

The Gathering Study Guide



*Crossroads Community Church
November - December 2025*

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Welcome to Crossroads Community Church Study Guide, we are glad you joined us!

We offer this series study guide to be used as a resource for deeper understanding in tandem with weekend messages and it is our hope that you will find this useful in your faith journey and spiritual growth.

We believe The Bible, God's word, is inspired by Him, through the Holy Spirit and is sufficient for everything you need in life – **guidance, wisdom, strength, encouragement and HOPE**. His word reveals His nature and character and His plan of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ, through whom we can have eternal salvation when we choose to follow Him. We also believe the Bible remains relevant in our world today and its power is experienced when personally and consistently applied and practiced.

Part of your journey may include choosing a Bible translation and there are many. To help you choose, it is important to know that a "translation" is word-for-word while a "paraphrase" is thought- for- thought. If you are new to Bible reading or don't yet have one, we offer FREE Bibles that are English Standard Version translation – a very easy to read Bible. Other options are Bible Apps you can download to your phone, or sites like: www.Bible.org, www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.org.

We invite you to join us for weekend services:

Saturday Evening at 5:30pm. Question and Answer period after service.

Morning Social at 10:00am: A time to connect with others over coffee and donuts.

Sunday Morning at 10:30am

Promiseland Kids' Ministry: Toddler – Sr. High, Sunday at 10:30 am, offers Christian education and worship for children and youth

If you have missed a service, you can view it on our YouTube Channel, "Crossroads Ridgecrest", or go to www.crossroads-ridgecrest.org. If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment, please call (760)384-3333 Weds. – Fri. 10am-4pm, text (760)301-4840, or email ccc@ccc-rc.org

Week 1



November 10th – November 15th

Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Monday, November 10th, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 14:1-14](#)

Think: At this moment, there are 17 days until Thanksgiving, 45 Days (or 6 ½ weeks, or 6 weekends) until Christmas! By now, many people are feeling the stress of the holidays looming over them and everything they need to do. Do holidays cause you stress? What about them does?

For many, the expectations, money, family, busyness, or just simply the exhaustion of it all bogs them down and adds to the normal stresses of life and, if we're not careful, we don't enjoy or remember the real reason we are celebrating. In today's reading, it seems the disciples of Jesus were also feeling some stress. What does Jesus tell them in verse 1?

We can assume by Jesus' words, "let not your hearts be troubled" that the disciples were worried about something. The word "troubled" can also mean "distressed" and means *to agitate, cause inward commotion, take away calmness of mind, make restless*. Does this describe how you feel? Life, in general, will cause us to feel this way at times, but there are certain moments in life when stress is exaggerated. In today's passage, this is one of those moments. Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure, but they couldn't understand what He was telling them. They thought He had come to set up an earthly kingdom in which they would rule with Him, so they were

surprised and worried that He was now telling them He would be leaving them. What does He say He will be doing for them when He leaves?

How does Jesus encourage them?

What promise and hope does He give them, and all believers, in verse 12?

The best way to overcome stress is to focus on good things, remember our purpose, and rely on the hope Jesus gives us. This series will take us through some of the most common worries we have during the holiday season and provide practical and biblical ways to overcome them so we can enjoy the reason for the season instead of dreading it!

Engage: In the basics of Christianity, we come to understand that life around us doesn't change much, but we change in many ways. We see things differently, respond differently, and have a very different goal and purpose in life. But sometimes we need to be reminded of this. Later in John 14, Jesus promises His disciples a Helper who will come to dwell in them when He leaves – in [John 14:26-27](#), who is the Helper and what does He do?

The Holy Spirit will help us remember what we learn and how to apply it, how does this encourage you?

Does it give you peace to know you don't have to handle everything on your own? Jesus also promises something else in verse 27, what is it?

Peace is something we all want, but the peace Jesus gives is not the same kind of peace the world offers. What does the world tell us will bring us peace?

Oddly, the things the world tells us will give peace are often the very things that cause stress! For Christians, Jesus IS peace – He is the source and focus of our peace. This peace is not dependent on situations, people, or material possessions, it is dependent on biblical truth and assurance of salvation through Christ and transcends all circumstances. Take a moment to write what you currently look to for peace in life.

Is Jesus part of it? If not, strive to look to Christ alone for peace through this series. Both stress and peace have powerful feelings, and part of what we will learn is that we can be at peace in spite of how we feel, and that when we practice Christ's peace the feelings will also change.

Memorize: Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Tuesday, November 11th, 2025

Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Ephesians 3:14-20](#)

Think: Do you struggle with weariness and exhaustion during the holiday season? If so, why?

Physical and mental weariness is a real thing and we may not be at our best when this happens. How does exhaustion affect you?

How does it impact your relationships?

In today's reading, we come in on a prayer from the apostle Paul to the Christians in Ephesus. The apostle Paul wrote much of the New Testament, letters to the churches, for instruction, encouragement and often discipline. Here, what does he pray for in verse 16?

Whether we realize it or not, most of our life occurs inwardly before it happens outwardly. As we learned yesterday, stress is an inward issue and the evidence of it is seen in our attitude and behavior. Stress will exhaust us emotionally, physically, and spiritually so we must do all we can to "strengthen" the inner being – our soul and spirit. In the following verses, what does Paul offer to help with this? What strengthens us is the love of Christ, that He dwells in our hearts, that we have deep roots in Him so we stand firm during the trials of life and that God's love for us is immeasurable and unsearchable but a powerful reality we can only begin to understand! How does it strengthen your inner being to know this?

Engage: Look at verse 20 on this website, <https://netbible.org/bible/Ephesians+3#>, scroll down to verse 20 and click on it. The right side of the page will bring up several translations of this verse. Write how some of these translations describe the term, "more abundantly" from the ESV. Notice in the KJV and NKJV the term "exceedingly abundantly"? It is hard for us to image Paul's inability to accurately describe in words what God wants to and can do in us. Have you ever experienced the inability to find the right words to accurately describe something? Did you feel it just didn't have the power you wanted? If we look at the definition of these words it will help us out... first the word exceeding(ly), in Greek is "hyper" (pronounced hooper – more as hoo pear) – how are we familiar with this word? We use it to describe someone or something that goes over the normal need, above and beyond, and can often refer to an unnecessary amount of attention or work. We hear of people who are hypersensitive, hypervigilant and so on. The word "abundant" simply means beyond measure or extraordinary, so in this case God is hyperabundant or even beyond beyond! Even in this it's hard for us to grasp the concept but rather than trying to figure that out, lets look at the application, in what way is God hyperabundant toward you?

How does it impact you to know God wants to lavish on and do through you more than you can even think to ask or imagine?

THIS is the power that is at work in you – knowing this, how are you strengthened in heart, soul, and mind?

The next time you are worn out, weary, and feel like you just can't go on, remember this passage to remind yourself of the abundant power God gives you and thank Him.

Memorize: Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Wednesday, November 12th, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 14:22-33](#)

Think: Stress, fatigue, and now wind and waves? There are two very important lessons from today's reading: one is our alone time with God, the other is the danger of taking our eyes off Him in the busyness of the season.

In verses 22 and 23, what did Jesus do?

This particular moment occurred after Jesus fed the 5,000 (including women and children estimates are upward of 10-15,000) with 5 loaves of bread and two fish. He had spent a great deal of time teaching the people and it was time for a break. After dismissing the crowds and sending the disciples ahead of Him, He found time alone to pray to His Father. Jesus always demonstrates in His own life what we should do in our walk with God and there are a few occasions recorded in the Bible where He took time to be by Himself and spend time in prayer ([Luke 6:12](#), [Mark 1:35](#), [Mark 14:32](#).) From these verses we see that Jesus would pray before making decisions, when He was going to be tested by unimaginable pain and suffering as well as just to refresh Himself after a long period of ministering to people.

In this same passage today, as the disciples were crossing the sea in the middle of the night, what did they see?

What did they think Jesus was?

What did Jesus tell them?

Now Peter, the bold and impetuous man that he is, asks Jesus to tell him what?

Why do you think Peter asked this?

What happened when he took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the waves and wind?

Peter is a unique man, his faith in Christ was demonstrated early on in his declaration the Jesus was the Christ of God ([Matthew 16:16](#)), he is a natural leader, he was outspoken, but like many passionate and determined people, he was also the one to fall and fall hard ([Luke 22:34](#)). The good news is that his fall was not permanent and he was restored – this moment was a test of his faith and a temporary failure.

During the holidays, we pour out more time, energy, and resources than we do on a normal basis and one of the things that tends to fall away in the busyness is our alone time with God, and as we, like Peter, take our eyes off Jesus and focus on the waves around us, our devotional time may suffer

and we begin to sink. The key to overcoming holiday stress and busyness is making sure our prayer and devotion time with God continues to be a priority. You may be tempted to worry that you won't get everything done, but you would be surprised to find that when we are faithful to God, he is faithful to us... when we seek Him first, and His righteousness, He will provide for all our needs ([Matthew 6:33](#))

Engage: How does busyness impact your time alone with God?

Clearly if you are doing this study, you are spending time with Him 😊 however, where is your attention? It is wonderful that you are doing this, but like many of us, it can easily turn into a "checking the box" on the list of things to do and we aren't really focused on Him and listening for His voice. Do you find that to be true? Truthfully, this can be an issue for many of us even without holiday stress! So, how do we change this? What can you do to slow down and listen for His voice through reading and prayer?

Is there anything in your list of to-dos that you can delegate to others? You can also separate the things that **need** to be accomplished versus what you **want** to accomplish. As you decide this, ask yourself, "will this glorify God?" and assess if your motive and attitude will glorify or detract from Him. This season, follow Jesus' example and go off by yourself to spend time with the One who can refresh your heart, mind, body and soul.

Memorize: Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Thursday, November 13th, 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 15:4-8](#) [John 15:16-17](#)

Think: What's the story with fruitcake? The Christmas fruitcake has been a running joke for longer than all of us have been around! Some people like it, most don't, and it was Johnny Carson who famously joked, "there's only one fruitcake in the entire world and people keep sending it to each other", noting the extremely long shelf life of this debated dessert.

But fruitcake does have a unique and very long history – its origins begin in ancient Rome where fruitcake was more of an energy bar made for soldiers to carry into battle, made with dried fruit, nuts, and seeds, it was a great source of portable nutrition. Over the centuries, it has lasted and remained mostly the same with few additions such as honey, sugar, and spices and began its journey into the dessert world. It was known as a symbol of wealth in the 18th and 19th centuries and became popularized by Queen Victoria as a wedding cake. Fruitcake was also taken into space in 1969 on Apollo 11! Love it or hate it, fruitcake has nutritional value and lasts a long time... a v-e-r-y long time. That brings us to our lesson today.

In our journey as Christians, we know there are ups and downs, tests and temptations, and the holidays are some of the most trying times we have. As we mentioned yesterday, we can easily let busyness affect our time with God and so it is most important to make sure we are able to get our alone time with him to have the mental and spiritual strength to endure. Part of the importance in this is that, whether we realize it or not, we are bearing fruit – in today's reading, how do we bear fruit as Christians?

What happens to us if we disconnect from Christ (the Vine)?

What is the purpose of our fruit?

How long should our fruit last?

Staying connected to Christ is not just for our own personal benefit but for the benefit of others. This fruit is a spiritual fruit that is the evidence we belong to Christ and is also meant to serve others. Like fruitcake, our fruit should be recognizable, have “nutritional” value and have lasting power!

Engage: What kind of fruit are we supposed to have as Christians? [Galatians 5:19-23](#), shows us two very different definitions... in verses 19-21, what are the characteristics of the “flesh”?

Then in verses 22-23, what fruit or qualities come from the Holy Spirit?

Both describe people and who they belong to – the flesh belongs to the world and the devil, the spirit belongs to God. (Keep in mind, that Christians do occasionally struggle with some of the works of the flesh, the difference is the **consistent practice** of it.) When you stay connected to the vine, the fruit in your life should match that listed in verses 22-23, how are you doing with this? The thing that both descriptions have in common is practice – we either practice sinful actions or habits, or we practice love, joy, peace, patience, and so on. The fruit of the Spirit are not feelings, they are demonstrations of character that come from a heart and mind transformed by the grace of Christ and we must **choose** to practice them. During this busy season, how can you practice the fruit of the Spirit?

Memorize: Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Friday, November 14th, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Psalm 18:1-6](#), [Psalm 18:30-33](#)

Think: When it comes to holiday stress, we are not the only ones dealing with it. Everywhere you go – work, Walmart, the grocery store, and even church – you will come into contact with others going through the same thing. Our stress can be exacerbated when the stress of others splashes onto us! We must always remember, especially when dealing with people, we are in a spiritual battle – and like any battle, the enemy comes after us in many ways, but the most effective way is through other people, especially those closest to us.

In the Old Testament, King David, God's chosen to rule Israel, spent many years in battle. He was well acquainted with being surrounded by enemies, being attacked and chased by King Saul, many times hiding in caves. David was also a musician and poet and frequently expressed his challenges as well as his devotion to the Lord through words – hence we have the Psalms. Many of his psalms express his complete reliance on God during his darkest moments. In today's Psalm, how does David describe the Lord?

What did God do for David?

How does it encourage you to know that God offers the same strength and stability to you?

Engage: As a soldier, David used soldiers' terms to describe the protective nature of God. We see words like fortress and shield, both meant to protect from enemy forces outside. Satan will often use outside circumstances or people to "push our buttons" and try to trap us into sinning. But God watches over us! Based on your life and needs, what words can you use to describe God's strength and protection over you?

Another way to remind ourselves of God's goodness is to think back on other times when we can see God's work in our lives. Think of one of these times and write your own short Psalm using today's example.

Memorize: Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Saturday, November 15th, 2025
Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 19:16-22](#)

Think: One of the greatest stress inducers is lack of or an imbalance of priorities. Generally speaking, we define priority as something that is more important than other things, which is basically true, but the question remains... what makes something a priority? How would you answer that question?

Often what we find consistent is that priorities tend to be subjective, but they are also based on importance, urgency, impact, precedence, and goals. All these factors are part of determining and setting priorities and can change based on need or desires. During the holidays, do your priorities change? Why/why not?

What is one priority that should never change that also fills each requirement above?

In today's reading, we meet a rich young ruler whose priorities were challenged by Jesus. What did the man ask Jesus?

What did Jesus tell Him in verse 17?

What did the man then ask in verse 20?

What did Jesus answer in verse 21?

What was the result in verse 22?

Would you say this man had an issue in his priorities? It's interesting that Jesus' comment to the man to sell his possessions is not part of the ten commandments (see [Exodus 20:2-17](#))... why do you think Jesus did this?

If this young ruler had been keeping the six commandments Jesus mentioned, he probably kept the first four as well – there's no indication he didn't. However, what Jesus exposed in this young man was that even though he was keeping all the commandments, he still had a heart issue. Based on today's passage, what was this man's priority?

What did he love more, his money or God?

Engage: Jesus will always reveal and expose those buried or hidden areas in our lives that need to change. The deception is that we can “have it all” and make no sacrifices in our lives. For this young ruler, his adherence to the commandments became a matter of checking religious boxes but his priority was money. Money isn’t bad, nor does God always want us to sell everything and give it to the poor, but when you drop some money into the Salvation Army bucket or give an extra Christmas donation to Compassion International, are you checking boxes or responding to God from love? Take some time to reflect on your priorities... is God your first priority? Is everything you are and do a love response to Him? If you’re not sure, ask Jesus to expose anything in you that needs to be changed or shifted. Are you willing to do whatever Jesus asks of you?

Memorize: Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Week 2



November 17th – November 22nd

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Monday, November 17th, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Luke 16:1-15](#)

Think: In our world there is the idea of ownership – we own our home, we own cars, we own recreational vehicles, and so on. There is nothing more satisfying than the day we make that last payment and we can say we “own” it and are free of debt. For the Christian, there is a very different concept of this... the reality is we own nothing! Everything in this world, including our bodies, children, time, talents, homes, money, etc. belongs to the One who created everything – we are simply stewards of what we’ve been given. In a way, this gives more importance to what we have knowing that it belongs to God! Even our very life and body belongs to God as we were bought with the precious blood of Christ (See [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#))

This week, we will study the subject of stewardship, or management of the resources God has given us. The definition of steward or stewardship is to be a manager, guardian, overseer, or administrator (of another’s property). In today’s reading, Jesus teaches His disciples a lesson on stewardship through a parable. In verses 1-7, what did the master discover about his steward?

When the steward realized he would lose his job, what did he do?

Why did the master commend him in verse 8?

What did Jesus say in verse 9?

Does this confuse you? This is one of those parables that is difficult to understand at first glance, but Jesus is simply using the example of a dishonest manager to teach that in some respects, the ungodly do more to prepare for the future than those who follow God. If God owns everything we have, what attitude should we have about how we care for and use the resources we've been given?

It is okay and proper for believers to manage their time, money, possessions, talents, and service well with an eye toward the future. Our goal should be longevity as well as gratitude for all we've been given, but our priority is being prepared for our eternal future. This is the lesson... have we prepared for eternity as much as we have our retirement?

Engage: There is another side to this, there are those of the faith who haven't prepared for longevity in this world at all. Some take an extreme view that because this planet is not our home, there is no need to be financially or otherwise prepared for the future. What is the problem with this?

There is a balance required in this. God blesses many of His children with wealth, time, talents, and other resources and there is an expectation that because all we have, whether a little or a lot, is His that we are to care for and use them wisely and with eternity in view. How does Jesus express this in verses 10-12?

How do you currently view the resources you have?

Has today's lesson changed anything? How do you currently use the resources you have for God's purposes?

Are you also preparing for your future while here on earth? This is a both/and... while we must first prepare for our eternal home (death), we must also prepare to live and live well.

Memorize: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Tuesday, November 18th, 2025

Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Mark 12:41-44](#)

Think: Do you remember the days of the pyramid scheme? The idea of gaining wealth through recruitment into an investment that has no reality. As one might predict, they collapsed and failed, leaving many penniless and disillusioned. This might also bring up memories of the famous Enron scandal of the early 2,000's where many lost their life savings. “Get rich quick” schemes have been around for a very long time and always end poorly. The problem is the attitude toward money and what we want to do with it. When a person's only goal is to get rich, it can be very damaging – turn to [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) , what is the danger of the pursuit of riches?

These verses are part of a letter written by the apostle Paul to a young church leader, Timothy, addressing issues or needs he and the church was facing. Paul's letters, which make up most of the New Testament, are letters of instruction, encouragement, and discipline to the young Christian church and its leadership. In these verses, is Paul saying that money is the problem? What IS the problem?

It is the desire, pursuit, and love of money that is the problem. The words used here describe **extreme greed** for wealth or gain indicating a sole focus on pursuing that alone. Have you ever had a desire for something so extreme you could think of nothing else? If so, did you pursue it? Did you neglect other things to attain it? Did the desire and pursuit for this “thing” cause damage elsewhere? Turn to [Luke 16:13](#) from yesterday’s study and note what Jesus teaches about this struggle. It is clear that money will master/control us if we let it, but like any temptation, we choose whether we will feed it or deny it.

Engage: Money is a difficult situation... we need it to live, and it requires tremendous responsibility and self-control. Sadly, in today’s economy it is getting increasingly difficult to make ends meet so the issue of money is more important than ever. So how do we practice godly stewardship if we struggle to pay bills? Godly stewardship not only focuses on who the real Owner of our possessions is, it also requires trust in the One who gives all things. In today’s reading in Mark 12, how did the poor widow demonstrate faithfulness and trust?

How did Jesus compare her gift to others?

God isn’t as concerned with the ***amount*** we give, rather the heart behind the offering (we will learn more about this later this week). How hard do you think it was for the widow to give all she had to live on? It is often noted that those with less to give tend to be more generous than those with an abundance, do you agree? Why/why not?

Part of the lure of wealth is self-reliance, whereas those who don’t have much learn to rely on God. Whether God has blessed you with a lot or a little, what is your attitude toward money? Is God showing you anything that needs to change?

Memorize: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Wednesday, November 19th, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Luke 12:16-21](#)

Think: As long as we're on the subject of riches... list some things you are "rich" in.

You may have listed material possessions and money, or you may have listed family and children. There are many ways we can be rich, but what question is asked in the parable today – specifically verse 20?

What is the lesson of this parable in verse 21?

We don't need to rehash the last two days of study learning about money, today let's focus on spiritual wealth. There are many parables in the gospels (especially Luke) that emphasize the need to be prepared for eternity and Jesus' return, and this parable demonstrates this perfectly. How easy is it to forget about or put off our salvation and faithfulness to God when we are financially secure? What are other "securities" that can also inhibit our faith?

Some may remember the old saying, “don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today” – attributed to Benjamin Franklin, the idea is to not procrastinate as tomorrow is not guaranteed. For the man in today’s parable, he procrastinated in the most important thing, and it resulted in spiritual bankruptcy. This remains a problem for many today, thinking they have plenty of time to become Christian, or they want to “experience” life/get married/have children/finish college before becoming Christian, or they’ll do it when they get old. Turn to [James 4:13-16](#), what does this passage say about the plans we make and God’s part in it?

How does it describe our life?

Does this mean we stop making plans? Turn to [Proverbs 16:1-3](#) and [9](#), according to these verses, is it ok to make plans? Both passages from James and Proverbs tell us we can and should make plans, but we are to make them with God’s will in view. The goal is not to have God give His stamp of approval on everything we want but to take our plans to Him for the purpose of planning **with** Him and asking for His wisdom and guidance.

Engage: Is there anything in your life that is taking priority over your salvation? Even if we have become Christian, we can put off practicing godly living. Are there any habits or sinful practices you are procrastinating on stopping? Stewardship of our faith and salvation means we are treating it as something to protect and care for like we would anything else that is extremely important. Take a moment to let God reveal anything that is inhibiting your faith and don’t put off change or commitment until tomorrow – tomorrow is not guaranteed.

Memorize: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Thursday, November 20th, 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Acts 9:36-42](#)

Think: One of the greatest resources we have is our talents or abilities. We are all given special talents at birth... some people are athletic, other are artists or musicians, while others are skilled at cooking, sewing, or working with their hands. When we become Christian, we are also given spiritual gifts, special abilities given by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of glorifying God and strengthening the church ([1 Corinthians 12](#)). Why do you think God did this?

In [Matthew 5:16](#) what does Jesus teach about the purpose of good works?

What word is used to describe them?

What special talents or abilities do you have? Are they something that can be used to serve God and others? Serving is an important part of being a Christian, turn to [James 2:14-17](#). According to these verses how important is serving?

What does it demonstrate?

In today's reading, we are introduced to a devoted woman who demonstrated her faith through serving. What happened to this woman?

What was she known for?

It is clear she impacted many people and she was very loved... how do you want people to remember you? Will the way you served God be one of the defining qualities of your life?

Engage: Stewardship of our talents and spiritual gifts is very important as believers. For those who are new to Christianity, there may be a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about serving, but many others don't serve for other reasons. What are some reasons Christians may not be serving or using their gifts in the church?

Are you serving in an area of ministry or other community organization? If you're not, and are not sure what or how to get started, here's a few simple questions you can answer:

What is my passion? (teaching kids about Jesus, helping the homeless, being part of presenting an excellent church service, etc.)

What is my availability? (depending on the season of life you are in may impact this)

I like working with people or I'm more comfortable in the background. This is more of an awareness of how we function best.

What are my talents or gifts I can offer God?

There are many ways you can honor God through volunteering on a ministry team at Crossroads whether working with kids, missions, decorating, weddings, being part of the weekend service through hospitality, tech arts, library, or Connections counter, we have a schedule that will work with yours and will teach you all you need to know. Additionally, there are wonderful community organizations such as Salvation Army and Pregnancy Care Center where you can volunteer. If you would like more information on how you can get connected, simply visit the Connections Counter during weekend services, email us at ccc@ccc-rc.org, or call the office at 760-384-3333.

Memorize: "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Friday, November 21st, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Philippians 1:21-25](#)

Think: When you were a child, what was the one place you looked forward to going the most?

Why?

Many of us have a favorite place we like to go, or we may have vacation plans that we are eagerly looking forward to – what is it about these that excites us? The knowledge that we will have a break from the routine and work of life, being able to rest and have some fun, refreshing our minds are all part of why we enjoy this. For Christians, there is another place we look forward to, what is it? Heaven... our eternal home, but what is it about heaven we look forward to?

In the verses from Philippians 1, the apostle Paul expresses his desire for this as well. Between living or dying, what does he say he would rather do?

Why?

However, while he remains on earth, what is his goal?

For Paul, and many of us, we eagerly look forward to leaving the pain of this world behind, but as we've learned, not only do we not know when we will die, we also don't know how long we'll live! There is a quote, attributed to poet Oliver Wendell Holmes that says, "*some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good*", meaning they're so focused on heaven and spiritual matters that they neglect the practical needs of life. It is true, there are some that are so focused spiritual matters that they forget about being in the moment and seeing the opportunities God has in front of them. Since we don't know when we'll leave this earth, we should focus on each day we are given and making the most of it for Christ's sake.

How do we do this? Look up [Romans 12:1](#) and [Ephesians 5:15-17](#), according to these verses, what are we encouraged to do and why?

This is a matter of stewarding the time we have been given and using it wisely. How are you doing in this? What does your schedule look like? Do you recognize the time you have also belongs to God? If the hours of our day all belong to God, what should we do with them?

Engage: We have 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, 365 days in a year... it seems like a lot, but the average person seems to have become increasingly busy over the years. Add in technology where work can be done anytime, sports and other activities for our children, and social media can devour time, and we find we don't have much time in the day. Take a few minutes to write your daily routine and how much time you spend on each thing – be honest.

Aside from work hours, meals, sleep, and other necessary chores, how much time do you have left in your day?

How are you using it?

This isn't meant to make anyone feel guilty, it is meant to help us be aware of the amount of time we may squander without realizing it. Making the most of the time we have, "**because the days are evil**" is not only a matter of what we choose to do with our time but how we are living out the time we have... for example, how do you make the most of your time for Christ at work?

How do you do this at home?

How do you do this when you take your kids to soccer or football or girl scouts?

In Philippians 1, Paul said, "to LIVE is Christ", this is our goal, all things Christ centered and living in a way that glorifies Him in our attitude, actions and words... at work, in parenting, in the community and our downtime or free time - read these verses and note how you can include them throughout your day - [Galatians 5:22-23](#), [Deuteronomy 6:5-9](#), [Colossians 3:17](#) and [1 Corinthians 10:31](#).

Memorize: "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Saturday, November 22nd, 2025
Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [2 Corinthians 9:6-15](#)

Think: God is an overwhelmingly generous God and He wants His people to be generous as well. However, it is common for people to worry about meeting their own needs before giving to others. Although this isn't entirely wrong, we are commanded to provide for our family (See [1 Timothy 5:8](#)), when it comes to tithes and offerings, we may make the mistake of giving *after* we pay bills and do other things and *if* there's anything left over. God, as creator and sustainer of life both requires and deserves the best of what we have to offer, which means we give to Him first, then take care of everything else. Do you give God the best of what you have, or do you give Him leftovers? Much of our concern in this is that we won't have enough, but God isn't concerned with how much we give but the motive and attitude with which we give it! In today's reading, what does God love in verse 7?

What are we taught about attitude in verse 6?

What will God provide in verses 8-11?

So, the question we must answer is: do we trust and believe that our generous God will generously give us all we need to also be generous?

Engage: As we finish this week on stewardship, today's passage is a great reminder that when it comes to our money, time, possessions, service, and anything else we can do for God, our goal is to be Christ centered, giving Him the best of what we have and make the most of every day He's given us. If you have discovered that you haven't been giving to God first or your best in any area, write how you can change this and place your trust in Him. This can be difficult at first since we tend to want the extra money, time, energy, etc. BEFORE we give more to Him, but it doesn't work that way. We can't reap if we don't sow – meaning we don't get the apple before planting the tree – so what we are doing is choosing to trust that God will provide. Our encouragement is that God always blesses faithfulness, it may not mean you'll get more money or things, but spiritual wealth beyond anything you can imagine! And remember, God is pleased with consistent faithfulness, not amount.

Memorize: "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10

Week 3



November 24th – November 29th

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Monday, November 24th, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 6:19-34](#)

Think: A recent report from the World Health Organization states that in 2025, over 1 billion people worldwide suffer from mental health disorders like anxiety and depression – in 2021, they reported 365 million suffering with an anxiety disorder. In their reports, they often point to the lack of government funded programs to meet the needs of those struggling with this, yet for all the resources available the rates of mental health disorders, primarily anxiety, are only increasing, so what's going on?

First, we must define the terms... the web definition of anxiety is: *“a natural feeling of worry or unease in response to stress, characterized by feelings of fear, restlessness, and a racing heart. It becomes a disorder when these feelings are excessive, persistent, and interfere with daily life, requiring help to manage symptoms like panic, muscle tension, and difficulty concentrating.”* The American Psychological Association defines it as: *“An emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune.”* The Bible defines it as: *to be troubled with cares.* Why is it important to understand how it is defined?

In today's reading, what does Jesus teach about being anxious?

Anxiety is not a new issue for people, what is relatively new is how it is viewed, defined, and diagnosed. Being concerned or worried about certain aspects of life is a normal part of life, and although we may say that life today is more worrisome than it was in Jesus' day, that would be somewhat incorrect. In His day, Jews lived under the oppression of the Roman government. They were abused, overtaxed, and controlled by the Romans... life was not easy. What is significantly different is that life then was simpler in that their sole focus was earning a living, marriage, family, and faith – no technology, no media, social media, google, etc.

There is a common factor... anxiety, no matter how you define it, is all about what a person chooses to focus on. Even when the world around us is in chaos, what we choose to focus on is our responsibility. In verses 19-24, what does Jesus teach about what we choose as “treasure”?

Why is this important?

What does He call the eye?

What does it mean to have a “healthy” eye vs. a “bad” eye?

What does He then teach about what to “look” at in verse 26?

What are we to “consider” in verse 28?

What are we to “seek” instead in verse 33?

Do you see a problem and solution pattern here? This looking and considering means more than a glance or passing thought, it is the idea of focusing intently and studying/carefully examining. Seeking is an intentional matter of looking to find or strive for/pursue something. In Jesus' day people struggled with emotions just like we do, but the solution was simple – change your focus and focus on the one truth that never changes or disappoints us – GOD.

Engage: In today's passage we should see a clear path to the problem and a clear path to the solution... what we choose to look at or focus on will impact our mind and heart which will then lead to actions and responses. Anxiety may or may not come from outside sources, but it is always dealt with internally and true healing comes from knowing Christ. However, we must not make the mistake of believing we will never experience worry again, but we now have a lasting solution and that is what we will work on this week.

Do you struggle with feelings of anxiety? What are you anxious about?

Take a moment to evaluate if your worries are legitimate or perceived. Either way, how can you apply Jesus' teach of looking, considering, and seeking a biblical solution? Today and throughout this week, begin taking note of the areas you may feel anxious and what the source is. Ask yourself, "where is my heart focused?" is it on God and His provision or on yourself and earthly things?

Memorize: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Tuesday, November 25th, 2025

Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Philippians 4:4-7](#)

Think: The issues surrounding anxiety and any other mental health challenge are how we view them as well as the very powerful feelings that come with them. Unfortunately, many people who seek help are primarily focused on getting rid of the feelings rather than discovering the source and having a correct view or understanding – but not any view or understanding, a biblically correct view and understanding. You may notice that almost all resources use the term “disorder”, a term that implies a disruption of normal activity or function. However, we have become a society obsessed with labels – everyone has something, but the problem with this is that it becomes an excuse for not taking personal responsibility. More importantly, many Christians are rejecting biblical understanding, hope, change, and practice when it comes to mental health.

Since God created humans ([Genesis 1:27](#), [Psalm 139:13-14](#)) our DNA, and every system of our bodies, He might know a thing or two about how they function, what the needs are and how to heal and overcome the trials and stresses of life. This does not mean we neglect or reject medical science or real medical issues – in fact, biblical counseling is holistic and should always recommend a thorough medical exam to rule out any medical concerns. Once that has been established, we can then focus on the biblical understanding and hope we have in God and His word.

In today’s reading, the apostle Paul is giving instructions for overcoming anxiety (this also works for any other emotional challenges we may struggle with). What is the first thing he tells us to do in verse 4?

How often are we to rejoice? Always? Even when we are suffering? Even when we are anxious? Even when we are depressed or going through a difficult trial? Why would we do this in verse 5?

Part of the reason is the testimony it gives to those who are watching. Paul is not suggesting a “fake it till you make it” program, he is encouraging genuine joy in the midst of suffering. When Christ followers are able to have real peace and joy in the middle of trials, it catches the attention of those around them. Have you known someone like this? How did it impact you?

If Christians are walking around in chaos or always “wringing their hands”, what does that show others about God?

Does it offer hope?

Engage: The deception in anxiety is that we tend to see our problems as bigger than they are AND even bigger than God! If you were parenting in the 90's you may remember the Christian kids show, Veggie Tales. One of their most famous songs is "God is Bigger Than The Boogeyman" with lyrics that remind us; *"God is bigger than the boogie man. He's bigger than Godzilla, or the monsters on TV. Oh, God is bigger than the boogie man. And He's watching out for you and me."*

Even when the situation is more than we think we can handle, consider this... is God allowing this trial in my life for a purpose? Is God bigger and more powerful than this situation or my feelings?

In verse 5, what are we reminded of concerning God?

Peace and joy are possible when we understand that the Lord is near – near to us in our daily life, guiding us and is big enough to handle every problem we run into. When we keep our eyes focused on those truths it will settle our heart and mind. In verses 6-7 of Philippians 4, what are we instructed to do when we are anxious or worried?

How are we to pray?

Again, we see something that goes counter to what we may have been used to – thankfulness. How can we be thankful in our prayers when we are struggling? How does it change your mental state when you focus on being thankful to God?

Much of the healing of anxiety comes from knowing the truth about God and viewing it from His perspective. This comes through prayer and spending time in the Bible.

Memorize: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Wednesday, November 26th, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Philippians 4:8-13](#)

Think: Yesterday we presented the first portion of dealing with anxiety from a letter written by the apostle Paul. As a review, what steps should we take when feeling anxious?

Today's passage gives further details of how to intentionally shift our focus from our problems to the Lord. List the things we are to think about in verse 8. As a reminder, this is not a call to ignore or neglect real problems or needs. God does expect us to do what is necessary, but it's the battle of the heart and mind that we need to work on. For Paul, he could give these instructions because he personally experienced the need to do so. How do we know this? In verse 9, he tells his readers to practice what he has given them, what is one thing he shows them in verses 11-13?

In case we are tempted to think this lesson of contentment was an easy one for Paul, let's read [2 Corinthians 11:23-28](#) and note what Paul experienced. Do you think he's qualified to offer us hope? If we practice praying the way Paul teaches, with thankfulness, and focusing our minds on the things of God, we will learn to be content in any situation.

Engage: Contentment is a huge part of Christian living and something very much needed during the holidays. It is during Christmas, we may find ourselves more anxious and less content if we are focused on the amount of money we do or don't spend on Christmas gifts and other holiday expenses. The word content means "sufficient, independent of external circumstances or contented with one's lot". True contentment means we are satisfied with everything we do or don't

have and every situation we find ourselves in knowing it is God's sovereign plan for us. It is here we have the opportunity to mature and grow in our faith, and it is here we practice biblical change. If you are struggling with anxiety now, how can you practice focusing on the things listed in verse 8. How can you practice contentment in spite of circumstances? This is also a great time to ask God what He is teaching you through this. For additional resources to go deeper into this, the book "Respectable Sins" by Jerry Bridges is a good read and a deep dive Bible study is "Self-Confrontation", an in-depth discipleship course through Biblical Counseling Foundation. These resources are available at Crossroads and if you are interested in them or free counseling, please contact us at 760-384-3333 Weds – Fri 10A-4P.

Memorize: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Thursday, November 27th, 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [1 Peter 5:6-11](#)

Think: We will learn today and tomorrow one of the purposes in God's plan to allow us to go through trials. In verse 6, what are we to do before God?

Turn also to [James 4:7-10](#), What does verse 10 tell us?

You'll notice that both passages encourage humbling ourselves before the Lord while also resisting and watching out for the devil. What does humility and resisting Satan have to do with each other? If we are honest about it, we might realize that anxiety is typically self-focused while humility means "meekness or lowliness of mind". True humility is the response of a grateful heart that recognizes our position before the Lord and He fights our battles for us ([2 Chronicles 32:8](#), [Psalm 46:7](#)). In [2 Kings 6:15-17](#) we see an amazing example of this. The king of Syria was going to attack Israel, and the servant of God's prophet Elisha was worried and scared when he saw they were surrounded. How did Elisha encourage his servant and what did he pray for?

Wouldn't you love for just one moment to see heavens armies around us? Finally, read [Romans 8:31](#), what does this verse teach?

No read it again but replace the word "us" with "me". How does this encourage you?

Engage: Our battle against anxiety and worry is successful when we know who the enemy is, his tactics, and who fights for us. Satan lies to us and if he can cause worry through lying to us about our life, situations, abilities, our worth, etc. than he wins. But if we remember we are God's possession and He fights for us, we can successfully overcome our feelings. In this comes the true humility today's passages talk about. Do you recognize the emotional battles in your life as tactics of the devil to distract you from focusing on God? When you struggle, remind yourself that you can cast (throw) your cares to God and He is fighting for you and recite Romans 8:31.

Memorize: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Friday, November 28th, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 8:28-29](#)

Think: As we continue to learn God's plan through trials, what do verses 28-29 teach about His plans?

Do you realize that God knew before you were born about the trial you are going through right now? Did you know He already had a plan to guide you through it? God is never caught by surprise over the things we go through, and for those who love Him He can work everything – every painful experience – every doubt – every worry – for GOOD! What is this good? The good for us is that we are conformed to the image of Jesus. How does it impact you to know God's plan for you is to reflect the image of Christ?

Does that even seem possible? It must be, or it wouldn't be in His word! We may not feel like we are worthy or even capable, but with God all things are possible ([Matthew 19:26](#))! In this, God's plan is that we glorify Him as He conforms and transforms us. THAT is the key to anxiety... knowing the plan, that there is a plan and it is a perfect plan!

Engage: The practical part of this is for us is that we should also have a plan for those times we are tempted to worry. In our struggle against any temptation or sin, the battle can be won or lost based on how prepared we are to face it, and it is the same here. Take a minute to think about the times or situations you battle anxiety, worry, fear, or any other emotional issue. Are there any triggers? Is there a pattern? You might notice there are recognizable thoughts, activities, events, etc. that may trigger certain unwanted feelings. What can you do to prepare to deal with this in advance?

How can you plan to overcome?

One of the most powerful weapons you have is the word of God, the sword of the Spirit... memorizing Bible verses, reminding yourself of God's promises remembering He is fighting for you.

Memorize: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Saturday, November 29th, 2025

Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Psalm 100:1-5](#)

Think: As we close this week's study and the month of November, we will simply take some time to remind ourselves that God's solution for holiday stress, anxiety, and other worries is thankfulness. It may not make sense to the human mind, but there is REAL healing in the process of taking stock of what we have to be thankful for...

Engage: In this Psalm of thanksgiving, WHAT are we to be thankful for?

WHO are we to be thankful to?

HOW are we to thank God?

WHERE are we to thank God?

WHY are we to thank Him?

This is not just something to do when we are having difficulties or on Sundays at church, this is a way of life! In fact, practicing thankfulness all day every day for everything, is a great way to avoid the temptation to focus on our problems. If our minds are occupied with the things of God, we won't be preoccupied with negative thoughts. Commit to memorizing this psalm, it is only 5 verses and it is a great one to remind us of God's goodness always.

Memorize: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

Week 4



Gathering: Restoring Relationships

December 1st – December 6th

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Monday, December 1st, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 12:1-2](#) and [9-12](#)

Think: If there was ever a time that has the ability to exacerbate the pain of broken relationships, it's the holiday season. Christmas is a time for family, but many people deal with sadness, anger, confusion, and unforgiveness in family relationships as well as friendships. Is there hope? There's always hope! This week we will look at the hope the Bible gives for restoring relationships as well as what to do when we aren't successful. As we begin, let's look at the difference between reconciliation and restoration.

Reconciliation is the reestablishing a broken relationship through removing the conflict. This is what Jesus did for us when He gave His life on the Cross – for those who believe, we are reconciled to God ([2 Corinthians 5:17-19](#)). Restoration is returning the relationship to its former, healthy state and this is the goal, but as we will see, while reconciliation is possible full restoration may not always be possible. Either way, the only way this can even be possible is through a change in how we view and approach healing broken relationships.

When we have been deeply hurt by someone and it has resulted in a broken relationship, how do people normally respond?

For many, when there is conflict in a relationship, the result is a completely severed relationship – no more communication, no more doing things together, and gossip is common. However, when we are Christian, we have a new standard... according to today's verses, what change takes place in us?

How is it to be demonstrated?

When we choose to follow Christ, a big part of our life may now include efforts to reconcile any broken relationships we may have. This may seem like a daunting task, but we will learn, leaving pain and damage in our relationships is not an option. How does this challenge you?

Engage: Do you have any relationships that need to be reconciled? Have you made any efforts so far? If so, what have been the results? If there are people you have been or are in conflict with that needs attention, and you have chosen to follow Christ, make a commitment now to do all you can to bring peace between you. Keep in mind, regardless of the results, God will count you faithful for the efforts you make.

Memorize: If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Tuesday, December 2nd, 2025
Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 12:14-21](#)

Think: Yesterday's passage taught us that as Christians we are to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. What does that mean? As Christians, we soon find out that the way we think, look at situations and respond to them is an entirely new world! Everything we do is likely opposite

of how we may have done it in the past, and if it isn't it is likely the motive is completely different. In today's verses, how we are to treat others that is counter to what you may be used to?

Regarding reconciliation, what does verse 18 teach?

What does it mean to live peaceably?

There are many people who refuse to be peaceful... in fact, turn on any news station these days and you will probably find a report of a riot or violence somewhere. But even in our personal relationships, peace is the goal. However, people can live "peacefully" while not being *at* peace with one another. The word "peaceably" in verse 18 comes from the Greek word *eirene* which means to live in harmony, but we are not called just to live in harmony with others but do all we can to be at peace in our heart. Turn to [James 3:17-18](#), how does this happen?

This kind of peace is truly a heart issue – we cannot claim Christ and refuse to work on broken relationships, but when we truly have the heart of Christ we will want to no matter how hard it may be!

Engage: Many times, those we need to reconcile with feel like an enemy. Living in peace with others is not passive, but an active demonstration of biblical love. In today's reading, what are we told to do for those who are our enemies?

How easy is this to do?

Christian living is filled with doing hard things, making sacrifices, and going against our feelings, but when we think of how Jesus reconciled us to God through His own life, do we have any other choice than to do the same for Him? We must remember that when Christ died for us, we were technically considered enemies of God ([Romans 5:10](#)). For those you may need to reconcile with now, how can you practice the actions listed in today's reading?

Memorize: If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 7:1-5](#), [Matthew 7:12](#)

Think: One of the reasons people struggle with peace in their relationships is due to unresolved conflict. Either we take things personally when we shouldn't (making assumptions) or we simply have a fear of confrontation. Once again, it is not optional for Christians to ignore problems – in fact Jesus makes it very clear that if we know someone has something against us it is our responsibility to seek them out for resolution – turn to [Matthew 5:23-24](#), how does Jesus explain this?

The lesson in this is that harboring resentment or anger toward someone will interfere with our relationship with God. It tarnishes our worship, serving, and prayer life! However, it is rather intimidating to have these difficult conversations and we may not know where to begin so let's look to God's word for instruction.

The first thing we need to do in conflict resolution is evaluate our own actions, attitudes and words. In verses 1-5, what do we learn about judgement in verse 2? What do people tend to do in verses 3-4? It is so common for us to notice sin and problems in other people while not seeing it in ourselves! This is exactly why Jesus teaches verse 5, what are we to do? Did you notice He didn't

say we are not to help other people? We ARE called to help one another (See [Galatians 6:1-5](#)) but it must be done in love and humility which requires we examine our own lives first and deal with our own problems before we try to help others. This doesn't mean we must be perfect and it also doesn't mean we recognize our issues and ignore them, but that we are actively working on them.

Then in verse 12, how are we to treat others? This is the "Golden Rule"! It is so simple, yet so difficult... if we want mercy, should we be merciful? If we want kindness, should we be kind? If we want others to be patient with us, should we be patient with them? How do you want to be treated? The Bible offers a great deal of instruction when it comes to how Christians are to treat others – much of the New Testament letters to the churches include this – and Jesus Himself teaches us how we are to treat others in [Matthew 22:37-39](#)... we are to _____ our _____ as _____ (vs 39).

Engage: In every conflict there are two sides... often, we don't take the time to own up to our part in the problem. If you have conflict with anyone, follow today's verses and stop right now to take a moment to check yourself and recognize your part in it. The hardest part of this is not blame shifting, but taking full responsibility. Once you've done this, make a commitment to talk to the person following [Matthew 18:15-17](#). In these verses you see a method of addressing the issue of someone who has sinned against us, but it is also useful for basic conflict resolution as well. According to these verses, what is the first thing you need to do and how?

If resolution isn't achieved, what is the next step?

Inviting others into the conversation is not gathering people who will be on your side, but those with the ability to biblically guide the conversation. If resolution is still not achieved, what is the next step?

We are here to help you if it becomes necessary – you can invite the person to meet together with us. It is important to keep in mind that even when all biblical steps are taken, we cannot control the actions of others and peace may not be achieved. As long as you have done all you can to follow God's word in an effort to gain peace with others, God counts you faithful.

Memorize: If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Thursday, December 4th, 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 6:14-15](#), [Matthew 18:21-35](#)

Think: Have you heard people say, “just forgive and forget”? How about “I can forgive but I can’t forget”? Are either if these correct, biblical, or even possible? Forgiveness is a huge part of Christianity... it is what Jesus did on the cross for all mankind! Yet as humans, we have a very hard time extending forgiveness and understanding what it really is. Why is this important?

As you read today’s passages, what does Jesus teach about the importance of forgiveness?

Does this change your understanding of forgiveness? How does it impact you to know that your forgiveness hinges on your willingness to forgive others?

The key here is willingness... forgiving others who have hurt us is never a matter of ability but choice. God chose to forgive us, Jesus chose to go to the cross for us, so how can anyone refuse to forgive knowing this? But we do...

Let’s learn a little more about forgiveness. When God forgives us, He does not forget our sins, He *chooses* not to look at them, remember them, or continue to hold them against us. Forgiveness is about love, mercy, and letting go – the problem is we don’t forget, literally, we don’t forget the hurts against us but where we fail is when we choose to continue dredging them up and holding them against others. Turn to [1 Corinthians 13:5](#) (NLT) in these verses, what does love NOT keep a record of? Forgiveness is an act of love, and this is where it gets real for Christians. If we say we

love God but don't love others, we are in sin (See [1 John 4:20-21](#)), if we say we want God's forgiveness but choose not to forgive others, we are in sin, if we want God's mercy but refuse to be merciful, we are in sin (See [Hosea 6:6](#) NKJV). When it comes to restoring relationships, whether peace is achieved or not, forgiveness and mercy must be given first, whether they deserve it or not, whether they've asked for it or not.

Engage: Yesterday we learned about logs in our own eye, and the steps to conflict resolution. Today is technically the first step that should be taken before anything else... forgiveness. Before we talk to someone we are in conflict with, we first forgive them in our heart and mind. Why do you think this is important?

How can forgiving the person before talking with them change your attitude?

How can it impact the conversation?

Take some time to make sure you have forgiven anyone you are not at peace with. If you have been withholding forgiveness, commit to dealing with this immediately. If you struggle with remembering the hurts of the past, practice what we learned from [Philippians 4:8](#) to focus on things that are good, pure, lovey, etc. Memorize Matthew 6:14-15 to remind yourself of the importance of letting go. If your desire is to hang on to hurts and not forgive others or "forget" what they've done, then it is a heart issue and lack of love for God and an honest examination of your faith is needed.

Memorize: If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Friday, December 5th, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Philippians 2:2-8](#) and [14-15](#)

Think: Christianity is not simply a matter of becoming a better version of yourself but becoming an entirely new person with the goal of truly living like Jesus – which is sacrificial living. In verses 3-8 of today's reading, how are we to demonstrate this in our own life?

What does this look like for you in your daily life and relationships?

Is it always easy to put others first? Why?

We are inherently selfish, but Jesus calls us to die to ourselves and take up our cross daily ([Luke 9:23](#)). Even when we try to do this, we tend to grumble about it... what do verses 14-15 teach about this?

How easy or difficult is it to not grumble, complain, or feel like we're being treated unfairly? Again, we find ourselves wrestling against our flesh ([Galatians 5:16-17](#)) and once again the key to overcoming is found in renewing our minds through focusing on scripture and practicing living like Jesus.

Engage: List specific ways you can put your spouse first, your kids, boss, family, or friends first. In verse 3 today, we are told to do this with all humility – the danger of trying to put others first

without a heart of humility is that we can develop a false sense of humility, or even martyrdom in an effort to look good to others. How can you maintain a humble heart?

Humility comes from remembering our own past and who we were before Jesus saved us. This should be practiced consistently, not to berate ourselves but to reflect on His mercy and goodness and keeping ourselves in check. Finally, you may notice that grumbling comes with lack of forgiveness and gratitude, so if you find yourself grumbling check your heart for any unforgiveness or lack of thankfulness to the Lord.

Memorize: If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Saturday, December 6th, 2025

Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [1 Corinthians 5:5-13](#)

Think: On the subject of restoring relationships, forgiveness, mercy, and making efforts to resolve conflict, you may be in the place where you have done all you can with no results. The question then is, what do I do when resolution and reconciliation is not possible? What do I do when the other person refuses or continues to be hateful or hurtful? There are two responses here depending on the situation... back in [Matthew 18:17](#) what are the instructions when a person refuses to listen or repent?

What does it mean to treat them like a tax collector or Gentile?

In Jesus' day tax collectors and Gentiles were seen as traitors, extortioners and dogs, but is it realistic to say this is what Jesus meant? Probably not – if Jesus came to seek and save the lost, then that's how we are supposed to see those who don't know Him or even those who say they do but refuse to listen to scripture. So, in this case we would see and interact with them as we would an unbeliever who needs to know Jesus. How do you do that?

However, there are also situations that are much more difficult, and that brings us to today's reading. Some context is required here – in this portion of the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, he is addressing a very specific sin issue of a man sleeping with his stepmom (father's wife) and the church had done nothing to rebuke him! What does Paul instruct the leaders of the church to do in verse 5?

Does this seem harsh to you? What is the purpose of this action in verse 6?

Delivering this man to Satan doesn't mean send him to hell, it means immediate and thorough discipline needs to take place for his salvation and the protection of the church. In the Bible, sin is often referred to as leaven. If you've ever baked bread with yeast, you know that it takes very little to make dough double or triple in size and it is the same with sin in our personal life as well as the church and even in other relationships. The other fact about yeast is that it only does its work under certain conditions – it must be dissolved in warm water and mixed into the dough – and so sin is the same. When sin finds a warm, cozy environment and it mixes with ignorance, inattention, or complacency, it has room to grow and will impact others.

Now let's turn our attention to verses 9-13. What does Paul teach about interacting with others practicing sin?

Here's where we see the difference between believer and unbeliever – how does Paul say Christians should respond to the person who claims to be Christian but continues to deliberately practice sinful living?

This is the difficult line when we have been making efforts to reconcile with people and they not only refuse to recognize the problem but continue to cause problems. This may be the uncle who gets drunk and disorderly at family gatherings, it may be the grandparents who cause fights at their grandchildren's birthday parties, it may be the mom who lies and gossips about other family members, it may even be the coworker who goes to church on Sunday but the bar on the weekends. There may be times where for the benefit of that person as well as the family, after all other efforts have been made, we have to ask them not to join the family event. We may also need to limit or stop spending time with them as well ([1 Corinthians 15:33](#)). This is a heartbreaking but sometimes necessary decision and one that should never be taken lightly or with any anger, pride, or lack of love, humility, and forgiveness.

Engage: The goal in this is not to make excuses to reject a person, but to show how sin can impact a relationship, family, or community, the efforts we must make and the heart/motive with which they should be taken. In fact, it may help to know that in [2 Corinthians 2:5-11](#) it is taught Paul is addressing this situation again – that after a time, it appears the man that was “delivered to Satan” repented and was forgiven and restored so he wouldn't fall away from the faith. This is where we must be encouraged to be faithful and endure. Restoring relationships can take time, a lot of time, so don't give up. This is a very important lesson to teach and model to our children as well... how to choose friends and what to do when their friends are participating in questionable or sinful activities and how to maintain a heart of love and humility in the process. Is there someone in your life you have had to cut ties with? After this week's study, do you need to go back and change anything or make a new effort? For the church, the door should always be left open – that is to say, when a person must be removed from the fellowship due to unrepentant sin, the door of reconciliation should always be left open. If they were to repent and are willing to show the fruit of repentance, they are to be forgiven and fully restored, just as we are in Christ! This should apply to all our relationships as well. For those you may have had to “remove” is the door of your heart and home left open for their return?

Memorize: If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Week 5



December 8th – December 13th

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

Monday, December 8th, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Luke 9:57-62](#)

Think: It has been said that a person can stand in the middle of a crowd yet still feel lonely or alone. Sadly, this can be exacerbated during the holidays, especially when a person is going through their first Christmas without a loved one, or they have just moved to a new town, school, or job. Have you ever experienced this? Loneliness can be a physical reality or a state of mind, either way it can be a very powerful feeling and one that can be hard to navigate. This week we will learn more about the family we may not know we have, the family of Christ. Yet we will also learn that there is a type of loneliness in Christianity as well, but one well worth it.

In today's verses, how does Jesus describe His life?

Does it sound lonely? There are two things happening here, first... Jesus makes it clear that this world is not His home, but this is a choice. It's a matter of not becoming attached to the things of this world knowing that this life is temporary. Second... Jesus makes it known that we are choosing that same life if we choose to follow Him. In verses 59-61, how did those Jesus invited to follow Him respond?

What did they want to do first?

Was it bad to want to do this? Jesus isn't saying that, but what He is warning against is the idea that we need to tie up loose ends or accomplish goals first – it is simply matter of priority. However, when we choose Christ, we need to know we are also choosing loneliness.

Engage: What does loneliness as a Christian look like? It may mean we lose friends and even some family. It may mean we don't get invited to certain get togethers anymore. It definitely means live counter to the world and most popular beliefs and trends. If you are Christian, what have you lost? Do you ever feel lonely? If so, how do you deal with it?

The main challenge, and Jesus' warning, is to not look back on your old life and miss it to the point of focusing on the past rather than looking ahead to what Christ wants you to do.

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

Tuesday, October 7th, 2025
Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 14:15-29](#)

Think: When Jesus was preparing to be crucified, He also prepared His disciples for this new reality. Part of this was teaching them that He would be leaving them but that they would not be alone. In this passage, who does Jesus say will be sent to them?

Where does He dwell?

What does He do for us?

In verse 27, what does Jesus give to His disciples (us)?

Why do you think He says this?

Jesus knew the time was coming when the disciples' world would be turned upside down. They would be scattered and in fear for their lives when their Messiah, the One they thought was going to set up His kingdom on earth, was arrested, and crucified. Do you think they felt alone? Although they didn't understand at the time, Jesus was giving them hope! Until His resurrection the Holy Spirit didn't dwell in each believer as He does now. God would send His Holy Spirit on certain individuals as He willed for specific purposes, so with the disciples, understanding what Jesus was saying didn't come easily. In fact, before we are Christian, we can't understand the things of God either (See [1 Corinthians 2:10-12](#)), but at the moment of salvation, we receive the Holy Spirit in us and He will guide, teach, and help us remember as well. Does this give you encouragement and hope? This also means that no matter what happens in life, no matter where we go, we are never truly alone... the Spirit is with us always.

Engage: When we are struggling with loneliness, we are not at peace. What kind of peace does Jesus promise us?

Jesus had peace in His Heavenly Father and His mission! He was focused on what He came to do. Often, people find peace in others or in material possessions— mainly they depend on others or things to bring them joy, peace, security, etc. but Jesus gives us a very different peace. This peace is not dependent on people, possessions, or circumstances – it's a heart and mind focus on Him only and taking satisfaction with what He's given us and our circumstances. What this means is we can be alone but not lonely! If you struggle with loneliness, take a moment to note where your

focus is – on Him or what you don't have or think you should have. How can focusing on the mission he has given you help?

How does knowing the Holy Spirit goes with you everywhere encourage you?

If you find that you have been focusing on people or things to bring you peace, commit to focusing your heart and mind on Christ during times of loneliness or instability.

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

Wednesday, October 8th, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 28:1-20](#)

Think: Yesterday we read that prior to Jesus' crucifixion, He told His disciples He would be leaving them, but that when He did, He would send another Helper, the Holy Spirit, who would bring to mind the things He taught. Now in Matthew's gospel, it is a couple days after Jesus has been crucified and placed in the tomb. Filled with grief, the women came to prepare His body since the night He was crucified was the Sabbath and Jewish law prevented them until it was over, but when they arrived at the tomb, what did they find?

Just moments before, they probably felt completely alone and had no hope, their minds filled with questions about their future. Now their minds were filled with completely different questions!

In verses 6-10 what were the women instructed to do?

Who did they see along the way?

Jesus is ALIVE!!! When someone we love dies, we spend a lot of time thinking about them, keeping their memory alive, but with Jesus He IS alive and the hope we have is that when our loved ones chose to follow Him, they are also alive with Him in heaven, and we will see them again. Until then, we have work to do... what does Jesus tell His disciples in verses 19-20?

Known as the Great Commission, Jesus gave His disciples a mission and purpose – tell others about Him, baptize them, and teach them what it means to live as a Christian – does this sound lonely to you? Our peace is connected to purpose, but it is important to note that not just any purpose will do, but one that has eternal potential. As we do this, where is Jesus (vs. 20)?

Engage: Over the last three days we have discovered that loneliness can be tied to lack of peace, purpose, and mission. Do you have a mission? What is it?

Does your mission give you purpose? At the very core of Christianity, we all have the same mission, the one Jesus gave His 11 disciples in verses 19 and 20. Are you following His mission? If you are not, why?

If you are parenting, this IS your mission for several years as your children and home are your mission field. How and/or what are you teaching your children about Christ and what it means to be a Christian?

How can you prepare them for the loneliness they may feel at times?

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

Thursday, October 9th, 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 8:14-17](#)

Think: In the “Fast and Furious” movie franchise, there is a singular prominent theme... family. The main character, Dom Toretto is quoted saying, “*the most important thing in life will always be family*”, and he often refers to family as those people you choose to be in your life. An interesting trivia nugget is that the word “family” is used a total of 81 times in the first ten movies and 27 times in the movie, “Fast X”. Why are we talking about this? It’s not to promote the movies, but to introduce the importance of family and the fact that when we become Christians, we have a whole new family! In today’s verses, what words are used to convey this?

Family is not just those we are biologically related to, but those we most closely associate with and in the Christian faith a literal supernatural exchange that takes place. First, the moment we choose

to submit to Christ, we become part of the adopted family of Christ. We understand the nature of adoption on a human level, and here the apostle Paul uses the word, *huiiothesia*, which was originally a legal technical term for adoption as a son with full rights of inheritance. In the Roman world, when a person was adopted they were given the same full legal rights as the biological son(s), so Paul uses this to help the new Christians understand that they are not slaves to a pagan god who requires works and appeasement with no guarantee of reward but are true adopted children of God and heirs with Christ! This relationship is so real, so special, and so personal, he uses the word, “*Abba*” – the Jewish word children use for daddy.

The second part of this is the fact that as a Christian, you now have a spiritual family. There are many people who have lost their biological family or maybe they never married or had children. For others, their family is estranged from them, but regardless of the how or why, the lack of family can leave a hole in our lives, and it is only emphasized during the holiday season. However, the great news is that we’re NOT alone, we just need to be reminded of the gift we’ve been given in Christ.

Engage: If you feel like you have no family, how has today’s study encouraged you?

Knowing you are part of the family of Christ, you not only receive the benefits of the heavenly inheritance, but you are also brother or sister to someone else looking for family. How can you be that person to someone who needs some company, friendship, or guidance?

Is there someone in the church who needs a place to be for Christmas dinner? Is there a way you can serve someone in the church or invite them to your Bible study or event we are hosting? If you are the one looking for family, look around you – who is there? Who is in your group or volunteer ministry? Don’t be afraid to ask if you need something!

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

Friday, October 10th, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Hebrews 10:24-25](#), [1 Peter 5:7-9](#)

Think: An added difficulty of dealing with loneliness is that it can be compounded by depression and the two can become a vicious cycle – loneliness causing depression or depression causing loneliness. The problem is isolation. When people experience loneliness and/or depression they tend to pull away from activities and people, becoming more and more isolated. When this happens, false thoughts can creep in convincing them no one wants them around, but these thoughts are not from God they are from the devil who is a liar ([John 8:44](#)).

The Bible teaches us that we are meant to be together, for many reasons, but one is for our protection from Satan's schemes. In Hebrews 10:24-25, what are we not to neglect?

According to these verses, what are we supposed to do?

Why?

In 1 Peter 5:8, who are we to watch out for and why?

As we learned yesterday, Christ's church is a family, not just locally but globally, and part of the family's role is to gather together, encourage one another, and protect one another from the devil. But this is something we must also practice in our own life... when we are feeling alone, discouraged

or depressed, we must go against our feelings and stay connected – to God and His word and the body of Christ.

Engage: If you’ve ever watched Animal Planet, you’ve likely seen shows about lions and how they hunt for prey. They typically hunt in packs, but you will notice that the prey they go after are the ones that are the easiest to catch. These are the animals that are small, weak, or have strayed from the rest of the herd. Satan uses the same tactics, and when we have strayed from the church, we are in a weakened state and become easy prey. How well are you connected to the church?

Are you or have you ever pulled away and isolated out of loneliness or depression? What was the impact of that?

The entire world experienced this in 2020 when the COVID pandemic struck and we were forced into isolation... how did that impact you and your family?

For some people, they continue to live in fear of becoming ill, but there are many other reasons in the world that people continue to stay isolated... list some of the possible reasons. Turn to [2 Timothy 1:7](#), what spirit are God’s children NOT given?

What *are* we given?

Other translations use the term “sound mind” where it says self-control, and it conveys the idea that we are to do what we know we need to do. The extreme emotions that can come with loneliness are a battle of the mind and so the practice of power and love and self-control is simply following scripture. Looking back at Hebrews 10, how can you follow and practice these verses?

If you are not connected into a bible study or life group, we have several available throughout the week. You can pick up a brochure at the Connections Counter or go to the website at www.crossroads-ridgecrest.org. Additionally, volunteering in a ministry to support Christ’s church is also a great way to combat loneliness and again there are several areas we would love to have you serve. Get plugged in, stay connected and encourage others to do the same!

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

Saturday, October 11th, 2025

Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 15:1-6](#)

Think: Life is never perfect, Christians are not perfect people, and we will all go through rough patches in life. It is a misconception that Christians are always happy – this is simply not true! Different seasons of life will happen, and when they do, the family of Christ needs to be ready to respond.

Did you know that elephants have very powerful social bonds and work together to protect each other? To protect their young, they will form a circle around the young, facing outward to create a shield. They also coordinate charging against predators and alert others about danger. Elephants are also known to show concern for members of their family as well as help them when they are weak. They work together to solve problems and share the responsibility of caring for the young of family groups. What a beautiful picture God has given us in His creation!

We can learn much from this example and what the scriptures teach us. In verse 1 of today’s reading, what do those who are strong have an obligation to do?

There are two words here that are powerful points... *obligation* and *bear*. The word “obligation” expresses the meaning, “that which is due” and is the same word often used to note when money

is owed. The word “bear” means to help carry, support, or to take upon – this is the picture of someone with an injured ankle leaning on another for support to walk. With these definitions in mind, what is the role of strong, mature Christians?

Not only are Christians not always happy, we are not always strong! When this verse speaks of those who are weak, it means those who make a mistake from an error in knowledge or simply succumbing to a temptation. Every church is filled with people who are new to Christianity and are still learning and making mistakes, or people who are going through a tough season and having difficulty emotionally. Like the elephant, it is our responsibility and privilege to show concern, protect and help solve problems for those who are weak. Not just when problems present themselves, but we should be aware and on guard at all times!

Engage: We don’t need to walk around as though we will be attacked at every turn, but Satan IS an opportunist and will come after us, our children, our spouse, or church when we have become comfortable and complacent. In fact, one of the biggest issues in churches is that we are really good at putting on a brave face when we are dying on the inside! Part of our obligation to bear with others who are struggling is getting to know people, stepping out of our comfort zones, and getting involved. Have you ever noticed when someone at church just doesn’t seem to be themselves? They “act” ok but something is just off... do you press them or accept their “I’m fine” response? Of course we can’t force folks to talk, but we can let them know we are there if, and when, they need to talk. What are some other ways you can encourage and support people?

The power of a phone call or card is more than many understand! Have you been on the receiving end of a well-timed phone call? How did it encourage you?

God’s plan for us is to offer others the kind of comfort He gives us. We have a Care Ministry that makes phone calls to check in on people as well as cards for special occasions, sympathy or just to say we were thinking of you. If you would like to be part of that ministry, please contact Karlie Manos at (760)384-3333 or sign up at the Connections Counter. If you are interested in becoming

a mentor or learning how to disciple someone, please contact Dionne for an appointment by calling the above number or email dionne@ccc-rc.org.

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

Week 6



December 15th – December 20th

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Monday, December 15th, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 11:1-16](#)

Think: Last week we talked about the loneliness that often comes with following Christ and aside from the disciples, we see that there were almost no others in Jesus' life that He could call friends. However, over the next few days, we will meet a family that Jesus had become very close to, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. These are the same sisters in [Luke 10:38-42](#) where Martha complained to Jesus that Mary wasn't helping her with serving the meal. We don't have many details about the friendship but we can tell from the scriptures and how the sisters interacted with Jesus that they were close.

In today's scripture, how is Lazarus described (vs. 3)?

What was the situation?

What was the interaction between Jesus and His disciples?

What didn't the disciples understand?

Why did Jesus delay going to Bethany?

It may be difficult to understand why Jesus would purposely delay going to Lazarus when we know He has the power to heal. This was one of the reasons the sisters sent for Him. In Jesus' ministry people saw Him heal the sick, blind, and demon possessed, the disciples witnessed His power and authority over nature as He calmed winds and sea, but Jesus was about to show them He also had authority over death!

Engage: When someone we love dies, we grieve, and although loss and grief is part of life, it is never easy. To define grief in this sense is profound sorrow, to be in distress or heaviness. This kind of grief will affect us emotionally, physically, and sometimes spiritually, so we must look for hope. For Christians, our hope is in Christ and the fact that when we have a genuine relationship with Him, life is eternal - even after we have passed from this life, we live with Him in heaven! Biblically speaking, the word grief is often used more in the context of sin and its consequences, which we will learn later this week, but we also read of mourning. The difference between grief and mourning is that grief is an internal response where mourning is the external expression of it. There is no "cookie-cutter" method, timeframe or pattern to grieving and mourning, it is simply an extremely difficult season we must face. The hope is we can grow through it and glorify God in the process. Have you lost someone you love or who you were close to? How did or how are you going through it?

Did the person have a relationship with God? Why does this matter? If you are in the grieving process now and are having a difficult time, we are here to help – God offers great hope and healing! You can make an appointment for free counseling by contacting the office at (760)384-3333, Weds. – Fri. 10am-4pm or emailing ccc@ccc-rc.org.

Memorize: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Tuesday, December 16th, 2025

Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 11:17-27](#)

Think: Death is so final... or is it? In today's reading we see the conflict within Lazarus' sister Marth between what she *knows* and what she *wants*. The hope of eternal life that Christians have is a wonderful truth and reality to lean into when someone we love dies, but it doesn't always stop the pain and questions. When an elderly person or someone who has been battling cancer dies, it is painful and we mourn them, but there's a sense of expectancy. It is when tragic and what we see from our human perspective as untimely death occurs, we are left reeling.

We might assume Lazarus' death was unexpected – other than he had become ill, however, Martha knew something about Jesus that left her with questions and hope. In this passage, how long had Lazarus been dead when Jesus arrived?

What did Martha tell Him in verses 23-34?

It almost appears that Martha is blaming Jesus yet at the same time she is confident in His ability to change the situation. As believers, we often waiver here as well... praying, hoping, and even begging God to heal someone, yet knowing that God's will may be death for that person and when it is, why He didn't stop it. Have you experienced this? You are certainly not alone, and as long as we don't cross the line of irreverence toward God, the why questions can be ok simply when we lack understanding. Turn to [Isaiah 55:8-9](#), how do God's thoughts and ways differ than ours?

Like Martha, we may *know* what God’s word promises, but what we *want* is based purely on personal thoughts and feelings. Even so, Martha trusted in Jesus and believed that He gave eternal life – do you trust this as well?

Engage: We can acknowledge God’s will and sovereign plans, but we can still wrestle with trying to understand some of His decisions. We must be clear on something first... God does NOT take anyone away “too soon”. Read [Job 14:5](#), what does this verse explain about the determined amount of our time?

God knows the number of our days – the day we enter the world and the day we leave the world, and although He is capable of changing those days, there are only a few passages in the Bible that show He did that and they were special circumstances (See [Hebrews 11:5](#) – Enoch, [2 Kings 2:1-12](#) – Elijah, [Isaiah 38:1-5](#) – Hezekiah). God also doesn’t “need another angel”. People, in their desire to offer comfort to those in mourning will often say things like this. Well meaning as they may be, what they don’t realize is not only is it unbiblical but it makes God look selfish. Angels are created beings, no one becomes an angel or earns or loses wings – no matter how many Hallmark movies may show this 😊 Death became a part of life when sin entered the world and sadly the circumstances surrounding it can leave us confused and even rock our faith. Is there a death that has left you confused? Has it shaken your faith at all? How have you or are you dealing with it?

Does the fact that Jesus offers eternal life, giving hope that you will see your loved ones in heaven encourage you? This hope is grounded in Christ alone, and for those who are unsure of their loved ones salvation, turn to [Luke 23:39-43](#), what did Jesus tell the criminal on the cross who confessed Him?

This man had what we may call a deathbed confession and although salvation shouldn’t be put off until the last moment, it does show us God’s amazing grace and that even when a heart truly repents and confesses Him at the last moment, paradise is the future. This also gives hope to those who are unresponsive physically since we can’t and won’t know until we arrive in heaven, what can take place between a person and God in the unconscious moments.

Memorize: Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Wednesday, December 17th, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 11:28-37](#)

Think: The grieving process can walk us through many emotional highs and lows, feelings of profound sadness, anger, loneliness, disillusionment can happen and even take us by surprise. There can even be a physical toll on a person in mourning – fatigue and even illness can be part of how we deal with grief.

People often disassociate Jesus with real human emotions and feelings believing that as God He didn't struggle with them. He may not struggle with them the way we do, but He does have very real emotions. This is seen in [Luke 22:39-44](#) where we find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane just before He is arrested and crucified. In these verses, what does He ask of His Father?

How does verse 44 reveal His emotional state?

There is a real condition called hematohidrosis, where intense emotional or physical stress causes tiny blood vessels to rupture in the sweat glands.

As we continue reading about the death of Lazarus, in today's reading, when Mary heard that Jesus was coming, what did she do?

What did the people at the house think she was going to do?

Likely many of these people were friends and family of Lazarus, but in the Jewish culture it was a common practice to hire mourners to weep and wail over someone's death. When Mary sees Jesus, what did she say to Him?

Do you find it interesting the sisters said the same thing to Jesus? How does this show their faith in Him?

Verse 33 says Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled. The Greek words for "moved" and "troubled" are more related to anger, but the type of anger that is directed at the cause of the pain. The King James and New King James Bible say Jesus *groaned* in His spirit. Think of it as the frustration of watching people suffer because of something someone else did and it brings on feelings of indignation, but in this account Jesus' indignation is directed at Satan and the damage he causes/caused when sin entered the world. However, He was also moved to tears because He shared in their grief. The Bible also tells us that God sees our grief and tears, turn to [Psalm 56:8](#) (NLT), what does God do with your tears?

How does this comfort you to know that God cares for your sorrows and understands our grief?

Engage: When you are grieving, what's the thing you want most?

Is it to have a loved one returned to you? Is it for the pain and sadness to stop? Is it to know that God cares and is with you? Turn to [2 Corinthians 1:3-5](#) (NLT), in this verse, who comforts you?

Because of this, what are you then able to do for others?

As we will learn more in tomorrow's study, God does not waste our pain. In his book, "Walking with God through Pain and Suffering", Timothy Keller tackles the issue of why God allows pain and how,

with a relationship with God, we learn there is meaning and purpose in it (this book is available in the church library). In what way has God comforted you through a loss?

Have you comforted others as well? Can you see how God equips us to care for one another? If you have never considered this before, take a moment to reflect on the ways God comforts you and how you can offer this to others.

Memorize: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Thursday, December 18th , 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [John 11:38-45](#)

Think: The plot thickens! Moved by the grief of Mary and Martha, the way sin has ravaged God's creation, we now come to a HUGE moment in Jesus' ministry. In today's passage, what did Jesus tell the people to take away?

What was Martha's response?

You have to love Martha – stating the obvious! How long had Lazarus been in the tomb?

For the people who had been mourning, Mary and Martha, the disciples, as well as any other onlookers, was there any question Lazarus had died? What was Jesus' prayer that shows the specific purpose for His delay in coming to Lazarus?

When Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out, what happened?

Up until this time, Jesus had demonstrated His power and authority over illness, demons, and nature and now He publicly demonstrated His power over death! It is in this we may wonder why God doesn't continue to do this now. For us, this is where we come face to face with God's sovereign plans when He chooses not to heal and the "sickness" leads to death. For Christians we have a choice to make, become angry with God and blame Him or see the opportunity to be a testimony to God's strength, comfort, wisdom, peace and joy when we can walk in these during these painful seasons of life. How is this a testimony? Does this mean we are happy about the situation? No! It simply demonstrates our submission and faithfulness to a good God who will strengthen us, take our pain and give it purpose.

Engage: When the people saw what Jesus did, many of them believed in Him. That is our goal... even in the most painful times of our life, people can ultimately choose to follow Christ when they hear the hope of salvation in Christ at a memorial or when they watch faithful Christians walk in peace, joy and grace. Turn to [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#), here the apostle Paul expresses how God works through us in difficult circumstances. What does he teach?

We tend to mature more under the pressure of trials than when times are easy and there is more power in a testimony written in pain than when life is smooth. Have you ever known a believer who has shown this in their life? How did it encourage you?

How about others who were watching them? The reason believers can do this is because we know something about eternity – read [Revelation 21:4](#) and write what we have to look forward to?

Memorize: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Friday, December 19th, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 5:4](#)

Think: Now we turn our attention to a different kind of grief and mourning. Today's verse takes an eternal perspective on the subject... what word is used to describe those who mourn?

The word "blessed" in the Greek means "happy", does this make sense? In our world what are the things that are promised to make us happy?

If we were to ask Joe or Jill Public, they would likely say money, a good job or home, good health, safety, etc. All of these are good and do bring a sense of happiness, but when they are gone are they still happy? The happiness or blessedness Jesus is speaking of is the supernatural reality that exists for those who do not depend on the world's goods to make them happy. In fact, in this verse, which is part of the greatest sermon ever given, the Sermon on the Mount, is part of a list of what are called beatitudes or attitudes and realities that run counter to what we would normally expect.

In the culture of this time, many of the people Jesus taught and ministered to were oppressed, slaves, poor, spiritually lost, disabled, and so on – their lives were marked by mourning, yet Jesus promises them what?

However, we must be very careful here... He didn't necessarily mean comfort in this life. There is a great example of Jesus' point in a parable found in [Luke 16:19-25](#), in this parable, what was the circumstance surround the rich man and Lazarus (this is not the same Lazarus)?

What did the Lazarus receive in his eternal life?

This is the comfort Jesus promises.

There is another layer to today's verse. This mourning Jesus speaks of isn't just a personal issue based on our own circumstances, but the kind of mourning that happens when we are grieved by sin and its effect in others and the world. This is a godly mourning that has a broken heart over the sin of others and the damage it does. List some of the effects of sin you see in the world. Does it grieve you? This mourning looks forward to the future of a new world when Jesus returns, and sin and death are destroyed in the end!

Engage: One of the marks of a true Christian is the growing broken-hearted grief we feel over sin in the world, our friends, and family. This is more than a passing acknowledgement of how "unfortunate" it is, but a real emotional and often physical reaction to it – much like Jesus when Lazarus died – and grows as we mature in our faith and understand the impact. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being "I don't think about it" and 10 being "It makes me cry and motivates me to do something", where would you say you are?

If you find you don't really think about it, ask God to help you learn the importance of this.

Memorize: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Saturday, December 20th, 2025

Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 7:18-25](#) , [1 Timothy 1:12-16](#)

Think: We will finish this week looking at another aspect of grief over sin... our own. It is always easier to see the sins of others than to recognize it in ourselves, but just as our mourning over sin in the world grows as we grow in Christ, our own sensitivity to the sin in our life should also be growing. Turn to Romans 7:18-25, what is the internal battle the apostle Paul describes within himself?

Do you find yourself in this same battle? In verse 24, how does Paul express his grief over his own sin?

Now turn to 1 Timothy 1:12-16, what is Paul's testimony?

In verse 15, how does he see himself?

Did you notice that Paul says "I am" and not "I was"? Although God's saving grace takes us from death to life, sinner to saint, Christians continue to battle sin. In fact, we should become increasingly sensitive to the sin in our life with it taking less to break our heart and lead us to repentance. Paul wasn't claiming to keep sinning the way he did, but understanding the grace given to him he continues to be more mindful of any sin present. He is showing the right view and attitude toward sin and one that we should also have. Are you becoming more sensitive to the sin in your life? Does it grieve you when you do sin? Why/why not?

Engage: Many churches, pastors, authors, and leaders deliberately avoid the subject of sin and repentance in a person for fear of offending them. However, the Bible is perfectly clear on the subject, and it should never be ignored. This isn't an issue of trying to get people to walk around in sackcloth and ashes but to have a proper and accurate view of ourselves as well as a repentant heart. When you become Christian, you notice that the sinful activities that never bothered you before, bothers you now. Do you notice this? What is happening here is a work of the Holy spirit, read both [2 Corinthians 7:10](#) and [Ephesians 4:30](#). In Ephesians, who is also grieved by a continual practice of sin?

When we deliberately sin, we grieve God's Holy Spirit, and when we try not to sin but sin anyway, the Holy Spirit will convict us. This is the feeling of guilt we experience, but this guilt isn't meant to condemn, according to 2 Corinthians 7:10, what is it meant to do?

Godly sorrow, or the conviction of the Holy Spirit is meant to lead us back to God with a repentant heart. This should lead us to not only repent, but create a plan to resist temptation in the future. If there is an area of temptation in your life that you continue to struggle with, does it sadden you? Do you have a plan to resist the temptation? If not, take a moment to think of some ways to avoid or resist. Find a bible verse you can memorize and recall to mind when you are faced with temptation. Remember, you are not alone – as a Christian, you have the power and wisdom of God's Holy Spirit in you to give you the ability to overcome and when you try with all your heart yet our flesh fails, we can ask for forgiveness and be cleansed from all unrighteousness ([1 John 1:9](#))!

Memorize: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, John 11:25

Week 7



Gathering: Calming Chaos

December 22nd – December 27th

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Monday, December 22nd, 2025

Day 1

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Isaiah 9:1-7](#)

Think: Christmas can be one of the most chaotic times on our calendar. Last minute shopping, holiday meal planning, family visits, wrapping gifts, cleaning the house, oh and we still have to go to work! Was this what God intended when He sent His Son into the world as an infant? Was this God's plan for the future of Israel and all humanity? Not really. Christmas as we know it, and all the activities that go with it are good and fun and a tremendous blessing from our gracious God, but if we're not careful it can take us into stress and chaos, and we aren't enjoying any of it. Can you identify with that?

Today's passage comes from the book of Isaiah, named for the prophet of God who was sent to prophesy to the southern kingdom of Judah. All of Israel, at this time, including Judah had a succession of evil kings who led people astray with worship of Baal, sacrificing children to the god Molech and other evil acts. Even when they would have a king who followed God and cleansed the land and temple, another evil king would rise up and start all over. War was a "normal" part of life for God's people, often becoming the target of surrounding nations. It would be safe to say that they were in chaos most of the time. The role of a prophet was to speak the words and messages given by God and focused on repentance, consequences of sin, and judgement of continual rebellion. However, God also gave messages of hope – messages of deliverance and salvation for the faithful remnant. As we come into today's scripture, the pagan nation of Assyria was invading the Northern kingdom of Israel, and they were headed for the southern kingdom of Judah – they needed some good news!

We all need good news! At the time of the writing of this study, our nation is entering its 4th week of government shutdown, and many people are not being paid for work, have been furloughed and those in food assistance programs may not get their aid starting Nov. 1st. Do you think we are in

chaos? Prayerfully, by the time you are reading this, everything will have been resolved! Although there’s no “good” time for this, having it happen right at the holidays couldn’t be worse! We need some GOOD NEWS!!!

In this portion of Isaiah, several hundred years before Jesus was born, Israel was given some good news. What hope was given to the people?

Verses 6-7 are some of the most well-known prophecies of the coming Messiah, how is He described?

What titles is He given?

What kind of government will He have?

How do you think this gave them hope?

Even though Jesus fulfilled this prophesy 2,000 years ago, He will continue to fulfill it as He continues to be our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace in a perpetual kingdom and will be established when He returns. Does this give you hope?

Engage: There are different types of chaos... national, global, relational, and personal. What would you say is the opposite of or antidote for chaos?

You likely wrote that peace is the opposite of chaos, and you wouldn’t necessarily be wrong. Chaos is defined as disorder and confusion and the word “peace” as stated in today’s verses is the word *shalom* and means quiet, soundness, tranquil, welfare and safety. The question we face is where does chaos come from and how do we avoid or overcome it? Turn to [1 Corinthians 14:33](#), what does this verse say about God?

God is not a God of confusion, so when we are struggling with chaos or chaotic situations, where is it coming from? Satan loves chaos and loves to use it as a distraction. It causes us to be stressed, impatient, anxious, etc. so the one thing we must remember is that chaos is not from God and we

must stop, look around and find out what the source of chaos is. Is there a way we can change or minimize it? This week we will work on the different areas we struggle as well as learning and living in God's peace.

Memorize: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Tuesday, December 23rd, 2025

Day 2

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Luke 2:1-20](#)

Think: Almost 700 years after Isaiah's prophesy, the Prince of Peace was born! Considering how He was described one might think His entry into the world would have been front page news, yet God had a very different plan for this birth announcement! Who did God choose to be the first to hear about the birth of Christ?

Why do you think He chose shepherds? Let's consider a few things... first, shepherds were of humble means so they wouldn't have had any profit to gain from this. On the flip side, had God chosen a government official, royalty or religious leaders to receive the birth announcement, how do you think they would have responded to this news?

We know from other bible passages that high ranking and wealthy people didn't take kindly to "competition" so chances are the message would have been lost on them. God, took the best news of all to the people who not only needed it most, but would share it with others.

Another point to consider is the many times Jesus uses the term "shepherd" to describe Himself and how He cares for His flock – us! He cares for, feeds and protects us the way a shepherd does his own sheep. We also know that Jesus is called the Lamb of God and that was how John the Baptist announced Him at His baptism (See [John 1:29](#)).

In the angel's birth announcement, what was proclaimed in verse 14?

At this time in Bible history, there was chaos. Israel was governed and ruled by Rome, and it was a tenuous relationship at best. The one thing people wanted was to live peaceful lives without worry or concern. The Jewish (and Gentile) people were also often very poor, so peace of not having to struggle was also an issue. Honestly, we still worry about the same things today.

What makes Christianity unique is the accessibility to any and all people. God loves the lowly and downhearted, the humble and poor, the uneducated... the sinner. Yes, God loves rich educated people too, but in a world that elevates wealth and status above everything else, He offers the greatest riches of all to all people. One of these riches is peace.

Engage: How would you describe a peaceful life? Is it a life free of stress? Free of financial worries? Is it a life of relational bliss? The kids are doing well at school, the car is running, and the refrigerator is full? What about political peace, world peace and societal peace? If God sent peace on earth in Christ, then why is there so little peace and so much chaos? Peace can be situational, like national tranquility, but the kind of peace God gives is spiritual and internal. It is a choice that results in a tranquil state and transcends circumstances rather than being dependent on others or situations to make us feel at peace. Turn to [Philippians 4:6-7](#) and [Galatians 5:22](#), in these two passages, what is our source of peace and how do we achieve it?

What these verses are teaching us is that peace is possible regardless of circumstances. The caution for us is that we need to practice peace and know that if we are not at peace with someone or something, we may be in sin. Lack of peace is much like the warning light in our car – it is an indicator that something deeper is going on. Where are the areas you lack peace?

Take some time to evaluate if it is an area of sin. No matter the reason, take your worries to God and thank Him for the peace only He can give. Memorize these verses to remind yourself of God's promise and gift that first Christmas.

Memorize: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Wednesday, December 24th, 2025

Day 3

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Matthew 10:34-39](#)

Think: When you were a child, was there a word you thought meant one thing only to find out as you grew up, meant something else completely? We are often limited in our faith by the language differences between western American English and the Eastern languages of the Bible. It is with time and study that not only do we learn what words really mean but the lessons God is teaching us as well. The Bible is called the "living word". What does that mean to you?

If you look in [Hebrews 4:12](#), what is the sword and what does it do?

Have you ever read your Bible only to feel completely convicted and exposed – but in the right way? Have you ever noticed you can read a verse and it applies to your life or situation, then years later

have that same verse apply, but in a different situation? That is because the word of God is alive! It is powered by the Holy Spirit. But sometimes that power hurts when we are confronted in our sin and it can also hurt when that sword divides people in our lives when we choose to follow Jesus.

In today's verses in Matthew 10, what does Jesus say about what He came to bring?

Does this seem to contradict what we've been learning about His purpose? This sword He is speaking of is not a literal sword meant to be used to kill, but that the word of God is a sword and it pierces and divides. Jesus' presence divides people and when someone chooses to faithfully follow Him, it can also divide friendships, families, even marriages. Choosing this life will separate us from the world, and we might even call this a different kind of chaos, even the right kind of chaos. It's not a matter of disorder or confusion but it does cause division, rejection, and persecution. Jesus didn't come to speak smooth words that would tell us we're ok in our sin, He came to reveal the truth. He didn't come to make us feel good about ourselves, He came to help us realize how much we need a Savior. He knew that His message would divide even though His message is hope, grace and mercy, so that's what He means when He says He didn't come to bring peace, but a sword.

Engage: It may not make sense at the moment, but even when we lose family and friends because of our choice to follow Jesus, we can be at total peace. How is that possible? The peace God gives us is a supernatural peace we have from the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean we will always be happy about circumstances or that we won't be sad about losing people in our lives, but we are "tranquil" about it, have you experienced this? Learning this kind of peace can take time and frequent reminders that God is in control and will only do what is best for us. If there is a situation in your life right now, how can you apply today's lesson?

One more thing... we are never to use the sword (the Bible) as a weapon against others. People are already being accused of weaponizing Christianity and sadly in some instances this is true. The point of Hebrews 4:12 is that we are to allow the sword to do its separating work in our own lives.

Memorize: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Thursday, December 25th, 2025

Day 4

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Amos 8:11-12](#), [Daniel 12:1-4](#)

Think: Most generations can say that the past was a much simpler time. Looking back in time and history, we notice that 30, 40, 50 and 100 years ago and more was much less complicated and busy, less chaotic. As you look around the world, what causes busyness, stress or chaos?

Isn't it interesting that the things that are supposed to make our lives easier actually makes it more difficult?

Increased chaos in the world is a sign of the end times. Reading today's scripture, what are some of these signs?

It seems one of the main characteristics is the "running to and fro" and increased knowledge. This is pointing to the idea of people searching for something they can't find – God's word. Does this mean God's word isn't present? Not at all, rather it has more of the sense that as people see times become more chaotic, dangerous, and unstable, they will search for answers but not from God. Turn to [2 Timothy 3:1-7](#), how are the last days described?

Does this match the prophecies given to Amos and Daniel? The book of Daniel, chapters 7-12 are some of the most specific end times prophecies in the Bible. They describe the conditions of the world as well as what is known as the great tribulation and the time frame in which this will take place as well as the antichrist and what we should watch for. [Matthew 24](#), Jesus' own words

describe the end times, [Ezekiel 38](#) describes the war against Israel in the end times and of course the book of Revelation describes in detail God’s work in the last days. The challenge is that many people avoid reading or learning this valuable information, why is that?

End times prophecy can be scary and confusing, so many people choose not to spend much time learning about it. However, here we are in 2025 having watched Hamas wage war against Israel, holding people hostage, antisemitism in the United States is growing, assassination attempts against the president, the successful assassination of Charlie Kirk simply for publicly expressing his faith and willingness to engage people in conversation, as well as the hardheartedness of people celebrating his death and the death of Jews or anyone else who disagrees with their opinion. Would you say we might be in the end times? Did you know that 27% of the Bible is prophecy? This includes prophecy about the conditions of the world before the second coming of Christ, so whether we like it or not, as Christians we should have some knowledge of what to look for.

Engage: The challenge with biblical prophecy is that it is often both near and distant future. Many of the prophecies of the Old and New Testament have been fulfilled but continue to apply to a future fulfillment. Think of it this way... the prophecy of the antichrist and the atrocities against the Jewish people have seen a fulfillment when Hitler killed millions of Jews during WWII. He seemed to fit much of the description, but he didn’t fit the complete description. In Matthew 24, Jesus warns that it is possible that the insidious nature of the antichrist will be so compelling that even the “elect” or Christians will be deceived! Do you think you would be deceived? Why/why not?

The deception about being deceived is that we never think we will be deceived! There is only one way to be sure this doesn’t happen, what is it? Read your Bible and know what to look for. However, in this, we are not to “run to and fro” in panic mode. What helps prevent this is preparation, whether it is stocking up on emergency food and supplies or being vigilant about the state of the world. How can you make sure you are prepared?

How can you help others prepare?

If you would like more information on end times prophecy, some reliable teachers/authors are Joel Rosenberg and Jonathan Cahn both of whom you can catch on YouTube or you can check out some of their books in the church library.

Memorize: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Friday, December 26th, 2025

Day 5

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Romans 5:1-11](#)

Think: Over the years many people have said, “God is love”, or “God won’t sent people to hell” or even, “God loves me because I am a good person”. These statements are both correct and incorrect, do you know which ones are which?

God IS love... He demonstrated this by sending His Son into the world to offer salvation to all people ([1 John 4:8-9](#)). God does NOT send people to hell, they choose hell when they choose to reject Him ([Ezekiel 18:20-23](#), [2 Peter 3:9](#)). God does love all people, BUT we are not good! Read [Romans 3:10-12](#) and [Mark 10:18](#), what do these verses say about being good?

The dilemma is our understanding of what “good” means and is. In Genesis chapter 1, the creation account, after God created each thing, He called it “good”, meaning pleasant, agreeable (to the senses), valuable, or excellent. If we take into consideration that this is God’s description of His original creation before sin entered the world, “good” was something entirely different than what we know now. How do you define good?

What makes something good?

What makes a person good?

If someone is an atheist, can they do good things? Does that make them a good person? What is the standard?

In reality there is only one standard – God’s, so no matter what we do, how many people we help, how much money we donate, we are not inherently good. As you read today’s passage in Romans 5, what is our condition before Christ?

How are we described in verses 6, 8 and 10?

Does this sound good? What IS the Good News in this passage?

This is wonderful news for the person who has been trusting in themselves and their good works to be enough to get them to heaven.

Engage: Before we choose to follow Christ, we are called enemies of God. Once again, we are limited by our human understanding. On a human level, how do we feel about those we would consider our enemy? Do we love them? Do we do good things for them? Not usually – BUT GOD! Although we are enemies of God, meaning our sin separates us from Him and we cannot approach The Holy in that state, He still loves us and because of that love, He made a way to reconcile us to Himself through Christ! How many people do you know make a way for their enemies to be

reconciled? So how does this apply to calming chaos? True peace of heart and mind starts with salvation and peace with God through Jesus. Everything else we've talked about is only possible inside of a relationship with Him – it is spiritual peace. Even when we are in the middle of trials, we can have supernatural peace – how is this described in Romans 5:3-5?

Do you rejoice in your sufferings? If you focus on the fact that God is producing endurance, character, and hope in the trial you are going through, does that bring a sense of peace and calmness to your heart and mind? If you have chosen God's gift of salvation through Jesus, take a moment to thank Him for His goodness toward you. If you have been working to earn salvation through good works, choose to set that down and know that God doesn't require a performance-based life to please Him. Come to Him through faith in His grace ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) alone and let your good works be a gift of gratitude for doing what you could never do for yourself.

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Saturday, December 27th, 2025
Day 6

Pray: Prayer is communication with God where we can express our needs and thankfulness. It is a time to be still and listen for His voice as He teaches, guides and comforts you through His word. Take a moment to write a short prayer here~

Read: [Ephesians 6:10-18](#)

Think: Christians not only need to be reminded that in this life, we are in a spiritual battle against the forces of darkness, we also need to be reminded we are not just in defense mode. Ephesians 6 describes how Christians should live in the world – how do these verses explain this?

In any branch of the military, soldiers are equipped with tactical gear that is meant to protect them as well as arm them to fight against their enemy. So many Christians make the mistake of thinking that the armor God gives is something to be put on every day, however if this is what we're doing, what does it indicate we are also doing?

The spiritual armor of a Christian is never to be taken off, and it is not mostly defensive it is mostly offensive! Yes, each piece protects our heart and mind against the schemes of the devil, but each piece also helps us advance against and fight the forces of darkness. Turn to [Matthew 16:18](#), what does Jesus tell Peter about this?

Jesus paints a picture that His church will never be defeated or overpowered by the forces of darkness, but this is not just a defensive move but also an offensive move as Christians boldly bring the Gospel to a lost and broken world. In verse 15, what are on our feet?

Read [2 Timothy 4:2](#) and [1 Peter 3:15](#), how do these verses describe our need to be ready to tell others about Jesus?

We are to be agents of peace! What we are learning is that we are to be evangelists of our faith and in this spiritual battle we are to war against the devil and his forces by offering the Gospel of peace to others. This is how we combat chaos.

Engage: Are you ready at all times to talk to others about Jesus? It is a scary thought to many, fearing rejection and ridicule, however the verses we learned today aren't merely suggestions nor are they meant for select people. The best way we can share the Gospel of peace is to tell others our own story. Take a moment to summarize your story of how Jesus brought you peace and practice getting comfortable with it. You don't have to be a bible scholar to wear the shoes of the Gospel of peace, just "one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread"!

Memorize: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

