ISSUES

RELATIONSHIPS

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IDENTITY

LIFE AS I KNOW IT

Our mindset, the things we hold valuable, and our character are all significant parts of our identity. Of course there are other things that shape our identity such as how we were made, relationships that we have, things that happen to us and around us, and the things we think, say and do.

In this study we will learn about Jesus' identity before we understand how his identity influences ours. Our answer to Jesus' question of "who do you say I am" does not change his identity, however, it does change ours and it influences everything about our lives.

WEEK

1

I AM

MATTHEW

5:14-16

THE IDENTITY OF CHRIST

The one identity that matters more than any identity is the identity of Jesus Christ. The truth about His identity as Christ the Lord changes everything about the identity of mankind. As Christians our identity is to be transformed to that of Jesus Christ. Therefore, his identity is supreme.

Read Matthew 16:13-17.

When Jesus asked this question, he was not looking for someone else to make up his identity for him. He knew his identity. The book of John records a number of Jesus' statements regarding his identity.

Read John 6:22-59.

What did Jesus accuse the people of for following him?

Jesus takes this moment to teach them a lesson. They were so enthralled with the food, they were missing out on the fact that their Messiah had come. They tell Jesus that God gave them manna during the desert wandering. Jesus responds by telling them that they need to ask for the true bread from heaven that gives life.

By equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying he is essential for life. Jesus is trying to get his hearers thinking beyond physical life to spiritual life. He is contrasting what He brings as their Messiah with the bread He miraculously created the day before. That was physical bread that perishes. He is spiritual bread that brings eternal life.

He is proclaiming He will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God. When Christ died on the cross, He took the sins of mankind upon Himself and made atonement for them. When we place our faith in Him, our sins are charged to Jesus, and His righteousness is accredited to us. Therefore, Jesus satisfies our hunger and thirst for righteousness. He is our Bread of Life.

Read John 8:12 and 9:5.

JESUS' CLAIM AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD COMMUNICATES THREE THINGS:

- 1) He is true _____.
- 2) He is the portrait of _____.
- 3) He is the very _____ of God.

Read John 8:58.

What was the claim Jesus was making?

Jesus does not simply say, “Before Abraham was, I was,” which would simply mean that he is more than 2,000 years old. Rather, he uses the present tense “I am” in speaking of existence more than 2,000 years earlier, thus claiming a kind of transcendence over time that could only be true of God.

JESUS ISN'T OLD, HE IS ETERNAL. —ALEX KENNEDY

Read John 10:7-15.

Shepherds often kept their flocks in the countryside at night in a pen made up of a rocks piled into a rough circle with a small open space to enter. Since there was no gate to close—just an opening—the shepherd would keep the sheep in and wild animals out by lying across the opening. He would sleep there, in this case literally becoming the door to the sheep. When Jesus says, “I am the door,” He is reiterating the fact that only through Him is salvation possible.

What is Jesus calling false teachers and other religious leaders that offer salvation other than the teachings found in the Bible?

Describe the difference between a hired hand and the good shepherd?

It is helpful to realize that sheep are utterly defenseless and totally dependent upon the shepherd. Sheep are always subject to danger and must always be under the watchful eye of the shepherd as they graze. Likewise, Jesus gave His life on the cross as “the Good Shepherd” for his own. He chose to save others, though He had the power, did not choose to save Himself.

Read John 11:17-27.

What are the two things Jesus is claiming in this passage of Scripture?

HE USED HIS ENCOUNTER WITH MARTHA TO MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT HIS DIVINE NATURE:

- 1) Martha believed that the resurrection is an event; Jesus showed that the resurrection is a Person.
- 2) Martha’s knowledge of eternal life was an abstract idea; Jesus proved that knowledge of eternal life is a personal relationship.
- 3) Martha thought victory over death was a future expectation; Jesus showed that victory is a present reality.

Read John 14:6.

In these words, Jesus was declaring Himself the great “I AM,” the only path to heaven, the only true measure of righteousness, and the source of both physical and spiritual life. He was staking His claim as the very God of Creation, the Lord who blessed Abraham, and the Holy One who inhabits eternity.

Read John 15:1-5.

At this point Jesus is making it clear that he is going to be leaving the disciples soon. Even though they would no longer enjoy His physical presence, he would continue to nourish and sustain them just as the roots and trunk of a grape vine produce the energy that nourishes and sustains its branches while they develop their fruit.

Why would Jesus declare the need for his disciples to depend upon him?

SO, WE DEPEND ON JESUS FOR EVERYTHING, STARTING WITH OUR VERY IDENTITY, “FOR IN HIM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE OUR BEING” —ACTS 17:28

Take a moment to review each of the meanings of the passages that Jesus described himself as I AM and what that means for his identity.

<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Statement</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
John 6:35, 48	I am the bread of life	Righteousness
John 8:12, 9:5	I am the light of the world	True Knowledge, Moral Purity, & Presence of God
John 8:58	Before Abraham was, I AM	Eternal
John 10:9	I am the door	Protector & Only Way In
John 10:11	I am the good shepherd	Sacrificial Love & Caretaker
John 11:25	I am the resurrection and the life	Death Has No Power Over Him
John 14:6	I am the way, the truth, and the life	Only Option for Eternal Life
John 15:1	I am the true vine	Sustainer, Life-Giver, Source of Fruit, Nourisher

Which part of Jesus' identity do you need the most in your life right now?

Over and over, he defines himself. Jesus knew who he was and, as a result, he was not under pressure needing others to define who he was for him.

This is the principle of identity. As long as you are unsure of your identity, you're going to be pressured to fit into the world's molds. The world will manipulate you. People will try to make you into what they think you ought to be rather than what God made you to be.

The only way you can counterbalance outside external pressures is to have an internal sense of satisfaction about who you are and who God made you to be. You discover who you are by knowing whose you are.

That is what this study is really all about it. The Bible says that God created you. You are deeply loved by him. You are accepted as you are. You can be forgiven. He has a plan for your life. In the coming weeks we are going to look at how the identity of Jesus shapes the identity of each of us. Our answer to the question of “who do you say I am” does not change his identity, however, it does change ours.

NOW WHAT?

Which part of Jesus' identity is the Holy Spirit calling you to share with a friend this week?

How can you rely on Jesus' identity to shape yours?

Think through each of the "I AM" statements and their meanings from today's lesson. Pick a couple of them and write a prayer of praise in the space below.

GOING DEEPER

As a Christian, how does knowing Jesus' identity increase your faith?

From your knowledge of Scripture, how did Jesus' identity shape his actions?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

John 14:6

WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JOHN 6:35

What phrase does Christ use in reference to himself?

What attribute does Christ reveal about himself through use of this phrase?

DAY 2 — JOHN 8:58-59

What does Christ mean when he says he was alive before Abraham?

Think of what God the Father said to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:14. What is Jesus saying of himself in respect to his deity?

DAY 3 — JOHN 10:7-10

What phrase does Christ use in reference to himself?

Entering life by way through Christ, what does the passage say we are protected from?

DAY 4 — JOHN 10:11-18

What term does Christ use in reference to himself?

In what ways does Christ exhibit being a shepherd? According to the text, how is he our shepherd?

DAY 5 — JOHN 11:25-26

Explain the significance of Christ being the resurrection and the life.

Believers die all the time. What kind of freedom from death is Christ speaking of then?

DAY 6 — MATTHEW 15:1-8

What phrase does Christ use in reference to himself? To his followers? What does this visual mean?

What attributes of God are revealed through this metaphor that Christ shares?

DAY 7 — ISAIAH 54:1-12

How does this passage of Scripture speak of the identity of Christ?

How does this passage help us identify Jesus with the New Testament?

WEEK

2

**I am:
The
Image
of God**

GENESIS

1:24-2:25

MADE TO REPRESENT

Read Genesis 1:26-31.

This account tells how and why God created human beings. This is the beginning of the human story. The best way for us to understand our own individual purpose is to understand God's purpose for human beings in general. Today we will focus especially on verse 26. Let's spend a few minutes looking at this verse in it's context and trying to discover what it means.

When you type on a computer or your phone, how do you show emphasis? What options do you have to show someone who is reading your message what the important parts are?

The authors of the Bible didn't have most of these available to them! Instead, they used a more old fashioned way of telling us what is important: REPETITION. Whenever we read the Bible, one of the most helpful things we can do is look for repeated words and phrases.

Look at Genesis 1:1-23. Write down the repeated words and phrases that the Bible uses to describe God's creation of the world in these verses.

Now look at verses 26-31. How do these verses compare to verses 1-23? What words are missing? What words are the same? Are there any new words?

Although many of the words are the same, there are some striking differences. For example, "according to their kinds" means that animals were based on a pattern God had designed. "Let us make man in our image" means that humans are based on the pattern of God himself.

The author (Moses) is trying to tell us that this section is especially important. In other words, the creation of human beings is the most important part of this chapter. Human are *not like* the rest of the creation. Read the first sentence of verse 26-27 out loud. The word "image" should stand out; it is repeated three times!

What is an image? How does it relate to the thing that it is an image of?

Why do people make images of things? Why do people make images of themselves?

Why do you post (or not post) “images” of yourself on the Internet? Has anyone ever posted an image or video of you that you did not like? Why didn’t you like it?

An Image Has Two Purposes:

- 1) To be like the original thing or person.
- 2) To represent the original thing or person.

So Genesis 1:26 tells us that humans are different than the rest of creation in two ways. First, they are *like God* in ways the rest of creation is not. Secondly, they represent God in a way the rest of creation does not. One theologian translates verse 26 like this: “Let us make man like us, and let him represent us.”

In what ways are humans like God that the rest of creation is not?

Why might God have wanted to create humans with these special qualities, instead of being like the rest of creation?

ESTABLISHING SUPERIORITY

There is a clue to this question in the second half of verse 26. Read it out loud again at your table.

What does it mean for humans to “have dominion”?

How does “have dominion” relate to being the image of God?

When we put all of these things together, we find out that God created us for a very specific purpose: to be his representatives! The reason we exist on earth is to carry out God’s will on the earth. God is invisible, so he has sent us to do his will. This means that every human is extremely valuable because they are designed to be God’s representative. It also means that we have a huge responsibility. It is our job to live our lives to carry out the will of God on earth, just as an ambassador carries out the wishes of a country in a foreign land.

Read verses 28-31.

What else does God command Adam and Eve to do in these verses?

These verses are often called the “Cultural Mandate.” They teach us that God wanted to create humans beings so that he would have a representative in the world. Men and women, guys and gals, moms and dads and kids, were all created *like God* so that we would be able to *represent* God in the world and to rule the world for him.

There Are Three Main Ways That We Represent God.

- 1) Ordering
- 2) Filling
- 3) Restoring.

THE VALUE OF REPRESENTATION

As a student, how can you be “ordering” and “filling” and “restoring”?

How might understanding that you have this job impact how you live each day?

Each day we have a choice to embrace or reject the calling to represent God to the world. Talk about some ways that you reject or embrace it.

Discuss this statement: I was created to be God’s ambassador in the world. This means my life is incredibly important.

Sometimes we get discouraged about our place in the world. Discuss with your table ways that you could encourage one another in remember your calling to represent God in the world.

NOW WHAT?

Think about your story up to this point. If you asked those who know you, who would they say you represent most?

What has God specifically gifted you to do? What do you like to do?

Do you use that skill to further your own interests, or to further God's interests?

Create a specific goal of one area where you can improve how you are using your gifts and talents to "order" or "fill" or "restore" the world for God.

GOING DEEPER

Think about the Bible stories that you know. How did the characters in those stories represent God (or *misrepresent* Him)?

Why did God make people to represent him, instead of having animals or rocks or statues do the job?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Genesis 1:26

WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — PSALM 8

What responsibility does God give to mankind?

How does this passage reflect mankind being made in the image of God?

DAY 2 — GENESIS 2:15-25

How do the responsibilities of mankind God places on Adam reflect God's will and character?

Explain how the relational nature of man, as seen in Adam and Eve's necessary relationship, is an image-bearing aspect of God.

DAY 3 — GENESIS 9:1-7

Any overlap in God-given responsibilities expected of Noah that were also expected of Adam? (Genesis 2:15-25)

What implications flow from verse 6?

DAY 4 — EXODUS 20:4-6

Other than restating the First Commandment, why would God not want us to form an 'image' to worship?

In his righteous jealousy, how does God say he will reward or punish individuals that obey or disobey the Second Commandment?

DAY 5 — COLOSSIANS 1

Why are all things created?

In what ways does Christ go before us, based on the passage?

DAY 6 — HEBREWS 1:3

We may be made in the image of God, but who is made in the exact representation of God's being?

What does it mean that to be the exact representation of God?

DAY 7 — 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

As image bearers of God according to this verse, what does mankind do?

How does the passage reflect mankind being made in the image of God and who we are?

WEEK

3


I am:

A

Sinner

GENESIS

3:1-13



THE FALL

Last week we saw that God created humans to represent Him to the world. This is what it means to be created in the "Image of God." God has put us in the world, made in and as His Image to take dominion, to fill the earth, and to subdue it for Him. This forms the basis of our relationship with God.

In Genesis chapter 3 something goes seriously wrong. This week we're going to find out what went wrong and how that affects us.

Read Genesis 3:1-6.

Look carefully at the conversation between Satan and Eve in verses 1-3. Compare what they say with God's actual command in Genesis 2:15. What is different? What is the same?

Do these changes make a difference? Why might Eve and Satan have made changes?

Last week we learned about the beginning of the human story. God created human beings to represent him. Now, Satan is telling a Eve a totally different story. Read verses 4-5.

What story is Satan trying to get Eve to believe and why would he want her to believe it?

If Satan's story is true, what does that mean about God? What does it mean about Eve?

All of this sets the stage for what happens in verses 6-7. Now that Eve has questioned the word of God, accepted Satan's lies about God's motives, and begun to believe that God isn't good or right, she actively rejects his commands, choosing instead to serve herself.

Read verse 6. Eve "saw" three things about the fruit. Write down what they are.

Eve chose to reject God's story and believed Satan's story instead. Instead of representing God like she was designed to, Eve chose to represent her own interests. She "saw" the fruit, and began dreaming of all the great things that would happen for her if she ate it. Eating the fruit was the last step in a process of rejecting God's plan and embracing her own selfish desires.

Read verses 7-24. Write down some of the consequences that Adam and Eve experienced because they turned away from God.

A SINNER IS A PERSON WHOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS BROKEN

Based on this story of Adam and Eve, how would you define "sin"?

What does this have to do with us? One of the clearest explanations can be found in Romans 5:12. Turn to Romans 5:12 and discuss the following questions.

Who is the one man? Who did this one man's sin affect? How did it affect them?

The following phrases come from the rest of Romans 5. Read them one after another.

- **Romans 5:12** — "Sin came into the world by one man..."
- **Romans 5:15** — "Many died through one man's trespass..."
- **Romans 5:16** — "For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation..."
- **Romans 5:17** — "Because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man..."
- **Romans 5:18** — "As one trespass led to condemnation for all men..."
- **Romans 5:19** — "For as by the one man's disobedience the man were made sinners..."

What do these verses teach us about the effect of Adam's sin?

EVERY PERSON HAS SIN AND DEATH BECAUSE OF ADAM'S SIN

Not only is every person a sinner because of Adam, but all sadness, sorrow, brokenness, sickness, and pain in the world comes from sin. Sin comes from rejecting God as Lord and desiring to represent ourselves instead. When Adam and Eve chose to seek their own desires and reject God's plan, the entire world was brought under the power of sin. This is a critical part of your story.

THE IMPACT OF SIN IN MY LIFE

We have seen that at its core, sin is about refusing to represent God and choosing to represent ourselves instead. From the minute we are born, we would rather represent ourselves than God. Just like with Adam and Eve, when we seek to represent ourselves instead of God, there are negative consequences.

Discuss this statement: "The fall did not begin when Eve ate the fruit, it began with her inner intention to eat the fruit." Is this true? Why or why not?

Why is it important to understand that sin is more than just "doing bad things?" Why do we sin?

What evidence do you see in the world that every person naturally seeks to represent themselves instead of God?

What are some ways that you seek to represent yourself instead of God?

Have you experienced the negative consequences of these decisions?

What does it mean that being a "sinner" is part of our identity?

What difference does it make whether you believe that being a sinner is part of your identity?

We've talked a lot about sin today. This is because until we understand and admit that sin is a very big part of our story, we'll never understand the importance of what Christ has done for us. We can't hide from death, and we can't hide from sin. We need to admit this part of our story and understand where it comes from. Next week will talk about the good news of Christ's payment for our sin.

NOW WHAT?

Think through your story up to this point. How has it been marred by sin? (This may be your own sin or the sins of others).

Are there people you need to ask to forgive you for sin or hurt that you've caused?

PRAYER: Take some time and ask God to reveal to you how you have sinned. Confess that sin and turn away from it.

Sin will always be a part of your story. Spend some time confessing this to God and asking for His Holy Spirit to give you grace as you grow.

GOING DEEPER

Sin is a part of every person's story. Think about people you know who may be hurting. How can you show them love and grace in the midst of their pain and suffering?

What can we learn about God from Genesis 3?

PRAYER: Ask God to restore those you know (including yourself) who have been hurt by the results of sin.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Romans 5:12

WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

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APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — GENESIS 3

What does it mean after mankind sins when this passage says "and to dust you will return"?

What are some of the deeper reasons that Adam and Eve ate from the tree? As sinners, how do we exhibit those same reasons for sinning?

DAY 2 — ROMANS 1:29-32

Was there anything on this list that surprises you?

In what ways does society approve of those who practice some of these things? In what ways do I sin by approving of those who practices some of these things?

DAY 3 — 2 SAMUEL 11:1-12:13

List the ways that David sinned in this situation.

Look at the relationship of Nathan and David, and the role Nathan plays in his life. Do you have a friend in your life that will tell you difficult things you need to hear, even if you don't want to hear them? If not, how will you find one?

DAY 4 — MATTHEW 23:27-28

The legalistic, self-righteous mindset of the Pharisees is seen in every generation. What does Christ want these people to know?

How are we like the Pharisees?

DAY 5 — NUMBERS 20:2-13

Why was Moses punished for such a seemingly small thing as striking the rock twice?

What does it say about mankind's sinful nature that Moses too receives judgment from God?

DAY 6 — LUKE 22:54-62

Explain the interactions that happened in this passage.

What did Peter realize after the rooster crowed and Christ looked at him?

DAY 7 — JOHN 8:1-11

Because everyone had to walk away, what does this say about mankind?

What responsibility does Jesus charge to the woman at the end?

WEEK

4

**I am:
Redeemed**

EPHESIANS

1:7-8

A CHURCH WORD WITH A PUNCH

REDEMPTION — IS OBTAINING SOMETHING OR SOMEONE'S RELEASE BY MEANS OF PAYMENT.

When God looks at believers, He sees His beloved Son, Jesus. Jesus sees you and me, and the whole church as His bride—not the sin or the mess we are now, but the perfected bride He is making us to be. This is all due to redemption.

This truth is so important for us to understand. God even started teaching about redemption way back when He was leading the Jews out of Egypt. This passage teaches us that redemption always comes at some cost.

Read Exodus 13:11-16.

What were the Israelites told to redeem?

What was the purpose of this redemption command?

God obviously takes redemption seriously, so much so that He issued commandments to His people that would remind them about redemption every time a firstborn was born. Redemption in the sacrificial system foreshadowed what was to come through Jesus for the payment of our sins.

ONCE AND FOR ALL

The reconciliation that needs to happen between man and God goes both ways. God's first act in reconciling us to himself was to remove the obstacle that separated him from us—the guilt of our sin. He took the steps we could not to remove his own judgment by sending Jesus to suffer in our place.

Read Romans 3:23, 5:10, and 6:23.

Why did mankind have to be redeemed in the first place?

There was no escape from the curse of God's law. It is just. We are guilty. There was only one way to be free: someone must pay the penalty. Jesus alone met the demands of the Law.

Read Galatians 2:16.

The law's demands have been fulfilled by Christ's perfect law-keeping, its penalty fully paid by his death. Christ redeemed us through His own death on the cross. This is why the Bible teaches that

getting right with God is not based on law-keeping: Our only hope is having the blood and righteousness of Christ credited to our account.

Jesus made it plain that rejecting the eternal life he offered would result in the misery of eternity in hell. However, for those who trust Christ, the best is yet to come. We will see the all-satisfying glory of God.

Read John 3:18, 36, 14:2-4, and 17:3.

What hope does redemption provide now?

Where does a redeemed person spend eternity?

Reconciliation from our side is simply to receive what God has already done, the way we receive an infinitely valuable gift.

For all these reasons and more, Christ suffered and died. Why would you not embrace him as your Savior from sin and judgment, and live with God eternally?

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER: A PORTRAIT OF GOD

Sometimes the best way to explain a concept is revealing it through a story. There are beautiful stories of redemption throughout the Bible, such as, the story of Ruth and Boaz. A young Jewish man had traveled with his family to Ruth's home country of Moab (now known as Jordan). He married Ruth but died just ten years later. Ruth went with her mother-in-law, Naomi, back to the family's hometown of Bethlehem, even though she was not Jewish herself. To appreciate the rest of the story, you need to understand the history between Israel and Moab.

Read Deuteronomy 23:3 to see how the Law regarded Moabites in the holy places of the Lord.

Based on the law, what response would Ruth have received if she tried to enter the temple?

Accepted Denied

Read Judges 3:28-30.

Describe the relationship between Israel and Moab.

With a history like this, you can imagine that anyone from Moab did not receive a warm welcome in the land of Israel. Yet, Ruth insisted on returning with Naomi to her homeland.

What words would you use to describe Ruth's character as it was revealed in this action?

As a young widow in a foreign land, Ruth was at risk of falling between the cracks of society with no one to provide for her future well-being. She basically could have been cast out like a dog. Naomi, however, opened new doors for Ruth and God moved through different events to take care of Ruth.

Read Ruth 2:1-12 and keep in mind how important first impressions are.

Ruth found favor with Boaz. He could become her kinsman-redeemer. While that may seem a little odd to you, this was a very normal way of life for the Jews. What is a kinsman-redeemer, you might ask? The Jews had a belief that if a husband died without a son, his closest male relative had to marry his widow. This was to make sure that the dead husband's family line would continue. If that relative declined, the next-closest male relative could become the kinsman-redeemer.

As you read Ruth 3:7-13 and 4:13-14, consider how the entire story of Ruth is an illustration of God's redemptive love for you and me.

Who do the main characters in the story, Ruth and Boaz, represent as you read this book of the Bible today?

REDEMPTION IS HERE

Can you make the connection? Just like Ruth, you didn't deserve to come into God's presence. You were lost and unclaimed. God provided a Kinsman-Redeemer to pay the price for you. Now you are the bride of Christ and have been claimed for eternity.

Hopefully, this gives you a new appreciation for what has been done for you. Based on your learning from these verses, here's a question that might take a little more thought.

Can you redeem yourself? Why or why not?

Read Galatians 3:10-14.

Who has been redeemed?

Read 1 Peter 3:18.

The gospel is the good news that at the cost of Jesus' life, God has done everything necessary to eternally redeem us for himself. So we could be his and our identity would be in him.

NOW WHAT?

In your own words, define redemption.

Ask someone this week the following question: "Who/what gives you hope?"

If you are moved to embrace God's Son for redemption, tell God in words like these:

God, I'm convinced that Jesus suffered and died for my sins. I gratefully trust in him now as my Lord and my precious Treasure and the only way I'll ever receive your forgiveness and your promise of eternal life. Amen.

PRAYER: Thank God for paying a huge bride price for you. He gave His life for you. Thank God for redeeming you. Ask Him to help you to realize that you are valuable to Him. Ask God to open your eyes this week to His redeeming love. Ask Him to put this idea front and center in your faith and to open your eyes to what it cost for Him to redeem you. Thank Jesus that He is your Kinsman-Redeemer.

GOING DEEPER

Read Matthew 27:50-51 and Romans 10:9.

When is a person redeemed?

How do the truths we discussed today change your worship of Jesus?

PRAYER: This might take a little courage; are you up for it? Confess "that" to God. Thank Him that Christ has already redeemed you from "that" by dying on the cross. Ask His Holy Spirit to give you strength to fight "that" by His power rather than yours.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Galatians 3:13

WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JOHN 4:1-14

What does Christ claim to give those that ask him for?

What does Jesus say about the well water? What does this mean for the things of this world?

DAY 2 — 1 PETER 1:3-5

What hope is available from having a new birth?

What does Peter mean by "inheritance"? What are we waiting for?

DAY 3 — ROMANS 5:1-5

Why do you have hope from God? How is peace connected to hope?

How can we rejoice in our sufferings because of all this?

DAY 4 — GALATIANS 5:1

What does this passage say Christ gives us in Him?

How is Christ's freedom better and different than the American definition of freedom?

DAY 5 — REVELATION 19:7-10

What does it mean to be invited to the "marriage supper of the Lamb?"

In the metaphor for the Bride of Christ being the church, what significance is the "fine linen" and its cleanliness?

According to the passage, what are we to do up unto and after the point of Christ and the church being joined together?

DAY 6 — ROMANS 1:16

According to this verse, through the Gospel Christ gives us salvation and access to...?

Describe the attitude Paul exhibits here. How can you reflect that attitude?

DAY 7 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

The first phrase gives us the feeling that we are not alone in our struggles. What does the first sentence of this verse mean?

Why will God not allow us to be "tempted beyond what we can bear"?


WEEK

5

**I am:
No
Longer
Condemned**

ROMANS

7:21-8:4



RESPONDING TO SHAME

Everyone experiences a certain amount of shame and regret over sins committed in the past. The Bible has much to say about shame and regret, and there are numerous examples of people in the Bible who experienced these negative feelings.

Read Genesis 2:25.

Adam and Eve were innocent in this moment. They had done nothing wrong, there was nothing to hide, and they were without shame.

Read Genesis 3:1-13.

Eating the fruit transformed Adam and Eve, but not for the better. Now ashamed of their nakedness, they attempt to clothe themselves. Conscious of the Lord God's presence, they hide. When confronted by God regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the man blames the woman, who in turn blames the serpent.

Describe the shame and regret Adam and Eve must have felt after they sinned?

Immediately God judges the serpent, woman and man. They spoiled the perfect creation God had made. Adam and Eve were in a perfect world, had perfect minds and bodies, and had perfectly close fellowship with God. When they chose to sin against God, all of God's creation was made subject to sin's effects, including disease, decay, death, and separation from God for eternity. Every human being afterward was born with a sin nature—the natural inclination to sin.

However, his punishment for their sin is only part of the picture. The other part is his great mercy that was displayed to cover their shame by making garments of clothing. Thankfully, God is sovereign, and He had a plan even then to redeem His world through His Son, Jesus Christ, and give mankind a choice for salvation and eternal life with Him. He did this so that all of our sin and shame would be completely taken away.

God covered their shame, yet they still had to live with the consequences of their sin. How are consequences different than shame?

God does not identify believers by their sins. It's almost as if He sees things the other way around—while we might magnify our mistakes, He is not intimidated by our weaknesses, like we so often are. He sees their power as already dissolved by the cross.

Read John 13:37-38.

Right after the Passover meal, Peter tells Jesus that he would lay down his life for his Lord. Jesus responds by telling him that on that very night Peter would deny three times even knowing the Lord.

Read John 18:15-27 & Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75.

What happened?

Read Luke 22:61-62.

What was Peter's response?

It is clear that Peter was upset about what he had just done. He was so bold in his statement to fight for Jesus and then allowed fear to overtake him. Shame certainly has a place in our lives. It helps us recognize that we have sinned. It allows us to feel the weight of the sin. However, its purpose is to lead us to repentance when we have done something wrong.

Read John 21:15-19.

Later, Peter was restored and grew in his faith, becoming one of the founding fathers of the early church. Peter did indeed "strengthen his brothers" after being forgiven, just as Jesus had foretold .

While Peter must have lived with much shame and regret over his public denial of Christ, his deepened understanding of the person and work of Christ overcame his feelings of failure. He realized that he was forgiven by the grace of God, and he moved past his personal regret to feed Jesus' sheep.

LIVE IN THE FREEDOM OF CHRIST IN THE FUTURE

Our souls are wearied by the weights we put on ourselves. We are often dried up by self-criticisms and judgment. We try to motivate ourselves with fear and shame—the idea that we are bad people until we change. However, that tactic simply isn't effective.

Staying in that place keeps us stuck and God knows this. He chooses to motivate us by giving us knowledge of who we really are, and awareness of His unconditional kindness. He knows that only gracious love brings us healing and the ability to love ourselves. It then gives us the strength to let go, and move forward in hope.

As we grow spiritually by spending time with God daily in prayer and reading His Word, we find ourselves loving and trusting Him more. Yes, we regret our past mistakes, but that is not our focus.

JESUS SUFFERED SHAME THAT OUR SHAME MIGHT BE TAKEN AWAY
AND THAT HIS GLORY MIGHT BE RESTORED UNTO US.

Take some time to look through the following passages of Scripture. Put a star next to the three that stand out the most to you.

- **1 Peter 5:7** — Acknowledge to God that you are wrestling with shame.
- **1 John 1:9 & Psalm 32:5** — Acknowledge any sin on your part that has brought shame into your life and ask for God's forgiveness.
- **Ephesians 6:10-18** — Armor up and fight against guilt and shame.
- **John 8:36** — Trust the freedom that Jesus provides.
- **Matthew 18:21-22 & Colossians 3:13** — By the grace of God forgive anyone who has offended you and brought you shame.
 - **Romans 12:19-21** — Put the judgment of any now living offender in God's hands.
 - **Ephesians 4:31-32** — Acknowledge any unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, and resentment that you have held toward the offender and ask God to forgive and cleanse you from your shame.
- **Psalm 139:23-24** — Ask the Holy Spirit if you are free from the bondage of shame. If you are not free the Holy Spirit will reveal why you are not.
- **Joshua 1:8** — Meditate on God's Word.
- **James 5:16** — Don't go it alone.
- **Hebrews 3:1** — Fix your eyes on Jesus.
- **John 1:12** — You are a child of God.
- **Colossians 1:15-22** — You are cleansed from all our unrighteousness.
- **John 10:27-30 & Hebrews 7:24-25** — Your salvation is eternally secured.
- **Psalm 103:2** — Trust that God has cast our sins from us as far as the east is from the west.
- **Philippians 3:13-14** — Shame and regret are part of what is behind us. We must learn to forget.
- **Titus 3:3-7 & Romans 6:4** — Change your path and walk in newness of life.
- **Romans 8:1** — You are a sinner, but you are justified.
- **Galatians 2:20** — God has forgiven us, therefore, we can move on.

Why did you choose those three Scriptures?

When we feel guilty and perceive God as sternly pointing out our faults, perhaps we can recognize it is really just our own voices or the enemy's. We can choose instead, to listen to His quieter voice that tenderly repeats, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ." (Romans 8:1). We can recognize that God is a God of deep compassion.

WE'VE GOT IT MADE RIGHT

If it wasn't enough to be redeemed from our past sins, Jesus' death on the cross even redeemed us from our future sins. This opens the door to another idea. Since you're already forgiven for the sins you haven't yet committed, why fight it? If Christ is your Savior, you're going to heaven anyway, so why bother trying to be obedient? That very same question was asked by one of the New Testament writers. Look at what Paul the Apostle said in his letter to the Romans:

Read Romans 6:1-2.

If you and I are dead to sin through Christ's death, what are we saying to God when we willingly continue to sin?

Read 1 John 1:9.

When we see issues in our lives, we are asked to take them seriously, to present them and ourselves to the only One who is able to help us, teach us and grow us into His likeness.

GOD IS WILLING TO EMBRACE US NO MATTER THE SEVERITY OF THE SIN, DON'T CHOOSE TO RECOIL IN SHAME, BUT COME TO HIM IN COMFORT.

NOW WHAT?

If all this talk about “that” is causing your ears to burn or your heart to beat faster, then God has already convicted you about “that” and even though Christ redeemed you from it, He wants to empower you to overcome it. So, what is “that” for you? If it’s not obvious, take a moment to ask God to make it clear to you. You can even follow a similar prayer that David once used:

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

Write your thoughts and responses here:

When do you struggle the most with feeling shame for your past?

Write down the name of someone that you know is enslaved to shame and regret. Pray for them on your own. Take time this week to share the passages of Scripture that are listed in this lesson.

GOING DEEPER

What does it mean to live in such a way that you know that you are not condemned?

Read Ephesians 4:22-24.

These verses talk about our identity in Christ and how we are newly created for “holiness and righteousness”. What’s the difference in the two?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Romans 8:1

WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JOHN 1:29

In this verse what does Christ save us from? What does he take away?

What does John mean when he calls Christ the Lamb of God? How is Christ the Lamb of God for us?

Read Exodus 12:1-13. Describe the parallels between Christ and the Passover lamb.

DAY 2 — ROMANS 8:1-3

According to this verse, what are we free from as a result of being in Christ?

Look up the definition of condemnation and meditate on how Christ took your place.

DAY 3 — MICAH 7:18-19

What is the significance that God hurls all our iniquities into the depths of the sea?

What does verse 19 mean for any shame we might feel for our forgiven sins?

DAY 4 — ROMANS 6:16-17

What does sin lead to? What does obedience to God lead to?

How might you live differently knowing that you are free from the slavery of sin?

DAY 5 — 1 THESSALONIANS 1:6-9

Write down the first phrase of verse 6. This is a characteristic of God.

Why couldn't God have just wiped our sin clean without Christ dying in our place?

DAY 6 — PSALM 51:5 & 1 CORINTHIANS 15:22

Explain your understanding of the "sin nature of Adam" that we all have on us.

How long has God had a plan set in motion so that we may be saved from our inherited sinful nature?

DAY 7 — REVELATION 21:3-4

What words would you use to describe the final state of living with God after all these things have passed away?

What words would you use describe God's character and give Him the glory for protecting you from all this?

WEEK

6

**I am:
An Heir
of
Heaven**

HEBREWS

11:8-16

GO FROM YOUR COUNTRY

Read Genesis 12:1-7.

Circle or underline the phrase "Go from your country" in your Bible. In Hebrew, this command sounds like this: "Get up NOW and leave! Hurry!" Abram didn't have time to think about whether to obey, he had to make a decision right away.

Write down and talk about the things that Abram had to leave behind when God called him to "Go from your country."

Write down the things that God promised to do for Abram. Would it have been difficult for Abram to believe God about these things? Why?

Read verse 6. What is important about the "Canaanites being in the land?"

God called Abram to leave everything that he had and everything he had known to go to different land. God made great promises to Abram, but these promises seemed hard to believe. After Abram obeyed and went to Canaan, his situation got worse instead of better! Instead of being a great nation and being famous, Abram had to live among the wicked Canaanites as a traveling shepherd. His obedience didn't seem to improve his situation.

Read Hebrews 11:8-16. This passage provides insight and helps us understand the story we just read in Genesis.

How do these verses describe Abraham's living situation? Why is this important?

What reasons are given (in verses 8-10) for why Abram obeyed the call of God to leave his land?

Look through these verses and circle or underline every word that has to do with a place.

Why are there so many words about places?

What is an “inheritance” (verse 8)? What “inheritance” was Abraham hoping to get?

What does it mean to be an “heir” of a promise (verse 9)? What promise was Abraham an “heir” of?

What is faith? (Hint: Hebrews 11:1) What did Abraham “not see” and still believe?

INHERITANCE BEYOND MEASURE

Verse 13 says something very interesting. It says, “These all died, not having received the things promised.” What does this mean? What did they “not receive”?

Did this mean that God had failed to deliver on his promises? Why did they still believe God even though they didn’t get what was promised?

According to this passage, what is heaven? How did these men and women of faith think and feel about heaven?

Do you see the progression? Faith that God would give them a homeland in heaven produced obedience on earth. Abraham believed that God would fulfill his promise of “land” in heaven. Abraham didn’t need to see God fulfill the promise on earth, because by faith he believed that heaven was a better place. Christians believe that heaven is better than earth, and this promise is their hope.

CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THAT HEAVEN IS THEIR HOMELAND

ETERNAL FOCUS

When was the last time you thought about heaven? Do you look forward to heaven?

What do you think about heaven? What do you suppose it will be like?

Is there anything that makes you NOT look forward to heaven? Are there earthly things you don't want to give up?

Why might it be hard to believe that we have an inheritance in heaven?

Why is it important to think about heaven regularly? Why is it so easy to forget about the future promises?

Can you have "faith in Jesus" and not think about heaven?

How does the promise of heaven impact the way we live now? How did it impact Abraham's life?

What might you need to change about how you live this week if you really have faith in God's promise of heaven?

In what ways can you demonstrate that you have faith that heaven is a "better country" (verse 16)?

Everything about Abraham's life and story points towards the "better country." Does yours? Is your life defined by the hope of receiving a heavenly country? Or are you focused on getting and keeping earthly things? One of the most important things a Christian can do with his or her mind is think about heaven.

NOW WHAT?

Write down a few steps you could take to remind yourself about heaven each day.

Think about your “bucket list.” Should Christians have a “bucket list”? Why or why not?

What might you do (or NOT do) because you believe that God has promised to give you all the benefits of heaven?

PRAYER: Spend a few minutes praying about how you could use your life to seek God’s kingdom.

GOING DEEPER

Read the rest of Hebrews 11. How did faith affect the lives of the people who are described in this chapter?

If your name was listed in Hebrews 11, what would it say about you? Is your story focused on heaven or earth?

What can we learn about God from reading Hebrews 11?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Hebrews 11:16

WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

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READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — ROMANS 8:17

What does this verse promise us if we are in Christ Jesus?

If we are to share with Christ in his glory, what are we to share with Christ?

What does it mean to be an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ?

DAY 2 — EPHESIANS 1:13-14 & HEBREWS 9:15

According to the passage in Ephesians, who is with you until you finally acquire your inheritance?

What purpose does our inheritance serve in the long run?

DAY 3 — 2 CORINTHIANS 6:18

Consider what it means that, regardless of our familial circumstance, we have a perfectly loving Father in Heaven that loves you.

How does this translate to our lives? How does the fact stated above affect our thinking?

DAY 4 — EPHESIANS 1:4-6

How long has God known us? What does the passage say we are in Christ?

Think about the idea of adoption. At what point in your life did the Lord adopt you?

DAY 5 — MATTHEW 18:1-5

Who does Christ say is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

What does it mean to change and approach God like a child? What attributes of a child is God looking for in us?

DAY 6 — 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19, 35-58

What does this passage share that is in store for those in Christ?

What is Paul trying to say in verses 12-19? How do we have victory in Christ?

DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 3:18-21

If we are not of this world, where does our citizenship lie?

Explain how it is encouraging knowing that your citizenship is not of this world.

WEEK

7

**I am:
The
Temple
of God**

HEBREWS

9:1-10, 10:19-23

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Read Hebrews 9:1-10.

These verses describe how things were under the “first covenant.” “First” is another word for “old” and “covenant” is another word for “testament.” So we can reword verse 1 to say: “Even in the Old Testament...” Therefore, these verses compare the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Verse 1 talks about “an earthly place of holiness” in the Old Testament. What is this referring to? (Hint: Read Exodus 25:1-9. What words are used to describe the “place of holiness”?)

Describe the value of the things that you wrote down from Exodus 25.

Why does Hebrews make such a big deal about the “Holy Place” and the “Most Holy Place?” Write down some of the differences between them.

What makes the Most Holy Place so special? What was the purpose of the Most Holy Place?

Read Hebrews 9:8. What is “By this” referring to? What does the Holy Spirit indicate “by this”?

Only one Israelite per year (the High Priest) was able to walk into the place where God lived. Regular Israelites—people who would have been just like you and me—were NEVER able to be in the Presence of God. God’s Presence was in the Most Holy Place, but no one was allowed to go there. All throughout the Old Testament the Bible teaches us that God is so holy that man cannot be in his presence. The Tabernacle—and eventually the Temple—reminded everyone about the separation between men and God.

ALTHOUGH GOD LIVED IN THE TABERNACLE
MEN COULD NOT APPROACH HIM

Read Hebrews 10:19-23.

Look carefully at verses 19-20. What words do you see repeated from 9:8?

How are these words used differently in this passage? What is “new” in these verses?

MOVING IN

One of the main differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament—according to these passages—is that in the OT, the way into the holy place was closed. However, Hebrews 10:20 says that a new way has been opened into the holy place, and that we have confidence to enter it!

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20 and John 14:17.

In the Old Testament, the “holy place” was in the Tabernacle, closed off from the people. Where is the “holy place” now?

These verses talk about Christians being the “temple” of God. What does that mean?

A TEMPLE IS A PLACE WHERE GOD DWELLS

What can we learn from the Old Testament temple and tabernacle about the importance of God’s dwelling place?

Write down all the things that verses Hebrews 10:19-25 say that we have because of Christ.

DWELL WITHIN YOU

We have explored the difference between the Old Testament Temple and the New Testament Temple. The Holy God who created the universe wants to dwell with you! Because of Christ, this is not only possible, it is reality. If this is true, it affects our lives in a huge way!

Think about the people you live with. What is unique about living with someone else?

How is your relationship different from those you see occasionally?

Do you really believe that God lives in you? How does that look in your life?

How should it make you feel? How should it make you think? How should it make you act?

Why is it difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit (God!) lives in you? What are some reasons that you doubt this is true?

Hebrews talks about "assurance" and "confidence" and a "clean conscience" and "holding fast to our hope." Do you feel these types of things in your life? Why or why not?

What is your conscience? How does it work?

Why does Hebrews say we have been cleansed from an "evil conscience"? What does this have to do with God living in us?

How should these truths affect our identity? In other words, what should we believe and know about ourselves, if God lives in us?

NOW WHAT?

What are the implications of God living in you for your daily life?

How can you remind yourself that God is living in you? What are the consequences if you forget this truth?

Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit's impact on your thoughts or emotions or conscience? How do you know?

GOING DEEPER

Read Hebrews 9:11-14.

These verses talk more about Christ's work for us. Think through how they fit with the other passages we studied in this lesson. It will help to know that the word "tent" is the same as the word "tabernacle" in Hebrew.

What is the "greater and more perfect tent" (vs. 11)? Why did Christ need blood to enter into the "holy place"?

Why do you suppose God wants to dwell with men? Why did he go to such great lengths to live first in a tent, then a house, and now in us?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Hebrews 10:19-22

WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

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EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

Now, under the New Covenant, the Lord dwells within us. Prior, where did the Lord dwell? If those areas were held so sacred, shouldn't we hold our bodies as sacred as well?

How may I live differently by actively remembering my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, God dwelling in me?

DAY 2 — LEVITICUS 20:26 & 1 PETER 1:13-16

Keeping in mind that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, how might pursuing holiness take on more importance in your life?

According to the passage in 1 Peter, what were we like before we were in Christ—prior to becoming a temple of the Holy Spirit?

DAY 3 — ROMANS 8:6-9

What does the mind of the sinful man bring? What does the mind controlled by the Spirit bring?

How are the mind of sinful man and the mind controlled by the Spirit in conflict?

DAY 4 — EPHESIANS 1:13

What brings about the Holy Spirit to dwell in us?

How does being sealed in the Holy Spirit change the way I live?

DAY 5 — TITUS 3:3-7

Using the terminology from this passage, why are we saved?

The generous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us who believe in Christ brings about what in our lives?

What change?

DAY 6 — ROMANS 14:17

What does this verse say comes about by life for the kingdom of heaven?

What do you think it means to live with joy in the Holy Spirit? What does that look like?

DAY 7 — 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17 & 1 TIMOTHY 4:8

What does 1 Timothy say is of "some value"? What does 1 Timothy say is more important?

Why is godliness more important according to 1 Timothy?

WEEK

8

**I am:
An
Image
Bearer**

EPHESIANS

2:8-10

TALK THE TALK AND WALK THE WALK

Before you jump in, how do you think an image-bearer of Christ should look? Describe their life.

Do you look like either of your parents or maybe even both of your parents? Has someone ever met you and told you that you look exactly like your mom or your dad? Or maybe you've stood by your sibling and had someone say, "You two must be brothers!" Did you know that God wants us to look like Him, too? No, it's not your physical appearance that should look like God. Deeper than the physical outward appearance, God wants our lives and our hearts to look like Him.

Read Romans 8:29.

What do you think it means to "be conformed to the likeness of His Son?"

Read James 2:14-26.

What did this person do wrong verses 15-17? What could have been a better response?

Why do you think God wants His followers to do good works?

Unscramble the words below to discover the relationship with faith and works.

iafht tuwihto eesdd si adde

What do you think the above statement means?

Scripture teaches in Ephesians 2:8-9 that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works or deeds. Yet, when you read that faith without deeds is dead, you might get a little confused. The word "justify" that James uses emphasizes the way in which works demonstrate someone has been declared righteous by God through faith. True faith always produces salvation and works.

Look at the equation below, and circle the correct "formula".

Faith + Works = Salvation

Faith = Salvation + Works

While works and deeds do not save us, they do have a very important place in our lives. After becoming a Christian, our faith will lead us to do good works.

ONLY GOD DESERVES THE PRAISE

If good works in our lives do not save us but are a result of our faith, why do we do them? Is it so we can feel good about ourselves? So that other people can look at us and applaud us? If we are not careful, we can all fall into this trap.

Read Matthew 5:16.

How will people respond when they see your good deeds?

How can you give God the credit when you perform a good deed?

What are some results that could come from your giving credit to God in these situations?

A CASE FOR FAITH

Read Acts 26:20.

This is Paul defending himself from the accusations against him. What did Paul say would prove their repentance?

How do you think good deeds prove repentance?

When we claim to be a Christian, our life should be led by the Holy Spirit. Before we became a Christian, we were ruled by our sinful nature—we could not help but sin. Thankfully, when the Holy Spirit filled our lives, we can become different.

REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Read John 16:33.

Think about the last hard time you faced. It may have been within your family or your group of friends, or maybe even with a teacher. Write about it briefly here.

The way Christians handle problems tells the watching world a lot about God. When you are in a difficult situation, you have the greatest opportunity to show Christ to others. People are always watching—they want to know if God is real in hard times. Can God still be trusted and loved when times get tough?

Being an image-bearer of Christ does not mean that you have to put on a fake smile and pretend things are great. You can be honest about your struggle and still have faith in God.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

What do you think this Scripture means?

It may not be right away, but God never wastes anything in your life. He won't waste your difficulties, so please don't waste them either. He wants to comfort you so that you can be an ambassador for his comfort to others.

ETERNAL IMPACT

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

What is the command for every image-bearer of Christ?

Hopefully, you have been challenged this week to examine your life to see if you are bearing the image of God to the world around you.

Read Colossians 3:9-10.

Your new self is your new life in Christ. When you decided to receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you became a new creation. Each day you have a decision about which way you will live. Will you live like your old self, or will you live like your new self? Only one of these reflects the image of God!

Once again, why do you think it is important for you to bear the image of God to the world?

People's eternity is at stake. Your role as an image-bearer of God can have a huge impact on those around you. Will you be found faithful? Will you be found in his image?

NOW WHAT?

After learning about a Christ follower's role in reflecting God's image to the world how has the Lord challenged you this week?

What area or areas of your life need to look more like God?

What difficulties have you faced that could be used to reflect His glory?

PRAYER: Take time today to confess your sins to God. Tell Him that you are sorry for the times you have stolen His glory by accepting praise from others. Ask Him to help you give Him the credit and praise in all situations in your life. Even though it may be hard to be an image-bearer for God, it is not impossible. Thank God that He helps you to do this. Ask Him to help you remember to depend on Him in your everyday life. Ask God to help you put off the old self with its sinful desires each day and put on the new self, which allows you to be an image-bearer for God!

GOING DEEPER

PRAYER: Ask God to show you ways that you are like or have been like the person in James 2 who did not help the brother or sister in need. Ask God to convict you and help you live out your faith by doing good deeds for people in need.

Respond to the following statement: "You are the only Bible some people will ever read."

What good works is God showing you that you were created specifically for?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Matthew 5:16

WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — EPHESIANS 2:10

What word does Paul use to describe ourselves?

How do you feel about that? How does being the handiwork of the Almighty God affect our mindset and actions?

DAY 2 — MATTHEW 5:16

Bottom line—what are our good deeds meant to do?

If we bear Christ's name, a name greater than any other, how should that affect the way we live every day?

DAY 3 — EPHESIANS 5:10 & LUKE 4:1

In living a life of love, what does the verse from Ephesians tell us to do?

If Christ obediently followed the Holy Spirit, and we are told to be imitators of God, then how will we imitate Christ in this circumstance?

DAY 4 — MATTHEW 28:16-20

Now that we have a choice to bear the image of Christ, Jesus calls us to go do what?

Aside from our brothers and sisters in Christ, are we alone in our mission?

DAY 5 — 1 PETER 4:12-19

What do we receive if we endure sufferings for bearing the name of Christ? Why?

According to this passage, what are we to do when we face suffering?

DAY 6 — JOHN 4:23-24

What does this passage describe as "true worship"?

Explain the significance of worshipping in spirit and truth if "God is spirit."

DAY 7 — ROMANS 6:13

Based on verse 19, to what does righteousness lead?

According to verse 22, to what does sanctification lead?

WEEK

9

I am:

A

Disciple

ACTS

22:1-21



THE POWER OF YOUR STORY

We all love stories, especially the stories that give us an inside look at someone else's life. As a child of God, you have a powerful story to tell. Sharing how you came to know Jesus and the difference Christ has made in your life can help others discover how they, too, can know God personally. A carefully prepared testimony, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is your best tool you can use anywhere to effectively share the message of God's love. Do not dismiss how your story has tremendous influence through the Holy Spirit.

The challenge every Christian faces is how to share a lifetime of experiences in just a few minutes, and communicate the significance of dependent faith in a way others can understand. That is reason this lesson includes template and some tips to help you draft your personal testimony. This purpose is to help guide you to create a synopsis of your story that you can share with individuals or groups.

Helpful Hints

- 1) Write the way you speak. You want to be able to share without reading from a piece of paper.
- 2) Practice sharing your story so it becomes natural for you.
- 3) Smile often and show enthusiasm.
- 4) Be careful not to glamorize how "bad" you used to be.
- 5) Don't harshly criticize the church, organizations, or other people.
- 6) Be realistic. Do not imply that Christ removes all of life's problems, but, rather, that He walks with you through them.
- 7) Avoid a focus on religious activities. You want to make it about Jesus and your need for Him.
- 8) Your goal is to explain specific ways Christ has changed your life and show that having Jesus in your life really does make a difference!

Read 1 Peter 3:15.

The questions below will provide a solid frame to build your story on. Try to think of specific examples, details, and Scriptures that relate to each question. In order to give well-thought-out answers, please take your time answering the questions. Remember, you are preparing to give a reason for the hope that you have in Jesus. After praying, answer the following questions in complete sentences.

BEFORE I RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR

Describe your family. How many brothers/sisters do you have? Describe some details about your parents.

How often do you attend church as a family? How involved is your family at church?

What was your life like before you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? What did your life revolve around? What was most important to you?

Where did you look for security, peace of mind, and happiness? How did those areas begin to let you down?

What were your attitudes, needs and problems before Jesus?

Who/what introduced you to Jesus?

What were your initial reactions to Jesus Christ?

WHEN I RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR

When and why did you begin to feel positively about Christianity?

Why do you need Jesus Christ in your life? Explain the problem of sin.

When/where did you trust Jesus as your Savior? How did you come to accept Christ and give Him complete control of your life?

What does it require for you to trust Jesus as your personal Savior?

What feelings did you struggle with right before you accepted Christ?

Why did you go ahead and choose to follow Christ?

AFTER I RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR

How is your life different since you became a Christ-follower?

What changes have you see in your life as a result of your relationship with Jesus? In your attitudes? In your actions?

How long did it take before you noticed any changes?

What does knowing Jesus Christ mean in your life now?

Describe specific changes and illustrations about the changes Christ has made in your life.

How are you motivated differently?

What is God doing in your life right now?

Why would you encourage someone else to become a follower of Jesus?

You did it! You have answered some key questions to help you put your testimony together. Now all you have to do is get on the computer, look back over your answers and type your testimony in paragraph form. As you look back over what you wrote today consider if your answers will be easy for a non-Christian to understand. Did you use too many "churchy" words that will not make sense to someone that was not raised in church? Go back and make changes if needed.

Just like Paul shared his testimony with the crowds in Acts 22, next week you are going to share your story with your DC group. Before doing that, practice sharing your testimony with your parents this week.

Be creative in sharing your life! Enjoy sharing with others the incredible story of what Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, is doing in you!

NOW WHAT?

What is your responsibility as an individual who has received grace and mercy from Jesus?

With whom do you plan to share your testimony within the next two weeks?

When and where do you plan share you story with the individual(s) listed above?

PRAYER: Ask God to help you share your testimony with boldness. Pray for the individuals you listed above to listen to your testimony with an open heart and mind. Thank God that you have a testimony to share! Ask for help to clearly communicate the truth to other people through sharing your testimony.

GOING DEEPER

What is the difference between being a fully devoted follower of Jesus and being religious?

How can you continue keep your testimony fresh as you grow older?

When is your story complete?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 Peter 3:15

WEEK 9 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JOHN 3:25-31

How does John speak of God in his testimony?

Where does John place himself in respect to God? What is the focus of John's testimony?

DAY 2 — LUKE 2:8-9, 15-20

Does the overlap of the shepherd's testimonies make their testimonies more powerful? What might this say about the collective testimony of the church?

We know what the shepherds had heard and seen. What have you heard and seen God do in your life?

DAY 3 — LUKE 17:11-19

How does the fact that the one leper, that continued praising God even after he fulfilled his obligation to Christ's command, strengthen his testimony as a faithful believer in Christ?

How does the urgency exhibited by the lepers in sharing their testimonies translate to the urgent need for my testimony to be shared?

DAY 4 — LUKE 18:35-43

How did the beggar live as a witness to those around him in reference to what God had done for him?

Explain how this is a testimony and more than just a miracle story.

DAY 5 — LAMENTATIONS 3:12-24

How is Jeremiah's testimony more powerful in light of his voiced struggles in the previous chapters?

How does Jeremiah's attitude on the enduring characteristics of God show the hope that he has in his testimony?

DAY 6 — PSALM 138

What does David do first in his testimony? How is this necessary for our own testimony?

Explain how David portrays his need for God within this testimony.

DAY 7 — LUKE 26:32-33, 39-43

What does the second criminal recognize about himself and the other criminal?

How does the second criminal react to the first criminal's statement to Jesus? What words would you use to describe the second criminal's attitude in doing so?

WEEK

10

My Story: For Reason and Hope

1 PETER

3:15

LOOKING BACK

You have done a great job this semester as you have learned more about your identity in Christ. It is such a privilege and joy to study Scripture. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

How do you feel now that you have completed this study?

Describe how your future will be impacted because of this study.

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalm 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and can live out.

- Jesus' identity is supreme.
- We must understand Jesus' identity before we understand how his identity influences ours.
- Our answer to the question of "who do you say I am" does not change his identity, however, it does change ours.
- Humans are created with special qualities unlike anything else in all of creation.
- The purpose of being a human is to represent God in the world.
- Every person has sin and death because of Adam's sin.
- Until we understand and admit that sin is a very big part of our identity, we'll never understand the importance of what Christ has done for us.
- We were slaves to sin, and Christ bought us with His blood.
- Jesus alone provides redemption.
- Christ has truly taken our sins, clenching on to them is not pleasing to God.
- When we feel we need to punish ourselves, we are actually devaluing Jesus' sacrifice.
- God is willing to embrace us no matter the severity of the sin, don't choose to recoil in shame, but come to him in comfort.
- What God promises his people is not earthly blessings, but heavenly ones.
- Only because the work of Jesus on the cross may God dwell within us.
- The Holy God who created the universe wants to dwell with us.
- God's plan and purpose is for us to reflect Him.
- While works and deeds do not save us, they do have a very important place in our lives.
- Developed a personal testimony.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.

ABIDE IN ME

LIFE IN CHRIST ESSENTIALS

In John 15 “abide in me” means to continue in a daily, personal relationship with Christ, characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy.

The goal of this study is to learn the core principles for every follower to live out in Christ. The content will challenge students to take their next step in their faith journey and encourage them to live an abundant life in Christ.

WEEK

1

The Life in Christ Essentials

JOHN

15:1-11

ESSENTIALS OF LIFE IN CHRIST

For the next eight weeks we're going to study what we call the "Essentials of Life in Christ." The seven essentials are: Prayer, Scripture, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple Maker, Generous Living, and Transformational Community. These are things that we believe are "essential" in the life of every Christian. Theologians often call this area of theology the study of "the Christian life." At Carmel, we call it "Life in Christ."

Today we're going to answer two important questions: "What is a Christian?" and "What is the Christian Life?" Once we answer these questions, we can learn how each Essential fits into the picture.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

You probably hear and use the word "Christian" all the time. There is Christian music, Christian churches, Christian books, and Christians. What exactly does it mean to be a Christian? How do you know if you are really a Christian? What makes someone a Christian?

What is a Christian?

You might be surprised to know that the Bible only uses the word Christian three times. Instead, it refers to people being "in Christ" or "with Christ." These phrases occur more than 200 times in the New Testament! Theologians call this idea the doctrine of "union with Christ."

UNION WITH CHRIST IS THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF THE WHOLE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION.
—JOHN MURRAY

In other words, a Christian is someone who is "in Christ." If you are in Christ, then you are a Christian. If you are not in Christ, then you are not a Christian.

Make a list of the different ways that we use the word "in."

Which of these ways might apply to "in Christ?"

At different times, the Bible uses "in Christ" to mean "by Christ," "with Christ," "through Christ," or "on behalf of Christ." Whenever you see the phrase "in Christ," stop and think about what it means in the passage that you are reading.

One of the clearest teachings about being "in Christ" is found in John 15. Jesus uses a plant metaphor, just like the one we talked about in our introduction today. This passage will help us understand what it means for us to be in Christ.

IN CHRIST, IS LIFE

Read John 15:1-11.

Circle every place in this passage that Jesus uses the words "in me" or "in you."

What does it mean to say that a branch is "in" the vine?

What happens if a branch is separated from the vine? What does a branch receive from the vine?

How does this relate to being a Christian?

For you and me, to be "in Christ" is to be connected to Jesus Christ the same way that branch is connected to the vine.

How do we get connected to Christ?

ABIDE IN ME

Throughout these verses Jesus uses the word "abide" (some versions translate this as "remain") combined with "in me." So in verse 4 he says, "Abide in me, and I in you." Underline "abide" or "remain" every time you see it in these verses.

Look through these verses and write down the results of "abiding" in Christ.

What is "pruning" and how does it relate to abiding in Christ?

Write down the consequences for those who do not "abide" in Christ.

What can we learn from these verses about how to abide (remain, stay) in Christ?

THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT

Jesus commands Christians to “abide” in him and He also gives a reason in verse 8. If you planted an apple tree, you would hope to eat apples from it. If the tree never produced any apples, what would you do? You might cut it down, or you might wonder if it is really an apple tree?

What does it mean for a Christian to “bear much fruit?”

Why does Jesus use the metaphor of a fruit tree? Does it help you understand what he is saying? Why or why not?

ABIDE IN CHRIST → BEAR MUCH FRUIT

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

Based on what we’ve seen in John 15, work with your small group to write a one sentence description of the Christian life.

Does this sentence describe your life? How do you abide in Christ? What fruit do you see in your life? Give personal examples.

What is the difference between a Christian and a “good person?” Can you be one and not the other? Why or why not? Which one are you?

The “Life in Christ Essentials” that we will study for the next seven weeks are the way that Carmel Baptist Church has chosen to summarize what the Christian life looks like. Prayer, Scripture, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple Maker, Generous Living, and Transformational Community are specific ways that we “abide in Christ” and “bear much fruit.” Learning about these essentials will equip you to live an abundant life in Christ, abiding in Him and bearing much fruit.

NOW WHAT?

Think about what it means to “abide in Christ.” Does this describe your life? Why or why not?

Write down a few areas of fruit in your life. Use Galatians 5, Ephesians 4, and Colossians 3 to help you.

Write down a few areas in your life that are not bearing fruit. Why do you think you aren’t bearing fruit in these areas? What might need to be pruned from your life?

Spend some time asking God to help you abide in Him, and so bear much fruit.

GOING DEEPER

Read John 15:5. Think about some areas where you may be trying to live without “abiding” in Christ.

Read Ephesians 4. How does this passage relate to John 15 and what can we learn from it?

Can a person bear fruit without abiding in Christ? Why or why not?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5

WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JOHN 15:1-3

What is the goal of the vinedresser pruning the vine?

How does your perspective of pruning change when you see it as discipline for your good rather than punishment?

DAY 2 — JOHN 15:4

How does the branch bear fruit? To you, what does it mean to abide?

How can you strive to have moment-by-moment communion (abiding) with God in your own life?

DAY 3 — JOHN 15:5

What is your role as the branch?

If "apart from me [Christ] you can do nothing," how heavily should we rely on our Life in Christ Essential of Prayer?

DAY 4 — JOHN 15:6-7

We are not living out our purpose as the branch if we are not abiding in Christ. Are you truly living out your purpose?

What does it mean for God's words to abide in you?

DAY 5 — JOHN 15:8-9

How is the Father glorified?

What would change in your life if you truly believed that God loves you the way he says he does?

DAY 6 — JOHN 15:10

How does your ability to abide in Christ impact your ability to obey His commandments?

How does it comfort you to know that Jesus is your perfect example for living this out?

DAY 7 — JOHN 15:11

God desires that you would abide in him for your good and his glory. How does this make you joyful?

In what ways are you settling for anything less than the abundant life Christ has called you to through abiding in him?

WEEK

2

Essential #1

Prayer

LUKE

11:1



CONVERSATION WITH GOD

The first Life in Christ Essential is Prayer. Many times we say that prayer is simply “talking to God.” In one sense this is true. When we pray, we do talk to God. In another sense, “talking to God” doesn’t quite capture the importance of what happens when we pray. Think about the difference between “talking” to a customer service agent, talking to your best friend, or talking to your mom when you’ve done something wrong. Who we are talking to, and what we are talking about makes a big difference in the purpose of talking.

It may be tempting to examine the definition of prayer right away. First, let’s take a brief look at what prayer is not (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- **Prayer is not magic.** We cannot summon God as though He were a genie, waiting to grant our wishes without regard for our circumstances or the consequences.
- **Prayer does not make demands.** While we can make requests of God in prayer, we dare not make demands. God is the Creator of the universe and does not take orders from us.
- **Prayer is for our benefit, not God’s.** We need a relationship with God, available to us through Jesus Christ and engaged primarily through prayer.
- **Prayer is not a guarantee against suffering.** Trials will come (John 16:33, 1 Peter 4:12-13).
- **Prayer is not an opportunity for us to show off.** (Matthew 6:5).

In order to develop a clear idea of prayer, we must first have a clear idea of God. This is known as the “knowledge of God.” While we cannot explore all of God’s attributes, here is a basic list:

1. **God is a personal being.** God is a person we can interact with, He has a will, and we are able to relate to Him on a meaningful level. If He were impersonal, then prayer wouldn’t be meaningful. If He were personal, but uncaring and distant, prayer wouldn’t serve a purpose.
2. **God is all-loving** (omnibenevolent). If God were personal, but uncaring or unkind, then prayer might do us more harm than good! In relation to prayer, this means that God always desires the best for us because He loves us (1 John 4:8, 16; John 3:16).
3. **God is all-powerful** (omnipotent). No prayer is beyond His ability to answer. If God were less than all-powerful, then we would have no assurance that He could answer or even hear our prayers (Luke 1:37).
4. **God is all-knowing** (omniscient). If God were limited, then He would not know all that is happening in His creation. If this were the case, He might overlook our prayers because they might be beyond His knowledge. Fortunately, the Bible is clear that God knows everything (Psalm 139:2-4; 147: 4-5; Isaiah 46:10, Matthew 6:8).
5. **God is wise and holy.** He knows what is best for us, as well as what will lead us to holiness rather than sin.
6. **He is also immanent.** God is active in His creation in a personal way, not only directing greater matters of history, but also involved in the life of everyone. This means that no prayer is too great for Him, but also that no prayer is too small for Him.
7. **God is sovereign.** God is supremely in charge of everything that happens in His universe. Nothing takes Him by surprise and nothing happens in our lives without the knowledge of God, even though we may not always understand His actions (Isaiah 55:8-9).

In hearing and responding to our prayers, then, we are assured that God will do so on the basis of His many attributes. His personal nature, love, power, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, immanence and sovereignty all play a role in how we relate to God in prayer and how He relates to us.

PRAYER IS LIKE THIS: A PERSONAL, COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSE TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.
—TIM KELLER

So what is prayer? Prayer is a wherein we humbly communicate, worship, and sincerely seek God's face, knowing that He hears us, loves us and will respond, though not always in a manner we may expect or desire within the context of a relationship.

MOSES AND THE GOLDEN CALF

Let's look at one Old Testament example of a man whose prayer is in response to his knowledge of God. For the last 12 chapters, Moses has been up on top of a mountain, where God has been telling him what the laws will be for the people of Israel. We pick up the story as the people have begun to get bored and angry in waiting for Moses.

Read Exodus 32:1-14.

Who are the four main characters in this story? (Hint: one is a group of people)

1) 2) 3) 4)

What did Aaron and the people do in verses 1-6? Why did they do this?

In verses 7-10, God tells Moses what has happened and declares that he is going to destroy the people of Israel for worshipping another god. Then in verse 11-14, Moses prays as a response to God.

Read Exodus 32:11-14 again.

What reasons does Moses argue that God should not destroy the people?

1)
2)
3)

How did Moses' knowledge of God impact his prayer? What can we learn about Moses relationship with God?

How does God respond to Moses prayer? Did Moses prayer change God?

This is a very strange story. God first declares He's going to destroy the Israelites, then Moses prays, and he appears to change God's mind. It is important to realize that Moses' prayer did not change God. The Bible is clear that God is unchanging, and his purposes and promises are unchanging. So what happened when Moses prayed?

GOD, WHO NEVER CHANGES, ALLOWED MOSES TO BE PART OF GOD'S PLAN TO SAVE AND PROTECT THE ISRAELITES. PRAYER IS GOD'S WAY OF INVITING US INTO HIS STORY.

What does this story teach us about God? What does this story teach us about prayer?

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Based on attributes of God we learned about today, did God know what Moses would pray before he prayed? Does God know what we will pray before we pray it?

If God knows what we are going to pray, describe two reasons why we should pray?

1) _____ 2) _____

What do you pray for most often? When do you pray?

Do you trust that God hears you when you pray? Do you believe he responds? Why or why not?

Discuss these statements: Whether we pray or not makes a difference to God. Your relationship with God is only as deep as your prayer.

Do you struggle to pray? Why do you think many people have trouble with consistent prayer?

Keys to Proper Attitude in Prayer:

- We must not be haughty, but humble (Ephesians 4:2; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6).
- Always strive to have a prayerful attitude (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- Our prayers must come often and regularly, not from legalistic duty, but from a humble heart, realizing our dependence on God in every aspect of our lives.

NOW WHAT?

What are some practical obstacles that stop you from praying?

What choices do you need to make in your life to open up time for prayer?

Do you know someone who is consistent in their prayer life? Would you consider asking them to help you learn to pray?

Pick a Psalm and pray each verse back to God using your own words. Write it out in the space below.

GOING DEEPER

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 that we ought to “pray continually.” How is that possible?

Is it easier for you to pray when things are going well or when things are going poorly? Why?

Read Romans 8:26-28.

What can you learn about prayer from these verses?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.” —Psalm 3:4

WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — EXODUS 15:1-18

What event is Moses responding to? Find and list some of the attributes of God that Moses talks about. What strikes you most about this prayer? Does it resemble your prayer? Why or why not?

DAY 2 — GENESIS 18:22-33

What are the circumstances of this conversation between God and Abraham? What is Abraham asking God to do? Why is he asking for that?

How would you describe the way that Abraham approaches (and thinks about) God's position in his prayer?

DAY 3 — NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

Nehemiah's prayer has several parts. How would you divide it up?

Are there any similarities between this prayer and Moses prayer for the Israelites in Exodus 32 (the passage for last Sunday's lesson)? What are the differences?

DAY 4 — PSALM 6

How would you describe David's mood during this prayer? Is this appropriate for prayer?

Compare verses 1-7 and 8-10. How does David end his prayer? Are you this "real" with God?

DAY 5 — PSALM 146

How would you describe the purpose of this prayer? What reasons does the Psalmist give for trusting God as opposed to man? What kind of people does the Psalmist talk about?

Why are these people important God, and why might the Psalmist bring them up?

DAY 6 — EPHESIANS 3:14-19

What five specific things does Paul pray for the Ephesians? How do these relate to each other?

Can you figure out what reason Paul is talking about in verse 14 based on the previous verses?

DAY 7 — HEBREWS 4:14-16

What claim does this passage make about Jesus (v 14-15)? What does the author say is the result of this claim? (v. 16)

Why is it significant that Jesus can sympathize with us? How should that affect our prayer?

WEEK

3

Essential #2

Scripture

HEBREWS

5:12-14

TWO KINDS OF FOOD

The second Essential of Life of Christ is Scripture. The word “Scripture” is the translation of a Greek word, which the bible uses often: γραφή (graphē). This word simply means “writings.” When we use it, it refers to the 66 books that are found in the Bible. The Bible is not a magical book; it is a book of writings by men who God used to write down His own words. The Bible (Scripture) is essential because it is God’s Word spoken to us. Today, we are going to think about how the Bible is part of the Christian Life.

Read Hebrews 5:12-14.

Look carefully at these verses. Does it sound like the author happy with the people he is writing to? Why or why not?

How do we know that this passage is talking about the Bible? What words does the author use to refer to the Bible?

Apparently the Hebrew people were doing something wrong with God’s word. To help them understand what was wrong, the author uses a metaphor about food. Read the passage again and look at all the food references.

What two food “groups” does the author talk about? What does each one represent? Why did the author choose to use these two specific kind of foods?

These two different kinds of “food” go with two very different groups of people. The author praises one group and corrects the other group.

How does the author describe those that drink “milk”? Write down these descriptions. Why does he criticize them?

How does the author describe those that eat “solid food”? Write down these descriptions. Why does he praise them?

How does a person move from the first group (child) to the second group (mature)?

CHILDREN DRINK MILK—MATURE PEOPLE EAT SOLID FOOD.

GROWING INTO MATURITY

Look carefully at verse 14 and let's draw some conclusions from this passage. The verse describes how people become mature in God's word: they "have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good and evil."

What is discernment? What does it mean in this context? What is the opposite of discernment? (Hint: look in verse 13).

Share something you have become skilled at. How did you become skilled at it? Do you know how to do it well enough to teach someone else?

In verse 14, the author says that mature Christians have their powers of discernment "trained by constant practice." Circle the word "trained" in your bible. The Greek word that is used for "trained" is rare in the bible, only occurring four times. One of those times is in 1 Timothy 4:7.

Read 1 Timothy 4:6-10.

The word for "train" is the same, and the word in the Apostle Paul's day it was often used to refer to Olympic training.

How does 1 Timothy 4:7 relate to Hebrews 5:14? They use the same word, but are they talking about the same thing? Why or why not?

Why would Hebrews use the word for Olympic training to talk about reading the Bible? What does it look like to approach the Bible with this mindset?

What can we conclude about the goal of reading the Bible?

What can we conclude about the consequences of neglecting the "oracles of God" and the "word of righteousness"?

How does this relate to our discussion of the Christian Life?

EVALUATING OUR BIBLICAL MATURITY

The author of Hebrews makes it clear that training ourselves to understand and apply God's word is a huge part of what it means to live the Christian Life. In other words, you can't "abide in Christ" without reading and learning his word.

This passage points out that being a mature Christian doesn't happen by accident. We don't grow in maturity unless we train ourselves by constant practice in reading God's Word. Are you training your powers of discernment by constant practice, or are you unskilled in the word of righteousness?

What might it look like for someone to train themselves by constant practice in God's Word? Give examples of when you have done it well.

Take a minute to think about your personal interaction with God's Word in your life right now. How would you describe it? Are you stuck on basic principles or are you going deeper by constant practice?

What would happen to your physical body if you only drank milk, instead of eating solid food? Why would this happen?

What happens to your spiritual life if you neglect the "solid food" of God's word? Why would this happen?

How do you know if this is happening to you?

Do you feel guilty when you don't read your Bible? Why or why not? What is the difference between "feeling guilty" and "repentant?"

We all experience emotional, spiritual, and practical roadblocks to "constant practice." Identify some of these things that keep you from pursuing God's word.

What practical steps are you taking in your life right now to train yourself in God's Word?

NOW WHAT?

Think back to Week 1 when we talked about abiding in Christ. What is the relationship between abiding in Christ and training yourself in God's Word?

Is it possible to read God's Word and yet NOT abide in Christ? Why or why not?

Is it true to say that abiding in Christ depends upon training yourself in God's Word? Why or why not?

No one learns God's Word overnight. Write down one single step you want to take this week to train yourself in God's Word.

GOING DEEPER

One sign of maturity is the ability to teach others what we have learned. Write down at least one area of God's word that you could help someone younger than you understand.

Do you have any opportunities to teach others what you have learned about God's Word?

What are some reasons that you might be worried about teaching others?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." —Hebrews 5:14

WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JOSHUA 1:7-9

What is the "Book of the Law?" What three things does this passage say we should do with the Book of the Law?

Why is it so important that you "do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth"?

DAY 2 — PSALM 19

This Psalm can be broken into three main sections. Can you find them? What is theme of each of each one?

Write down all the adjectives used to describe God's Word.

DAY 3 — PSALM 119:1-16

Write down all the words that these verses use to refer to God's Word.

Do you feel the same way that the Psalmist does about God's Word? How can you grow in your love for the Bible as the very Word of God?

DAY 4 — ISAIAH 5:24-25

Isaiah is pronouncing a curse against Israel—God's people! What have they done wrong? Why is this a wrong thing to do?

What are the consequences for Israel ignoring God's Word?

DAY 5 — GENESIS 3:1-7

What strategy (relating to God's word) does the serpent take to convince Eve to eat the fruit?

How did Adam and Eve display doubt about God's Word?

DAY 6 — JOHN 1:1-18

What conclusion can you draw about how important words are to God?

God's Word points to the Word who is God (Jesus). Spend some time meditating on this truth.

DAY 7 — 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

Write down the four things that Bible is profitable for. Why is it profitable for these things?

What is the purpose of reading the Bible? (Hint: Verse 17)

WEEK

4

Essential #3

Authentic

Faith

1 THESSALONIANS

1:1-10

AUTHENTIC OR NOT?

Our first two essentials that we have talked about are Prayer and Scripture. These first two Essentials go together because they focus on the conversation that we have with God. God speaks to us in his Word, and we respond in Prayer. These are the most basic actions of being a Christian – hearing and responding to God.

The third Essential of Life in Christ is Authentic Faith. Let's start by defining what we mean when we use the word authentic.

What do you think of when you hear the word "authentic"? What are some examples of things that are authentic?

What is the opposite of authentic? Write down some examples of things that are not authentic.

How do you know if something is authentic?

Is it possible to have faith that is not authentic? Why or why not?

This essential is called Authentic Faith for a purpose. The Bible makes it clear that it is possible to have "fake" faith. Some people claim that they believe in Jesus, when in reality they do not. In order to understand the difference between authentic faith and fake faith we must look in God's Word for the answer rather than our own opinions.

NOT IN WORD ONLY

One of the clearest answers to this question is found in 1 Thessalonians. Paul is very specific in the beginning of this letter to the Christians in the city of Thessalonica about their faith.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

What three things does Paul list in verse 3 that he thanks God for about the Thessalonians?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Look carefully at verses 4-10. Write down as many ways as you can find how Paul describes the Thessalonian Christians.

In verse 4, Paul says, “we know that [God] has chosen you, because...” In other words, he’s about to give the reasons that he knows that their faith is real!

What are the reasons that Paul gives for knowing that God had chosen the Thessalonians, specifically in verse 5?

What does it mean that the gospel came in “word? What does it mean that the gospel came “also in power”?

How did Paul know that the gospel came in power and full conviction? What did he see in them? (Hint: Look at verses 6-10)

WITH FULL CONVICTION

Paul preached the good news of Jesus to the Thessalonians, and not only did they believe that it was true, they embraced it in their hearts with full conviction. Their faith was so authentic that everyone around them knew that they were Christians. They became an example to all the believers all over the world! It is an example even for us to consider today. Their faith was real, and everyone could see it.

AUTHENTIC FAITH IS FAITH THAT CAN BE SEEN

In this case, the word “conviction” is another form of “convinced.” In other places in the Bible this word is translated as “assurance.”

What does it mean to be “fully convinced” of something?

How does being fully convinced about something change the way that you act? Give some examples?

What does the Holy Spirit have to do with being fully convinced (verse 5)?

IS YOUR FAITH AUTHENTIC?

Think about your own life for a moment. If someone looked at your life, would they be able to write the same paragraph about you that Paul wrote about the Thessalonians? Has the gospel come to you in power, or in word only? Are you so fully convinced that Jesus Christ is God that everyone around you knows it? It is impossible to abide in Christ and bear much fruit without having Authentic Faith.

How has your Authentic Faith changed your own life? Give some examples.

You are not alone if you have doubts about God and about the gospel. Which parts of the message about Jesus are sometimes hard for you to be fully convinced about? Why are they hard?

We talked about “fake faith” at the beginning of this lesson. How do you know if someone’s faith is fake? How do you know if your own faith is fake?

Think of someone who you could write these verses about. Who do you know that demonstrates Authentic Faith? How can you see it in their life?

Discuss some of the ways that you can follow their example of authentic faith.

Knowing about Jesus and going to church does not mean that a person has Authentic Faith. Authentic Faith is a faith with also has power and the Holy Spirit and full conviction. This kind of faith can be seen in the way that people live their lives.

NOW WHAT?

Think about your personal faith. Has your faith become more authentic over time? How?

What are some things that might prevent someone from having Authentic Faith?

What is the relationship between “abiding in Christ” and Authentic Faith?

What is the relationship between “bearing much fruit” and Authentic Faith?

GOING DEEPER

Read James 2:14-17.

What does James mean when he says that faith without deeds is dead?

According to James, is it possible to have works without faith? What about faith without works?

Authentic Faith is faith that can be seen. If you were put on trial for your faith, what would evidence in your life would demonstrate your faith is real?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” —James 2:17

WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — JAMES 2:14-17

What example does James use to make his point?

What is the answer to James' question in verse 14?

DAY 2 — JAMES 2:18-26

What do the demons believe? Why is this important?

What two biblical examples does James bring up to demonstrate his point? Is it possible to have "faith" and not be saved? What always comes along with saving faith?

DAY 3 — MATTHEW 5:14-16

What does Jesus command us to do in this passage? How do we do that?

What does this passage teach us about our faith? Is it ok if no one can see that we are Christians?

DAY 4 — 1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9

What does Paul thank God for about the Corinthians?

How was the "testimony about Christ confirmed" by the Corinthians? How was the testimony about Christ been confirmed in your life?

DAY 5 — MATTHEW 3:1-10

What does John criticize the Pharisees and Sadducees for doing?

What did the Pharisees and Sadducees place their hope in? Did they think that they had faith?

DAY 6 — LUKE 18:9-14

What two men does Jesus describe? What were they doing?

What is the difference between the two men? Why was one man "justified" and the other man not justified?

DAY 7 — HEBREWS 11:13-16

What characteristics does Paul list of these great men and women of faith in these verses?

How do we know that their faith was authentic?

WEEK

5

Essential #4

Obedient

Follower

JOHN

10:27, 14:15

THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In weeks 2 and 3, we talked about the two basic ingredients of the Christian Life: Prayer and Scripture. Last week we saw that a Christian is fully convinced about Christ, and their Authentic Faith can be seen by those around them. Paul praised the Thessalonians for their Authentic Faith. They knew Christ with both their head and their heart.

Today, we're going to look at Essential #4: Obedient Follower. We'll look back in the letter to the Thessalonians and see how Paul talks to the Thessalonians about what it means to be an Obedient Follower of Jesus.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

What does Paul "ask and urge" the Thessalonians to do in verse 1?

Why would Paul tell them that? What exactly does he want them to do more of?

Discuss what Paul means by "walk to please God." What "instructions" did he give them?

The first half of verse 3 says: "For this is the will of God: your sanctification." If "sanctification" is God's will for us, it is important for us to know what it is! The rest of the verses in this passage should help us understand what sanctification is.

Compare and contrast verse 3 and verse 7:

Verse 3a: "For this is the will of God for you, your sanctification."

Verse 7: "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness."

What do you notice about these verses? What is the same? What is different?

These verses are saying the same thing, but in two different ways. In fact, the word "sanctification" and the word "holiness" are really the same word in Greek!

What does it mean to be holy? What is the opposite of being holy? Give examples of things that are pure and things that are not.

Rewrite verses 3a and 7 in your own words.

Verse 3)

Verse 7)

We could summarize this passage by saying that being holy (or pure) is the purpose and goal of the Christian Life. God did not call you to be a Christian so that you could be messy, dirty and sinful. He called you so that you could be holy and pure.

GOD LOVES HOLINESS, AND SO SHOULD WE

It is important to realize that our work to be holy cannot, and does not, save us. You cannot earn God's acceptance by trying to be more holy. As we saw in week 1, we can get connected to Jesus only by believing in him—by faith. However, if we aren't saved by what we do, then why does Paul make such a big deal of being holy to the Thessalonians?

If being holy doesn't save us, why should we be holy?

Read 1 Peter 1:13-16.

What reason does this passage give for why we should be holy?

This is one of the most important truths about God. God is perfect, holy, and pure; everything he does is right. He loves goodness and truth and beauty and perfection. God has called you to be a Christian so that he can make you beautiful and pure! Holiness matters to God because He himself is holy.

Think about the things that you like to do. They matter to you because they define who you are. If you are a baseball player, you care about baseball. If you are a musician, you care about music. If you are a reader, you care about books. God is the same way; what he IS determines what he loves. He is holy, and therefore he loves holiness, and he wants his people to be holy too.

OBEDIENT FOLLOWERS

What does holiness have to do with obedience? What does disobedience do to holiness?

Read John 15:10.

In other words, to abide in Christ, we must obey his commandments. Following God's commandments leads to holiness. Being an Obedient Follower of God is definitely an Essential of Life in Christ.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:8.

Using your own words, restate the warning described in this verse.

What does an "Obedient Follower" look like? What does he/she do? What does he/she not do?

DISCUSS AND APPLY

What is your response to this statement? God's goal for me is to be holy.

Think about your own life. What motivates you to obey God? Is that a good motivation? Why or why not?

List some "fruit" in your life that has come from being an Obedient Follower of God's commandments.

What are some of God's commands that are hard to obey? Why are they hard to obey?

Do you believe that obeying God's commands is good for you? Why or why not?

What are some practical ways you that you can seek to obey God this week?

NOW WHAT?

What sort of “fruit” do you see in your life that shows you are an Obedient Follower of God’s commands?

Does God require perfection from us? Why or why not?

We know that we don’t obey God’s law perfectly. What should we do when we realize that we’ve disobeyed God’s laws?

Spend a few minutes writing out a prayer that God would forgive your disobedience and give you the desire to be holy, as He is holy.

GOING DEEPER

Write down some things that encourage you to obey God’s commandments.

Write down a few things that hold you back from obeying God’s commandments.

What is the relationship between obeying God, abiding in Christ, and bearing fruit?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification.” —1 Thessalonians 4:3

WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

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EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — MATTHEW 23:25-26

How is this relatable to our lives today? What is the "cup"?

Where does holiness begin?

DAY 2 — 1 JOHN 2:1-3

Can we be 100% pure while living on this earth before Jesus comes back?

Why is it necessary to work towards purity and holiness before Jesus comes back?

DAY 3 — 2 SAMUEL 22:21-25

Reflect for a minute, how do you think David kept himself living so clean in God's eyes?

What is one thing in your life you are feeling guilty about today? What is the opposite of that thing and how can you practice walking it out in your day today?

DAY 4 — GALATIANS 5:16-24

Out of the list of the desires of the flesh, which sticks out to you the most?

Which fruit of the spirit do you think combats that specific sin most effectively?

DAY 5 — 1 PETER 2:1-3

What makes the Bible pure?

What do you think it looks like to "grow in respect to salvation"?

DAY 6 — PSALM 17:15

Where does the psalmist find his satisfaction?

What is God's "likeness"? Do you feel this is a reflection of how you feel about God? Why?

DAY 7 — COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

How does God view those who do not believe in Jesus?

What did Jesus' sacrifice do for us and how are we viewed in Him?

WEEK

6

Essential #5

Disciple

Maker

2 TIMOTHY

2:1-2, 4:1-5

WHAT IS A "DISCIPLE"?

Over the past 5 weeks we have focused on our personal relationship with God. The first two Essentials (Prayer and Scripture) describe the conversation that we have with God. The next two Essentials (Authentic Faith and Obedient Follower) describe what that conversation produces in our lives.

The final three Essentials are: Disciple Maker, Generous Living, and Transformational Community. These three Essentials shift from focusing on our personal relationship with God to our relationship with other Christians. It is important to realize that unless you are growing in Prayer, Scripture, Faith, and Obedience, it will be impossible to do these last three.

Today we're going to focus on #5: Disciple Maker. Before going any further today, we are going to try an activity. Pick one of your favorite things (could be a place, sports team, video game, movie, song, person, etc.). Explain to your group why you love it, and try to convince them that they should love it too.

What was difficult about this activity? Why was it difficult?

Why do we want others to love what we love? Can you think of other examples in your life where you try to convince your friends about something?

In the most basic sense, the word disciple means: learner or follower. So you are a "disciple" of the things you love. If you know the lyrics to every Taylor Swift song, you are a disciple (follower) of Taylor Swift. If you watch every play and know every player of the Clemson football team, you are a disciple (follower) of Clemson football.

Why do people become followers of something?

How do you know if someone is a "follower" of something or not?

DISCIPLE — A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST IN LEARNING AND LIVING

What does it mean to be a "follower in learning?" What does it mean to be a "follower in living?"

What parts of your life does being a disciple of Christ affect?

THERE IS NOT A SQUARE INCH WITHIN THE DOMAIN OF OUR HUMAN LIFE OF WHICH CHRIST, WHO IS THE SOVEREIGN OVER ALL, DOES NOT SAY, 'MINE.' —ABRAHAM KUYPER

MAKING DISCIPLES

Part of being a follower of Christ is helping others be followers of Christ as well. The clearest statement of this in the entire Bible is what we call the "Great Commission."

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

Who was Jesus talking to in this situation? When did this happen?

The command in this verse is "make disciples." This is a very clear mission for the disciples. They weren't supposed to just BE disciples, they were supposed to MAKE disciples.

Does the command to "make disciples" apply to us today? Why or why not?

What three things does Jesus say are part of making disciples of all nations?

What does it mean for those first disciples to "Go"? How does it relate for us today? Should we all become missionaries somewhere in Africa?

Baptism is the second part of making disciples that we find in the Great Commission. Although we're not going to talk much about it today, if you are a follower of Christ and you haven't been baptized, you need to be! Baptism is a visible sign that a person is connected with Christ and the Bible commands it for all disciples.

Let's focus on the third part of making disciples that Jesus mentions in our passage is: "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Look carefully at verse 20. Re-write it in your own words.

What are some of the things that Jesus commanded us? Find the Scripture references and write them down as well.

If following Jesus' commands is part of being a disciple, what does this mean for making disciples?

Disciple making is not something that you do only on Sunday, or Wednesday, or during Bible Study. If being a disciple has to do with every part of life, then making disciples has to do with every part of life.

YOU ARE A DISCIPLE MAKER

Jesus didn't just command us to be a disciple; he commanded us to make disciples. This includes more than just sharing the good news of Jesus with non-Christians. It includes helping each other follow Christ in learning and living each and every day. This process of following Christ is called "discipleship." You already know this word because you're in "Discipleship Community" right now!

DISCIPLESHIP — THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TO FOLLOW CHRIST

What is the difference between friendship and discipleship?

How can you help your friends become better followers of Christ?

Think about someone who has helped you follow Christ better. How did they help you follow Christ better? Do you realize that this is discipleship?

Think about your friends. Do they follow Christ better because they are friends with you? Do you encourage them in their walk with Christ? If not, why not?

Disciple Making does not happen by accident. What steps can you take right now to actively seek to make disciples of your friends, relatives, neighbors, and anyone else you know?

NOW WHAT?

Everyone needs someone to help them become a better disciple. Who is helping you? If you don't have someone, consider asking someone older than you to meet with you regularly for the purpose of growing in discipleship.

Have you been baptized? If not, why not? Talk to your parents or an adult leader to find out why baptism is so important.

Identify one person in your life that you can be intentional with to help them grow in their relationship with Christ.

Write down two practical steps you can take to disciple the person you identified above.

GOING DEEPER

Write a list of all the things that you are a "follower" of. Think about why you follow each of those things, people, teams, etc.

Making disciples is more than "telling people about Jesus." Write down some creative ways that you can help people grow to be better disciples. (Hint: think about Essentials 1-4)

What heart attitudes are stopping you from being a disciple maker?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." — Matthew 28:19-20

WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — PROVERBS 18:1 & 19:20

Name some people you would consider "wise"?

Where do you think true wisdom comes from?

DAY 2 — 1 TIMOTHY 6:20

From this verse, who do you think Paul is to Timothy?

How do Paul's words to Timothy speak to you today?

DAY 3 — COLOSSIANS 2:8 & 1 PETER 3:15

What is the number one most important thing we have to remember as Christians?

How do these two verses work together and how do they speak to you today?

DAY 4 — EXODUS 18:13-20

What is Moses' Father-in-law going to be for Moses?

Why do you think it is important for Moses to have his Father-in-law teach him?

DAY 5 — MATTHEW 10:33

When you read this, what is your immediate reaction?

Why would Jesus choose to disown us? Does this change your salvation?

DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 4:8

How is this verse important when it comes to being a witness to our friends?

In what ways are you not living out this verse?

DAY 7 — GENESIS 12:1 & HEBREWS 11:8

What other scripture does this sound like?

What made it possible for Abram/Abraham to obey God?

WEEK

7

Essential #6

Generous Living

MATTHEW

25:31-46

THE MACEDONIAN GIFT

Last week we talked about being a Disciple Maker. Making Disciples is a part of what it means to follow Christ. As we grow in Prayer, Scripture, Faith, and Obedience (Essentials 1-4), we seek to help others walk that path with us. Today we're going to study Essential #6: Generous Living.

What do you think of when you hear the word "generous"?

Maybe you think of rich people who give lots of money to charity, or eating a "generous" portion of food at Thanksgiving dinner. Today's study will help us see that Generosity has to do with more than money; it's not just something rich people do.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. Before you read, it will be helpful to know some background to this passage. Paul tells the story of the church in Macedonia. They had sent a gift of money to the poor in another city. Paul tells about their example (verses 1-5), and then asks the Corinthians to be generous as well (verses 6-15).

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

List at least 5 different ways that Paul describes the Macedonian church.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Look carefully at verse 2. What contradictions do you see in this verse? Why might Paul have put these words together?

What could it mean in verse 3 when it says that they "gave beyond their means"?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:4 again.

This is a strange verse. Here's another way to say it: The Macedonians begged Paul for the chance to help the other Christians.

What is strange about this? Why were they so eager to give?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:6-15.

What is Paul asking the Corinthians to do?

Compare verse 9 to verse 2. What words are repeated?

Read verses 13-14. What reason does Paul give for them to be generous? What does "fairness" have to do with it?

Paul gives another reason in verse 8. What is it?

Verse 15 is a quote from Exodus 16:18. Read Exodus 16:13-21.

What happens in this story? What is manna?

Why might Paul have quoted this story? What does it have in common with our passage in 2 Corinthians 8?

ABUNDANCE AND NEED

What does it mean to have "abundance?" Does it have to do only with money? Give some examples.

What does it mean to have "need?" Give some examples of different needs people have.

What do "abundance" and "need" have to do with generosity?

According to this passage, why should we be generous to others? How might generosity and love be connected?

Why is Generous Living an Essential of Life in Christ?

A generous person is someone who uses their portion God has given them to meet the needs of others. Paul urges the Corinthians to use what God has given them to supply for the needs of others.

LIVING GENEROUSLY

Now that we've explored the generous living of the Macedonians and Paul's desire for the Corinthians Christians to be generous as well, let's talk about how we can learn to be generous.

Do you have abundance in your life? Talk about different ways that God has blessed you.

How could you use these areas of abundance to meet the needs of others?

Is it hard for you to be generous? Why or why not?

What are some attitudes or beliefs that prevent us from giving ourselves and our resources to others?

How does selfishness kill generosity?

Think back to the Macedonians who were eager to give. Why were they eager to give? Are you eager to help others? Why or why not?

Identify one person in your life who has a need you can meet. What is their need? How can you meet it?

God is a giver. Remember, you were made in the image of God. God wants you to be like him. Each day you have a choice to live generously. Choose to live with open hands.

NOW WHAT?

Generosity is essential for Christians. Why?

In what ways was Christ generous to us? What does this have to do with Generous Living?

Selfishness is the opposite of generosity, and we are all selfish at times. Describe the areas of your life that you are selfish on the left. Describe one action you can take to change each area on the right.

GOING DEEPER

How might Prayer and Scripture affect our Generosity?

Think about Christ “becoming poor” for you. What does this say about the importance of Generosity?

Write a prayer below asking God to do whatever it takes to help you to live generously.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” —2 Corinthians 8:9

WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — ACTS 20:35

How did Paul describe his work of helping the weak?

Write out the phrase quoted from Jesus:

DAY 2 — 1 JOHN 1:5-7 & MATTHEW 5:16

Who is light? How can we be in the light? What is the result of being a light?

What are we to do with our light? Why?

DAY 3 — 1 JOHN 3:16-18

What does it require for us to love someone the Christ loved us?

What does it look like in today's culture to have closed hearts towards those in needs?

DAY 4 — PROVERBS 11:24-25

In this passage, compare the one who blesses and the other who withholds.

What will the man who blesses others gain? What will the man who withholds suffer? Will he ever be satisfied?

DAY 5 — 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-9

Whose decision is it as to how one should give?

What will happen to a person if they choose to give reluctantly? How will God bless one who decided to give generously?

DAY 6 — MATTHEW 6:1-4

What must we be cautious of when helping the needy?

What is the outcome of those who boast about helping the needy?

DAY 7 — MATTHEW 25:31-46

What is the difference between the sheep and the goats?

When we love the least of these, whom else are we serving (see verse 40)?

WEEK

8

Essential #7
Transformational
Community

1 CORINTHIANS

12:12-31

TRANSFORMATIONAL COMMUNITY

The final Essential of Life in Christ is Transformational Community. We started off Week 1 by learning about being connected to Christ, as a branch is connected to a vine (John 15). As we've learned about each Essential, we've talked mostly about how each one works in a person's individual life with Christ. Even our discussion of Disciple Maker and Generous Living were focused on your individual disciple making and generosity.

This week, we shift our focus to how our Life in Christ requires relationships with other Christians. The Bible has a great deal to say about community, because God himself is a community (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Our goal today is to discover how God has designed us to live in community, and to see that being connected to Christ also means being connected to others. When we pursue Prayer, Scripture, Faith, Obedience, Disciple Making, and Generosity in the context of Christian community, we experience the transformation of becoming more like Christ.

Read Romans 12:3-8.

Who is Paul referring to when he says "we" in verse 5?

What metaphor does Paul use to describe what the church is like (verse 4)? In what ways is the church like that?

What does Paul command us to do in verse 6? What does this have to do with the "body?" (Hint: think about how a human body works)

Each of us is just one part of the body. We are like an ear, or a foot, or a hand. Each part needs all the others parts, and the body needs each individual part! Each part needs each other. This is the way God has designed the church to work. Each person plays a critical role.

Can you think of any other analogies that describe the way the church should work together? (Hint: think about sports, or buildings, or families)

There are many ways for people to find community. You might be part of a band, sports team, scout troop, or other small group of people where you build relationships with other people. However, the church is different from all of these kinds of community. The reason it's unique is that in the church we are actually connected to one another through Christ. We are as connected to each other as we are connected to Christ. When we have faith in Christ for salvation, we become connected to other people in the Church.

Since Christ is the reason we are connected, then our community should have all the elements of Life in Christ. In other words, the Life in Christ Essentials should define our life together. As we saw in Week 5, the goal of the Christian life is sanctification—becoming more like Christ in every way. Another word we might use instead of sanctification is “transformation.” That’s why this Essential is called “Transformational Community.” When we practice the first six Life in Christ Essentials together, we are transformed into the image of Christ.

PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE

How often to do you pray with other Christians outside of your family?

If you started praying with your friends, would your relationship with them change? Why?

Do you ever study the Bible with friends outside of Sunday morning? Do you think that Bible study with Christian friends is important? Why or why not?

Do you have a consistent Bible study time of your own? Share about it.

Prayer and Scripture are two sides of one conversation: between us and God. If you try to have this conversation all on your own, you will fail! One of the primary purposes of coming to church is to pray and read the Bible together, and encourage one another to do this each day.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25.

How might your small group “stir one another up” in consistent prayer and Bible study, both alone and together.

AUTHENTIC FAITH AND OBEDIENT FOLLOWER

Authentic Faith is faith that is seen. For it to be seen, we need to be around other people who are looking for it! This is true both for yourself and for others. We need to see each other’s faith!

Think of someone outside of your family who you know is a Christian. How do you know they a Christian? How can you see their faith?

What does it mean to be “transparent” with others? Is this a good quality? Why or why not?

The people who you are most “transparent” with have the most influence on your life. Who are you “transparent” with? Do those people help or hurt your faith?

Describe some roadblocks to being transparent with other people in your small group.

God designed us to live our lives as a body. That means we can’t be Obedient Followers on our own! We really do need each other in order to have an abundant Life in Christ.

Do you have other Christians in your life (outside of your family) who challenge and encourage you to be obedient to God? Who are they?

Brainstorm some ways your small group can help each other be Obedient Followers this week. How can you hold each other accountable for what you learn on Sundays?

DISCIPLE MAKER AND GENEROUS LIVING

What intentional steps can you take to “disciple” your Christian friends?

Talk about some needs that your small group could work together to meet.

Being part of a Transformational Community means pursuing the Life in Christ Essentials together. As we pray and study God’s Word, are transparent and hold each other accountable, and make disciples generously together, we are slowly transformed into the image of Christ. God’s design is not just for community, but specifically for the community that transforms us to be holy as He is holy.

NOW WHAT?

Think about each Essential. (Prayer, Scripture, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple Maker, Generous Living). How does being in community help us pursue each one?

Which Essential are you already doing well?

Which Essential is your weakest? How can you be transformed by working on this weakness with those in your small group?

After going through this lesson, what are some ways you can pursue deeper community at church right now? How will you do that?

GOING DEEPER

Read Acts 2:42.

What four things did the first Christian devote themselves to?

Do you see any similarities with the Essentials?

Spend some time praying that you will be changed by your interaction with the church community.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one of another.”
—Romans 12:5

WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — ACTS 2:42-47

How does this passage describe the early church? What did they do together?

Which of the Life in Christ Essentials can you find in this passage?

DAY 2 — EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Write down the things that this passage says there is "one" of. Why might Paul emphasize "oneness"?

Summarize what this passage says about the goal of community. (Hint: Look at verses 13 and 15). How does being connected to Christ change the way we interact with other Christians?

DAY 3 — 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-20

What point is Paul making by talking about "the foot"?

Read verse 18 again. What point is Paul making about every Christian?

DAY 4 — 1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26

What parts of the body have the greatest honor, according to this passage?

How does Paul describe the effect each member of the body has on the other members?

DAY 5 — GENESIS 2:15-23

What did God put Adam in the garden to do?

What was the "problem" that God wanted to solve? How did he solve it?

DAY 6 — GALATIANS 6:1-5

What is Paul telling Christians to do? Why?

Compare and contrast verses 2 and 5. What can you learn from these two verses?

DAY 7 — 1 PETER 2:1-5

How does Paul describe the Christians in this passage?

What does it mean to be a "living stone?" What does this passage teach us about the purpose of gathering together as the church?

LOOKING BACK

You have done a great job this semester as you have learned more about your identity in Christ. It is such a privilege and joy to study Scripture. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

How do you feel now that you have completed this study?

Describe how your future will be impacted because of this study.

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalm 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and can live out.

- A Christian is an individual that abides in Christ by faith and produces fruit.
- Apart from Christ we can do nothing.
- God wants us to pray because he wants us to have a relationship with him.
- Scripture is essential to our growth in Christ.
- Scripture is a lamp at my feet and a light for my path.
- God alone determines authentic faith.
- An individual with Authentic Faith will display the fruit of the Spirit.
- The Result of obedience to God's commands is personal holiness/sanctification.
- Our motivation to obey and follow Christ comes from our response to his love for us.
- The goal of discipleship is helping people grow in following Jesus' commands. This is a lifelong process.
- We are all called to make disciples.
- A transformed life in Christ will cause the believer to live in such a way that generosity overflows no matter the circumstances.
- Learned how to live with open hands.
- Contributing to the needs of others is only made possible by God's underserved gifts in our lives.
- All of the Life in Christ Essentials happen within the context of Transformation Community.
- Being a part of a Transformational Community means pursuing the Life in Christ Essentials together.
- We are the body of Christ. We need each other.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.

PSALMS

SONGS OF PRAISE

Is it true that Christianity is unique in the fact that it is a singing and rejoicing faith?

John Piper responded to that question by saying, "Absolutely. I don't think there are any other religions that sing like Christians sing. Christians really make music over their faith."

This study will help students to understand the different styles of Psalms and how they can reflect on them to worship and pray.

Psalms Forward

WHO WROTE PSALMS & WHY IS IT BROKEN UP INTO FIVE BOOKS?

It is uncertain why Psalms is divided into five books. Some sources, including Jewish Midrash traditions, suggest the five-fold division is based on the five books of the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy). The division of the Psalms is not based on authorship or chronology, as several authors composed Psalms, and their individual songs are mixed throughout the various collections.

David is listed as the author of 73 psalms, Asaph of 12, and the sons of Korah of 11. Other psalms were written by Solomon, Heman the Ezrahite, Ethan the Ezrahite, and Moses. The earliest extant copy of Psalms is from the Dead Sea Scrolls from about the first century AD. That copy shows that the division into five books extends to at least that time and certainly earlier.

Each of the five books of Psalms ends with a doxology or a song of praise. The final verse of each concluding psalm includes either “Praise the Lord!” or “Amen.” Psalm 150, serves as the fitting final doxology, concluding with the words, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.”

HOW TO READ THE BOOK OF THE PSALMS

The Psalms are prayers, but they also happen to be prayers written to God as poems and songs. That means they are not quick, easy reading. Think about reading poetry in your English class at school—you may take a whole class period just to analyze just a few lines of one poem because poems have a lot of meaning packed into just a few words. Keep this in mind as you’re reading through the book of Psalms. Other books of the Bible are stories or letters, but the book of Psalms is a book of poetry.

In English, different types of poems have different forms. When you think of an English poem, you probably think of rhyming—this is one of the most common forms. Hebrew poetry has form, too. Instead of being about rhyming, however, it’s all about the pairing of ideas and concept—putting two thoughts next to each other in the text.

- A) Sometimes the second thought repeats or restates the first thought.
 - a. Example: Think of an apple and another apple.
- B) Sometimes the second thought is the exact opposite of the first thought.
 - a. Example: Think of an apple and an orange.
- C) Sometimes the second thought restates the first thought, but carries it a little further.
 - a. Example: Think of an apple and a bigger apple.

Remember, these are just the basics, but most of the meaning in the Psalms can be found by building off of these “forms.” For example, sometimes these three forms are all used together, or two of them are used in combination, etc. **WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER** is that when you find yourself getting frustrated and thinking, “Wait, this is saying the same thing over and over again,” you’re probably right! That’s OK. Realize and recognize that the author intends to do that—that’s the way Hebrew poetry works. Try to appreciate it and enter into another time and culture instead of saying, “I don’t like that—it’s different than what I’m used to.” Take time. If you try to figure out why the author wrote it this way, you will be rewarded.

PSALM EXPLANATIONS

Scholars have broken the Psalms up into a few different “groupings” that can be helpful in understanding each psalm’s purpose and form. There are eight different types explained below. It should be noted that some people split the Psalms up into more groups than this, and some others use less. The criteria for what makes a psalm one type as opposed to another are neither perfect nor universally agreed upon, so these are just some general guidelines.

In parenthesis after each Psalm category a color is listed. It may help you to color code the Psalm number as you go through this study so you can remember what type of Psalm you are reading.

Torah Psalms (light blue)

“Torah” literally means instruction (and also refers to the five books of Moses, which are the first five books of the Bible—Genesis through Deuteronomy). Torah Psalms focus on the importance of God’s instruction and the role it should play in the life of a believer. Only three out of the 150 Psalms are considered “Torah” Psalms. However, the longest psalm in the Bible (119) is a Torah Psalm. The other two Torah Psalms are Psalm 1 and Psalm 19.

Wisdom Psalms (brown)

Reading a Wisdom Psalm is like reading the book of Proverbs. There’s lots of “practical” advice, contrasting the righteous with the wicked, and the rich and the poor. The emphasis is on trust in the Lord, the gaining of understanding, and the foolishness of solely seeking possessions. Psalms 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133 are Wisdom Psalms.

Praise Psalms (yellow)

Praise Psalms aren’t really “studied” so much as they are absorbed. Reading a Praise Psalm is like being in the ocean when a huge wave washes over you. Overwhelmed in the midst of the experience, you’re almost forced to contemplate it. Praise Psalms seem to be relatively easy to understand, but one shouldn’t discard the profound in the simple. Structurally, these psalms present a call to the reader (or the pray-er) to praise God. The psalmist often offers several reasons why God deserves our praise: His absolute power and might, His work as Creator, His control over human history, His mercy, ect. It’s a crime to allow the simplicity of “praise God” to wash over our lives without purifying our hearts. Psalms 8, 29, 33, 47, 65, 78, 93, 95–100, 103–6, 111, 113, 114, 117, 134, 135, 136, 145–50 are Praise Psalms.

Lament Psalms (dark blue)

Lament Psalms were composed from the depths of human despair. These psalms express darker sides of human experience. Worshiping God is stretched to the limit as the psalmist deals with confusion, doubt, disappointment and even anger. These feelings exist for mature Christians. In fact, it seems impossible to be spiritually mature without walking through these dark valleys. Many people enter God’s family during difficult times. The Lament Psalms describe what happens when the spiritual person struggles through crises. Though stretched and strained, the psalmist still hopes in the Lord. Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 137 are Lament Psalms.

Zion Psalms (green)

Zion is “an ancient name for various parts of Jerusalem, of Judah and all the land, and also a metaphor for the people of God.” Zion Psalms focus on God’s presence among the Israelites—specifically in Jerusalem, although Zion can also be metaphorical. Since God can be found and known, these psalms “express an intense longing to make a pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem.” Psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122 are Zion Psalms.

Thanksgiving Psalms (orange)

While Praise Psalms focus on the glory of who God is, Thanksgiving Psalms tend to be an expression of gratitude for what God has done. Often times these psalms will follow a common form: the author is distressed, then he calls to God for help, then God comes to his rescue. Thanksgiving Psalms are in this way similar to a testimony . . . telling a story about God’s help and thanking Him for what He has done. “These psalms originated as a grateful response to God for a specific act of deliverance, such as healing from illness, which may be a physical manifestation of unforgiven sin (32), deliverance from enemies (18; 92; 118; 138), or simply rescue from trouble (66:14). These psalms assume the presence of the congregation, which is gathered either for worship or for instruction (32:8–11; 34:11–14) and who hear the story of the deliverance. There are hints indicating how these psalms were used in worship: 118:19–29 assumes a procession, while 66:13–15 and 116:12–19 point to a thank offering accompanying the psalm. In Psalm 138 the worshipper is in the outer court of the temple (v 2). At the heart of these psalms is the story of the deliverance, summarized briefly, ‘O Lord my God, I cried to thee for help, and thou hast healed me’ and often expanded.” Psalms 18, 30, 32, 92, 116, 118, 138 are Thanksgiving Psalms.

Royal Psalms (purple)

Rather than having a common form, Royal Psalms have a common theme: the king. It’s important to remember that the psalms were actually songs that were sung and played in a corporate (group) setting. Today in the church we have certain songs for certain types of events—one song might be appropriate to sing on a national holiday, while another might be better used for a wedding. It was the same way in Ancient Israel, and these Royal Psalms were all used at events where the king was involved (his coronation, his victory in battle, the establishment of his kingdom). While these psalms were first used in association with the earthly kings of Israel, many Christians believe them also to be prophetic about the coming Messiah—the King of Kings. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132 are Royal Psalms.

Liturgical Psalms (red)

Just like Royal Psalms, the Liturgical Psalms were reserved for a certain purpose. These psalms were each used during the order of worship (or liturgy) in the temple—they were for public worship. Just like we have certain songs to accompany different “sacraments” that we take part in (communion, baptism, etc.), these psalms may have been for certain “rites” as well. Psalms 15, 24, 50, 81, 95, 115, 132 are Liturgical Psalms.

WEEK

1

Torah

Psalms

PSALM

1



PSALM 1:1-6

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

¹ Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

² but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree
 planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

⁴ The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

⁶ for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

What doesn’t make sense in the psalm?

What’s confusing?

Underline the nine key words in verse 1 (walk, counsel, wicked; and stand, way, sinners; and sit, seat, mockers). What do you think the psalmist is communicating through this list of three actions?

What are the attributes (v.3) of the “blessed man”?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

What are the attributes (v. 4-5) of the “wicked”?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What is the “law” of the Lord? Why is it called “law”?

What does it mean to “delight” in the law of the Lord?

Do we have a choice over what we delight in? In other words, can we decide what we like and what we don’t like about the “law”? Explain.

Circle the word “delight” in v. 2 representing all of the law of the Lord.

This psalm says of the blessed man, “whatever he does prospers.” What does “prosper” really mean? Look to the text to support your answers.

Reread verses 1-3.

Double underline the word “planted”.

Why is the picture of the tree used?

Put a square around the words “fruit” and “prosper”.

Does the tree always yield fruit? Does the leaf ever wither? What clues from the text support your answer?

CHAFF—THE SEED COVERINGS AND OTHER DEBRIS SEPARATED FROM THE SEED IN THRESHING GRAIN; THE WORTHLESS PART OF GRAIN THAT IS STRIPPED AWAY FROM THE WHEAT AND THROWN AWAY

Why is the tree different from the chaff?

Draw marks around the word “wind” as if to illustrate the force of the wind.

What does this psalm teach about the future and eternity? Read verse 5 carefully, what ideas are paralleled together?

God has an intimate knowledge about each of us. The word “knows” carries a meaning of more than information about a person, rather a knowledge that has a focus on the relationship with that person. It should encourage us that God knows us that well and approves of us in Christ.

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

NOW WHAT?

Using the teachings from the psalm, would you be considered blessed or wicked? Take an honest inventory of your heart and the way you live your life . . . where do you feel you stand?

What is the major difference between the righteous versus the wicked described in verse 1 and verse 3 because both end up stationary (Hint: look at verse 2)?

What do you need to change in order to remove yourself from the wicked messages you hear each day to be able to focus and meditate on the “law of the Lord”?

PRAYER: Pray this text over your small group, family, and friends this next week.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Torah Psalms. “Torah” literally means instruction (and also refers to the five books of Moses, which are the first five books of the Bible—Genesis through Deuteronomy). Torah Psalms focus on the importance of God’s instruction and the role it should play in the life of a believer. Only three out of the 150 Psalms are considered “Torah” Psalms. However, the longest psalm in the Bible (119) is a Torah Psalm. The other two Torah Psalms are Psalm 1 and Psalm 19.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you. Don’t forget to color code the Psalm number as described in the Forward on page 5.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

—Psalm 1:1-6

WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 19:1-6

DAY 2 — PSALM 19:7-11

DAY 3 — PSALM 19:12-14

DAY 4 — PSALM 119:1-16

DAY 5 — PSALM 119:17-32

DAY 6 — PSALM 119:33-48

DAY 7 — PSALM 119:49-64

WEEK

2

Torah

Psalms

PSALM

119

PSALM 119:1-16

Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet

Aleph

- ¹ Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the Lord!
- ² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
- ³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways!
- ⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.
- ⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
- ⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.
- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous rules.
- ⁸ I will keep your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me!

Beth

- ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
- ¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
- ¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
- ¹² Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes!
- ¹³ With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.

¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.

¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

PSALM 119:81-88

Kaph

⁸¹ My soul longs for your salvation;
I hope in your word.

⁸² My eyes long for your promise;
I ask, "When will you comfort me?"

⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

⁸⁴ How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?

⁸⁵ The insolent have dug pitfalls for me;
they do not live according to your law.

⁸⁶ All your commandments are sure;
they persecute me with falsehood; help me!

⁸⁷ They have almost made an end of me on earth,
but I have not forsaken your precepts.

⁸⁸ In your steadfast love give me life,
that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

Use the following chart to work through the three sections.

- A) Make a list of the actions/verbs that a blessed person ought to do
- B) Make a list of the actions or promises of God and His Word
- C) Find at least two parallels in each section and explain their meaning
- D) Compare and contrast the overall tone in each section

<u>Verses 1-8</u>	<u>Verses 9-16</u>	<u>Verses 81-88</u>
Actions of a blessed person	Actions of a blessed person	Actions of a blessed person
Actions/Promises of God	Actions/Promises of God	Actions/Promises of God
Parallels/Meanings	Parallels/Meanings	Parallels/Meanings
Overall Tone	Overall Tone	Overall Tone

VERSES 1-8

Reread verse 6. Do you feel “shame” when you read the Bible? Should people always feel shame when they consider God’s commands?

Is it possible for people to read the Bible and feel good about the way they are living?

Reread verse 8. What’s the connection between obeying God’s ways and being forsaken by Him?

Why do you think the writer makes this request?

Be honest: Why do you do the good that you do? What truly motivates you to live God’s way?

VERSES 9-16

Based on this passage, what are some specific markers of spiritual maturity?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 2) |
| 3) | 4) |
| 5) | 6) |

How would you rate yourself on Scripture memory?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reread verse 15. What does it mean to meditate, to consider God’s Word?

Go through all three sections and underline each time you see a reference for the Word, law of the Lord, ways, statutes, precepts, commands, etc.

VERSES 81-88

Reread this section. In your own words, describe the emotion portrayed here.

Circle each time the passage speaks about longing for God, salvation, or the Word.

Describe the person's dependency on God's Word. Write some key phrases from the text to support your answer.

Is it OK to be sad as a Christian? Is it OK for things not to be going so well? Explain.

Why are Christians so good at being fake and so bad at showing what's real?

Explain verse 88. Is the writer making a "deal" with God? Explain your answer—be sure that the text supports your response.

Use the following chart to work through the three sections:

- A) Identify the overall theme for each section. Start by pulling out some key words from each paragraph. Remember, Psalm 119 is a Torah Psalm. It takes the reality of God's word and explores what God's revelation means for our lives.
- B) Each section takes a slice of human experience as it stands in relation to God's Word. What's the specific human experience described in each section?
- C) Write a single sentence summary for each section; write the best sentence you can. Use a pencil so you can work to perfect it.

<u>Verses 1-8</u>	<u>Verses 9-16</u>	<u>Verses 81-88</u>
Theme/Key Words	Theme/Key Words	Theme/Key Words
Human Experience	Human Experience	Human Experience
Sentence Summary	Sentence Summary	Sentence Summary

NOW WHAT?

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

PRAYER: Pick one phrase from Psalm 119 that is important to you and meditate on it.

What will it require of you to treasure God’s Word the way the psalmist describes in Psalm 119?

PRAYER: Pick one phrase from Psalm 119 and pray that Scripture over your best friend.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Torah Psalms. “Torah” literally means instruction (and also refers to the five books of Moses, which are the first five books of the Bible—Genesis through Deuteronomy). Torah Psalms focus on the importance of God’s instruction and the role it should play in the life of a believer. Only three out of the 150 Psalms are considered “Torah” Psalms. However, the longest psalm in the Bible (119) is a Torah Psalm. The other two Torah Psalms are Psalm 1 and Psalm 19.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. ” —Psalm 119:18

WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 119:65-80

DAY 2 — PSALM 119:81-96

DAY 3 — PSALM 119:97-112

DAY 4 — PSALM 119:113-128

DAY 5 — PSALM 119:129-144

DAY 6 — PSALM 119:145-160

DAY 7 — PSALM 119:161-176

WEEK

3

Wisdom Psalms

PSALM

73

PSALM 73:1-28

God Is My Strength and Portion Forever

A Psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ Truly God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
- ² But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,
my steps had nearly slipped.
- ³ For I was envious of the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- ⁴ For they have no pangs until death;
their bodies are fat and sleek.
- ⁵ They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them as a garment.
- ⁷ Their eyes swell out through fatness;
their hearts overflow with follies.
- ⁸ They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
- ⁹ They set their mouths against the heavens,
and their tongue struts through the earth.
- ¹⁰ Therefore his people turn back to them,
and find no fault in them.
- ¹¹ And they say, "How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"
- ¹² Behold, these are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
- ¹³ All in vain have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
- ¹⁴ For all the day long I have been stricken
and rebuked every morning.

¹⁵ If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

¹⁶ But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,

¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I discerned their end.

¹⁸ Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.

¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!

²⁰ Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

²¹ When my soul was embittered,
when I was pricked in heart,

²² I was brutish and ignorant;
I was like a beast toward you.

²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

²⁷ For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

²⁸ But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord God my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

What’s the relationship between “Israel” and “those who are pure in heart” in verse 1?

Are they the same thing (that is, all of “Israel” is also “pure”)? Are they different? (Are the “pure” a sub-group of Israel, or is it possible to be “pure” without being of Israel?)

Put a set of large brackets around the section that describes the wicked in verses 4-12.

Reread verses 4-12 and write as many descriptions of the “arrogant” that you can find.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1) | 2) |
| 3) | 4) |
| 5) | 6) |
| 7) | 8) |
| 9) | 10) |

Do these descriptions ever feel true in our world today? Explain.

Do you think that people who live this way realize what they are doing? Explain.

In your opinion, what is the spiritual condition of the writer according to verses 13-14?

Verse 13 represents a mindset that isn’t true. In reality, it’s never a waste of time to live a pure life.

Why is this verse included in the Bible if it’s not a “right” way to feel?

What's the best thing to do when we find ourselves in this condition?

Look at verses 16-28 and underline the statements that helped the psalmist get out of the "verse 13" mindset.

According to the text, did the psalmist's confusion, frustration, or doubts aggravate God?

What did he discern in verses 18-20?

The solution to the problem is found when the singer goes into the sanctuary of God, the holy place where God's people gather for worship, the light is finally allowed to break through. The key is to contemplate the outcome of the lives of the arrogant and the faithful.

How can God use confusion and doubt to change your life?

In a sense, the writer gives us a warning in verses 1-3. What is it?

Take a look at verse 15. How does our response to the prosperous wicked sway the generation that follows us?

Describe the psalmist's attitude in verses 21-22. What did God teach him in verse 23-28?

What does it require of us if we are to not fall into the same mentality or lifestyle?

How does being near to God and seeing him as a refuge influence your conversations each day?

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: "meditate" = "think deeply"). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

NOW WHAT?

Is there anything in this psalm that you identify with right now in your life? What is it, and why?

What doubts do you have about God? Ask your parents or leader to help you answer your questions.

Who do you know that needs to hear the wisdom you have gained from this lesson? What is your plan to share it with them?

Pick a verse or phrase and meditate on it. (Put the pen and paper down.) What verse did you choose? Why? What did you learn? How were you encouraged?

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Wisdom Psalms. Reading a Wisdom Psalm is like reading the book of Proverbs. There's lots of "practical" advice, contrasting the righteous with the wicked, and the rich and the poor. The emphasis is on trust in the Lord, the gaining of understanding, and the foolishness of solely seeking possessions. Psalms 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133 are Wisdom Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works" —Psalm 73:28

WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 37

DAY 2 — PSALM 49

DAY 3 — PSALM 73

DAY 4 — PSALM 112

DAY 5 — PSALM 127

DAY 6 — PSALM 128

DAY 7 — PSALM 133

WEEK

4

Praise Psalms

PSALM

95

PSALM 95:1-11

Let Us Sing Songs of Praise

¹ Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

³ For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.

⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

⁶ Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

⁷ For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸ do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,

⁹ when your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

¹⁰ For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways."

¹¹ Therefore I swore in my wrath,
"They shall not enter my rest."

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

Describe what you believe it means to praise God?

Circle the specific ways the psalmist suggests to praise God.

Write the actions below.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 2) |
| 3) | 4) |
| 5) | 6) |

Are these actions to be done in public or private? If both, why?

Underline the reasons a person should praise God as described in verses 3-7.

Close your eyes for a moment and try to picture the descriptions. Explain the impact these truths have on your faith.

What are some things people commonly praise in place of God?

What are some things about God that cause you to praise Him?

What would it require for you to consistently have a mindset of praise?

Is it something that God must do or you? Explain.

Describe some practical steps you could take to cultivate gratitude for God in your heart?

Verses 7 and 8 give a strong warning against hardening one's heart toward God. What are some practical clues from this psalm that can help us not to have a hard heart?

Reread verse 1.

How could your consistent reflection on your need for a savior and salvation that is in Christ alone impact your praise to God Almighty?

Read Exodus 17:1-7.

What was the complaint and testing of the Lord?

Read Psalm 95:9.

What had the Israelites experienced leading up to that moment in Exodus 17?

How could reflection on their redemption from Egypt have influenced their attitude and ultimately their worship?

At all times it is critical that we remember our salvation story and praise God for it. It helps us have the proper perspective. It also allows us despite all circumstances follow through with specific actions of praise in described in Psalm 95.

Describe the connection between disobedience and unbelief.

What about obedience and belief?

It should be remembered, that salvation is based not on good works but on Jesus' high priestly sacrifice, and anything believers can do to please God comes from his working in them. The opposite of perseverance is disobedience, which was the sin of the faithless exodus generation.

NOW WHAT?

Consider the last two weeks—was your life a life of praise. Why or why not?

Consider the condition of your heart today. Would you describe it as “hard” or “soft” toward spiritual things?

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Praise Psalms. Praise Psalms aren't really “studied” so much as they are absorbed. Reading a Praise Psalm is like being in the ocean when a huge wave washes over you. Overwhelmed in the midst of the experience, you're almost forced to contemplate it. Praise Psalms seem to be relatively easy to understand, but one shouldn't discard the profound in the simple. Structurally, these psalms present a call to the reader (or the pray-er) to praise God. The psalmist often offers several reasons why God deserves our praise: His absolute power and might, His work as Creator, His control over human history, His mercy, ect. It's a crime to allow the simplicity of “praise God” to wash over our lives without purifying our hearts. Psalms 8, 29, 33, 47, 65, 78, 93, 95–100, 103–6, 111, 113, 114, 117, 134, 135, 136, 145–50 are Praise Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” —Psalms 95:6-7

WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

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EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

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DAY 1 — PSALM 8, 29, 33, & 47

DAY 2 — PSALM 65, 78, & 93

DAY 3 — PSALM 95-100

DAY 4 — PSALM 103-106

DAY 5 — PSALM 111, 113-114, & 117

DAY 6 — PSALM 134-136

DAY 7 — PSALM 145-150

WEEK

5

Lament Psalms

PSALM

74

PSALM 74:1-23

Arise, O God, Defend Your Cause

A Maskil of Asaph.

- ¹ O God, why do you cast us off forever?
Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?
- ² Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old,
which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!
Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt.
- ³ Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins;
the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary!
- ⁴ Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place;
they set up their own signs for signs.
- ⁵ They were like those who swing axes
in a forest of trees.
- ⁶ And all its carved wood
they broke down with hatchets and hammers.
- ⁷ They set your sanctuary on fire;
they profaned the dwelling place of your name,
bringing it down to the ground.
- ⁸ They said to themselves, "We will utterly subdue them";
they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.
- ⁹ We do not see our signs;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is none among us who knows how long.
- ¹⁰ How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?
- ¹¹ Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!

- ¹² Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth.
- ¹³ You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.
- ¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
- ¹⁵ You split open springs and brooks;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.
- ¹⁶ Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.
- ¹⁷ You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth;
you have made summer and winter.
- ¹⁸ Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs,
and a foolish people reviles your name.
- ¹⁹ Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts;
do not forget the life of your poor forever.
- ²⁰ Have regard for the covenant,
for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.
- ²¹ Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame;
let the poor and needy praise your name.
- ²² Arise, O God, defend your cause;
remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!
- ²³ Do not forget the clamor of your foes,
the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually!

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

Take just a few moments to mark what seems confusing or difficult to understand?

Take a look at the first question in the psalm: “Why have you rejected us forever, O God?” Who is “us” and “the people” in this verse?

So did God really reject them forever?

In verse 2, the writer mentions God purchasing his people. In what way did God “purchase” his people?

Also, notice the author’s tone is angry, even grieving. Something bad has obviously happened. What is it? (Look at verses 3-8.)

Circle the word “signs” in verse 4 and 9.

Based on the context surrounding each word, how are they used differently? How do these differences better help you understand what is occurring in these verses?

Verses 4-9 are nothing more than the writer telling God what has happened. If God already knows everything, is this a waste of time? Why tell God what He already knows?

Read Psalm 139:4.

How does knowing this verse help you to be honest with God? Does God value honesty in prayer? Why?

“WOULDN'T HE KNOW WITHOUT BEING ASKED?” SAID POLLY.
‘I’VE NO DOUBT HE WOULD,’ SAID THE HORSE. ‘BUT I’VE A SORT IDEA HE LIKES TO BE ASKED.’”
—C.S. LEWIS FROM *THE MAGICIANS NEPHEW*

Read Psalm 74:10-11.

What is the psalmist asking God to do?

It seems as if the author is questioning God's way of doing things. It's almost like he is correcting God, commanding God, "Why are you doing it like this? Do this instead, God!"

Have you ever felt the same way as the psalmist? You know the promise of His covenant, but you feel as if He has rejected you and insisted He follow your commands instead. If so, when? How long did you feel this way?

If you have never felt like this, do you think it's because you have a close relationship with God, or because you have not always been aware/honest about your feelings toward God?

The psalmist asks for God to destroy someone else (verse 11). Who is he asking God to destroy? Why?

Is this a righteous or sinful prayer to pray? Is it ever right to pray for someone else's destruction?

In verses 12-17 the entire tone and focus of the psalm changes. What happens? How does this section change the overall tone of the psalm?

Read verses 18-23.

Verses 18-23 are a series of commands that the writer makes—all directed toward God! Go back through these verses and underline all of the commands: "remember," "do not hand over," "have regard," "do not let," "rise up," "do not ignore."

It seems like the psalmist believes that God will listen as he is telling Him to do these things, or asking these things of Him. Where does this confidence come from?

Why doesn't the psalmist feel the need to use polite phrases like, "please" and "if you would"?

In verse 19, who is the dove and who are the wild beasts? Why does the author choose to use imagery? What do these animals reflect?

We see in Psalm 74 that the author perseveres through his trial and the event of destruction by holding fast to God's promises. So even in our raw emotions, we must remember who He is and whose we are. When the times of affliction come, we must know and be able to remember His promises. So let's close by looking at a few of His promises for us.

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

What is the promise Jesus gives us?

Read John 14:15-31.

List at least 5 promises in this passage:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

How will you commit to remembering God's promises for you during despair and destruction?

NOW WHAT?

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (i.e. “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

What are some verses or phrases that stand out as particularly meaningful? Explain why.

PRAYER: It was already mentioned that verses 4-9 are the author telling God about what has gone on. Practice this kind of praying today. Talking to someone means telling them what’s going on in your life, what you’re feeling, thinking, and what’s happening. Often times we only talk to God when we have something to ask Him or something to thank Him for. If you only talked to a friend when you wanted to ask for something or say “thank you” for something, you wouldn’t talk to that friend very often! So practice this “normal” kind of communication with God. Start by telling Him about your day today. Write it out in a journal. He already knows, but He wants to hear it from you.

GOING DEEPER

Read John 15:18-16:4.

How is this passage similar to Psalm 74?

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Lament Psalms. Lament Psalms were composed from the depths of human despair. These psalms express darker sides of human experience. Worshipping God is stretched to the limit as the psalmist deals with confusion, doubt, disappointment and even anger. These feelings exist for mature Christians. In fact, it seems impossible to be spiritually mature without walking through these dark valleys. Many people enter God’s family during difficult times. The Lament Psalms describe what happens when the spiritual person struggles through crises. Though stretched and strained, the psalmist still hopes in the Lord. Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 137 are Lament Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” —Psalm 74:12

WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 44 & 60

DAY 2 — PSALM 74 & 79

DAY 3 — PSALM 80

DAY 4 — PSALM 83 & 85

DAY 5 — PSALM 90 & 94

DAY 6 — PSALM 123

DAY 7 — PSALM 137

WEEK

6

Zion Psalms

PSALM

84

PSALM 84:1-12

My Soul Longs for the Courts of the Lord

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith.

A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

² My soul longs, yes, faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

³ Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
ever singing your praise! *Selah*

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶ As they go through the Valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength;
each one appears before God in Zion.

⁸ O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*

⁹ Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed!

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

¹² O Lord of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

After your first read through, what part of Psalm 84 jumps out as particularly meaningful? Explain why.

What parts are confusing or difficult to understand?

Circle the adjective used in vs. 1 to describe God’s dwelling place. What are some synonyms of the adjective used that come to your mind?

In vs. 2, describe in your own words, the emotion the reader is feeling / expressing. To what or who is he feeling these emotions toward?

Underline and define the words “home” and “nest” in verse 3.

What do these words imply about the permanence of the sparrows place?

Why does the author bring up sparrows and nests? What does that have to do with God?

Draw a box around each time the word “blessed” is used.

What does “blessed” mean?

Underline these characteristics of those who are blessed in verses 4-5.

The phrase “highways to Zion” is used in vs. 5 in the ESV. The term “pilgrimage” is used in the NIV. Define “pilgrim.” What is a highway and to where is it leading? What do you think it means that this is in their hearts?

Do you view yourself as a pilgrim? Would it change the way you approached each day if you saw yourself as moving towards a heavenly destination? How?

THE VALLEY OF BACA—ALL ANCIENT VERSIONS HAVE “ VALLEY OF WEeping”
DESCRIBED AS STERILE, AND VOID OF WATER

Why is it significant that there would be “springs” and “pools” in the Valley of Baca?

What could the “Valley of Baca” be compared to in your own life?

What would it look like for your life to become a “place of springs”?

Valley of Baca would be suffering, difficulties, and discouragements in your own life. For their to be “springs” or “pools” through this difficult season would mean blessings in the middle of the hard season. We go through suffering, but there is life and joy admits this time because of the joy of God’s presence and his working through it.

What does the author request of God in verse 8-9?

Rewrite vs. 10 in your own words.

What is the sentiment being expressed?

Why does the author call God a "sun" and a "shield"? What characteristics go along with these metaphors? (vs. 11)

Define "favor" and "honor" in verse 11.

What does it mean "no good thing does he withhold"?

What is the overall theme of the psalm?

What could fuel your own personal desire to be in God's presence?

NOW WHAT?

How does your perspective about eternity change based on your study of Psalm 84?

What do you need to change in order to set your mind on your eternal home rather than the pleasures of this world?

PRAYER: Ask God to help you set your mind on your eternal home with Him. Ask him to help you have an eternal perspective about

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Zion Psalms. Zion is “an ancient name for various parts of Jerusalem, of Judah and all the land, and also a metaphor for the people of God.” Zion Psalms focus on God’s presence among the Israelites—specifically in Jerusalem, although Zion can also be metaphorical. Since God can be found and known, these psalms “express an intense longing to make a pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem.” Psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122 are Zion Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion”
—Psalm 84:5

WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 46

DAY 2 — PSALM 48

DAY 3 — PSALM 76

DAY 4 — PSALM 84

DAY 5 — PSALM 87

DAY 6 — PSALM 122

DAY 7 — JOHN 14:15-31 & 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

WEEK
7

Thanksgiving Psalms

PSALM

32

PSALM 32:1-11

Blessed Are the Forgiven

A Maskil of David.

- ¹ Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- ² Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- ³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*
- ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*
- ⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.
- ⁷ You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*
- ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- ⁹ Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.
- ¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.
- ¹¹ Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

What is confusing or difficult to understand?

According to verses 1-2, what is the condition for the forgiven?

Underline each time you see the word sin, transgression, iniquity.

Why is sin (v. 1) compared with deceit (v. 2)? Aren’t there other sins besides deceit?

Do these verses talk about ALL KINDS of sinners, or just the sinners who are deceitful?

Describe the importance of combining the right words with the right intentions.

According to verses 3-5, how can someone get to the “blessed” state?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

From your understanding, what does it mean to “deal” with your sin?

Circle the words that have to do with the mouth in verses 3-5.

What are some roadblocks that hinder you from dealing with it?

Describe the cause and effect for verses 3-6.

Verse 3 – Cause:

Effect:

Verse 4 – Cause:

Effect:

Verse 5 – Cause:

Effect:

Verse 6 – Cause:

Effect:

Whose hand is being described in verse 4? What is the purpose of his hand pressing him?

Why does this passage describe physical effects that happen when a person doesn't deal with sin? Do these really happen?

When you allow sin to go "unchecked" in your life, what happens to you personally? Is there any change in your life . . . if so, what is it?

Describe the freedom the psalmist speaks of in verse 3-5 must have felt like.

Is the "covering" in verse 1 the same "covering" in verse 5? Why is it good for the sin to be covered in one verse, but not the other?

Does verse 6 mean only Christians can pray?

What does "while you can be found" mean in verse 6? If God is loving, won't we always be able to find Him? Explain.

In reference to verses 6-7, the man is not only blessed by what God does not do, punishment for sin, but what God does for him to preserve him from trouble.

Explain the metaphor of the horse and mule.

How are verses 3-4 an image of verse 9?

Compare verse 7 and 10.

WHEN IT IS THE LORD WHO MAKES US GLAD, WE WILL FIND OURSELVES COMING TO HIM IN PRAYER RATHER THAN SEEKING OUR PLEASURE ELSEWHERE.

This psalm is classified as a Thanksgiving Psalm; yet, it speaks a lot about confession. How does confession lead to thanksgiving?

WHAT IS SO BLESSED ABOUT HAVING OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FORGIVEN? O, THAT WE MIGHT CHERISH OUR FORGIVENESS MORE! —JOHN PIPER

Compare the affections you feel for things and people in this world with the affection you feel for Jesus and for being forgiven through his death. If you find that your heart leaps up more vigorously for anything else than it does for the forgiveness of God, repent.

Considering where you stand with your faith right now, how is this psalm personally inspiring or challenging for you?

NOW WHAT?

What are some verses or phrases that stand out as particularly meaningful? Explain why.

Do you have sin in your life that has not been confessed? Repent now. Listen to the warning.

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Thanksgiving Psalms. While Praise Psalms focus on the glory of who God is, Thanksgiving Psalms tend to be an expression of gratitude for what God has done. Often times these psalms will follow a common form: the author is distressed, then he calls to God for help, then God comes to his rescue. Thanksgiving Psalms are in this way similar to a testimony . . . telling a story about God’s help and thanking Him for what He has done. “These psalms originated as a grateful response to God for a specific act of deliverance, such as healing from illness, which may be a physical manifestation of unforgiven sin (32), deliverance from enemies (18; 92; 118; 138), or simply rescue from trouble (66:14). These psalms assume the presence of the congregation, which is gathered either for worship or for instruction (32:8–11; 34:11–14) and who hear the story of the deliverance. There are hints indicating how these psalms were used in worship: 118:19–29 assumes a procession, while 66:13–15 and 116:12–19 point to a thank offering accompanying the psalm. In Psalm 138 the worshipper is in the outer court of the temple (v 2). At the heart of these psalms is the story of the deliverance, summarized briefly, ‘O Lord my God, I cried to thee for help, and thou hast healed me’ and often expanded.” Psalms 18, 30, 32, 92, 116, 118, 138 are Thanksgiving Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”
—Psalm 32:11

WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 18:1-24

DAY 2 — PSALM 18:25-50

DAY 3 — PSALM 30:1-7

DAY 4 — PSALM 30:8-12

DAY 5 — PSALM 116:1-7

DAY 6 — PSALM 116:8-14

DAY 7 — PSALM 116:15-19

WEEK

8

Thanksgiving Psalms

PSALM

116

PSALM 116:1-19

I Love the Lord

- ¹ I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- ² Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- ³ The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- ⁴ Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"
- ⁵ Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
- ⁶ The Lord preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- ⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.
- ⁸ For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;
- ⁹ I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.
- ¹⁰ I believed, even when I spoke:
"I am greatly afflicted";
- ¹¹ I said in my alarm,
"All mankind are liars."

¹²What shall I render to the Lord
for all his benefits to me?

¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,

¹⁴I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.

¹⁶O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.
You have loosed my bonds.

¹⁷I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁸I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord!

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

After reading through the psalm, what is confusing or difficult to understand?

Look throughout the psalm, what motivates the psalmist to love God?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 2) |
| 3) | 4) |
| 5) | 6) |
| 7) | 8) |

What has God done in your life to “save” and help you?

Is it wrong to call on the name of the Lord in the midst of trouble? Explain.

Describe a time in your life when you were overcome with “trouble and sorrow.” What happened? What did you do? Did you turn first to God for help? Did you only rely on your own strength?

Verse 8 gives a list of things the psalmist has been delivered from. Make your own list of things you have been delivered from.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

How does your experience of God’s grace, righteousness, or compassion influence when you call on Him?

What does it mean to be simple or simple-hearted (verse 6)? How does this verse help answer this question?

Underline all of the past tense statements. Place a star next to all of the "I will..." (future tense) statements. Put a square around the present tense statement in verse 7.

How do the past tense statements lead the psalmist to make the future statements?

How do the future statements lead to the present tense statement?

How can verse 7 be powerful for your life?

According to verse 9, what is the purpose of deliverance in verse 8?

How does a thankful heart cause a desire to repay? Have you ever considered trying to repay the Lord? Can we? Is worship repayment?

This passage repeats the same verse twice (v. 14 and 18)? Why is this important?

Describe the logic of being freed from chains but now a servant.

What would it mean for you to "fulfill your vows" to the Lord? Have you made any commitments to Him that you need to "make good" on?

Why is the presence of others important?

How does this psalm challenge or encourage you to worship God better?

NOW WHAT?

PRAYER: Thank God for his willingness to provide a way so you could have a relationship with Him. Thank Him for the everyday grace that meets you in the midst of your sinfulness. Thanks Him for pleasure it is to know Him. Spend time thanking him for what is overflowing in your heart.

After reading this psalm, what are some verses or phrases that stand out as particularly meaningful? Explain why.

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Thanksgiving Psalms. While Praise Psalms focus on the glory of who God is, Thanksgiving Psalms tend to be an expression of gratitude for what God has done. Often times these psalms will follow a common form: the author is distressed, then he calls to God for help, then God comes to his rescue. Thanksgiving Psalms are in this way similar to a testimony . . . telling a story about God’s help and thanking Him for what He has done. “These psalms originated as a grateful response to God for a specific act of deliverance, such as healing from illness, which may be a physical manifestation of unforgiven sin (32), deliverance from enemies (18; 92; 118; 138), or simply rescue from trouble (66:14). These psalms assume the presence of the congregation, which is gathered either for worship or for instruction (32:8–11; 34:11–14) and who hear the story of the deliverance. There are hints indicating how these psalms were used in worship: 118:19–29 assumes a procession, while 66:13–15 and 116:12–19 point to a thank offering accompanying the psalm. In Psalm 138 the worshipper is in the outer court of the temple (v 2). At the heart of these psalms is the story of the deliverance, summarized briefly, ‘O Lord my God, I cried to thee for help, and thou hast healed me’ and often expanded.” Psalms 18, 30, 32, 92, 116, 118, 138 are Thanksgiving Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” —Psalm 116:7

WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 32

DAY 2 — PSALM 92:1-9

DAY 3 — PSALM 92:10-15

DAY 4 — PSALM 118:1-7

DAY 5 — PSALM 118:8-18

DAY 6 — PSALM 118:19-29

DAY 7 — PSALM 138

WEEK

9

Royal Psalms

PSALM

2

PSALM 2

- ¹ Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
- ² The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,
- ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
- ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
- ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
- ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
- ⁷ I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
- ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
- ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
- ¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

Define “royal.”

Circle all of the royal language in this Psalm.

List each character (or set of characters) that is mentioned (don’t forget the writer).

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

The Psalm can be split into four parts (every three verses). Come up for a title for each part. Write them between each section as well as below.

Verses 1-3:

Verses 4-6:

Verses 7-9:

Verse 10-12:

What is being described in these verses 1-3? From what you know of the Old Testament, is this an accurate picture of what happened throughout the Old Testament?

Respond to the following: Those who oppose the LORD and His Anointed think of God as a bondage-bringer. This attitude is evidence of spiritual insanity because God is a bondage-breaker, not a bondage-bringer.

TO A GRACELESS NECK THE YOKE OF CHRIST IS INTOLERABLE, BUT TO THE SAVED SINNER IT IS EASY AND LIGHT ... WE MAY JUDGE OURSELVES BY THIS, DO WE LOVE THAT YOKE, OR DO WE WISH TO CAST IT FROM US?" SPURGEON

In the context of this Psalm, who is “The LORD’s Anointed”? What is special about this person? How is he related to God?

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

Describe the similarities between this passage of Scripture and Psalm 2?

How does 2 Samuel 7 help us understand Psalm 2?

For the Gentiles to rebel against the heir of David is to rebel against the Lord who installed him; it is also to cut themselves off from their only hope of knowing the one true God.

Why might this Psalm have been placed second in the book of Psalms? Compare and contrast to Psalm 1.

Why might this Psalm have been sung in ancient Israel? What point is being made? How would this point have impacted the people singing it?

Read Hebrews 1:5.

What does this quotation of Psalm 2:7 teach us about Christ? How does Christ relate to Psalm 2?

Draw a Large crown next to verses 4-6.

What is Lord’s perspective about the revolt of the other nations?

How should God’s people respond to revolt based upon how Lord in Heaven responds?

Above the word “break” in verse 9, write the word “rule.”

How does the promise, described in 2 Samuel 7:16, that the line of David will be sure forever influence the king's response in verse 7-9? Does he seem confident?

What is the warning described in verse 10-12? Is it a command or a suggestion?

Is it possible to live out verse 11? If so, how?

What does the text mean by "kiss the son?"

If the other rulers choose to reject the king, whom are they really rejecting?

What do you think it would be like to have king? What is good about a king? What is bad? Why might God have set up Israel with a king?

What do we learn about God from this Psalm's focus on kingship? How does the king relate to God?

What difference does it make in your life that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you think of Jesus as King? Why or why not?

NOW WHAT?

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

How does God keeping his promise about the line of David increase your faith?

What have you continued to try to rule in your own life rather than letting King Jesus control?

PRAYER: King of kings, forgive me for when I have plotted against your rule in my life. I trust in your provision and perfect plan. I choose to serve you with gladness because I know you are good King who keeps His promises. I trust in you to be my refuge and to protect me against the enemy.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Royal Psalms. Rather than having a common form, Royal Psalms have a common theme: the king. It's important to remember that the psalms were actually songs that were sung and played in a corporate (group) setting. Today in the church we have certain songs for certain types of events—one song might be appropriate to sing on a national holiday, while another might be better used for a wedding. It was the same way in Ancient Israel, and these Royal Psalms were all used at events where the king was involved (his coronation, his victory in battle, the establishment of his kingdom). While these psalms were first used in association with the earthly kings of Israel, many Christians believe them also to be prophetic about the coming Messiah—the King of Kings. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132 are Royal Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” —John 18:37

WEEK 9 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 18

DAY 2 — PSALM 20-21

DAY 3 — PSALM 45

DAY 4 — PSALM 72

DAY 5 — PSALM 89

DAY 6 — PSALM 101

DAY 7 — PSALM 110

WEEK

10

Liturgical Psalms

PSALM

24

PSALM 24

A Psalm of David.

¹ The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,

² for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

³ Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.

⁵ He will receive blessing from the Lord
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. *Selah*

⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!

⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory! *Selah*

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT

STOP: Before continuing to these questions, make sure that you have:

- 1) Read the psalm at least twice. The second time, put a “?” next to anything that seems weird or doesn’t really make sense.
- 2) Review the psalm categories and introduction to Hebrew poetry in the forward of this book.
- 3) Take a minute to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you. (Take this seriously; make it more than just a “this-is-something-I-have-to-do” sort of prayer.)

Psalm 24 is considered written during the occasion when David's brought the Ark of the Covenant to the place prepared for it in the sanctuary. It is important to remember that the Ark of the Covenant was the considered to be the very presence of God. The intention of it was to lead the people to live a life beyond the show of external rituals to a genuine holy life and faith in God.

What clues can you find within Psalm 24 would cause you to consider that this was the purpose of the Psalm?

Who was allowed into the most holy place within the tabernacle? What were the qualifications?

Do we have any event that corresponds to this in our church? Compare and contrast what you know about Israel's worship with our worship today.

Look at verses 1-2. What do these verses remind us about God? How does this truth about God set us up for the rest of the Psalm?

Discuss this statement: Emotion is an important part of worship. How do Psalms help us with this? Are there any dangers of emotions during worship?

Write the question in verse 3 in your own words in the space below.

What is the “hill of the LORD” in verse 3?

Read the description of the person who can “ascend” the hill of the LORD (v. 4-6). Write the condition required in verse 4 in your own words.

What body parts are described in verse 4?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What role do these verses play in the overall Psalm?

Does worship at church ever cause you to consider your purity before God? Why or why not?
What can we learn from this Psalm about coming before God in worship?

Do verses 4-6 point toward Jesus? Explain.

Consider the words used to describe God in verses 7-10. What do these verses tell us about God?

How should this change the way that we approach God? What are some wrong ways of approaching God?

Verse 10 calls God the “King of glory.” What is glory?

In what situations in your life might this Psalm be helpful to read? When do you need to be specifically reminded of God’s glory and might?

PRAYER: Psalms can easily be used as songs or prayers. Spend a few minutes using this Psalm to pray with your small group, reflecting on the truths about God and man. Don’t forget to think about how Jesus is the only one who can truly ascend the holy hill of God.

NOW WHAT?

Do verse 4-6 describe you? If not, what needs to change?

Taking the time to interact with the text will help engage your mind with the heart of the text. Consider writing the words or phrases that you think of next to verse (Example: “meditate” = “think deeply”). Visualize the text and draw pictures. Highlight or mark key words that stand out to you. You could also color the parallel statements within the Psalm. This is perfect time to discover the riches of the Scriptures.

GOING DEEPER

One of the best things that you can do to dig deeper into the riches of God Almighty is to spend time studying, meditating, and reflecting on the Bible. We have an incredible gift to be able to study the Scriptures for ourselves.

The following week of devotions will be focused on looking at the Liturgical Psalms. Just like Royal Psalms, the Liturgical Psalms were reserved for a certain purpose. These psalms were each used during the order of worship (or liturgy) in the temple—they were for public worship. Just like we have certain songs to accompany different “sacraments” that we take part in (communion, baptism, etc.), these psalms may have been for certain “rites” as well. Psalms 15, 24, 50, 81, 95, 115, 132 are Liturgical Psalms.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discipline that it takes to have a daily quiet time. Spend time studying the text and come back next week ready to share all that God has spoken to you.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.”
—Psalm 24:3-4

WEEK 10 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Ask the following questions of each passage.

- What is going on in the text? What are the circumstances the author is addressing?
- Who is writing, whom is it being written to, and when was the author writing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this point to my need for redemption?
- How will I live differently because of what I just read? Is there something for me to obey, a path to follow, a sin I must repent of, or a blessing to celebrate?

DAY 1 — PSALM 15

DAY 2 — PSALM 24

DAY 3 — PSALM 50

DAY 4 — PSALM 81

DAY 5 — PSALM 95

DAY 6 — PSALM 115

DAY 7 — PSALM 132

LOOKING BACK

You've completed a short overview of the Psalms! It is my prayer that the time you spent in God's Word truly led you toward becoming a better worshiper. It is such a privilege and joy to study Scripture. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

How do you feel now that you have completed this study?

Describe how your future will be impacted because of this study.

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalm 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and can live out.

- One must dig deep into the treasures of God's Word in order to bear fruit for the kingdom.
- We should meditate on the law of the Lord with our whole heart and mind.
- Despite difficulties, God's Word brings us life and we must trust it.
- Scripture is a treasure of glorious riches. We must be diligent to fix our eyes on God's Word.
- Believers can rest content even when unbelievers seem to get along without a care in the world because God is our refuge and shield.
- When considering the greatness of God, the believer has no other choice but to erupt in praise to God.
- Discussed how is obedience related to praise.
- We can bring all our feelings to God—no matter how negative or complaining they may be—and we can rest assured that He will hear and understand.
- God is the same Lord in all the psalms.
- Wickedness offers no reward that can compare to the joy and pleasure of God's house.
- Understand the staggering privilege of being a welcome guest in God's own house.
- Believers are urged to accept this instruction about ready confession and to be glad in the Lord, who shows such goodness to his people.
- Only the forgiven are truly happy. That true happiness leads to genuine thanksgiving.
- We can rejoice because God hears our cries for help in our times of need.
- We can defy God and perish, or surrender to Him and be blessed.
- God is a bondage breaker, not a bondage bringer.
- Examined the approach of "coming into God's presence" in corporate worship.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.

CRITICAL ISSUES

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are a blessing. However, they are often difficult. Discerning the truth from the lies in how to build healthy relationships is becoming more challenging with our connected world.

In this study we will be looking into the eternal Word of God for direction to develop healthy relationships with our friends, parents, becoming a person of integrity, dealing with conflict, and responding to authority with Christlikeness.

WEEK

1

Your Relationship with the Lord

DEUTERONOMY

6:1-9

A STRONG CONNECTION

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

What are the three relationships that Jesus talks about here?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

These two commandments are the foundation of all our relationships.

Why do you think Jesus started with God? What value does a relationship with God add to other relationships?

List three qualities about God that make him the best foundation for all our relationships.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Why would a relationship with God be required for good relationships? Describe how a stable relationship with Jesus can help your relationships with others.

THREE CONNECTION KILLERS

Static of Sin

1 John 1:8-10

Ignoring the Call

John 12:44-50

Romans 1:18-32

No Service

John 8:47

When have you experienced sin affecting your relationship with God?

Sin causes major interference for your connection with God. The easiest way to avoid the static of sin is the stay close to the source of your connection, Jesus.

Ignoring God's Spirit in your life will cause major connection problems. Whenever you feel God calling, you must answer!

You may not have a connection with God because you have never called on Him to be your Savior.

Look at the following definition of a relationship. Does this definition describe your connection with God?

RELATIONSHIP — THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO OR MORE PEOPLE OR GROUPS AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH EACH OTHER, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS TO HOW THEY BEHAVE AND FEEL TOWARD EACH OTHER AND COMMUNICATE OR COOPERATE.

Circle the words in the definition that could describe a relationship with God.

Read Matthew 22:37.

THREE WAYS FOR HOW WE ARE TO CONNECT TO GOD.

1) A _____ connection.

Read Romans 10:9-10.

A relationship with God starts with the heart. The heart is the center of your physical and emotional life. That means your connection with God requires all of your physical and emotional resources.

2) A _____ connection.

Read Matthew 11:29.

A soul connection means that all of your desires are directed toward God. A total soul connection is made when you are completely satisfied in God.

How is your fulfillment in Christ impact your relationships?

3) A _____ connection.

The point is simple. God loves us very much and we are to love Him with everything we have – our heart, soul and mind. Connecting with your mind means that your thoughts are centered on God. This doesn't mean that you don't think about anything else. It means that you filter through the question, "Will this thought or action glorify God?"

How could the question of "will this thought or action glorify God?" impact your relationships?

A PROPER VIEW

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

To love your neighbor as yourself, you have to first have a healthy relationship with and understanding of God and yourself. That comes from a correct view of your identity. God has a lot to say about your identity, and it is very different than what the world says about you.

Write a brief description next to each passage that describes your identity in Christ.

John 1:12 –

Ephesians 2:10 –

Galatians 5:1 –

Romans 15:7 –

Galatians 4:7 –

Romans 3:24 –

1 Corinthians 3:16 –

2 Corinthians 5:17 –

Ephesians 1:4 –

Put a star beside those things in the list that you find it hard to remember or hard to understand.

When you listen to the confusing messages from the world rather than God, you are bound to live a life of self-condemnation, wishing you were someone else; God offers a very different view of yourself.

“LOVING YOURSELF” DOESN’T MEAN THAT YOU SPOIL YOURSELF, DO EVERYTHING YOU WANT, AND FORGET ALL ABOUT SELF-CONTROL. INSTEAD, LOVING YOURSELF MEANS SEEING YOURSELF AS GOD SEES YOU. IT MEANS UNDERSTANDING THAT YOU HAVE SELF-WORTH BECAUSE GOD LOVES YOU.

Loving ourselves is really allowing God’s love to affect who we are. It’s not being fine with our sins, bad habits, and mistakes. It is allowing His love, His truth, and His grace to change us. When His love affects us, it can then affect the others around us. With a proper view of your identity in Christ you see others differently. Your identity in Christ is essential in loving others.

NOW WHAT?

When did you begin a relationship with God? Do you ever doubt that you have relationship with God? If you have questions, talk to your parents or your leader about that today.

Look at the connection killers once again in the lesson. Write down three practical ways you can avoid them this next week.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

List a way you can improve each of the following:

- 1) Heart connection:
- 2) Soul connection:
- 3) Mind connection:

Describe your overall connection with God?

On a scale of 1-10, who influences your identity the most?

God 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 The world

Do you struggle with self-worth? How would remembering how God sees you change your struggles?

GOING DEEPER

Revelation 2:4 calls God our "first love"; He's called that for several reasons. One reason is that He loved us before we loved Him. Another is that our first love is supposed to come before and be the foundation of our other loves. Your relationship with God is the foundation of all your other relationships. If your connection with God is off, every other relationship you have will be affected.

Why do you think a proper identity is important to loving ourselves?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Matthew 22:37 — "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.'"

WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — MATTHEW 22:34-40

How does verse 37 point to the fact that we should love God with our whole being?

Why do you think this is the great and first commandment?

DAY 2 — DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

Why is it important that God is one?

Why might the commandment for us to love God with our whole being flow out of the statement that God is one?

DAY 3 — DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9

What are some things these verses say that we should do as a result of loving God?

How can you practically do some of those things this week?

DAY 4 — MATTHEW 6:19-24

Why can someone not serve two masters? Give an example in life of how that would be a problem.

What are some "masters" you fight against to devote yourself fully to God?

DAY 5 — ROMANS 10:8-10

What role does the heart play in your relationship with the Lord?

What are some examples of how someone could show outward signs of loving God, but not have a heart that loves God?

DAY 6 — MATTHEW 15:1-9

In what way were the Pharisees and scribes hypocrites?

How does being a hypocrite conflict with loving God with your whole being?

DAY 7 — 1 JOHN 1:15-17

What are some things that pull us away from loving God with our whole being?

What is a specific area in your life where you battle the things of the world? How can you fight it?

WEEK

2

Your Relationship with Your Neighbors

JOHN

15:9-17

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

Last week we learned that God is the foundation of all our relationships and how His love changes us. Today we turn our attention to how at the same time we are to love our neighbor. When Jesus makes these statements in this passage he immediately communicates we are created for relationships, and all of our relationships are to be marked by love. Far too often we avoid loving our neighbor because we feel ill equipped, we simply don't notice them, or because we know relationships are messy.

Write down the names of three people who are your neighbors.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Read Luke 10:25-37.

1) You may think you are too clean for your neighbor (v. 31).

It was a priest who refused to help the hurt man. In doing so completely missed an opportunity to share the love of God with someone in need.

2) Your neighbor may not have a good social standing (v. 32).

Describe a time when Jesus acted as though he was too good for someone?

Levites were important people because they helped the priests perform the sacrifices in the temple. Maybe the reason that he didn't help was because he had to prepare the sacrifices and he would be unclean if he helped. It's interesting that those that helped others make sacrifices for their uncleanness were not able to help those that were unclean. He may have thought that he was too good to help, but those who want to love their neighbor will cross social lines to do it.

Describe a social setting that you face regularly where if you were to really love your neighbor it would be a stretch for you.

3) Your neighbor may be from a different race (v. 33-35).

Samaritans were considered a mixed race by the Jews and looked down upon, but this was the man that stopped. This man understood that neighbors are people from all nations, races, and backgrounds. So who is your neighbor? Jesus said that he or she is anyone that passes by. God brings many people your way and they are all your neighbors.

HOW CAN I LOVE MY NEIGHBOR?

Ultimately, Jesus' question and statement (v. 36-37) corrects the lawyer's improper question (v. 29). The proper question is not "who is my neighbor?" but "how can I be a neighbor?"

1) Make the change in your house first.

Who does God love more?

Me My neighbor Everyone

When we understand God's love for us, we understand God's love for others. We see people differently. We see them not as just a person that can do something for me; rather, we see them as a soul that Jesus died for so they could be united with the Father!

Read John 15:9-11.

Jesus wants us to "remain" in His love. Why?

2) Take it to the whole block.

Read 1 John 4:12.

Do others know that you are a Christian? How?

3) Get rid of the privacy fences.

Read Matthew 25:37-40.

Who would our culture classify as the "least of these"? How do you show love to these people consistently?

Many people don't want "those kinds of people" around them. This parable shows us that when we care for others, especially the "least of these," we care for Jesus. God was honored when these people showed love to the "least of these." It is obvious within this text that this happened regularly. There was a pattern of love and concern for others around them.

4) Fulfill the law of the Lord.

Read Romans 13:8-10.

All the laws can be fulfilled by loving God, ourselves, and others. What this passage (and Matthew 22:39-40) is saying is that these few verses sum up all the other verses about what to do and what not to do to others.

There were hundreds of Old Testament laws; here are a few. Circle those that you would be keeping by loving God and others fully.

Don't kill (Exodus 20:13)

Don't seek revenge (Leviticus 19:18)

Honor your parents (Exodus 20:12)

Don't steal (Exodus 20:15)

Don't kidnap (Exodus 21:16)

Don't hate others (Leviticus 19:17)

Don't talk badly about others (Leviticus 19:16)

Don't worship idols (Deuteronomy 6:1)

Read John 15:12-17.

What is His command in verse 12?

When our one true love is God, He will give us joy that nothing else is capable of providing. He will then teach us how to practice love and friendship with each other. As we make our place in His love, our love for others will supernaturally come out. He says that we can be friends with God if we obey His command.

5) Follow the path before you.

Read John 13:34-35.

Jesus showed us what love was by the things He did. List some ways He showed love to others:

“TO SAY THAT LOVE IS A FEELING OR ANYTHING OF THE KIND IS REALLY AN UN-CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF LOVE...CHRIST'S LOVE WAS NOT AN INNER FEELING; IT WAS THE WORK OF LOVE WHICH WAS HIS LIFE.” —SOREN KIERKEGAARD

How will others know we are Jesus' disciples (v. 35)? Circle your answer.

- A) By thinking we are better than others.
- B) By telling people they are going to hell.
- C) By loving others.

When Jesus' love has changed us, then it will also change the way we treat others. The Bible calls God our "first love" (Revelation 2:4) for a good reason. God was the one who first loved us. It is that love that changes our lives and then flows to everyone around us. When our love for God is first, our love for all people will supernaturally come.

NOW WHAT?

Jesus' love does not end with us. We are to receive God's love and pass it along. Name 3 things that you would do to show God's love to other people this week.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Write down the initials of two people who are tough to love. Next to their initials describe how you can begin to try to love them as your neighbor.

- 1)
- 2)

Describe a healthy view of what a good relationship with God involves? In your journey through life, where do you think you are in your relationship with God? Would you be willing to try to make God your "one true love"? Why or why not?

GOING DEEPER

Think back to the Good Samaritan story. Who are you the most like: the priest who was too busy, the Levite who was too important, the Samaritan who helped others, or the man who needed the help? How are you like him?

Are you concerned for your neighbors who do not know Jesus? How often do you pray for them? Have you told them about your love for God and His love for them?

Jesus' life can be summed up in one word: Love. He came to this world because of His love for us. He spent years listening, healing, serving and caring for people because of love. He died a terrible death because He loved us so much. His love for us and our love for Him, is the foundation of all our relationships.

"ALEXANDER THE GREAT, CAESAR, AND HANNIBAL CONQUERED THE WORLD BUT THEY HAD NO FRIENDS...JESUS FOUNDED HIS EMPIRE UPON LOVE, AND AT THIS HOUR MILLIONS WOULD DIE FOR HIM...HE HAS WON THE HEARTS OF MEN, A TASK A CONQUEROR CANNOT DO."

—NAPOLEON

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Matthew 22:39 — "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — MATTHEW 22:34-40

Why is the second commandment like the first commandment?

Why do all the other commandments rest on the first and second commandment?

DAY 2 — JOHN 13:31-35

What is "new" about the commandment?

Why is this a sign that we are Jesus' disciples?

DAY 3 — JOHN 15:9-17

According to this passage, how do we abide in God's love?

What are some ways you can love others as Jesus has loved you?

DAY 4 — 1 JOHN 3:11-18

If you do not love, where do you "abide"?

What is a way you can "share the world's goods" with someone?

DAY 5 — 1 JOHN 4:7-12

In what ways should our love for others be like God's love for us?

How is God's love perfected in us if we love one another?

DAY 6 — 1 JOHN 4:13-21

Why does loving others give us confidence for the Day of Judgment (vs. 17)?

Agape love is described as "intelligent, purposeful attitude of esteem and devotion." Is there anyone you should love more in this way?

DAY 7 — MATTHEW 25:31-46

What separates the righteous from the unrighteous in this passage?

What are some reasons we often don't love others in the ways described here?

WEEK

3

Your Learning and Teaching Relationships

PROVERBS

9:9

DISCERNING INFLUENCES

Timothy is a young man in the middle of life struggles. Paul wrote to encourage him to remember that he has found his direction for all of his relationships from God's Word. As you look at Paul's instruction today, consider whether you are taking advantage of what God has made available to you.

1) Be careful of those who lead us in the wrong direction in life.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

Not everyone will take you where you want to go. Actually, some potential friends will actually come between you and the Lord. Paul warns Timothy to watch out for those who are a negative influence.

Write down the negative characteristics of people listed in the verses:

What would your life look like in ten years if you followed those people's example?

Paul tells us to have nothing to do with this kind of person. Why?

Think about the people to whom you go for help. Do they have any of the characteristics listed in verses 1-9?

Yes No

According to verse 5, is it always easy to distinguish the kind of influence someone may be?

2) Be ready to follow those who lead us in the right direction in life.

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

Timothy's life was changed forever through Paul's encouragement, guidance, and advice. They both knew where to go for help.

A) IMITATE GODLY EXAMPLES THROUGH TOUGH TIMES (V. 10-14).

How many times in these verses do you see words related to persecute or suffer? What are some ways that we "suffer" or are "persecuted?"

Paul said (v. 11) that someone was able to rescue him from the hardships of life. Who was it?

B) GO TO GOD'S WORD (V. 15-17).

There are a lot of good books out there, and some even have solid wisdom in them. However, no book contains the amount of truth, wisdom, and direction that the Bible does. In tough times, look for people who point you to the Bible.

Verse 16 tells us that the Bible is "useful" for four things. List them.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 3) |
| 2) | 4) |

WHO ARE YOU LEARNING FROM?

1) Find a mentor.

We all have struggles in our relationships. The question is, "to whom do you go for help?" We must be careful in choosing those we learn from. Timothy looked up to Paul. He spent time with Paul, got advice from him, and had his life changed forever from that relationship.

A) A MENTOR GIVES YOU WISE INSTRUCTION.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-6.

Paul had trained Timothy in his profession and continued to teach him for years. Do you know what you want to do when you "grow up?" Is there someone who could teach you about that?

B) A MENTOR MODELS THE KIND OF LIFE YOU WANT.

Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

Paul lived a powerful life and never stopped living for Jesus. Timothy knew that was the kind of person he needed to be around.

I TEACH WHAT I KNOW, BUT I REPRODUCE WHO I AM. —JOHN MAXWELL

C) A MENTOR RUBS OFF ON YOU.

Read Proverbs 13:20.

Explain how this passage could impact your life this next week? Year? 20 years?

2) Find an accountability partner.

An accountability partner is someone who asks you the tough questions that others won't ask you. They encourage, help you through your struggles and in your relationship with God.

QUALITIES OF AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER:

A) The same gender as you. B) Someone you trust. C) Someone who wants you to grow in Christ.

Read Galatians 6:1-2.

Not only do we need to learn from others; others need to learn from us. Everyone can teach another person, even you!

WHO ARE YOU TEACHING?

1) Find a person to disciple.

Name three things you have learned that you could teach to another person.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Paul called Timothy his "son in the faith" because they were so close (1 Timothy 1:2). Instead of looking only to people who were already mature, he spent time developing young Timothy into a great leader.

Read Acts 18:24-28.

These two older Christians took young Apollos aside and taught him what he did not understand. What are some other ways they could have responded to him? What was the outcome in v. 28?

Read Romans 10:14.

Your story is one of the best tools you have to share your relationship with Jesus. Tell others:

- 1) What your life was like before Jesus.
- 2) How you began your relationship with him.
- 3) How your life has changed. It's that's simple.
- 4) How you see him working in your life now.

All of us need to be looking for Paul-type relationships we can learn from and Timothy-type relationships we can teach in. When we surround ourselves with these kinds of people, our lives will be blessed.

NOW WHAT?

Think about the people you turn to for advice. Are they godly people? Do they encourage you in your walk?

Look back through the lesson and think about the four different relationships mentioned. Then answer the following questions by writing people's initials below:

Who are some people you might consider asking to be a mentor?

Who is someone you would consider asking to be an accountability partner?

Who are some people you could help disciple?

Who are some people who need to hear your story of how you met Jesus?

PRAYER: Ask God to show you a new way of seeing relationships—through His eyes. Ask for God's guidance in all of these relationships. If you feel that He is directing you to do something in one of these relationships, circle those initials and do what you feel led to do.

GOING DEEPER

What keeps us from going to God for help?

What issues about relationships do you feel God is not knowledgeable about?

Why do we often go to those who are struggling like us rather than God?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Proverbs 13:20 – "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — PROVERBS 1:1-7

What is the purpose of the book of proverbs, according to these verses? How do you get wisdom? Write down whom you learn from on a regular basis. Evaluate how these sources relate to Proverbs 1.

DAY 2 — MATTHEW 7:24-27

Write down the two kinds of people described in this passage. What is Jesus commanding us to do in these verses? What determines whether a house stands or falls?

DAY 3 — PSALM 119:1-16

How does this Psalm talk about the God's commands? What are the results of following God's word, according to this passage? How might these verses help us as we influence others and are influenced by them?

DAY 4 — PROVERBS 2:1-15

Which verse stands out to you in this passage? Where does it tell us that wisdom comes from? How are you seeking wisdom? Who do you seek it from? Who is your most trusted advisor?

DAY 5 — EXODUS 18:13-27

Consider this fascinating story. What advice does Moses father-in-law (Jethro) give to him? What reasons does Jethro give for his advice? Does Moses take the advice? What can we learn from this story about God? What can we learn about ourselves? Do you have someone in your life to help point out errors?

DAY 6 — ACTS 18:24-28

What did Priscilla and Aquila do for Apollos? Why did they do this? How did this impact his life? What can you do to imitate Priscilla and Aquila?

DAY 7 — 2 PETER 3:8-10

What do learn from this passage about the nature of this current world? What will be the result at the end of time? Do you believe this passage is true? How might this change the way that we think about helping others learn about Christ? How might it change the way that we think about our own relationship with Christ?

WEEK

4

Your Relationship with Your Friends

PROVERBS

12:26

FRIENDSHIPS ARE A BLESSING

A) We need friends so we will be encouraged.

Read Philippians 2:19-23.

We can see in this passage that Paul genuinely enjoys his friend. He speaks very highly of his friend, and appears anxious to see him again. Because of Timothy, Paul was not alone and was able to share his problems with someone. God gives us friends so that we can have the encouragement and help to make it through tough times and someone to be happy with in the good times.

B) We need friends to keep us on our feet.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:10.

Write the names of your close friends.

A real friend talks with you about more than the latest movie, the score of the game, and who said what to whom. They share what is on their hearts and want to know what is on yours.

A FRIEND IS ONE WHO MAKES ME DO MY BEST —OSWALD CHAMBERS

BE A PERSON OF GODLY CHARACTER.

Read 1 Peter 1:13-16.

Rather than following the example of those in the world and their selfish desires, Peter holds out God as an example of trustworthy character. The command is to be holy in all of our conduct.

Here we see that Christians are supposed to be different. How? What does that look like?

We are not supposed to conform to the old, evil desires such as, selfishness, prejudice, lust, jealousy, greed, laziness, hatred, or harshness just to name a few. Instead, when we are changed on the inside, these are replaced by new desires.

Beside the words above, write the new desires God gives us to replace the old ones.

Being holy is important, but we are not supposed to be holy and lock ourselves in our rooms. Our changed lives are meant to impact others, especially our friendships.

BE A PERSON THAT IMITATES GOD'S EXAMPLE.

Read Ephesians 5:1-2 and John 15:13.

Paul gives us a pretty clear instruction to those that are children of God. We are to imitate God. To live in such a way that displays the sacrificial love of Christ. You may be wondering how to do that; here are four specific ways:

1) BE A FRIEND THAT SACRIFICES — 1 JOHN 4:10-12

We imitate God, first, by being a person who loves. He showed us what love was, and we must show that same love to others.

2) BE A SERVANT LEADER — JOHN 13:1-17

What did Jesus do in this passage to show them the way as a visionary and leave them an example for a leader?

In those days servants washed feet. What does a servant look like today?

3) BE A PROTECTOR — JOHN 10:11-15

What does this passage say Jesus is willing to do to protect His sheep?

Should you see yourself as his defender or protector for your friends? What about those outside your social circle?

4) BE A TEACHER — MATTHEW 28:19-20

The last thing Jesus told His followers was to be a people who make disciples and who teach others what he had taught them.

DISCIPLE – A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST IN LEARNING AND LIVING.

It is hard to see yourself as a teacher of what God has taught you?

Do you think if you lived out these 4 qualities you would have a hard time making friends? How would they change your current friendships?

Do you have a friend that exhibits these qualities? Take some time to encourage them and say thanks this week.

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE MAKE GOOD FRIENDS?

Obviously the qualities we just talked about are important to look for in a friend. The book of Proverbs has a lot of advice to offer in regards to some qualities to look for in a friend.

Next to each passage below write what the verse means in your own words:

A) Proverbs 17:17 —

B) Proverbs 18:24 —

C) Proverbs 22:11 —

D) Proverbs 27:6, 9 —

E) Proverbs 27:17 —

Why would a real friend tell you the truth even when it is tough?

GOOD FRIENDS DON'T...

Next to each passage below write what the verse means in your own words:

A) Proverbs 10:23 —

B) Proverbs 18:2 —

C) Proverbs 11:12 —

D) Proverbs 16:28 and 17:4 —

E) Proverbs 26:18-20 —

Is it wrong to gossip about someone, even if it is the truth? Why? Is sarcasm healthy?

NOW WHAT?

Would you commit to pursuing the four character traits of God as listed on the previous page? Rank them from your strongest to your weakest areas.

What are you willing to devote time and energy into developing real friendships?

The best way to get a good friend is to be a good friend. Are you being a good friend? Give an example to explain your answer.

Are there people you spend time with that discourage you or pull you down? If so, what do you need to do?

Are your friendships God-honoring? What steps do you need to take to move in that direction?

GOING DEEPER

We use the word “friend” often to talk about people we go to a movie with or who sit near us at church. But are they really a true friend? Look at the definitions below. Beside each, guess how many of each type of relationship you have. Also, write the initials of those you consider companions and true friends below.

Stranger — a person whom you haven’t met.

Acquaintance — a person whose name you know and have spoken with.

Pal/buddy — a person you talk to and/or you do things with every once in awhile.

Close companion — a person who knows you better than most and you speak to almost every day.

True friend — a person who knows your heart; a person who helps grow.

PRAYER: Spend some time praying to God, asking Him to show you ways to be a better friend. Then take some time to specifically pray for a few of your friends.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Proverbs 12:26 — “One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.”

WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

What effect does encouragement have on you?

Why are some specific ways that you could encourage the people in your small group this week?

DAY 2 — PROVERBS 22:24-25

When a friend is upset and angry what is your typical response?

Describe how being close to someone who has an anger issue could impact you.

DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 1:3-4

What about your friends makes you overflow with thankfulness?

How often do you pray for your friends? Take some time each day this week to pray for your friends.

DAY 4 — EPHESIANS 4:32

What does it mean to be tenderhearted?

Describe how the forgiveness of Christ helps you to forgive others.

DAY 5 — PROVERBS 20:7

Describe the importance of living with integrity.

How does living with integrity impact the generations that follow you?

DAY 6 — EPHESIANS 4:29

Have you considered how your speech can build up or tear down? Try to count the number of times you speak positively and negatively tomorrow.

How can your speech benefit others that are listening to you?

DAY 7 — 1 PETER 5:5-7

Describe how having a spirit of humility could increase the depth of your friendships.

How has pride destroyed your relationships in the past?

WEEK

5

Dealing with Difficult Relationships

JAMES

4:1-3



THE REALITY OF CONFLICT

How prevalent is conflict in your life? Would you say it's something you deal with a lot? Or not very much?

Describe some things that may cause conflict between friends. Describe some common ways people today, especially teenagers, may handle conflict.

If you're being honest, how likely are you to handle conflict in a way you would consider healthy?

Not healthy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very healthy

HOW PEOPLE DETERMINE IF THE CONFLICT IS WORTH IT?

A) **The situation** - whether it is something you consider minor or very important.

B) **Who is involved**- if you consider the other person a valued friend or not.

C) **Personalities** - one person may be passive and pretend the problem doesn't exist while another may be more aggressive and act out in anger.

There are many different ways people handle conflict. Unfortunately, in our world, many choose to handle conflict in ways that may be hurtful, damaging, or even dangerous. However, if we are trying to live our lives as Christ-followers, we must handle conflict according to the way He has instructed.

Read Matthew 18:15-17.

Jesus often did His teaching in parables, or stories, that make His instruction relatable. Some of these parables were symbolic or metaphorical and required a certain level of interpretation. However, when it comes to handling conflict in relationships with other Christians, Christ was very clear in describing a step-by-step process.

When teenagers have disagreements or conflict, how do they normally respond at first?

Look at verse 15. What does Jesus tell us is the first step to handling conflict? Why do you think that may be difficult?

There are many reasons why people choose to bring other people into a conflict rather than approaching the other person one on one. When people feel they have been wronged, they often find comfort in having people to support their side of the story or point of view. For a Christ-follower, talking about conflict with other people is never the first step to take.

According to the passage we read, what is the second step to handling conflict?

How do you know you need to take this step?

Read Deuteronomy 19:15-17.

When Jesus tells His followers to “take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses,’” He is quoting from part of the Law that is found in Deuteronomy 19.

Based on the response of the first confrontation and the passage you just read from Deuteronomy, why do you think Jesus would have you include other people in conflict resolution at this point?

Notice that Jesus doesn’t tell us to choose one or two people who will see your side, agree with you, or defend you even if you’re wrong. When you choose the right people, they can also offer wise counsel to both people involved.

How should you choose the people to go with you? Are there certain traits they should have?

It’s important to understand that Jesus was not encouraging the offended person to find someone who would simply support them, back them up, and help them to be right. His desire is for Christ-followers to work toward reconciliation in relationships.

We live in a culture often has and encourages a “me first” attitude. We are told we must look out for ourselves. When two people have an argument or experience conflict, they typically desire to be right more than admitting a wrong. Christ calls His followers to behave differently. We see in this passage that He calls His followers to use all possible avenues to restore relationships.

As with the first step of reconciliation in verse 15, there are two possible responses. What are these?

Read Matthew 18:17.

Jesus offers one more step if the first two don’t work. What is the third step?

This is not something we are accustomed to seeing in the church today. What are some ways we can put this instruction into practice when dealing with conflict in relationships?

Is there any guarantee that this is going to work to reconcile the relationship? If none of these steps work, what does Jesus tell His followers they should do?

You cannot force them to restore the relationship, however, if the day comes when they are repentant and willing to reconcile the relationship, every effort should be made for restoration. Though people like tax collectors and pagans were known to behave in opposition to Christ's ways, grace and forgiveness were always available for them. We must have the same attitude and willingness to forgive that Christ demonstrated.

For us to have true reconciliation and for Christ's steps to resolving conflict to work, we must go into this process with the proper attitude. That attitude is one that should mirror Christ's own attitude.

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

These verses give a description of Christ's attitude and instruct His followers to have this same attitude. What is one word that can be used to summarize this attitude?

Why does our attitude matter when resolving conflict?

REVIEWING THE PROCESS

- 1) Put on the attitude of Christ (humility)
- 2) Approach one-on-one
- 3) Include one or two others
- 4) Bring it to the church
- 5) Separate yourself
- 6) Maintain attitude of grace and forgiveness

This list is one that comes from Christ. If we want to live as Christ-followers and live our lives as He did, then we must follow His instructions. Commit to handling future conflict this way.

We have been given a plan to deal with conflict. We must be careful how we handle the conversations within the process. On the next page there is a simple list of Biblical principles to help you walk through conflict resolution conversations.

SEVEN C'S FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICT

1) Call on God — When experiencing conflict, seek wisdom from God. He will give you clear direction on how to proceed. God is interested in your life, your problems, and your heart. Why? So you can bring honor to His name as you learn how to get along better with others in your life.

2) Check your emotions — As a human being dealing with conflict, you may get very emotional in the moment, and your emotions can interfere with how well you handle conflict. So try to look at a situation without letting how you feel determine how you will act. That doesn't mean you can't tell someone how you feel. Just don't let your emotions be the only factor or the key factor that determines your behavior.

3) Consider the other person's point of view — Look at the situation from their perspective. This different point of view may help you see something important that you have missed, and you may recognize they have a valid point.

4) Communicate in person — Technology is a great tool. However, it is not the best way to deal with conflict. The person with whom you're trying to resolve a conflict needs to be able to hear not only your point of view but also the emotions behind the words. Person to person is still the best way to resolve a conflict.

5) Confront in love — Going in love will always start the process off right. We see in the Bible God deals with us in His loving-kindness (Psalm 36:10; 40:11; 42:8).

6) Careful with your words — How you say things—the words and tone of voice and the facial expressions you choose—can help or hinder your efforts to resolve a conflict. Calmly speaking words that lead to fixing the problem will always help. Thoughtless comments will prolong the healing process and can even ruin a relationship. The words you choose as well as the way you choose to say them do matter, so choose wisely.

7) Create peace — Peacemakers are those who show grace to others even during hard times. God calls us to create peace in any and every conflict we deal with. Sometimes efforts to resolve a conflict can start off rough, but the goal is make peace and as a result enjoy a healthier, stronger relationship.

Conflict can enslave you, keep you focused on yourself, and destroy your relationships. Satan would love for that to happen (John 10:10). Wanting to ruin your life and the loves of your friends and family. The enemy will always interfere with your efforts to resolve a conflict, but God has a different plan.

God wants you to experience freedom; God does not want you to be a slave to conflicts. He wants every conflict in your life to be resolved in ways that make your relationships grow stronger. It's not easy, but dealing with a conflict can help you grow. If you just ignore difficult relationships, however, you won't benefit in any way. Face your conflicts and watch God work.

NOW WHAT?

When you think about dealing with difficulties in your relationships, what do you think is the most difficult part of what Jesus tells us we should do?

Sometimes it's so much easier to talk to our friends when someone is difficult than to talk to them. How do you think that could affect a relationship? Do you think it would make it harder to reconcile?

Is there anyone that you need to walk through the process of restoration with? Would you commit to doing that this week?

GOING DEEPER

Read 3 John 1:9-10.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TOXIC RELATIONSHIP ARE REVEALED IN THIS PASSAGE:

- 1) The relationship is always centered on the needs and wants of one person.
- 2) One person doesn't treat the other well.
- 3) One person doesn't like the others' friends.

Are you involved in a toxic relationship either as the recipient of the poison or as the toxin? Explain why that relationship deserves the label "toxic."

Prayerfully take a brief inventory of the main relationships in your life, which ones—if not toxic—are, to be honest, not pleasing to God?

What needs to be different in each of those relationships—and what will you do to make those positive changes? Or should one or more of these relationships—for your own good—be terminated?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Romans 12:18 — "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

READ - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — GENESIS 3:1-13

What is the primary and immediate consequence of Adam and Eve's sin (verse 7)?

How does this affect the way that we think about the root cause of sin and distress in the world?

DAY 2 — GENESIS 3:14-19

List the different ways that God declares that there will be trouble in the world in his passage. How many of them deal with relationships? Why might this be the case?

How do you see the fruit of this in the relationships that you have?

DAY 3 — GENESIS 4:1-16

What is the root cause of the problem between Cain and Abel? How and why does this affect their relationship with each other?

Think about how your relationship with God affects the relationships that you have with other people?

DAY 4 — PROVERBS 25:15-28

Circle each verse that deals with relating to others. Write down some of the most important sayings.

Do you see any themes? Big ideas? What sort of words characterize how we ought to live in relationship to others according to these proverbs?

DAY 5 — JAMES 4:1-10

What does James say about the cause of fights and quarrels among people? Where do they begin?

How can you fight against the specific desires you have that have caused difficulty with others?

DAY 6 — JAMES 4:11-12

What does it mean to judge your neighbor? What does this passage say about judging your neighbor and the law? How do these relate?

What causes us to judge our neighbor? How should we fight against this desire?

DAY 7 — GALATIANS 5:16-26

What are "desires of the flesh" and "desires of the Spirit?" How can we distinguish them in ourselves?

Do you see the fruit of the Spirit in your own life? Which ones? What is the cause for these to be evident in our lives?

WEEK

6

Your Relationship with Authority

TITUS

3:1-2

PARENTS ARE PART OF GOD'S DESIGN

Some animals lay eggs, leave, and never see their offspring. Other types of animals must be separated from their babies or they will use them as food. Humans have a very different relationship with their parents.

Why do humans have this unique relationship with parents?

Read Genesis 1:28 and 4:1-2.

How did you get your parents? Circle your answer.

I chose them

They chose me

God chose them for me

In the first chapters of the Bible we see God creating many things, even parents. In Genesis 4:1 Eve says, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." She knew that God had made her a parent. God has also given parents an extremely important role in the life of their children.

Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7.

God designed the parent/child relationship as the primary place that children learn about God. It's at home where kids learn who God is, if He is important, and how He wants us to live. If it is God's design to give parents the important role of diligently teaching us about God, then how are we supposed to relate to our parents?

Read Ephesians 6:1-3.

God tells us not to simply obey our parents, but to honor them as well. What's the difference? See the definitions below and discuss the importance of actions:

OBEY – TO LISTEN TO AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF SOMEONE

HONOR – TO SHOW RESPECT TO OR GIVE A HIGH STATUS OR SOMEONE

GOD HAS GIVEN YOU 4 WAYS TO HONOR YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER:

1. To prize highly (Exodus 20:12)
2. To care for (Psalm 91:15)
3. Show respect for (Leviticus 19:3)
4. Obey (Deuteronomy 21:18-21, Ephesians 6:1-3)

The real challenge/question is not what should you do, but what will you do when it comes to obeying and honoring your parents? When will you apply prize, care, respect, and obedience?

God has given us some key ways that we can honor our parents. We will take a look at just a few of them.

1) Accept Your Parents' Discipline.

Read Proverbs 15:5.

Read the following verses. Describe what God tell parents to do?

Proverbs 13:24 – Show love by:

Proverbs 23:13-14 – Save your children's lives by:

Proverbs 29:17 – Bring peace to your home by:

2) Learn From Your Parents.

Read Proverbs 22:6.

Circle how you would complete this sentence: My parents...

Have a lot to teach me

May teach me a little

Have nothing I can learn from

3) Your Obedience Honors The Lord.

Read Colossians 3:20.

God is honored when you honor your parents. How? We obey God, which honors Him. We also glorify Him by being an example to our friends, showing them that Christianity's view of relationships is different.

Have you ever thought about how your relationship with your parents influences the way that your friends see Jesus? Describe why it matters.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER AUTHORITIES?

Other authorities include the government, employers, police, teachers, and church leaders. Submitting to another person involves surrendering what you want and doing what another person says. Not exactly a popular idea in our culture.

Read Romans 13:1-6.

Who puts someone in a position of authority?

If God has placed whom He wanted in charge, and we choose to disobey this authority, we have disobeyed God. Remember, when we disobey God, we will be judged for our actions. When God puts people in authority, He also gives them the power to enforce their authority.

Read 1 Peter 2:13-17.

Name each person or institution described in this passage.

Describe the purpose of your submission to authority.

Read 1 Peter 2:18-25 and Acts 5:27-29.

Reconcile the two passages. In one Jesus laid down his rights and allowed something terrible to happen to him and in the other passage apostles rebelled against the authorities.

If the people in the government are not acting like "God's servants" what should Christians do?

Is there a difference between not liking what an authority directs versus a direct contradiction of the commands of Scripture? How are we to respond?

The general principle is for Christians to submit to authority. God called you to do what is right regardless of the circumstances or consequences.

There is one other authority that is in your life that God desires you to respect and honor as well. This group of people cares deeply for you and your walk with Christ.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 and Hebrews 13:17.

Describe the pressure that church leaders face knowing that they are called by God to "keep watch over you."

Your pastor, student pastor, DC leaders, and other church leaders have been placed in your church by God. They have a very important job and God commands us to respect and honor them.

Despite instances of poor leadership, of which many examples are provided in the books of Judges, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings (as well as in today's world), God assures us that a balance, respect, kindness, and submission are part of His plan. In short, God assures believers that temporary troubles never should trump the exhilarating ecstasy that awaits us with Him.

NOW WHAT?

On a scale of 1-10, how hard is it to obey your parents?

Very hard 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very easy

On a scale of 1-10, how hard is it to honor them?

Very hard 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very easy

Do you need to work on strengthening your relationship with you parents? Name three ways you can improve that relationship.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Is there something you need to talk to your parents about? If so, what is it? When will you talk to them about it?

PRAYER: Are you thankful for your parents/guardians? Spend a few minutes thanking God for your family. Also, take time today to thank them for what they do to provide for you and to help you become an adult.

GOING DEEPER

The most important relationship with someone in authority is our relationship with God. The Bible gives Him many titles of authority, such as Father, King, Judge, Master, Almighty God, and Lord. Those titles remind us to show Him the respect He deserves as we talk to Him and about Him. He is the ultimate authority that one day everyone will have to answer to.

Circle the title above that is easy for you to think of God as. Underline the one that is most difficult to see God as.

Do you believe that most people show God the respect He deserves?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Exodus 20:12 – “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”

WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

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EXAMINE - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

APPLY - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

PRAY - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

DAY 1 — EXODUS 20:12-17

How does the commandment about honoring parents relate to the others?

Why might this commandment be the first of one that relates to how we treat other people?

DAY 2 — GENESIS 9:18-27

What is the difference between how Ham treat's Noah and how Shem and Japheth treat him? Notice the result of their actions in v. 25-27. What can we learn from this story about God's design for families?

DAY 3 — GENESIS 5:1-5

Compare Genesis 5:3 to Genesis 1:26. How do they relate? Why is this significant?

How should this affect the way we think about and relate to our parents?

DAY 4 — JOHN 5:19-24

Describe Jesus' relationship to His Father (God)? Why do they have this kind of relationship?

How does Jesus relationship to his Father impact the relationship we have with our earthly mother and father? Why is it important that God has been revealed to us specifically as a Father?

DAY 5 — 1 JOHN 3:1-3

How does this passage describe our relationship to God? How does this passage impact your understanding of what it means to be a child of your parents? How does your experience of being a child to your parents affect how you view being a child of God?

DAY 6 — JOHN 17:20-26

What does Jesus ask his Father for in this prayer? What might it mean for us to be "one" with Jesus as Jesus is "one" with the Father? What can we learn about Jesus relationship to God, and the way that he acts as a Son? How should this affect our actions as sons and daughters of our parents, and of God?

DAY 7 — GALATIANS 4:1-7

What is the difference between a slave and a child? What does this passage claim about our relationship to God? How do we come to have this relationship with God, according to Paul?

What is an heir? What sorts of things do people inherit from their earthly parents? What sort of things will the sons of God inherit from Him?

LOOKING BACK

You have done a great job this semester as you have studied the Old Testament kings. All throughout Scripture, God's people are instructed to remember the works and words of God. By doing this, we are better able to keep His law. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

How do you feel now that you have completed this study?

What have you learned about your future during this study?

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalm 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and lived out.

- Your relationship with Christ is foundational for all of your other relationships.
- God purposefully created us with the desire to be with other people and with a desire to love and be loved.
- Recognized the importance of caring for the person on the outside of our social circle.
- Jesus is the example to follow in loving our neighbors.
- Discovered the qualities of a good person to ask for advice.
- All of us need to be looking for Paul-type relationships we can learn from and Timothy-type relationships we can teach in.
- Following God's plan for friendship allows for His name to be glorified and for our frustrations to be minimized.
- Considered the necessity for you to live out the qualities that you are looking for in a friend.
- Defined the modern day equivalent of Jesus' conflict resolution strategy.
- Discovered the importance of treating others with tenderness, compassion, and humility.
- Learned that conflict doesn't have to be a bad thing; it can be something that, if handled correctly, strengthens our relationships and us.
- Reinforced the importance of the parent as the primary disciple-maker.
- Learned to speak highly of and love and respect our parents.
- The most important thing we can understand about people in authority is that God put them there. They deserve respect, not because of what they do but because of the One who put them in authority.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.



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