

# Week 1

## Day 1: Avoid the Tragedy of Unbelief

Read Matthew 13:53-58

*"And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief." Matthew 13:58*

This is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. It is the account of Jesus going to His hometown to teach. When people heard Him, they were astonished. However, their astonishment did not lead them to respond to His teaching in obedience and faith. Their lives could have been radically changed for the better. Their community could have been dramatically changed. However, no positive changes occurred in the people or the town of Nazareth. Why? The Scripture gives the reason,

"Because of their unbelief."

Unbelief shuts the door on the transformational power of Jesus. Faith opens the floodgates to that same transformational power. In contrast to this passage of Scripture are countless others where Jesus worked miracles in response to the faith present in the lives of people. (Read Matthew 9:2; 9:22; 15:28; Mark 10:52; Luke 8:48)

When Jesus looks at your life, what does He find? An attitude of faith? Or unbelief? Do you believe Jesus can do a work of renewal and growth in your church? Do you believe He will? Do you believe that, to the extent you are praying for Jesus to bring renewal and revival to our church?

Prayer

If your unbelief is a roadblock to Jesus working in your church, confess the sin of unbelief. Ask God to strengthen your faith in Him. (Mark 9:24)

## Day 2: Remember God's Power

Read Jeremiah 32:17-44

*"Ah, Lord God! You Yourself made the heavens and earth by Your great power and with Your outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for You!" Jeremiah 32:17*

Sometimes we forget how powerful God is. We forget the great things that He has done in the past. We often allow the immensity of our own problems and challenges to overshadow the greatness of our God. Our view of God diminishes to an anemic, powerless God.

In order to build a case for the greatness and power of God, Jeremiah reminds us of what God has done in the past. He reminds us that God “made the heavens and the earth.” What a display of power! God spoke, and the world came into existence. No one but God could do that. Creation itself is a testimony to the fact that God can do anything.

Creation was just the beginning of God’s mighty display of power. Jeremiah reminds us that this same God led His people out of Egypt with signs and wonders (verse 21). As we read the Scripture, we are reminded that this same God sent Jesus to be born of a virgin, live a sinless life, die on a cross for our sins, and be raised to life on the third day. Only God could do that! The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is a reminder that God can do anything.

Have you forgotten God’s ability to do anything? Today, recall the many great things that God has done as recorded in Scripture. Remember the great things He has done in your life personally. Remember the great things He has done in your church.

Prayer

Prayer that you would be reminded how great and powerful God is. That your faith would stretch to believe that He can and will do something powerful in and through our church.

### **Day 3: Confess Pride and Embrace Humility**

Read Luke 18:9-14

*“I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 18:14*

Pride is a subtle sin. It is not always easy to detect in our own lives. Jesus understood this, so He gave us a picture of what pride and humility look like with the two characters in this parable. The Pharisee was an example of how pride behaves. The tax collector was an example of how humility behaves.

Pride refuses to admit it has a need. Not one time in the parable did the Pharisee admit he had a need. Humility, on the other hand, readily admits it has a need. The tax collector struck his chest and admitted he needed forgiveness as a sinner.

Pride has an “eagle eye” for other people’s sins. The Pharisee said, “I thank you that I am not like those other people who are greedy, unrighteous adulterers.” Humility, on the other hand, sees its own sin. The tax collector declared, “God turn your wrath from me, a sinner.”

The main concern for pride is “What do other people think of me?” The Pharisee prayed about himself, stating, “I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of everything I get.” Humility’s main concern is “What does God think about me?”

Prayer

Pray that God will reveal any areas of unhealthy pride in your life and show you His way to true humility.

## **Day 4: Can you trust God?**

Read Proverbs 3:1-6

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge him, and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6*

There are two ways people live their lives as they pass through this world – either remembering God or forgetting Him. They either acknowledge His presence and live their lives in dependence on Him, or they pay no attention to His claims on them and live a life on the basis of their own understanding and abilities. The worst tragedy and cruelest deception is the man who says feebly with his lips, "I trust God," but an examination of his calendar and checkbook shows no difference between him and the man who does not even make that claim.

The question we must ask ourselves today is, "Do we trust God?" The very nature of this question produces two possible meanings: First, "Can you 'Trust' God?" That is, is He trustworthy? Can He handle the decisions and the problems in your life? Secondly – "Can 'you' trust God?" That is, do you have the ability to trust Him?

These verses reveal some important things about trusting God: The matter of trust is an all-or-nothing thing. Notice how many times the word "all" is used. The command to trust precedes the promise. Blessing comes after trust is expressed. The promise is conditional. Unlike many of the unconditional promises in the Bible, this promise of direction is given only to those who exercise trust in God.

Prayer

Pray that our faith and trust in God will grow. Pray that we will allow God to be in control, and we will utterly depend on Him and desire that His will be done. Pray that the fruits of our deepened trust in Him will result in guidance from Him. Ask God to identify an area of your life where you need to yield to Him and then look for His direction.

## **Day 5: Search me, O God**

Read Psalm 139:23-24

*"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns." Psalm 139:23*

It's one thing to pray for a larger house, a newer car, a different ministry assignment, or a salary increase. It's another thing to ask the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to search our hearts and test our thoughts. The Bible reveals that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Nothing catches our Father off guard.

Health experts tell us that annual physical exams are wise and necessary. Early detection is key to physical health and personal longevity. Spiritual health requires periodic exams, too. Therefore, we make a decision and set a date to get away from the obligations and responsibilities of ministry. We desire solitude with the One who can reveal the most intimate things about us.

During the moments of solitude, we ask the Lord to search our hearts and attitudes. Is Jesus still our First Love? Are we guilty of simply going through the motions of ministry? Our solitude and transparency with God may lead to personal growth.

How long has it been since your last spiritual examination?

Prayer

Consider making a decision, setting a date, securing a place, and practicing a time of solitude with God. With an open Bible and blank pieces of paper, ask God to search your heart and attitude.

### **Day 6: A prayer for direction**

Read Psalm 119:133

*"Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me." Psalm 119:133*

There are at least two essentials to the Spirit-filled life – prayer and the Word of God. As the old song says, "They go together, you can't have one without the other."

Prayer finds its very foundation in the Scripture. You could not pray with purpose, conviction, or direction without the revelation of God that you find in the Bible. Therefore, you must study the Bible and be a person of prayer. In Psalm 119, almost every verse refers to the Scriptures. Verse 133 is a prayer for direction.

The Psalmist here pleads for guidance from the Word of God. Have you ever considered that God desires to guide every step you take? He desires to guide not only the big steps in your life but also the mundane steps you take every day in the kitchen or your workplace. He will also guide you to the friend who needs encouragement, the neighbor who needs Jesus, and the co-worker who needs a witness of God's love.

Prayer

Thank God for guiding our church through Scripture as we plan for the future. Ask the Lord to continue to give the pastor and staff the wisdom and discernment needed to accomplish everything He has placed before us. Thank God for His guidance of your steps. Ask Him to continue to guide you by making the Scripture you read become alive and personal to you

### **Day 7: Take a Soil Test**

Read Matthew 13:1-9

*"Still others fell on good ground and produced a crop: some 100, some 60, and some 30 times what was sown." Matthew 13:8*

Jesus addressed a large crowd of people, telling a parable (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning) to talk about a person's heart. As the farmer scattered seed, it fell along the path, on rocky ground, among thorns, and on good soil. Jesus desires for His followers to have hearts (soil) that yield a harvest.

What is the present condition of your heart? In Jesus' parable, He talks about four kinds of soil (hearts):

A calloused heart. This person lacks spiritual and ministerial expectations, goes through the motions, and relates to God with a selfish agenda.

A shallow heart. This person is often immature in the faith and busy in ministry. It's possible to be a mile wide and an inch deep.

A distracted heart. This person battles the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth.

A productive heart. This person lives his or her life to fulfill God's mission. In order to plant a garden, the ground (soil) must first be broken. If you desire to yield a spiritual harvest, brokenness is often what God uses.

Are you willing to be broken for God's glory? What kind of soil are you?

*"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." Psalm 51:10-12*

#### Self-Examination

- Preparation:

Praise God for who He is

Confess your sinfulness and need for cleansing

Allow His Spirit to draw you near

- Ask God to:

Search through your life and reveal any sin

Help you be honest with Him about your sin

Fill you with a deep desire for holiness

Help you hate the sin in your life

Help you surrender sinful thoughts and practices

Help you live more faithfully

Restore any lost joy in your walk with Him

- Thanksgiving:

Thank God for hearing you

Trust that God is at work to accomplish His will