



DEEPEN DISCIPLESHIP

A 6-MONTH, COMMUNITY-BASED DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE



imb / Equip

 DEEPEN **DISCIPLESHIP** 

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International Mission Board
3806 Monument Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23230

www.imb.org

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

It was an invitation to a completely different life.

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

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

Our hope is that this course will help you:

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

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

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

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

about the way the material is challenging you.

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

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



SECTION ONE

WEEKS 1 - 6



Introduction to Luke

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

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

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

Luke 1-3 WEEK 1 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 1-3

Luke 1–2

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

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

Luke 3

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 2:10-11

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

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

Luke 4-6

WEEK 1 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 4-6

Luke 4

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

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

Luke 5

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

Luke 6

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

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 5:31-32

REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

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

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

This study will help you grow in this area.

Luke 7-9

WEEK 1 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 7-9

Luke 7

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

Luke 8

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

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

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

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

Luke 9

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

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 7:47

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

Luke 10-12

WEEK 1 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 10-12

Luke 10

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

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

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

Luke 11

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

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

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

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

Luke 12

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

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

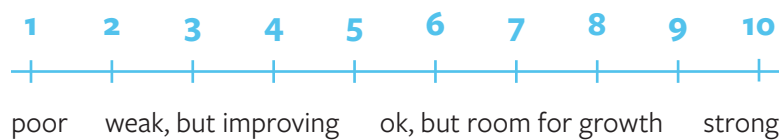
²And he said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’

/ Luke 10:2



REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

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



Luke 13-15

WEEK 1 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 13-15

Luke 13

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

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

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

Luke 14

Conflict continues between Jesus and the religious authorities.

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



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

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

Luke 15

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 14:27

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

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

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

Luke 16-18

WEEK 2 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 16-18

Luke 16

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

Luke 17

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

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

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

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



will be both sudden and unexpected

Luke 18

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

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 18:29-30

Luke 19-21

WEEK 2 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 19-21

Luke 19

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

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

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

Luke 20

This whole chapter is devoted to the religious leaders’ various

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

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

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

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

Luke 21

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 21:3-4



**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

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

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

Luke 22-24

WEEK 2 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Luke 22-24

Luke 22

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Luke 23

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

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

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

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

Luke 24

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Luke 22:19-20

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

Introduction to Acts



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

THE BOOK OF ACTS

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

Acts 1-4 WEEK 2 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 1-4

Acts 1

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

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

Acts 2

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

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



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

Acts 3–4

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Acts 1:8

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

The early disciples were “uneducated and untrained men,” but others recognized that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Would others who spend time with you recognize that you have been with Jesus, following Him with your whole heart?

- I think so.
- I’m not certain.
- I don’t think so.

Acts 5-8

WEEK 2 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 5-8

Acts 5

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

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

Acts 6-7

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

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

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

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

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

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

Acts 8

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’

/ Acts 5:29



GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

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

Acts 9-11

WEEK 3 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 9-11

Acts 9

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

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

Acts 10

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

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

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



Acts 11

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Acts 10:42-43

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

Acts 12-15

WEEK 3 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

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

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 12-15

Acts 12

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

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

Acts 13

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

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



joy and the Holy Spirit (13:52).

Acts 14

In the city of Iconium, a great number of Jews and Gentiles believe, but the response is again divided. In Lystra, the crowds mistake Paul and Barnabas for gods, but they quickly turn the attention away from themselves and to the gospel (14:14–17). The crowds again turn on Paul and stone him to the point of near death, though he is able to leave the city with Barnabas.

Paul and Barnabas then return to encourage the disciples in at least three cities where churches had recently been started, and they also appoint elders in each church (see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for more on elders). Then they return and report to the sending church in Antioch.

Acts 15

In this chapter, Luke describes a situation in which believers from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds reach an agreement over whether or not circumcision (a Jewish custom) is required for salvation (15:1). Given that Christianity grew out of Judaism, this is a perfectly natural question to ask. James listens to Peter and Paul’s stories, summarizes what they say, compares it to Scripture, and then suggests a solution. The believers agree together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit to adopt James’ proposal, and they plan to send representatives with a letter to the various Gentile churches.

Later, Paul and Barnabas disagree about John Mark. This disagreement results in their separation (15:39) just as their second missionary journey begins. Providentially, this unfortunate outcome results in two sets of workers, functionally multiplying their work.



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Acts 13:46b-48

**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

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

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

Acts 16-18

WEEK 3 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 16-18

Acts 16

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

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

Acts 17

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

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

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

Acts 18

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Acts 17:30-31a

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

Acts 19-23

WEEK 3 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 19-23

Acts 19

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

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

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

Acts 20

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

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

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

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

Acts 21-23

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Acts 20:28



**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

The cost of following Jesus can be severe, including suffering persecution that requires giving up your life for Him. Be honest. How willing are you to pay this kind of price for Him?

- not at all willing
- somewhat willing
- fully willing
- not sure

Acts 24-28

WEEK 3 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Acts 24-28

Acts 24

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

Acts 25-26

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

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

Acts 27-28

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

How is your life different after you met Jesus?



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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Acts 26:22b-23

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Evangelism is not about telling your personal conversion story like Paul did. It's about telling the gospel story of Jesus Christ. Write here the basic gospel as you know it today, and be prepared to talk through it with your group and/or mentor.

Introduction to Romans



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

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

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

Romans 1-2

WEEK 4 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Romans 1-2

Romans 1:1-17

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

Romans 1:18-32

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

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

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

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



to our hearts, to our actions.

Romans 2

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Romans 1:16-17

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

Romans 3-5

WEEK 4 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

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

READ & LEARN

Read Romans 3-5

Romans 3:1–20

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

Romans 3:21–31

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

Romans 4

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

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



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

Romans 5

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Romans 5:3-5

**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Christians aren't exempt from the temptation to place our trust in something other than Christ. Mark any of the following in which you might trust, and discuss your conclusions with your group and/or mentor:

- your education
- your ministry achievements
- your family or church heritage
- your speaking or leadership ability
- your reputation
- your faithfulness
- your theology
- other:

Romans 6-8

WEEK 4 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Romans 6-8

Romans 6

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

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

Romans 7

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

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

Romans 8

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Romans 8:1-4



GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

Reflect on the beauty of Romans 8 and then take some time to journal about God's grace in your life.

Romans 9-11

WEEK 4 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Romans 9-11

Romans 9

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

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

Romans 10

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

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

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

Romans 11

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Romans 10:13-15

Lined writing area for reflection notes.

**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

How much do you pray for individual non-believers? How many non-believers do you know well? A lack of prayer often indicates a lack of burden. If you don't pray regularly for non-believers to know God, take time now to pray for some by name.

Romans 12-16

WEEK 4 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Romans 12-16

Romans 12

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

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

Romans 13

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

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

Romans 14:1–15:6

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

Romans 15:7–16:27

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Romans 14:7-8



GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

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

Introduction to 1 & 2 Thessalonians

THE BOOKS OF 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS

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

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

1 Thessalonians 1-2

WEEK 5 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Thessalonians 1-2

1 Thessalonians 1-2

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

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

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

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Pray informed prayers for missionaries and unreached people by spending time at www.joshuaproject.net and www.imb.org.



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Thessalonians 2:4–6

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

1 Thessalonians 3-4

WEEK 5 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Thessalonians 3-4

1 Thessalonians 3-4

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

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

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

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

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

questioning what happens to believers who die before He comes back. Paul's answer was simple: they'll be resurrected, just like their Savior (4:14).



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

¹²And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

/ 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Think about the reality that Jesus could return any day. If you knew for certain that today is the day, what issues would you want to address today? What changes would you want to make? List at least two things that come to mind.

Maybe these questions will help you: Are you living a holy life? Do you love other believers? Are you a faithful employee at work whose life commends the gospel? Where do you need to grow in such a way to please Him?

1 Thessalonians 5

WEEK 5 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Thessalonians 5

1 Thessalonians 5

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

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

2 Thessalonians 1-3

WEEK 5 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 2 Thessalonians 1–3

2 Thessalonians 1

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

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

2 Thessalonians 2

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

hold on to the truths you know.

2 Thessalonians 3

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 2 Thessalonians 1:4-7a

REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

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

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

Review & Catch Up

WEEK 5 / DAY 5



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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

Introduction to Philippians

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

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

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

Philippians 1

WEEK 6 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 1

Philippians 1:1–11

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

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

Philippians 1:12–18

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

Philippians 1:19–30

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Philippians 1:6

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

Philippians 2

WEEK 6 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 2

Philippians 2:1–5

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

Philippians 2:6–11

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

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

Philippians 2:12–18

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

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

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

Philippians 2:19–30

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Philippians 2:3–4

REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

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

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

Philippians 3

WEEK 6 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 3

Philippians 3:1–11

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

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

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

Philippians 3:12–21

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

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Philippians 3:8–9

GO & DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

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



Past failures that still burden you:

Past successes in which you still glory:

Philippians 4

WEEK 6 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Philippians 4

Philippians 4:1–9

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

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

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

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

Review WEEK 6 / DAY 5



PRAY

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



Review of the First Six Weeks

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

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

Celebrate

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



SECTION **TWO**

WEEKS 7 - 12



Introduction to Matthew

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

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

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

Matthew 1-3

WEEK 7 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 1-3

Matthew 1:1–17

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

Matthew 1:18–25

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

Matthew 2

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

Matthew 3

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 1:22–23

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

Matthew 4-5

WEEK 7 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 4-5

Matthew 4:1–11

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

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

Matthew 4:12–25

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

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

Matthew 5:1-16

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

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

Matthew 5:17-48

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

¹²Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. ¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

/ Matthew 4:12–17

REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

The Beatitudes reflect God’s values and His kingdom culture, that is, the new lifestyle believers choose to adopt when they follow Jesus. Reading through these blessings, which ones remain hard for you to embrace? Be sure to hold yourself accountable to your group and/or mentor.

- blessed are the poor in spirit
- blessed are those who mourn
- the gentle are blessed
- those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed
- the merciful are blessed
- the pure in heart are blessed
- the peacemakers are blessed
- those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed

Matthew 6-7

WEEK 7 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 6-7

Matthew 6:1–18

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

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

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

Matthew 6:19–34

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



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

Matthew 7:1–12

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

Matthew 7:13–29

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 6:33

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

Matthew 8-10

WEEK 7 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 8-10

Matthew 8:1–9:34

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

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

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



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

Matthew 9:35–10:42

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

The rest of Matthew 10 introduces some of these ways:

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 9:37–38

Matthew 11-12

WEEK 7 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 11-12

Matthew 11–12

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 11:28–30

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

Matthew 13-15

WEEK 8 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 13-15

Matthew 13:1–14:12

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

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

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

Matthew 14:13–36

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

Matthew 15:1–20

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

Matthew 15:21–39

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 13:10–11

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

Matthew 16-18

WEEK 8 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 16-18

Matthew 16:1–27

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

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

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

Matthew 16:28–17:27

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew 18

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 16:24–25



REFLECT AND CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Forgiving others is a mark of genuine disciples of Christ. Use these questions as a guide to determine if you need to forgive someone. If you do, be sure to hold yourself accountable to your group and/or mentor.

- 1/** Do I get angry or anxious when I think about that person?
- 2/** Do I quietly hope that that person also hurts like I have?
- 3/** Would I willingly help that person if he or she needed ministry?
- 4/** Can I pray for that person?
- 5/** Would I be frustrated if God blesses that person?¹

¹Questions first published at <http://chucklawless.com/2016/05/need-to-forgive/>

Matthew 19-20

WEEK 8 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 19-20

Matthew 19:1–12

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

Matthew 19:13–29

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

Matthew 19:30–20:16

Why is following Jesus worth everything? Because those who

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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



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

Matthew 20:17–34

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 20:26b–28

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

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

Matthew 21-24

WEEK 8 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 21-24

Matthew 21:1–27

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

Matthew 21:28–22:14

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

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

Matthew 22:15–46

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

Matthew 23

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

Matthew 24

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 22:37–40



REFLECT AND CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

Disciples of Jesus live with a sense of urgency—urgency to know His Word and obey Him, to proclaim the Good News, to lead others to follow Him, and to make disciples who glorify Him. They do these tasks best through the local church. Which of the following best describes your commitment to a local church?

- I'm not attending a church.
- I regularly attend a church, but I'm not very invested there.
- I'm growing in my commitment to a local church, but I need to be more committed.
- I'm faithfully attending and serving God through a local church.

Matthew 25-28

WEEK 8 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Matthew 25-28

Matthew 25:1–26:16

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

Matthew 26:17–29

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

Matthew 26:30–27:61

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

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

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

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



Matthew 27:62–28:20

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Matthew 28:18–20

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

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

Introduction to Hebrews

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

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

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

Hebrews 1-2

WEEK 9 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 1-2

Hebrews 1

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

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

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

Hebrews 2

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Hebrews 1:1-4

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

Hebrews 3:1–6:12

WEEK 9 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 3:1–6:12

Hebrews 3

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

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

Hebrews 4:1–13

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 4:14–5:10

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

Hebrews 5:11–6:12

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

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

/ Hebrews 4:14–16

Hebrews 6:13–8:13

WEEK 9 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 6:13-8:13

Hebrews 6:13–20

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

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

Hebrews 7

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

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

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



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

Hebrews 8

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Hebrews 7:26–28

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

Hebrews 9-10

WEEK 9 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 9-10

Hebrews 9:1–10

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

Hebrews 9:11–28

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

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

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



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

Hebrews 10

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

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Hebrews 9:27-28

REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

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

Hebrews 11-13

WEEK 9 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read Hebrews 11-13

Hebrews 11

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

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

Hebrews 12

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

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



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

Hebrews 13

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ Hebrews 12:1–3

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

As part of God's people, we're privileged to serve Him through the local church and perhaps encourage others through our faithfulness (10:24-25). This week, find time to talk with a pastor or church leader about these things:

- Your favorite ministry role in a church in the past
- The favorite thing you're doing through your church today
- Something you'd like to do through your church in the future
- Some way you might strengthen your commitment to your local church

Introduction to James



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

THE BOOK OF JAMES

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

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

James 1

WEEK 10 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read James 1

James 1:1–8

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

James 1:9–18

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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



James 1:19–27

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ James 1:19–20

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

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

James 2

WEEK 10 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read James 2

James 2:1–13

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

James 2:14–26

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

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

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

James 3

WEEK 10 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read James 3

James 3:1–12

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

James 3:13–18

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

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

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

James 4

WEEK 10 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read James 4

James 4:1–12

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

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

James 4:13–17

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

Do you love God or the world?

James 5

WEEK 10 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read James 5

James 5:1–12

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

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

James 5:13–20

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

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

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

THE BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

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

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

1 Corinthians 1-4

WEEK 11 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 1-4

1 Corinthians 1

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

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

1 Corinthians 2

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

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 3

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

1 Corinthians 4

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

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

1 Corinthians 5–7

WEEK 11 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 5-7

1 Corinthians 5

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

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

1 Corinthians 6

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

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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



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

1 Corinthians 7

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

**REFLECT & CHANGE:
PERSONAL EVALUATION**

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

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

1 Corinthians 8-10

WEEK 11 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 8-10

1 Corinthians 8

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

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

1 Corinthians 9

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

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 10

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Corinthians 10:23–24

1 Corinthians 11-14

WEEK 11 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 11-14

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

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

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

1 Corinthians 11:17–34

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

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



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

1 Corinthians 12–14

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Corinthians 12:24b–27

REFLECT & CHANGE: PERSONAL EVALUATION

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

1 Corinthians 15-16

WEEK 11 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 1 Corinthians 15-16

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

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

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

1 Corinthians 15:12–34

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

1 Corinthians 15:35–58

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



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

1 Corinthians 16

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

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

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 1 Corinthians 15:54–58

Introduction to 2 Corinthians



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

THE BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS

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

2 Corinthians 1-3

WEEK 12 / DAY 1



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 1-3

2 Corinthians 1:1–11

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

2 Corinthians 1:12–2:13

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

2 Corinthians 2:14–3:18

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

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

2 Corinthians 4-5

WEEK 12 / DAY 2



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 4-5

2 Corinthians 4:1–15

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

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10

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

2 Corinthians 5:11–22

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

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

2 Corinthians 6-8

WEEK 12 / DAY 3



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 6-8

2 Corinthians 6:3–7:1

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

2 Corinthians 7:2–16

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

2 Corinthians 8:1–15

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

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



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

2 Corinthians 8:16–24

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



DAILY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

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

/ 2 Corinthians 6:16–18

GO AND DO DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

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

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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

2 Corinthians 9-11

WEEK 12 / DAY 4



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 9-11

2 Corinthians 9

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

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

2 Corinthians 10

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

2 Corinthians 11

Even though he feels ridiculous discussing his own credibility, Paul

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

2 Corinthians 12-13

WEEK 12 / DAY 5



PRAY

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

READ & LEARN

Read 2 Corinthians 12-13

2 Corinthians 12:1–19

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

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

2 Corinthians 12:20–13:14

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

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

