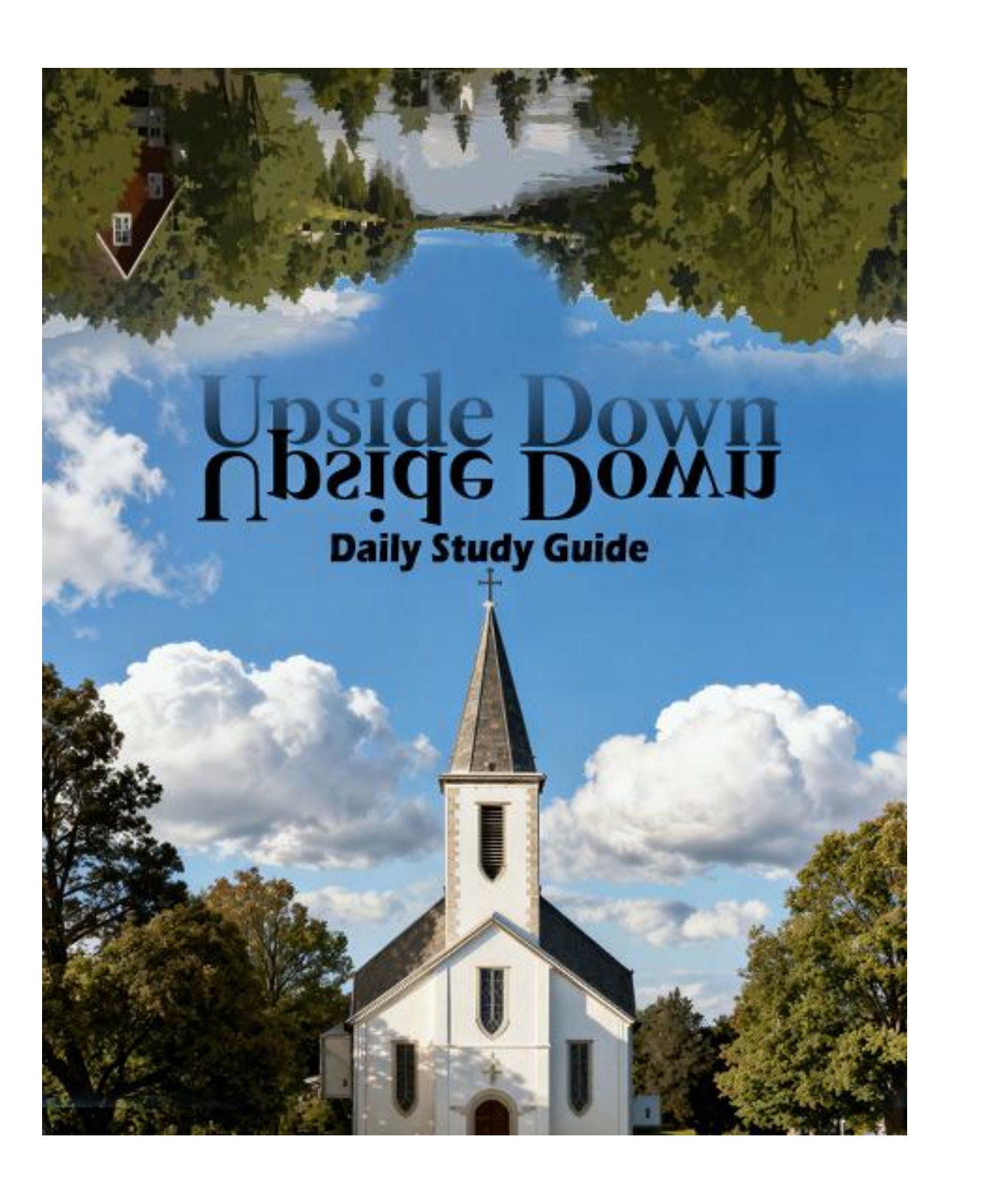


The background of the cover is a photograph of a white church with a tall steeple, set against a blue sky with white clouds. The church is surrounded by green trees. The top half of the image is a vertical reflection of the bottom half, showing the church and landscape upside down. The title 'Upside Down' is written in a large, blue, serif font, with the word 'Upside' above 'Down'. Below this, the words 'Upside Down' are repeated in a smaller, black, serif font. Underneath that, the words 'Daily Study Guide' are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Upside Down

Upside Down

Daily Study Guide

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

We offer this series study guide to be used as a resource for deeper understanding in tandem with weekend messages and it is our hope that you will find this useful in your faith journey and spiritual growth. We believe The Bible, God's word, is inspired by Him, through the Holy Spirit and is sufficient for everything you need in life – ***guidance, wisdom, strength, encouragement and HOPE.*** His word reveals His nature and character and His plan of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ, through whom we can have eternal salvation when we choose follow Him. We also believe the Bible remains relevant in our world today and its power is experienced when personally and consistently applied and practiced. Part of your journey may include choosing a Bible translation and there are many. To help you choose, it is important to know that a "translation" is a word-for-word while a "paraphrase" is thought- for- thought. If you are new to Bible reading or don't yet have one, we offer FREE Bibles that are English Standard Version translation – a very easy to read Bible. Other options are Bible Apps you can download to your phone, or sites like: www.Bible.org, www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.org.

We invite you to join us for weekend services:

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

Adult Sunday School at 9:00am

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

Sunday Morning at 10:30am

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

If you have missed a service, you can view it on our YouTube Channel, "Crossroads Ridgecrest", or go to www.crossroads-ridgecrest.org.

If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment, please call (760)384-3333 Weds. – Fri. 10am-4pm, text (760)301-4840, or email ccc@ccc-rc.org

Session 1

Right Side Up

Chapter 1

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

Read: [Luke 6:1-11](#)

Think: It probably isn't necessary to formally define the word "upside down". We know it means top is bottom and bottom is top, it can also mean inverted, reversed, or in great disorder. In the Jewish culture, everything Jesus did seemed upside down to the religious leaders, but what we will learn over the course of this study is that everything He taught, did, and calls His followers to is really right side up! To the world, Jesus' ways are counter cultural and backwards, but that's what makes Christianity stand out from all other religions.

In today's reading, what did Jesus and His disciples do that made the religious leaders so angry?

The problem wasn't so much *what* He did as *when* He did it. In the beginning, when God created everything, He rested on the seventh day (See [Genesis 2:2-3](#)) and established it as a holy day of rest to be observed by His people. By the time of the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt, God established certain rules for the people. God provided food, or manna, for the people to eat and His instructions were clear – gather twice as much on the 6th day for there won't be any on the 7th day (See [Exodus 16:4-5](#) and [22-26](#)). God made it easy for them to observe the day of rest... leftovers! The point was simple – rest, take a break and honor God. How well do you do in this? We are incredibly busy people so taking a true Sabbath day to do nothing is hard. We worry things won't get done but when we honor God and obey Him, He always provides. That was what He did for the Hebrews – it was not just a matter of obedience but also a matter of trust (www.gotquestions.org/Sabbath-day-rest.html).

When the religious leaders confronted Jesus, what did He ask them in both accounts?

The problem with the religious leaders was not their knowledge of scripture but application. By this time in history, many of the Jewish religious leaders turned God's law into legalistic ritual rather than the grace-filled instruction for life that it was. For a complete list of all God's commands, go to www.jewfaq.org/613_commandments.

There have been so many manmade details added to certain laws and how to observe them that in April of 1992, three apartments in an Orthodox neighborhood in Tel Aviv burned down because tenants asked a rabbi whether a telephone call to the fire department on the Sabbath would violate Jewish law. Observant Jews are forbidden to use the phone on the Sabbath, because doing so would break an electrical current, which is considered a form of work. In the half-hour it took the rabbi to decide "yes," the fire spread to two neighboring apartments – thankfully no one was hurt (<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-04-26-mn-1545-story.html>). This information is not meant to demean or belittle the Jewish people – they are God's chosen people and we should love them (our neighbor) as ourselves. This is a cautionary tale warning all of us that we are as capable of misusing, misunderstanding or misapplying God's word as anyone else!

To the Jewish people it appeared Jesus was breaking God's law – they misunderstood what He came to do and who He was. Turn to [Matthew 5:17](#), what does Jesus say of Himself?

How is it He can perfectly fulfill God's law while healing on the Sabbath?

Jesus was never breaking the law, He was demonstrating the true meaning of it. God always intended us to put serving others in their time of need first. One final point on this is that in Jesus fulfilling the law, that would mean He also fulfilled the Sabbath law – He IS our rest ([Hebrews 4:1-12](#)). Does that mean we no longer need to set aside time to rest and worship God? Of course not! We still need regular breaks so we can continue serving God for a lifetime and for the right reasons.

Engage: There are a few opinions on what keeping the Sabbath means, from attending church on Saturday to how it should be done. The apostle Paul had to address this in the New Testament church – read [Colossians 2:16-17](#), what does he instruct?

What does he say these days/observances are in verse 17?

The church in Colosse was in a city with diverse beliefs and they struggled with false teachings and heresies making their way into the church. In many cases, Jewish converts and even Gentiles were

pressed into following Jewish certain laws teaching them as necessary for salvation. Apparently, the new believers were being judged in how they were handling certain Jewish holidays (new moons) and Sabbaths. Because of Christ's fulfillment, we are free to observe the Sabbath on any day. Truthfully, because our true rest – spiritual rest – is in Christ alone, as a Christian, every day is a Sabbath!

How do you rest and honor God?

If you are not currently taking a day of rest to honor God, what can or should you do to start?

What are some ways you can make each day a day of worship to Him?

Memorize: So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Hebrews 4:9-10

Chapter 2

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

Read: [Luke 6:12-16](#)

Think: In Jewish culture, a man who is to become a disciple of a rabbi had to fulfill certain requirements. They had to immerse themselves in the study and life of the law and teacher, often

leaving home, job, and family to follow the rabbi, with the hope of becoming a rabbi as well. Typically, a person would choose a rabbi they wanted to study under, and here's where we see Jesus turning things upside down once more. In reading today's verses, what did Jesus do differently?

Jesus CHOSE them! This is why in [John 15:16](#) He tells His disciples, *"you did not choose Me, but I chose you"*. At this point Jesus was already gaining popularity, and many people were "following" Him – for many it was a matter of following Him around, not truly following Him. Choosing His disciples wasn't a random choice... how did He choose them?

If Jesus was God, could He have already known and simply selected these men without prayer? Why do you think He prayed?

What does this teach you?

Scripture records several times when Jesus spent time in prayer connecting with His Father. This is a beautiful example for us because there will always be some things in life that will require lengthy and intense prayer. As the names of the disciples are listed, who is specifically mentioned in verse 16?

Do you think Jesus knew at this point what Judas would do? We often remind people that Jesus demonstrates what it means to love our enemy by pointing to the scripture that records Jesus washing the disciples' feet - noting that He washed Judas' feet as well. In today's study, Jesus prayed for him as a chosen disciple! Oh, for the ability to know what Jesus and the Father talked about in that prayer!

The radical way Jesus chose His disciples, as well as the fact that there was nothing outwardly that "qualified" these men to become disciples, was nothing short of upside down! This should give us hope... turn to [1 Samuel 16:7](#), according to this verse, what does God look at in a person?

When you are interacting with others, do you try to look at their heart or do you judge by outward appearances? In the church, this is a challenging issue as there are many people who appear godly on the outside, but whose heart is not the Lord's. The opposite is also true, there are many flawed people who may appear as though they are not Christian, but their heart is completely devoted to Him. How does this challenge you?

Is there anything you need to change?

For a great article on the differences between Jesus as rabbi and traditional Jewish rabbis, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/ThemeStudyOnCommitment.pdf

Engage: There is an old saying in the church, "God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called". This perfectly describes how Jesus chose His disciples and trained them. Thinking about your own journey with Christ, what were you like when He called you?

Were you "qualified"? If we look at the word to mean, *fit for duty*, we should readily see we were not qualified when Jesus found/called us. If we look at this from a military or emergency service perspective, we know that when a person applies for service, they are not qualified for duty yet. They must be trained before they are sent out. There is also the expectation to **be** sent out, to put our training to use, yet in the church so many people choose Jesus for salvation but not necessarily for discipleship, they want the benefits but not the work. If you have been called by Jesus, how is He making you fit for duty?

In what ways are you now qualified to be His disciple?

Are you willing to be sent out? Is there someone Jesus wants you to talk to about Him?

Memorize: And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

Chapter 3

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

Read: [Luke 6:17-19](#)

Think: In the church world there are levels of leadership... elders, senior pastors, associate pastors, ministry leaders, and often ministry sub leaders. Then there are those who teach and serve in whatever capacity God has given them. When it is functioning at optimal capacity it is a beautiful, living organism that radiates light, hope, and healing to a weary and broken world. Ideally there is no humanistic hierarchy, just a body with all the parts functioning as they should ([1 Corinthians 12:12-31](#)).

Things were different in Jesus' day. The Jews had synagogue, but the requirements for service were very different, so what we are seeing in from yesterday and today's lesson is the birth of the church as we know it. Yes, it is true we see that in Acts 2, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, but the foundation of the church was laid here. Read [Matthew 16:15-18](#), in these verses, what is Peter's answer to Jesus' question?

What does Jesus say He will build?

The meaning in these verses has been debated for years – that Jesus is referring to Himself as the Rock, or the actual location of where this conversation took place, or that it means the solid rock of faith in Christ as Messiah. The Catholic religion sees this as Jesus appointing Peter as the first leader of the church and that he was the first Pope, given authority and through him all other popes carry on an unbroken line (www.gotquestions.org/vicar-of-Christ.html, www.gotquestions.org/Roman-Catholicism.html, www.catholic.com/tract/origins-of-peter-as-pope). As fun as this side trip is, it is not our focus.

The disciples didn't know it at the time, but this was the beginning of their formal training (qualification) as the men who would carry His message throughout the world. In today's verses, who was there and what was happening?

It is important to make the distinction between those who were His followers and those who were following Him to listen to His teaching and be healed. Many of these people didn't continue to follow Him once they got what they needed. Turn to [Luke 17:11-18](#), how do these verses demonstrate this?

One thing that is noticeable in the Bible is that even though Jesus knew what was in the heart of man ([Matthew 9:4](#)) He didn't withhold healing from people. He never refused to heal the sick, lame, or possessed because He knew they would walk away. Even if they chose not to follow Him, they would still carry His testimony with them – when asked how they were healed, they would have to tell people – it was Jesus!

Engage: Imagine for a moment, you are in this crowd who wants to see Jesus. There are hundreds, maybe thousands of people there, what are you hoping to hear or experience?

Jesus was offering the people something they never had before – hope, grace, love, and freedom. For many of these people, living under the hand of the Roman government was difficult at best, and the Jews had no place for Gentiles in their faith in God. Jesus wasn't just healing them physically, but spiritually. When you came to church or faith in Christ, what were you looking for?

Did you find it? If not, why not?

The heart of Crossroads is to be the kind of church where everyone has the same opportunity to hear about Jesus, learn, grow, and carry on His message. If you have had difficulty doing this, please let us know how we can improve. If you have made the commitment to follow Him, are you part of

the body of Christ doing your part to help others find Him as well? If you are looking to get connected in the church, please call the office at (760)384-3333, Weds-Fri, 10am-4pm to find out what's available or make an appointment to learn what we offer. Christianity isn't meant to be kept to ourselves; it is meant to be shared in a way that people will want what we have.

Memorize: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12

Chapter 4

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

Read: [Luke 6:20](#)

Think: Training begins. Write out this verse here:

Today's verse will be familiar to you if you are familiar with the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5. Scholars debate, based on some differences, that this teaching is different than the one in Matthew. It is entirely possible that as Jesus traveled and taught, that He taught the same principles to different crowds.

Turn to [Matthew 5:3](#), what word is in this verse that isn't in Luke's?

This has to be one of the most upside-down statements ever made! We live in a world filled with poverty, and the people Jesus was teaching knew all too well what it meant to be poor. So how in the world is a person who must beg for food supposed to be blessed?

Of course, we must understand the language and intent. The word “blessed” in Greek is *makario*, which means “happy”, but this is not the kind of happiness the world tries to sell us – happiness dependent on wealth or circumstances. This happiness comes from knowing God and the true nature of a life rooted in Him and lasts even if we don’t have money or are in a trial of some sort.

Most people misunderstood what He meant, they were focused on the physical and temporal needs rather than spiritual needs. The word “poor” can mean destitute of wealth, but it also indicates a condition of *spiritual* poverty. Without Jesus, we are spiritually bankrupt. Would you say you were spiritually bankrupt before knowing Jesus? If you haven’t yet made this commitment, do you recognize your need for Him? Spiritual poverty is understanding that we are separated and hopeless from a perfect and loving God and that we are helpless to change ourselves without Him. It also means we recognize we are not better or above other people.

This was an important lesson for the twelve Jesus just chose. In today’s verse, who is Jesus talking to?

How easy would it be for the disciples to think this was not their lesson? This was something they would battle during their time with Jesus! It can be so easy for us to hear a powerful message and think to ourselves, “Wow, so-and-so really needs to hear this message” while missing the fact God is talking directly to us! Have you ever done this? Did you eventually recognize that God was talking to you? How did it change you?

Before the disciples could teach others, they had to learn this lesson themselves.

Engage: It is interesting that this is the first statement Jesus makes in these sermons. Do you think it was intentional? Why/why not?

The entire Christian faith rests on our ability to see ourselves and our spiritual condition accurately in order to have a true relationship with Christ. We can’t do it backwards – if we try to deal with

spiritual poverty *after* coming to church, serving, or even getting baptized, we run the risk of having a false salvation based on works. Additionally, any attempt afterward may result in shallow or false humility and will eventually become noticeable. This is not to say that some haven't started this way but found their way to a real and humble relationship with Christ. The question for each of us is, do we have an accurate self-image? One that is based on God's standards, not our own or the world's.

Memorize: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:17

Chapter 5

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

Read: [Luke 6:21](#)

Think: Hunger and sadness were a real issues for people in Jesus' day and it continues to this day. In today's verse, what does Jesus promise?

If someone in our time were to give this message openly, on the street, how do you think it would be received?

Considering how many people struggle financially and with mental health issues like anxiety, we know some would listen, some would scoff, some would take what they could get and leave.

Turn to [Matthew 5:6](#), how does this verse differ from Luke's?

The hunger Jesus was teaching about is the desire or passion to “ingest” the word of God. He was using the word hunger to explain how we should desire and seek out God the way we seek food when we are hungry. Have you ever fasted or gone without food for 24 hours or more for a medical procedure? How hungry were you?

What was your focus?

For most of us when we are that hungry all we can think about is what we’re going to eat when we are able. That is how we should feel about desiring God, His word and His righteousness. King David describes it this way in Psalm 42:1-2, *“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”* If you have a dog who’s been outside during the summer, you know what this kind of panting looks like and it can only be satisfied with one thing – cool water. The satisfaction we feel is the same – like a delicious meal and a cold glass of water on a hot day – and it drives us to want more!

Now turn to [Matthew 5:4](#), how does it compare to Luke’s?

This weeping or mourning isn’t mere sadness or what is commonly known as depression now. This kind of sorrow weeps over sin in the world and the damage it causes. What sin do you see in the world that causes this kind of grief in you?

Does the sin in your life, past and present, cause you to mourn? The hope for all of us is to know and mourn over sin, however like the satisfaction of our hunger and thirst for God being satisfied, we will not weep forever. We know how the story ends for those who are devoted to Him. Turn to [Revelation 21:4](#), what promise is given for those who will see the new heaven and new earth?

How does this give you hope now?

Engage: Psalm 34:8 says, “Oh, _____ and see that the Lord is good!
_____ is the man who takes refuge in him!”

If you have children, you probably had the experience of them refusing to try new food, saying they didn’t like it even though they never tasted it. People who identify as Christians often do the same.

Many people in the church simply don’t understand the blessings God has for them because they’ve never tasted His goodness. Knowing God and desiring His righteousness has an addictive quality to it. Once you’ve experienced it, you don’t want to stop. If you have experienced this, briefly write was it was like for you.

Is there a way you can share this with someone who needs to feed on God?

Part of our lesson today is not only knowing that our mourning will turn into laughter but knowing what it takes to prevent us from becoming jaded and hear-hearted. How can you do this?

Memorize: He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. Revelation 21:4

Chapter 6

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

Read: [Luke 6:22-23](#)

Think: In the movie, *“Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban”*, there is a scene where Harry’s best friend, Ron Weasley, sees Harry’s future while reading tea leaves. He says the leaves tell him that Harry is going to suffer, but he’ll be happy about it. This perfectly describes today’s passage and lesson.

Probably one of the most upside down teachings from the Bible comes from Jesus’ words in today’s verses. In verse 22 Jesus teaches we will be blessed (happy) under certain circumstances, what are they?

How does this make sense? In verse 23, what is the reward and in whose company are we when this happens?

It is important for Christians to understand that following Christ comes with persecution and suffering – it’s a package deal! Turn to [John 15:20](#), what does Jesus say about this?

If Jesus was persecuted, we shouldn’t be surprised when we are... however, what we need to do is discern whether any persecution and suffering we go through is for His sake or self-induced. Often, Christians mistake consequences of sin for Christian persecution – in fact, the Bible speaks directly to this. Read [1 Peter 2:19-20](#), what do these verses teach about suffering?

At all times we should be mindful of how we are conducting ourselves in our public and private life. If you have a coworker that treats you poorly, if a boss is hounding you, if you’re never invited to the friend group outings, if you’re consistently being corrected or disciplined... before assuming it’s because you are a good Christian, examine your behavior, words, and actions. Ask God to show you if you’re doing something wrong or need to change. He’ll let you know! On the other hand, if this is because you are faithful to not participate in inappropriate activities, if you are doing your work well, if you’re sharing Christ with a coworker, but are persecuted, then you have reason to rejoice! You are right side up!

Engage: Have you ever endured persecution for the sake of Christ? What was the situation?

Were you happy about being persecuted? Why/why not?

How did God bless you in that situation?

The blessings of persecution are not only our eternal rewards in heaven, but the spiritual growth we experience through it. This is very contrary to the secular worldview where happiness often depends on life going smoothly.

Take a moment to check if there are any areas where you are suffering persecution. Check your motives and actions. Are you doing anything that is sinful like participating in gossip, disobeying authority, or not doing your work. This is an especially important lesson for kids. Most of the time, children will not recognize their part in the need for discipline, or they make excuses for their actions. If you are parenting, talk to them about this and show them these Bible verses helping them understand what it means. Finally, there's an opposite side to this – not getting persecuted at all. If you aren't experiencing any kind of persecution, you may be playing it too safe. We naturally avoid painful circumstances, but as Christians we can jeopardize our faith if we are allowing ourselves to be silenced or pushed into inaction for the sake of not offending others. If this describes you, what can you do to live boldly for the Lord?

Memorize: Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. John 15:20

Session 2

Capsized

Chapter 1

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

Read: [Luke 6:24-26](#)

Think: When we see the word capsized, we naturally think of a boat that has turned upside down. There are many reasons a boat can capsize, one being too much or too little weight. If you have ever seen a freightliner at a harbor, you may have noticed there's a painted red line about halfway through the ship. This red line is called the Plimsoll line. Named after Samuel Plimsoll, a British politician and reformer in the 1870's discovered there was an ideal weight for cargo ships to prevent sinking and capsizing. Too much weight and the ship would sink, too little and it would capsize – the red line marks the max weight limit a ship can legally and safely hold cargo. If you are at the harbor and can see the red line above the water, you know it is not fully loaded. Conversely, if you don't see the red line it is loaded at max capacity.

Why is this important to us? We all have an “ideal weight line” ... the amount of tension in our life that grows us rather than destroys us. In our world the pursuit of wealth, status, busyness, hobbies, and other things can weigh us down until we're sinking. The very thing that promises happiness can capsize our life!

This week, Jesus continues teaching us about the upside-down life. Last week we learned that God promises blessing, or happiness, to those who are sad, poor or hungry. This week, Jesus pronounces woes to those who seem to have it all – an easy life. Let's start with the word “woe” – it simply means *alas*. It's a sad state of affairs when our surplus becomes our demise, but that's what Jesus is talking about. In today's verses, how does He flip last week's lesson from [Luke 6:20-23](#)?

In God's economy being rich and popular doesn't mean much. It's not that God opposes wealth, he opposes those who love it and pursue it above loving Him and others. Turn to [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#), what do these verses teach about this?

This is true for the pursuit of relationships, hobbies, food, promotions – anything that takes God’s place in our heart. This is what was happening with many people of Jesus’ day. Has anything changed? The problem is people trust in temporary material possessions rather than trusting God. They care more about what others think of them than what God thinks. To drive this point home further, Jesus told two parables that are sobering, if not terrifying. Turn to [Luke 12:16-21](#) and [Luke 16:19-31](#), briefly summarize the life and attitude of each person in the parable.

What was their outcome?

Engage: God does not have a problem with money, food or goals – we do. For most of us we are simply taught it is good to pursue these things, and it is, as long as they don’t become our god. That’s the “woe” – when we have achieved wealth and a life of ease while ignoring God and the important matters of life. How do you view the pursuit of wealth and all it can provide?

What is your goal for your money?

Do you have a written plan? Are you generous with what God has given you or do you spend it on yourself? Even if you spend money on others, what is your goal?

Even if money is not your focus, there can be other things that take your focus off God. These are some hard questions, but very necessary. Jesus asked the hard questions because He wanted His followers to understand the commitment they were making.

Memorize: But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 1 Timothy 6:6-7

Chapter 2

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

Read: [Matthew 6:1-4](#)

Think: In yesterday's lesson we asked the question, what is the goal of your generosity? There are many reasons a person can be generous... the genuine desire to help others, tax benefits or in some cases, churches that promote prosperity gospel – the false teaching that if you give God a lot of money, He will make you rich (www.gotquestions.org/prosperity-gospel.html). On the other hand, some people give to be seen by others. In verse 1, what does Jesus warn of?

Where does the reward for this come from?

In the remaining verses, how should giving be done?

Does this mean giving should always be in secret? Not necessarily. In the book of Acts, we are told of some people who sold their property to support the new and growing church, but the motive wasn't self-centered ([Acts 2:42-45](#)).

The problem in Jesus' day, and in ours, is that many people who gave large amounts manage to call attention to their giving to make themselves look good publicly. This is often seen in our time when celebrities give money to a charity to make themselves look generous to their fans and watching public. The problem is that they receive their reward here and now... the attention of the public, but it's not the public who holds their eternity in their hand – God does!

God is also not concerned with amount. Turn to [2 Corinthians 9:7](#), what is the heart of the issue?

It is a sad fact that many people view the church as only wanting money and in some cases this has been true. However, it does take money to run a church just like any business and the church relies on the giving of its congregation to pay the bills. However, it is not the churches responsibility to determine how much or how often a person gives – that is between them and God, and it should be done willingly and gladly and without a lot of pomp and circumstance.

Engage: When you give, why are you doing it? Is it because you think it’s expected? Is it because you are grateful for what God has already given you?

If you don’t give at this time, what is the reason?

If it is your desire to give, but aren’t sure how to start, try working toward consistency first. Many people are struggling financially now and worry that they can’t give enough so they don’t give at all. Like we already learned, God isn’t concerned with amount – so determine how much you can cheerfully give consistently (every 2 weeks or monthly) and do it **before** you pay bills. Often if we wait to decide how much to give after bills are paid, we will worry about having enough money and may decide not to give at all. You will find that putting God first comes with its own blessing!

Memorize: Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

Chapter 3

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

Read: [Matthew 6:16-18](#)

Think: The subject of fasting can be confusing for some. At its core, fasting is primarily abstaining from food and drink for a set period of time for a particular reason. The fast that God required was on the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, which took place once a year on the tenth day of Tishri on the Jewish calendar (Sept-Oct on our calendar). This was a special Holy day where the high priest would enter the most holy place in the temple where the ark of the covenant was. He would offer sacrifices for himself and the sins of the people. It was a call to the entire nation of Israel to observe this as a day of repentance and mourning over sin as established in [Leviticus 23:26-32](#) where God called them to “afflict” themselves. The word “afflict” is defined as *humble, bowed down, to stoop* and is a proper response toward a holy God we have sinned against. Although it’s not specifically stated in these verses, part of the affliction was abstaining from food, or fasting.

Throughout the Bible we see different times of fasting – most common is fasting as part of repentance from sin, but there are times when people fasted before a major life event. Jesus fasted before entering into His public ministry in [Matthew 4:1-11](#). The prophet Daniel fasted in mourning over the vision he was given about Israel and the last days in [Daniel 10](#) and [11](#). Queen Esther called a three day fast for all the Jewish people when she discovered Haman’s plot to kill all Jews in [Esther 4](#). These are just a few examples, but the idea is that fasting is usually done during a period of intense focus on the Lord for deliverance, repentance, and guidance. This is not something to be done lightly, which is where we come to our passage today... what does Jesus teach about what we are to do when fasting?

What were the hypocrites doing?

What is their reward?

Fasting, like giving, prayer, Bible reading, and any other spiritual discipline can go from an act of love to an act of checking the box. Have you ever experienced this? It isn’t uncommon to go through a “dry spell” with God where we get into the box checking mode, but once we notice it, we must change it. For those Jesus called hypocrites, fasting became a ritual and an act of piety with no love or humility involved. This wasn’t a new problem for the Jewish people, In [Isaiah 58:1-14](#) God confronted His people about this. Read the passage and note the kind of fast God is pleased with. It seems through this passage that although Israel was observing the fast, it had become a self-centered and self-serving act and they were ignoring other commands like helping the poor and

feeding the hungry ([Deuteronomy 10:12-19](#), [Exodus 23:9](#), [Leviticus 23:22](#)). For more information on the Day of Atonement and fasting, go to: www.gotquestions.org/Day-Atonement-Yom-Kippur.html, www.gotquestions.org/types-of-fasting.html

Engage: [Philippians 3:19](#) talks of a person whose god is their belly, meaning they are driven by flesh desires, always feeding their flesh – sadly this describes many people in the church. The deception of this is when we are satisfied in life with plenty of food, money, and friends, we don't always recognize our need for Jesus.

Back in Luke 6:25, Jesus says, “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry”, based on our study, what kind of hunger is He talking about?

Although caring for those who are physically hungry is something we should do, He is more concerned with spiritual hunger and that is what many people, then and now, have missed. The real problem is they don't know they're starving and malnourished spiritually. Anyone who is satisfied with one hour a week going to church is like a person trying to live on one meal a week... it's enough to barely live but it will be a painful life ending in a slow painful death. It is the hope that as Christians we crave God and live in a mode of “can't get enough”. Do you crave to know God more? Do you want more of Him in your life? Take a moment to examine if the good things you have over shadow your hunger for God.

Memorize: Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ Philippians 3:8

Chapter 4

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

Read: [Matthew 6:19-24](#)

Think: We are taught from childhood that fulfillment and peace come from having enough money. It certainly helps but trusting in and relying on money will not secure our eternity in heaven. We have already covered many verses regarding this subject, but Jesus has more to say. In today's passage, where does He tell us to lay up our treasures?

This concept of laying up or storing treasure has the idea of constant focus and pursuit – it's a day-to-day life of going after something. For those whose focus is earthly treasure, what does Jesus say will happen to it?

Here, the reference to moth and rust is the picture of something being eaten away or rotting. The truth is, everything we have on this earth will eventually break down and decay or they can be stolen. What is it that you can lay up in heaven?

How does Jesus say we can tell where our treasure is in verse 21?

Where is your heart focused on a daily basis?

Jesus then makes a statement that, at first, seems out of place. In verses 22-23, what does He say about the eye?

Have you ever noticed how much your vision, what you look at, has to do with what you want? Think about it for a moment, if you were blind, how would it change certain desires?

God gave us the gift of sight and with our eyes we can appreciate the beauty of nature or look into the face of our newborn child or grandchild, but we can also use our eyes to look at things that are

inappropriate and cause sinful desires. It is up to us to make the choice! What we choose to look at and focus on will drive our passions.

Jesus then drives His point home in verse 24, what does He say about what masters us?

We can be deceived into thinking we can serve both God and our possessions and passions. This was a mistake Israel made in the Old Testament thinking they could serve God and the god Baal ([Judges 2:11](#)), the problem was they didn't really serve God, they abandoned His ways but still identified as His people. This is our caution! People often identify as Christian but live only for themselves thinking they are ok with God.

Engage: Again, we must be reminded that our money, home, cars, retirement accounts, etc. are not the problem. God wants and expects us to handle what He has given us well. Where we end up in trouble is how we view the things we have. Think for a moment, and be honest, how much time do you spend thinking about money, vacations, hobbies, and so on versus the amount of time you spend thinking about God and ways to serve Him?

Treasure in heaven is the upside down life of wanting what God wants, placing value on what God places value. We've already read in Isaiah 58:1-14 yesterday what God values – go back and review and note if there is a way you can serve others if you are not already doing that. Growing in this area, desiring what God desires comes with spending time with Him. Thinking about your journey with Him, how have you grown in this area?

How has He changed you?

Where do you need more growth?

For more on what treasures in heaven are, go to: www.gotquestions.org/treasures-in-heaven.html

Memorize: Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4

Chapter 5

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

Read: [Matthew 6:25-34](#)

Think: Do you ever struggle with anxiety? If so, what are the things that make you anxious?

It should bring hope to know that the Bible recognizes anxiety as something we often wrestle with and because it does, it means there's an answer. In the Bible, the word anxiety is defined as *worry, troubled with cares or to seek one's own interests*. The good news is that anxiety is actually a normal part of human life. However, we cross lines when it becomes the driving force in our life causing us to either pursue things out of fear of impending misfortunes or doing nothing at all out of fear of results.

If you Google anxiety you will find an endless stream of sites focused on anxiety disorder... the question is, how did a normal human feeling become a disorder? The answer goes back to what we look at and focus on. In today's reading, what does Jesus say we are to do when we are feeling anxious?

What are we to seek FIRST?

Did you notice what we are NOT to focus on? What many people don't realize is that the brain can be rewired when we practice certain thought patterns. Emotions are normal but when we choose to focus on the feeling itself rather than the facts/truth of the situation and how God cares for us, we are creating neural pathways that will literally change our thought patterns. It doesn't end there though – our brains also impact physiological responses so heightened and prolonged anxiety can cause heart problems, gastrointestinal issues, sleep disorders, and so on. Do you think God knows this? Since He created our brains, He also know what we need to heal. Scientifically speaking, What Jesus teaches in today's passage about looking at the birds and considering the flowers is good medicine! The problem is Satan knows this too so he will tempt us and distract us from looking at God.

The word "look" isn't a passive action of simply noting the bird's existence but to *fix your gaze on, to look intently*. The word "consider" also isn't a passive action of a mental note but means to *think, learn thoroughly or carefully examine*. How does this impact your understanding of what Jesus is teaching here?

When was the last time you sat and really watched birds – studied how they pick at the grass for bugs or seeds? Who put those there for them to eat? Have you looked at a nest? Who taught them how to do that? Who provides the materials for them? What about flowers? They have both male and female parts needed to reproduce but also need the help of birds or certain insects to pollinate. Who caused this? Not only is this miraculous but they are beautiful! Think for a moment... while you were considering God's creation, did you experience a feeling of peace, awe, or wonder? Did it relax you? Hopefully you noticed that focusing on God changed your thought pattern and now as you practice this anytime you are anxious, you will notice that with time the anxiety will be less frequent.

Engage: When the secular world systems removed God from the equation, humanity lost the ability to know how to handle fear, worry, anxiety, stress, depression, and any other emotional health issue we struggle with. Sadly, even in the Christian church, it is common for people to detach God's plan for healing in our emotional health and look to modern science/psychology only. Although science and medicine are revealing new things all the time, what many don't consider is that they are only revealing what the Bible already teaches. Jesus is clear in verses 33 and 34 today, who and what are we to seek first?

Why?

What does it mean to seek God first?

Whether we are struggling financially, relationally, or emotionally, the answer is the same – go to God first! Pray about the situation, read your Bible, focus on scripture, and how he has already cared for you and provided for you. Part of our challenge in this is expectations. If we expect God to give us what we *want* rather than what we *need*, we risk getting discouraged. Are you ever challenged by this? Where do your expectations come from?

Are you ready and willing to be satisfied and grateful with what God gives you even if it doesn't match your expectations? How can you practice seeking His righteousness each day?

You will notice that when you are focused on living biblically throughout each day, your mind isn't as focused on worldly cares.

Memorize: But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:33-34

Chapter 6

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

Read: [Matthew 7:7-11](#)

Think: We would do well to remember that God is not only the Creator of all things, but also a Heavenly Father. It has been noted that for some people how God is viewed as a Father depends on their relationship with their earthly father. How was your relationship with your father? Has it ever impacted your beliefs about God as a father? If yes, in what way?

If not, why not?

The reason we are exploring this a little is because no matter what our fathers were like, God is the perfect Father. His love for us is not dependent on our behavior, He doesn't make mistakes, He doesn't get irritated or cranky after a long day at work, He can only do what is good for us (even if we don't like it). He also wants to give us good things; however, we don't always get those good things. Why do you think that happens?

Part of the problem is what we're asking for and why – turn to [James 4:1-10](#) – in this passage, what is the reason people don't get what they ask for?

What does James tell us to do instead?

When we look at the verses in Matthew a little closer, there is a “method” so-to-speak. First is the asking – we would say this is prayer, or making our requests known to God. Seeking is looking for God’s leading or guiding us, and knocking is discovering opportunities God puts in our path. Often, people ask God for things then simply wait for Him to plop it in their lap! Think of the person who asks God for a job but doesn’t look for one or turns down jobs because it’s not the one they want. There may be times when God immediately opens a door for us, but most often it’s a process of asking our Father for what we need, then seeking Him as we do our part.

You may have heard some say it’s not right to keep asking God for the same thing over and over, citing that it is a lack of faith. However, [Luke 11:5-8](#) provides some additional context to this. What do these verses teach about asking?

The word “impudence” means *persistence*, but we must be careful to not assume this means if we keep bugging God about something He’ll give it to us to get rid of us! This is an analogy Jesus used to explain that if a human will help someone who is knocking and asking, certainly God will too!

Another important aspect of this is asking in God’s will. What does that mean?

Asking in God’s will means we ask for things from a God centered mind and heart – wanting what He wants. For example, if you have children, do you pray for them? What do you pray for?

Do you pray they will be successful? What kind of successful – godly or worldly? It is ok to pray for our children’s success, but without neglecting the most important success – that they would love, follow and serve Lord first all their life. So, whether you are praying for a job, a house, a car, healed relationship, etc. ask God for His will in it.

Engage: What are you asking for? What are you seeking? What door are you knocking on? Is it in line with what God would want for you? Answers can take time, which is why we see in the verses today the idea of perseverance. Some things require several prayers and continued seeking and knocking. Think of it this way... if you are praying for your marriage to be healed, one prayer

and one day of effort is not going to change things. You must continue to pray, seek God first EVERY DAY, practice godliness EVERY DAY in spite of how things are going. In this example, one of the first and most important prayers is to ask God to show you your part, what you need to change – not just asking God to change your spouse. Whatever you are asking God for, don't give up – seek Him first and continually. This is also the only way we will learn to discern when God is saying no and keeping certain doors shut.

Memorize: If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Matthew 7:11

Session 3

Inside Out

Chapter 1

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

Read: [Luke 6:27](#)

Think: We will begin our time today focused on one verse beginning with filling in the blanks...

*“But I say to you who _____, _____ your _____, do
_____ to those who _____ you,”*

The reason we are starting with this one verse is because there is much we can learn from it, starting with the word “hear”. Jesus is speaking directly to those who aren’t just hearing the words but understanding His meaning. This has always been the dividing line between those who truly followed Him and those who didn’t but thought they did. We know what it means to hear someone say something versus what it means to really listen to them. Listening carries the added action of the desire to learn and carry out what is being taught. In [Matthew 13:13-15](#), Jesus quotes [Isaiah 6:9-10](#) – read these passages and note what they say about hearing.

Who is Jesus talking about?

The very people God chose to be His, Israel. Even in our own time, Christians must guard themselves against becoming “dull of hearing”. How can this happen?

The minute we think we’ve “heard this message/sermon” so many times and choose not to ask God what we can learn from it, we have become like Israel. Have you ever done this? If so, how did you work through it?

It's interesting that Jesus begins this statement today with the act of listening, because what He was about to say is completely upside down and inside out from what the world tells us. When it comes to how we respond to those who don't like us or treat us poorly, how does the world say we should respond?

Our world is filled with conflict, back-stabbing, bullying, and all sorts of unkind behavior toward others. So, for Christians to respond with kindness is not only shocking but often difficult! Why is this hard to do?

Keep in mind, Jesus' audience included Jews and Gentiles who were oppressed by the Roman govt. – many of whom were slaves and overtaxed. Do you think they saw the Romans as their enemy? So, if Jesus tells them to love the Roman soldiers and do good to them, what do you think their response was? The word love here is “agape” which means *to welcome, entertain, be fond of, or dearly love*. This isn't a passive word nor is it a feeling – it is a word that takes action. The word “enemy” means *odious or hated, one that is hostile*. Based on these definitions, chances are many people listening to Jesus walked away – finding it too hard to overcome the very powerful feelings of hatred. What is interesting is that the teaching of loving our enemies wasn't a new brand of religion Jesus was selling... there are many instances in the Bible that speak directly to this, read [Deuteronomy 6:5](#), [Matthew 22:37-39](#), [Leviticus 19:18](#) and [Matthew 5:13-45](#). In these passages, what did you learn about who you are to love?

Two references stand out – Leviticus and Matthew 5 – in Matthew 5, what had the people “heard” about enemies?

Since God, Jesus, and the Bible never contradict themselves then this must be a misunderstanding. In fact, it was... it was a misuse of verses like [Deuteronomy 30:7](#) that people used to justify their own hate toward others. God never ordains hate of other people and even when the word is used in relation to Him it is not the fleshy, emotionally driven feeling of hatred we are familiar with. It is the response of a holy and loving God who allows people to choose to reject Him and in so doing, must deal with the natural consequences.

Finally, Jesus also taught that not only are we to love our enemy but do GOOD to them! What does that mean?

This means that we don't stop at *saying* we love them, paying lip service, but outwardly demonstrating it by doing what is good for the person – treating and speaking to them kindly, not gossiping about them, serving them, and so on. We may bristle at the thought, but when we are faced with the truth that before choosing to follow Jesus, we were once enemies of God as well (See [Romans 5:10](#)) and He chose to DO GOOD for us by sacrificing His own Son to reconcile us to Him, how can we refuse a little discomfort to be nice to someone? Jesus fully lived out what He taught.

Engage: What challenges you about today's subject?

Is there anyone in your life you would consider an enemy? An enemy can be the person living in your home, sitting in church, the ex-wife or husband, the employer, neighbor, etc. If you are Christian, there is no “opt-out” option here – we must choose whether we are hearing or listening and understanding what Jesus is asking of us. Since He gave His life for you, can you show kindness to someone who is your enemy? Since He shed His blood for you, can you forgive others AND speak well of them?

Memorize: *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Romans 5:10*

Chapter 2

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

Read: [Luke 6:28](#)

Think: Today we will work on the second half of yesterday's verse, again filling in the blanks.

“_____ those who _____ you, _____ for those who _____ you.”

In this verse, to “bless” is *eulogeo* meaning to speak well of and is related to the word we use when talking about someone who has died at their memorial – eulogy.

Jesus also teaches that we are to pray for those who abuse us. This is better understood as those who mistreat, use, insult, threaten, or falsely accuse us. This lesson from Jesus is equally as difficult as yesterday's as it goes against everything we naturally feel and have been taught. We must work at this by practicing what Jesus Himself demonstrated to us.

Turn to [Luke 23:32-35](#), in these verses we are at the crucifixion. What does Jesus pray in verse 34 and who is He praying for?

How does this impact you?

The Christian faith is radically counter intuitive, which makes it more desirable. No other religion in the world has a god who died for their people, no other religion deals with forgiveness this way. Even for the religions whose gods and prophets promote a peaceful way of life, or self-sacrifice, it is totally

self-serving. It is hard to imagine Jesus, hanging on a cross, having been beaten and whipped, hearing the people around Him curse Him, to ask God to forgive the people who did this. How does this show you Jesus’ love for all people?

No one would be shocked by the railings of a person falsely accused of crimes they didn’t commit who was sentenced to death, and chances are people at the crucifixion were expecting this kind of response from Jesus. How do you think the people who heard Jesus pray this reacted?

Jesus isn’t necessarily excusing what they were doing but pointing to the spiritual aspect they were completely unaware of. They truly didn’t understand the role they were playing in the prophecy of God’s plan of redemption put into motion from the beginning of time. Even in this horrible moment, Jesus was a witness to the love of God. That is our challenge when we are being mistreated.

Engage: There are many books and accounts of Christians throughout time who have been persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and abused who responded the same way Jesus did. God’s plan for His people to be a powerful witness happens most when we are loving, kind, and forgiving when we are hated. His plan is for us to overcome evil with good ([Romans 12:21](#)). Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6:27-28 is not only for the other person, but for us! We must choose to respond with His heart in difficult situations, and each time we do this, *we change*. Have you ever been readily forgiven by someone you have hurt? If so, how did it impact you?

Have you readily forgiven someone who has hurt you? If so, what was your motive?

How did it change you?

One of the challenges we face is that forgiving, loving, blessing, and praying for others who mistreat us is the understanding that our motive should be the desire for them to know God and want what

God wants for the person. If there is someone who is or has hurt you or mistreated you, pray Jesus' prayer for them. Write a short prayer for them here.

If you would like to learn more about Christians who have endured persecution and forgave their persecutors, you can read “Foxes Book of Martyrs”, “Tortured for Christ” by Richard Wurmbrand, “The Pastor’s Wife” by Sabina Wurmbrand, “The Hiding Place”, by Corrie Ten Boom, “I am N” by Voice of the Martyrs, “The End of the Spear”, by Steve Saint – all available in the church library.

Memorize: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21*

Chapter 3

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

Read: [Luke 6:29-31](#)

Think: In today’s verses we see an age-old saying that some may not have realized came from the Bible. Do you recognize it? We may have learned it as “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” ... known as The Golden Rule. Do you try to live by that rule? In what ways?

Honestly, this is an easy standard to live by – talk to and treat others the same way you want to be spoken to and treated – but do we always do that? If we are to be completely honest, we expect

others to treat us better than we typically do them. Why is that? Our perspective is off. Think of it this way... when you use binoculars to see something up close, which end do you look through?

How does it change your vision?

If you turn the binoculars around and look through the opposite end, what happens?

That can be the difference between how we view our behavior and the behavior of others! We see every fault and failure in them up close while we can't see our own. The only way to change this is to view ourselves and others through the lens of the Bible, and we will quickly see we are all slipping in the same mud!

The basic lesson from today's verses is don't retaliate when someone does or says something hurtful or mean. Some see these verses as Jesus teaching us to be a doormat and just take the abuse. Jesus is not endorsing physical attacks. For most of us, the magnitude of persecution is verbal attacks – gossip, slander, hurtful words, and so on, so when Jesus says “turn the other cheek” the idea is that it is not always necessary to fight back or retaliate. Sometimes we just need to put up with it and let God reveal the truth. This sounds completely opposite of what we are told by modern psychology, our friends, and sometimes the church, but if we look at how Jesus handled these moments, we will see He practiced turning the other cheek. Read [1 Peter 2:21-23](#) – this is the NLT translation because it is so perfectly stated. What do these verses say about how Jesus responded to persecution?

How does this challenge you?

You may be wondering if there is ever a time when you will need to defend yourself and the answer is yes; there will be those times. Times when you are in a court case or facing false charges at work that may impact your employment or even the need to clear up severe miscommunication. However, what we are talking about today are the petty acts of petty people or when it is not detrimental to your marriage, family, or work.

Engage: Many years ago, there was a popular saying people adopted, “I don't get mad, I get even”. It was on hats, T-shirts, and bumper stickers. That mindset hasn't really disappeared in our

world it's just packaged differently – especially through social media. This lesson of not letting what people say about us is not only something we need to learn and practice but it is most important to teach our children. So many kids are bullied online through their social media accounts and kids are more cruel than ever – to the degree of encouraging other kids to just kill themselves. It is imperative for parents to teach their children about Jesus and how He shows us what to do in these situations. If you are parenting, how can you use today's lesson to teach your children what to do if they are being treated poorly by kids at school?

What would you tell them if it is happening on their Facebook account?

Whether parenting or not, how can you follow Jesus' example?

One key point in this is not going back to the Facebook post and reading it over and over or continually thinking about what a person said. Success in this may require shutting down social media accounts or blocking people, and if you find yourself thinking and talking about it all the time, find a couple of Bible verses to memorize that are helpful, pray, and shift your focus by doing something constructive.

Memorize: *and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 1 Corinthians 4:12*

Chapter 4

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

Read: [Luke 6:32-36](#)

Think: As Jesus finishes His lesson on loving our enemies and what that means, He ends with the obvious... we are not special or any different than the world when we love those who love us and do good for those who do good for us. Where it becomes difficult for us is when we are confronted with God's sovereignty about fairness. In verses 35 and 36 today, what does Jesus say about how God treats all people?

Have you ever known someone who was rude, unkind, hurtful, gossips, etc. who seemed to always get what they wanted? The person who gets the promotions, the raises, the extravagant vacations, beautiful house... you know, the "good" stuff while you feel like you always have to scrape to get by or get the short end of the stick? Things just seem unfair and as a Christian we may feel like we should be the ones getting all the nice things. The problem is when we do that, we are questioning God's sovereignty and His decisions. In [Matthew 5:45](#), how is God's sovereignty demonstrated?

Although the wording is a little different, it is the same lesson – God offers mercy to all people every day. It is as if by His sending rain on both good and evil, and the rising sun on both good and evil, He is saying, "Here I AM!". Think about it – Jesus is talking to a crowd of people who were familiar with agriculture, and they relied on rain and sun for good crops. Many of these people were Romans who had to appease certain agricultural gods, Ceres and Saturn, often with rituals and sacrifices for blessing and protection over their crops. It was more of a "give to get" system and if a person made a mistake in the ritual or angered the god in some way it resulted in ruined crops. God doesn't operate this way, He is kind and provides as needed, He doesn't demand we appease Him or perform rituals to get what we need. His mercy and kindness is His way of showing He exists, that He has power over all creation, including the weather, that He loves His creation, and that by doing good and blessing them they will find their way to Him. And that is why we are to be kind to the just and the unjust, merciful to the just and the unjust, do good and bless not only the kind person but the evil person as well. When we do as He does, we will hopefully draw people to Him.

Engage: Have you ever felt like you had to do something for God to get something from Him? If you have, you can know that God isn't a works-based deity who will only act on our behalf when we behave or do certain things. He loves even when we are at our worst – BUT He doesn't want us to stay

there. Salvation comes by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus alone, and it is that same grace we have been given that drives Christians to love their enemy and do good for them.

Is there someone you feel has been blessed unfairly? If so, understand that your issue isn't with the person, but that you are questioning God. God has given you exactly what He wants you to have, so rather than focus on what others have, give Him thanks for what He has given you. This is another important lesson for parents to teach their children to avoid hyper-materialism in their child. If you are parenting, how can you help your child be thankful for what God has given them? The secret to our contentment is our relationship with Christ!

Memorize: *Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. Philippians 4:11*

Chapter 5

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

Read: [James 2:14-26](#)

Think: The book of James was written by Jesus' brother, half-brother really, and came after Jesus had been crucified and resurrected. Up to that point, scripture reveals that Jesus' family, with the exception of His mother, didn't believe in Him (See [John 7:3-5](#)). As a Jewish man, James would have grown up with Jesus learning the same scriptures in the Law of Moses and fully understood the importance of keep the Law. Sadly, what happened with many Jewish people, keeping the law became their means of salvation, in effect "working" their way to Heaven. The Law was never meant to be salvation, rather an "instruction" book for life – how to worship the Lord, how to treat people, hygiene laws, legal laws and so on. It was meant to keep God's people safe, prevent them from sinning and stand out from other nations as a light to the world and testimony of the One True God. In

[1 Corinthians 15:5-7](#), the apostle Paul lists the people that Jesus appeared to personally after His resurrection and James is specifically named. When that happened, what do you think Jesus said to him?

Can you imagine James’ reaction? Can you imagine what it was like for James as he connected the dots between the lessons he heard his brother teach along with the prophecies in the book of the Law and Prophets (what we know as the Old Testament)? That brings us to our lesson today...

Throughout His ministry, Jesus often pointed out the legalism and hypocrisy of many of the Pharisees who were more concerned with outward appearance than they were with love for the Lord. Even today this is a common problem for many who say they are Christian - their faith is defined by their good deeds. Conversely there are many who profess Christianity and are diligent in church attendance, life groups, and so on but choose not to volunteer in ministry or help others in any way, or they live a dual life – one in which they are acting like a non-Christian outside of church. In today’s reading, James presents an argument about this. What is his argument for the need to have both faith and works?

In verse 19, what truth does he reveal?

How does that knowledge impact you?

Many debates about this section of the bible have taken place throughout time as some believe James is promoting works-based salvation. Clearly, he is not. What two examples does he use to show this in verses 21 and 25?

What does he say of faith in verse 26?

The word “dead” is *necros* and it means lifeless, destitute of life, inanimate, destitute of force, or power, or spiritually dead. Based on this definition, what does a person with lifeless faith look like?

Engage: Here we are faced with finding the balance of both faith in Christ for salvation and the outworking of that faith. Over the years many have argued against serving with the excuse that if they do, they are relying on works. There is also the dilemma that any person, Christian or not, can do many wonderful things to help people. Think of the celebrities and big business owners who give large donations to good causes or travel to third world countries to help orphans, etc. These works are not motivated by faith in God. So where do we find balance? First, we must understand that works is the natural outflow of a heart devoted to Jesus and is comprised of both internal change and external evidence. Turn to [Galatians 5:22-24](#), how is the outworking of faith in Christ described here?

This is an internal change but is expressed outwardly by how we treat others and respond to life. How are you doing here? Of course it is never a perfect situation, but thankfully we can repent when we have failed. When it comes to works, as in actively doing something, the motive and source must be from a grateful heart and understanding of what Jesus has done for us – it is powerful and motivates us to DO something. How are you doing here? There are many ways we can serve others... list some ways you have or can do this. We often view serving others from a place of what is the most important, and that is a proper view in many cases, however we must be careful not to take the attitude James was addressing in verses 15-16 today. Go back and review them – what is the concern here?

The attitude behind this is “God will provide” as the answer releasing the person from doing anything. What if YOU are the solution God wants to provide? Have you considered that if you notice a problem or need, that God is showing it to you on purpose? Where do you see need in Crossroads?

If you haven’t noticed anything, look around – if you are seeing the same person every weekend volunteering in an area, that may be an indication of need. Where do you see need in Ridgecrest?

Is there anything you can do about it? As you reflect on this, ask God if He wants you to be part of the solution. When God intends for you to serve Him in these ways, He WILL give you all you need to fulfill that purpose.

Memorize: *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 1 Peter 4:10*

Chapter 6

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

Read: [Luke 10:25-37](#)

Think: As we close this week, we finish with one of the best examples Jesus gave to make his point... the parable of the Good Samaritan. For context, a Samaritan was a person from Samaria, a region north of Jerusalem and the people there were hated by the Jews because they had intermarried with Assyrians. Considered half-breeds, half Gentile and half Jew, they would not associate with them for any reason (For more, go to: www.gotquestions.org/what-is-a-Samaritan.html) making this lesson particularly difficult for them.

In verses 25-28, what question was asked of Jesus?

Who was asking and what was the motive?

In the New Testament times, a Jewish lawyer was an expert in religious law – he knew every detail and interpretation. Sadly, in this scene, his purpose was to trap Jesus into saying something against God's law. BUT JESUS! Jesus always knows our intentions, and He knew the intentions of this unnamed lawyer as well, so He uses a parable that reveals that although he was an expert in knowing the law, he was a failure at living it.

In this parable Jesus uses the example of a man robbed, beaten, and left for dead on the road to Jericho. This road was notorious for this kind of problem, so His example wasn't out of place. Who were the first two people to come upon the man?

How did they respond to his needs?

Why do you think they did that?

Even though this was not prohibited by God, in the Jewish culture, to have any dealings with a Gentile would have made them unclean, so for a priest and Levite, helping this poor man would mean they couldn't perform their priestly duties for a set period of time. There is also the possibility that if they thought he was dead, the law did say that a person who touched a dead body would be unclean for a short period of time. What is noticeable about this example is that neither the priest nor Levite even bothered to check! They were using the law to justify their inaction rather than God's law moving them to act with compassion. So enters the Samaritan – how did he respond to the injured man?

The Samaritan not only helped he went above and beyond! What was the point of Jesus' parable that the lawyer, priest, and Levite missed? (For more on laws of what is unclean, go to: www.gotquestions.org/Bible-unclean.html)

Engage: All too often we are more concerned with justification than we are compassion and mercy. Here's the error in that line of thinking – our justification depends on God's mercy and compassion. Think about that for a minute. It was God's mercy and compassion that moved Him to send Jesus to the Cross to pay for our sins. That payment wiped our sins away, thereby justifying us (declaring righteous) before God. This is the same principle as a criminal in court being set free, with his/her record cleared of all crimes because someone else took the punishment. They now stand justified – but that justification depended on someone's mercy and compassion. Do you ever justify actions or inactions? What is the motive in each?

You may notice that when we are moved to action out of love for Christ, He is the motive, and when we are moved to inaction WE are the focus. We have all been guilty at one time or another of passing by someone in need – whether it was a time issue, money issue, or even how they looked and it is often a matter of risk. Are you willing to risk convenience, comfort, time, or money to help someone – even an enemy? Is there someone you know or see frequently you can show love and compassion to? Briefly summarize what Gos has taught you this week and write at least one action item to practice what you have learned. For more on justification, go to: www.gotquestions.org/justification.html

Memorize: *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. Romans 8:30*

Session 4

Backwards

Chapter 1

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

Read: [Luke 6:37-38](#)

Think: if there was ever a verse from the Bible most widely misunderstood and misused it's this one – Judge not! It seems that even non-believers know this verse and make the mistake of thinking it is an endorsement of tolerance. Is that what Jesus teaching here? As we will learn this week, it does not mean we can never assess a person's behavior, especially those who claim to be Christian, what it does mean is that we need to do so biblically and with caution.

When you read the verse that says judge not, what does that mean to you?

Does it mean you're not allowed to recognize activities, behaviors, attitudes, and speech that are sinful, hurtful or damaging? Does it mean we turn a blind eye to it? Does it mean we aren't allowed to get involved in other people's lives for the purpose of helping? When we really look at today's verses, Jesus is pointing to the attitude of the heart. In these verses we see Jesus gives us two "don'ts" and two "do's" and there are conditions to each one – what are they?

Starting with the "*don'ts*": The problem for people in general, but especially many of the religious leaders of His day was that they were casting judgement and condemnation, or pronouncing guilty, others without examining their own lives and living up to the very standard they expected of others. Where most people get this wrong is that they judge by their own standards and not God's. Have you done this or experienced this? This takes a willingness to really look at how we judge others, and recognize we all do it. However, when we are doing something we know we shouldn't, do the standards change? Do we justify ourselves? What we need to remember is the conditions placed

on us as Christians - how we judge others is how we will be judged! Think about this for a moment. Do you want to be judged the same way you judge people?

Now let's look at the "*do's*": looking at these two, it almost appears as if they are the antidote to judging and condemnation. If judgement and condemnation are an assessment and sentence of guilt, then to forgive and give is a sentence of life! This is an incredible picture of our own lives before and after Christ! Before we choose to love and follow Jesus, we are judged and found guilty of sin and have a death sentence of eternity in hell, separated from God. After we choose Jesus, we are forgiven and given an abundantly overflowing new life in Him! So when it comes to how we treat others, we are to offer forgiveness when they hurt us and the hope of new life in Jesus. How does this encourage you and help your understanding of this passage?

Engage: It is important to always remember that we are to do for others what God has already done for us and when we do, the blessings we receive will always be far greater than we can imagine. These aren't necessarily material blessings but spiritual growth, healing, wisdom, and understanding – in this is the fact that the more we pour out for God, the more He can pour into us. Think of yourself as a sponge... a sponge will absorb water to its fullest capacity at which point it can no longer absorb any more until it is squeezed out. That's how we are – God pours Himself into us, teaching, guiding, and growing, but like a sponge, we won't be able to absorb anymore until we pour out what He has given us. What has God given you in abundance? Think about things like material possessions, godly wisdom, peace, knowledge, faith, patience, abilities that can benefit others like carpentry skills, musical talent, teaching, and so on.

What are you doing with what God has given you?

Have you noticed that He gives you opportunities to practice or pass on to others what He is teaching you? He's squeezing you out so He can give you more! Finally, when it comes to forgiveness, this is also something we can pass on to others. When we choose to forgive, it's like a dam that breaks loose and frees us up to freely forgive at all times which can bring life to those we have forgiven.

Memorize: *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 7:14-15*

Chapter 2

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

Read: [Luke 6:39-42](#)

Think: What familiar quote do you notice in today's verses?

Chances are you have been in a situation where you have used the quote, "it's like the blind leading the blind". What is the point of the quote?

It is easy to recognize the irony of a blind person trying to lead another blind person somewhere and Jesus uses this concept to help us understand His point regarding judging others.

Starting with verse 40, what does Jesus tell us about teachers and disciples (students)?

Does this seem out of context to you? Jesus is pointing out that how we judge others is something that is taught – good and bad. We tend to pick up the traits, characteristics, and responses of those we spend the most time with, especially those in the position of teaching us. That means our parents, teachers, bosses, pastors, and of course friends, all shape how we view people, so we must be careful when choosing them because when we are "fully trained" we will be like them. Choose wisely and protect your heart and mind when you don't have a choice.

One way to protect ourselves is to follow Jesus' wisdom in the remaining verses. What are we to do for ourselves?

When does it take place?

The fact that Jesus tells us to FIRST take any logs out of our eye so we can see clearly to take the speck out of someone else's is evidence that we are allowed and required to "judge" others but we must judge our own lives first. Does this mean we must be perfect before we help someone else? What this means is we are to recognize and work on our own short-comings and issues as well.

Engage: Jesus' listeners must have been shocked by such an outrageous example as a log in a person's eye! In another passage, He uses the example of straining out a gnat to swallow a camel ([Matthew 23:24](#))! Jesus seemed to enjoy using such examples! We know these are impossible, but they make a perfect lesson. We can be so concerned with the tiny infractions of others while overlooking the giant issues in our own life. Why do you think we do this? For some, we honestly don't see our own areas of sin, but for others it is a deliberate way to avoid the truth.

Has there been a time in your life that you did not recognize an issue? How did you finally learn there was a problem?

How were you able to change?

What did God teach you about yourself?

The hardest part of this passage is that it is not just directed at the average person, but it is especially directed at those in the church. There is nothing more damaging than a judgmental Christian who imposes biblical standards on others while ignoring them themselves. Many people have left churches because of this – how can we prevent this from happening?

Is there someone you are trying to help right now? If so, you are in the role of teachers – what kind of teacher are you?

Memorize: *How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. Luke 6:42*

Chapter 3

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

Read: [Galatians 6:1-5](#)

Think: Often, when we hear the verses, “Judge not or you will be judged”, we tend to think we must stay out of people’s business. When this happens, we can overlook the desperate cry of someone who really needs our help – so what do we do if we see someone needing help but aren’t sure what to do? First, go back to yesterday’s lesson and check your eyes for logs! Then you can see clearly to follow today’s lesson. In today’s reading, what are the steps of helping a person who is struggling?

The word “trespass” here is *paraptoma* and means to fall beside, side slip, deviation, or lapse from truth, sin. This is a different use of the word sin, which is *hamartano* meaning to err, miss the mark, or violate God’s law. Although both relate to a moral failure, *paraptoma* pictures someone stumbling on a path while *hamartano* is like someone aiming for something but missing the mark.

We can think of today’s passage this way, if you are with a friend hiking up a rough trail and they slip and twist their ankle, what will you do? Normally you would come alongside the person and help them walk, maybe having them lean on you for support, being very careful not to injure them further or fall yourself. That is the picture Jesus is painting in how we should care for those who have “slipped” in their faith. It is not intentional and shouldn’t be treated as such, but like someone who needs gentle care to help them walk again. This is not a judgement of their character but the loving response of a fellow believer offering grace and support while they heal. The important part of this is being gentle and compassionate while offering the right treatment for healing. What would that treatment be?

Just as a bandage or splint will add strength and stability to an injured ankle, the Bible gives strength and stability to a hurting soul who battles a sinful practice but wants to stop.

Engage: Do you know someone who needs this kind of assistance? Maybe you are the one needing someone to come alongside for support and healing. If you are the one in need of support, we are here to walk with you! We offer free counseling and all it takes is a phone call to schedule a time to talk. We are here Weds. – Fri., 10am through 4pm (760)384-3333.

If you know someone who needs help, what can you do for them while also taking caution not to slip yourself?

We must also recognize that many people won’t ask for help for a variety of reasons – primarily embarrassment – so we must always approach with care. As Christians we have God’s word to guide us, and it is there for us to use to help others. Find some bible verses that apply to the situation and go over them with the person and pray with them. If you are unsure where to look for verses, there are many resources that are available. www.gotquestions.org is a great sight for any question you may have, simply type the word(s) into the search bar and you will see several articles relating to the subject. Additionally, your Bible may have a concordance in the back listing most words or subjects, such as anger/lust/hatred, that will offer verses that have the word in it.

Memorize: *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

Chapter 4

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

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

Think: Many people in the Christian church confuse acceptance with tolerance. Briefly summarize the difference between these two words.

According to Webster's dictionary, acceptance means approval whereas tolerance is the act of allowing or indulging another in their differences or a deviation from a standard. Both can be a good and/or bad thing.

In today's world, tolerance is somewhat forced on people, especially the tolerance of ideals or beliefs that are clearly damaging and sinful. So as Christians, are we obligated to accept, embrace, and allow anything people choose to do? If so, where do we draw the line? This has been the battle since the beginning – there is the misplaced idea that Christians are only Christian if we tolerate and accept everything – and if we don't, we're being judgmental.

We've already established the need to assess the behavior and attitudes of others from a biblical view, and in today's reading, the apostle Paul takes it one step further. What is the problem Paul is addressing?

How was the church handling the situation?

Even though Paul wasn't physically present to witness this sin, what did he do (vs. 3)?

What did he instruct the church to do?

What is the purpose in verse 6?

In his instruction to remove this person from fellowship, Paul tells the church where the line of judgement is to be drawn (9-12), where is the line?

Who do we judge and who do we not judge and why?

Engage: So far we have learned that there are times when we can and should judge others for the purpose of helping them battle sin. What makes today's situation different?

The man in today's passage was flagrantly committing sexual sin, and it appears everyone knew about it! He wasn't repentant and continued to practice this sin. That is the line in the sand. The difference between our last few days and today is the difference between someone battling a sin issue, trying to stop versus the one who is knowingly sinning and not even trying to stop.

The city of Corinth was much like our Las Vegas – what happens in Corinth stays in Corinth. This was a hugely pagan city with pagan gods and sexual sin was a large part of their worship practices. It is possible that this man, newly converted to Christianity, didn't know God's standards or maybe he did but refused to change. We don't know if the church made any attempts at all to address this issue but from the serious nature of Paul's letter, what would you deduce?

Why do you think the church tolerated this man's actions?

Do you think it was right or wrong for them to remove him?

What we need to focus on are two key points – first, by removing him it would actually help him see the error of his ways and hopefully bring him back to real faith. Second, to not remove him would send the message to the rest of the church that sexual sin is acceptable. Think of it this way... if you get a splinter in your thumb and choose not to remove it, what will happen? Over time, it will fester and the pain will become unbearable until you remove it. It may even begin to infect your entire hand. That is the point – sometimes our need to judge the actions of others is for the good of the church as a whole.

What are some other sins that can take place in a church that will cause damage if tolerated?

Have or do you know someone who is practicing a sin, such as gossip, lying, causing division, etc.? Have you or anyone else done anything about it? If you notice someone who claims to be a Christian causing damage in the church, the first thing to do is talk to them privately with Bible verses ready to help them see their sin. Give them time to show whether they have repented. If the behavior continues, talk to them again but with another Christian to be a witness to the conversation and offer biblical support. Again, give them time to show repentance. If it continues, the need to address the sin with a pastor may be necessary to assess disciplinary action. Part of the challenge in all of this is that it can take a little time, a large amount of grace, constant self-examination, and potentially very difficult decisions. This is never easy, but if done biblically and to honor God it can be a time of enormous spiritual growth.

PS: It is thought that the person spoken of in [2 Corinthians 2:5-11](#) is the very person who was removed from the fellowship. Read the verses and note what Paul's instructions are and why.

Our part doesn't end with removing the person, it continues with forgiveness so we don't become hardened, and restoration into the church family.

Memorize: *Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, Luke 17:3*

Chapter 5

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

Read: [John 8:1-11](#)

Think: The act of cherry-picking and misusing scripture is an old one, and today's passage shows the reality and hypocrisy of this. Reading these verses, who did the religious leaders bring to Jesus and what was their accusation?

How did Jesus respond?

What did He tell them?

How did they respond to His statement?

Why do you think Jesus didn't debate these men regarding what the Law of Moses said?

Let's take a look at the Law they were referring to... turn to [Leviticus 20:10](#). According to this verse, what is the law regarding adultery?

Who is judged guilty and what is the punishment?

Now go back to John 8, do you notice anything (or anyone) missing?

Here is a perfect example of people judging others without examining their own motives. We don't know why the scribes and Pharisees chose not to also bring the man to Jesus, but what we do know is they intended to trap Jesus into saying something they could accuse Him of. What they didn't expect was that He would turn the tables on them and reveal the truth of the law – love.

Sometimes we need to have a mirror put in front of us to see our own sinfulness and the Bible is that mirror! This woman wasn't more sinful than the Pharisees, and they needed to be reminded that they are also sinners, and no sin is worse than another in God's kingdom. [James 2:10](#) tells us that to obey the entire law but fail in one point makes us guilty of breaking the whole law. Jesus is the righteous judge, and He came to bring forgiveness and life rather than condemnation and death.

Once everyone left, what did Jesus ask the woman?

What did He tell her in verse 11?

Jesus didn't simply release this woman from her accusers, He gave her a command – sin no more. She was to change her way of life and that's what Jesus asks of us. He doesn't just forgive us, there's an expectation that we will go and sin no more. To go on sinning deliberately is to insult His sacrifice ([Hebrews 10:26-31](#)).

Engage: If you have accepted Jesus' forgiveness, He has told you to go and sin no more. Are you responding to this? The effort we make to stop sinning is a natural response to the saving grace we receive when we submit to Him and should be taken seriously. Where have you been successful in this?

What area are you still working on?

Are you doing all you can to avoid temptation? The good news is that God is pleased with faithfulness even if we aren't successful in the results. However, that is not an excuse to make a half-hearted attempt then succumb to temptation. For the woman in today's reading, what would you suggest to her to help her avoid temptation in the future?

Turn to [Galatians 5:16](#), what happens when we are faithful to walk by the Spirit?

How do we walk by the Spirit?

Turn to [Galatians 5:22-23](#) and list the qualities of the Holy Spirit that should be practiced and evident in the believer's life.

Which one(s) do you need to work on the most?

The point is, if we are focused on practicing each quality, we won't be so inclined to follow our flesh desires.

Memorize: *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*
Galatians 5:16

Chapter 6

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

Read: [2 Timothy 4:1-8](#)

Think: The Christian life is not always an easy one. We go through trials, suffering, hardships, and so on. One of the most difficult times for Christians is when we need to have those hard conversations or help others through conflict – it can be messy and sometimes painful – and they don't always work out like we hope. However, that doesn't mean we should avoid them... in fact, avoiding the tough things is often the reason churches struggle because sin is allowed to continue and discipline is often never given. Over the week, we have explored the difference between being judgmental and biblical judging, and when/how it is necessary to judge as well as what to do.

In today's passage, the apostle Paul is writing to a young church leader addressing this very issue. He gives him specific instructions for his own life as well as how and what to do for the good of the church. From verse 2, list what Paul instructs Timothy and what his attitude should be.

Some may think these instructions apply only to pastors or leaders, but that would be incorrect. Although it does apply to them it also applies to EVERY Christian. Let's break this down...

First, every Christian preaches whether they realize it or not. Your words, actions, attitude, and thoughts all preach what you believe, and it is the responsibility of EVERY Christian to be able to tell others who Jesus is and what He has done for them – it's their testimony. Additionally, [1 Peter 2:5](#) tells us we are all part of the holy priesthood as the church and although we may not have a formal role of preaching or teaching, we should still be able to witness to others. We must keep in mind that the disciples who walked with Jesus, as well as those who came to faith through them, were not preachers or teachers either – they were fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots, young,

old, and so on so, so why should we be any different? If you are Christian, are you any different than those who went before you?

Next, we are to “be ready” – the point here is to always be able to have an answer for the hope that is in us ([1 Peter 3:15](#)) whether it is convenient or we are prepared. Are you able to tell people at any time why you have hope? Why/why not?

If you aren’t sure you could do this, take some time to write a short 1–3-minute testimony about who you were before knowing Christ, how He has changed you, and who you are now. Keep in mind that part of the hope you offer is what He continues to do in your life since you are always learning and maturing.

For some, the hardest part of Christian living is what comes next... reprove, rebuke, and exhort. In any church community you will encounter people who have been poorly taught, adhere to incorrect teaching, or have a lack of knowledge. Part of Timothy’s instruction, which is ours as well, is to be able to counter any incorrect or false teachings someone gives. In other translations, the word reprove is to correct or convince – meaning we should be able to defend the gospel basics. How well do you do here? It can be daunting if we feel we need to be a bible expert, but that is not necessary. Being willing to say, “I don’t know” and offer to do the research to find the answers is key. In fact, these may be the times God is giving you an opportunity to learn more by having to answer someone else’s questions or know why something is incorrect.

Rebuking means to *admonish*. There may be those times when someone who insists on going their own way or becomes argumentative or divisive needs to be admonished. This doesn’t mean they are being yelled at, but it does imply a firmer correction. Why is this important?

Do you remember when Paul warned us of leaven back in [1 Corinthians 5:6](#) (Day 4)? What was the caution?

If we allow someone to preach bad doctrine in our church without correcting them, we are allowing leaven to do its work – it will grow and possibly cause damage. Are you willing to stand for biblical truth and accuracy if someone brings a false doctrine into the church, your life group or into your home?

Now we come to “exhorting” which means *encouraging*. Put together, the picture we see here is someone who has the ability to share the gospel and give their testimony to anyone at anytime. If in the conversation, the person presents a false or incorrect gospel or belief, we can provide information and firm correction if needed while also encouraging the person to seek the truth. All this needs to be done patiently and with a willingness to spend time with this person to use God’s word to help them discover their error and change it. Is it your goal to learn how to do all of this? Why/why not?

You may already be in the position of talking to people in this way, and if so, how can you prevent becoming impatient with them?

Why is it important to be patient?

Many of the people we will talk to have a story – often one filled with pain and anger about how they were once treated by a Christian, pastor, or church so it is important for us to remember they are vulnerable and can be easily offended or frightened away.

Engage: As we end this week’s study, Paul reminds us why all of this is so important in verses 3-4, what is it?

As the return of Christ draws closer, people are getting more swayed by secular beliefs. Do you see this? What are some of the beliefs you notice?

It is very easy to recognize secular beliefs as wrong and sinful, and they are many and increasing in depravity. However, can you recognize false beliefs inside the church? List some that you can easily recognize.

This link highlights some of the most common false beliefs about Christianity in general , <https://sola.network/article/10-lies-christians-believe-about-their-faith-and-church/>. For other common false doctrines, go to www.gotquestions.org/false-doctrine.html, www.compellingtruth.org/false-teachers.html. These are easy to understand explanations about some of the most common dangers inside the church. Take some time to read these so you can be ready in season and out of season to have an answer!

Memorize: *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15*

Session 5

Duplicity

Chapter 1

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

Read: [Luke 6:43-45](#)

Think: Have you ever planted tomatoes and ended up with carrots? Or maybe put a roast in the oven then when you pulled it out ended up with a cake? Of course not! Although these are silly questions, it is exactly the point Jesus is making when it comes to the kind of life His followers demonstrate.

This week's lesson focuses on what we should look for and practice in our life as a Christian. In today's reading, what does Jesus teach about this?

How does this challenge you?

Verse 45 should stop us cold. We all know that everything we say doesn't always line up with what we say we believe... so how do we deal with this? As in all things, it comes down to motive and intent. As we will learn this week, not every person who says they are Christian is the real deal. We will also learn how to recognize the false Christian whose intention it is to deceive from the real Christian who is learning, and where we are in this.

Engage: If you are a Christian, how does your life prove it? Do your words match your heart? Do you say things that call your faith into question? Do you talk differently around different people? It is so important to be honest about this and not deceive ourselves into thinking we are ok. Jesus knows our heart so we can't fool Him, but as we will learn, many people think they can. Take a moment to check your heart for Christ. We aren't called to be perfect and Lord knows we aren't,

but if your heart's desire is to honor God in EVERY aspect of your life, the fruit you produce will match. Are you willing to let Jesus reveal if any fruit you produce doesn't match your words?

Memorize: Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. Psalm 26:2

Chapter 2

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

Read: [Luke 16:1-13](#)

Think: Many feel this to be one of the most difficult parables Jesus taught as it seems He is condoning dishonesty. However, we must remember that God can and often uses evil for His purposes (See [Genesis 50:20](#)). In verses 1-9, what was the example Jesus used for today's lesson?

Who was He talking to?

It is a frequent mistake many people make thinking once they have received Jesus as their Savior that there is nothing else for them to do. What is often overlooked, or sadly not taught, is that He is not only Savior but LORD! He is our Master, and everything we are and have belongs to Him. This means our life should be devoted to investing in our eternity and being prepared for when we are called – whether publicly, by death, or His return. So, as Jesus taught His disciples, He was teaching them a way of life, and like any good teacher, He used what was familiar to His students to make His point.

Even in ancient cultures, people practiced shrewd business dealings. The dishonest manager in today's parable was considered shrewd. Shrewdness is not a bad thing... in fact, as Christians we are called to be as shrewd as serpents and gentle as doves (See [Matthew 10:16](#)). Being shrewd simply means to be prudent or wise. The manager's shrewdness was what Jesus was commending and using to teach how Christians should prepare for eternity. How are you preparing for eternity?

The dishonest manager was wise enough to manipulate his circumstances – putting himself in a position to call on favors from those he helped. Jesus then ties his actions into character. In verses 10-12, how does Jesus bring this lesson together for His disciples and us?

Notice that it is not the quantity that matters but the faithfulness. God gives to each person according to their measure of faithfulness ([Matthew 25:14-15](#)) and ability, so if a person has little, they must be faithful with little and if they have much, they must be faithful with that too. Jesus' point was also that faithfulness is linked to our heart and what we love. Turn to [Matthew 6:19-21](#), what does Jesus teach about this in His Sermon on the Mount?

If you want to know what a person loves and is faithful to, just take a look at their life and possessions. Do they care more for their material possessions than their marriage or family? Or do they care for their family above all else? Does God come first or when there's time left in the day? How would you answer these questions for yourself?

Lastly, Jesus drives the point home in verse 13. What can we NOT do?

This is the greatest deception of all... Satan has convinced us that we can have it all and do it all. We can be Christian but with minimal to no changes in lifestyle. We can love God AND money. We can be Christian in our heart and not go to church. The deception is in the fact that we don't feel like we hate God or Jesus by doing these things any more than we would say we hate our family even though we prioritize work over them. The evidence is that we do choose one over the other.

Engage: We should be reminded that this isn't a lesson against money or possessions but the attitude toward them. His point was that if an unbelieving dishonest manager had enough wisdom to prepare for his future, so should Christians. Whatever God has given you; time, money, talents, possessions, etc. they should be invested toward the eternal future for yourself and others. How are you investing what God has given you toward your eternal future?

How are you investing in the future of your family, church, community, and world?

If you had to choose between God and anything else in your life, what would you choose?

Memorize: "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16

Chapter 3

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

Read: [Matthew 12:22-28](#)

Think: Did you know Satan can perform miracles? It may be hard to imagine since we see miracles as always good and coming from God. However, it is Satan's goal to deceive and distract people from focusing on God, so his "miracles", or signs and wonders, might seem good but are meant to keep people from following the One True God. Think of Moses when he was sent to

Pharaoh – a few of the first signs God had Moses perform were copied by the Egyptian magicians (See [Exodus 7:8-13](#)). One all Christians today should be watching for is the power of the antichrist in the last days who will be able to perform signs meant to deceive as well ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#).)

In today's reading what miracle did Jesus perform?

What did the religious leaders accuse Him of?

Why do you think they attributed this miracle to Satan?

Sadly, they weren't even logical in their accusation! It is not possible that Satan would cast out one of his own, but more than that, this scene revealed the true nature of Jesus' accusers.

What did Jesus tell the Pharisees in verses 25-27?

Jesus' statement that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand applies to more than spiritual things. Marriages, families, nations, and churches are also impacted by division. We are watching our country split over political positions, opinions on gender and other divisive subjects, and we are watching our "kingdom" fall. We read and hear of more pastors and church leaders fall into temptation and away from the church every day. These are kingdoms divided.

Spiritually speaking, a person who tries to live a divided life will ultimately fall at some point – if they don't make the decision to fully submit to God. It's not impossible for them to come to the truth, but pride often gets in the way. This is what was happening with the Pharisees Jesus was speaking to. The Pharisees of Jesus' time could also perform miracles, but nothing matching what Jesus could do and out of jealousy rather than glorify God, they gave credit to Satan! For more on the power Satan has, go to: www.gotquestions.org/demonic-satanic-miracles.html

Engage: Much like yesterday's lesson on two masters, the lesson of division is a powerful reminder that we need to take great care in our relationship with Christ. In fact, relationship is the key. The reason the Pharisees took issue with Jesus is they didn't really know Him. If they took the time to really know Him, they would have recognized He came from the Father – the very God they professed to follow (See [John 8:19](#)). The only way we can be certain we will never be divided in our faith is to spend time with Christ – to know Him, His character and nature. When we do this, we also know the Father. How has your knowledge of Christ helped you better understand God?

What are some ways you can protect your marriage and family from division?

How can you protect the church?

Finally, how can you know whether a miracle came from God or Satan?

The encouragement is knowing that as you continue to study the Bible you will come to really know both Jesus and the Father. Remember... Jesus came to fulfill all that God set in order through His law and He never changes or lies (See [Numbers 23:19](#)) and therefore can never be divided!

Memorize: They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” John 8:19

Chapter 4

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

Read: [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#)

Think: One of the most tolerated areas of living a dual or divided life is in our personal relationships. If we become Christian as an adult with established relationships, we will soon discover that as God transforms our way of thinking, the differences between us and others becomes clear. In some cases, we may find we need to end or limit certain relationships.

The apostle Paul teaches on this in today's reading. He is addressing a church and the areas they were struggling with; however, these lessons continue to apply today. What does Paul say about being "yoked"?

The understanding of yoked comes from an agricultural society that used large wooden beams to "yoke" or tie, oxen together for plowing fields. There are a couple of lessons here: first, if a farmer tied or yoked animals of a different size or species together, plowing would not just be difficult but impossible! The plow would not make a straight line, and it would harm the animals. The principle was taught in [Deuteronomy 22:9](#) where God commanded the people not to mix seed when sowing their vineyard. In our world, crossbreeding is very common – think of "designer" breeds of dogs, certain produce that has been crossbred or genetically modified. This may present more choice, but it eliminates certain qualities and abilities that are beneficial. In some cases, especially with dogs, the act of crossbreeding has caused inherent medical problems.

The second lesson is in the principle of our lesson today. It isn't a matter of prejudice but knowing that as Christians we must be very careful with our closest most intimate relationships. The church in Corinth, like our world today, was surrounded by sexual sin and the practice of tolerance of all sorts of evil. In many ways they were either tolerating sin in the church or learning what needed to change in their life as a believer. Let's tackle the first and most obvious question... what if someone who is married becomes Christian, but their spouse does not? Turn to [1 Corinthians 7:12-13](#), what does Paul teach here?

If he is addressing it then we can assume there was some confusion. The role of the Christian spouse is now to be a witness to their husband/wife. Turn to [1 Peter 3:1-7](#), what does Peter instruct husbands and wives and why?

It is the prayer that unbelieving spouses will choose Christ and there are MANY stories of this taking place!

The harder part of this is when someone has been in a relationship or is engaged to be married and one becomes Christian, but the other does not. How should that be handled based on today's reading?

Should the couple break up? This is where many face the difficult choice of following God or their own desires. This is a painful situation as no one wants to end a relationship that has many years, and in some cases, homes and children invested. This must be dealt with much prayer, bible reading, and counseling to help through this process of what to do. The good news is there are many testimonies of couples and families who have done this, and over time have both become devoted followers and were married.

Lastly, the principle of unequally yoked applies in every area of life – friendships, life choices, etc. Whatever and whoever we allow or bring into our life WILL influence us. Turn to [1 Corinthians 15:33](#), what does this verse teach?

We may ask the question, aren't Christians supposed to have unbelieving friends to witness to? Didn't Jesus do that? The answer is yes and no. We should have people in our life that we can witness to, but they may not be the people we allow intimate access to our life. People point to Jesus as "hanging out" with sinners as their permission to do the same, but let's take a look. Turn to [Luke 15:1-2](#), in these verses why did the sinners and tax collectors come to Jesus?

Notice THEY went to Him and He welcomed them, but Jesus didn't seek them out to hang out with them. Turn to [Matthew 4:18-22](#), [Mark 2:13-14](#) and [Mark 3:13-19](#), who did Jesus seek?

Do you notice the difference? Jesus is the example for us - that we will have people in our lives that we want to witness to but those we spend time with the most (yoked) should be those who are safe and good for us. People who will encourage us and hold us accountable. Granted, Jesus didn't need to be held accountable, but you get the point.

Engage: This can be one of the most difficult areas for Christians. Take some time to think about the relationships you have. Are there any unequally yoked relationships you may need to address? How can you practice the principles in today's lesson in future friendships and relationships?

If you need help with this, we are here for you! You can make an appointment by calling (760)384-3333 Weds. -Fri. 10am-4pm. You can also access our "Dating and Friendship Guide" on our website (by going to www.crossroads@ridgecrest.org and clicking on RESOURCES, then Brochures and Guides. Here you will find guidance on the importance of choosing godly friends and mates as well as the Bible verses to support it.

Memorize: Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14

Chapter 5

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

Read: [Luke 13:22-30](#)

Think: During Jesus' earthly ministry there were many people who followed Him. Thousands came to hear Him and be healed. Many people associated themselves with Him because of these reasons but never chose to believe He was the Messiah. We know that at the time of Jesus' ascension He had about 120 disciples (See [Acts 1:12-15](#)) of which were the twelve. As popular as He was, He had very few people who chose the hard path of discipleship.

This is a warning to every person who says they are Christian. In today's passage, what did Jesus teach about finding the path to Him?

What door or gate is the right one? If you have ever been to an amusement park where you had to walk through a turnstile to get in, you know that you can't carry a bunch of things through it - you must set them down otherwise you get tangled and stuck. This is the picture Jesus is painting with the narrow door. He starts by saying we must *strive* to enter through that door. What does that indicate?

The word "strive" in the Greek is *agonizomai*, which is where we get the word agonize. It means to contend, to struggle, or to endeavor to obtain something. Jesus is saying it will take determination, endurance, and effort to enter the narrow door. It also means we must set down anything that will hinder us from going through.

What is the future facing those who tried to get to Jesus through the wide door?

What did they try to rely on for entry in verse 26?

In our time, these are often the people who identify as Christian simply because they are American or went to church as a child or at Christmas and Easter. They may attend church on a regular basis. They may have been baptized as a child or some point in their lives but never laid their lives down for Christ. Turn to [Luke 9:23-25](#), what does Jesus say is required to follow Him?

What must we lose?

What do we gain if we do?

Losing our life means we are willing to give everything up for Him! This is also the reason why so few of the thousands who followed Jesus around never really worshipped Him as God and why so few find and enter through the narrow door.

Engage: What have you given up to follow Christ? If you haven't, are you ready? It is likely God has placed something on your heart, and it may be hard for you to give up. That's the striving Jesus was talking about. List anything that is hindering you from walking through the narrow door – a sinful habit, possessions, certain friendships, belief systems, pride, fear, etc.

It is usually fear that stop us – the fear that we will no longer have fun, that we will have to sell everything we have and give our money to the poor, the fear that we'll have to give up our goals. Do you struggle with this? The twelve Jesus chose did give up everything to follow Him, but what they gained was an eternal future that nothing in the material world can compare to. This is your promise as well.

Memorize: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

Chapter 6

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

Read: [Matthew 7:21-23](#)

Think: This final passage is another incredibly difficult one to understand. As you read this, who does Jesus say won't enter the kingdom of heaven?

In verse 22, what "credentials" did these people have?

In whose name were they doing these things?

This can be very confusing! If people are performing miracles, prophesying, and casting out demons in Jesus' name, then what is going on here? If you recall, we studied this week the fact that Satan can do signs and wonders through people. The religious leaders (Pharisees) who worshipped God often also were able to prophesy and cast out demons. It is not the works themselves that prove allegiance to God, but it comes back to relationship – again. Belief alone isn't enough (See [James 2:19](#)) the demons believe in God, but they don't love Him. Works isn't enough (See [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)), so we can't take credit for ourselves. Faith alone isn't enough (See [James 2:14-17](#)), without works to demonstrate our faith, it is dead.

Is it possible to do things in Jesus' name but not truly follow Him? Absolutely! Think of all the false religions and movements in the Christian church doing all sorts of things in the name of Jesus. It is likely that the people Jesus was referring to in this passage are those who DO Christian things, but their heart is far from God (See [Mark 7:6-7](#)). They believe in God, but they also rely on works to put them in right standing with God rather than serving from a grateful heart. They add works to their routine like adding accessories to an outfit. Their goal was not to love and serve others, but themselves. What they have not yet done was die to self and crucified the flesh, being baptized into His death and raised to new life with Him (See [Romans 6:1-8](#)). So how do you know if you are doing this or not? If you ever feel the need to remind Jesus of everything you have done for Him rather than reminding yourself of everything He has done for you, you may be in the wrong camp. If it terrifies you to think of reminding Jesus of everything you have done for Him, then you understand what it means to truly love Him with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

Engage: We must always be careful not to be too quick to judge others regarding their faith. This week we have learned a lot about what to look for, but like a fruit tree, it takes time for the fruit to grow. Sometimes we must allow time to see if a person is a true follower of Christ or not. In

our own faith journey, the development of good spiritual fruit also takes time. What is your responsibility in all of this?

First, evaluate your own life. It is always easier to see in others what we don't see in ourselves. Ask someone you know who would give godly counsel to be honest with you and tell you if there is anything that needs to change. Think back to the reason you initially started coming to church, why you asked Jesus to be your Savior, the reason you started volunteering or reading your Bible. It isn't uncommon to start with the right heart only to go off track and become task focused, but it is also possible for a person to start with the wrong motives and discover true faith. Where are you in this? Will Jesus say "depart from Me, I never knew you" or will He say, "well done good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of your Master"?

Memorize: And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27

Session 6

Unshaken

Monday, Day 1

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

Read: [Luke 6:46-49](#)

Think: We have seen more reports than ever about flooding all over the world and the damage it causes. At the writing of this study, Nepal has been devastated by a flood that has claimed over 1,000 lives with thousands more missing. Although no building can completely withstand the force of a bad flood like this, the damage is the greatest in countries where there are no building codes. Conversely, some countries have strict building codes that seem burdensome at the time but prove priceless in the moment of crisis.

This week we will study the need for a firm foundation in our faith. This foundation must be built on the Rock that is Jesus and no other. Like countries with no building codes, we will be swept away without the foundation of Jesus' teaching. In today's verses, how does He explain this?

What is the key to standing firm?

What is the result?

Engage: Even in our building standards today, contractors must dig and prepare soil before laying a foundation. Depending on what is being built and the environment, depth can range anywhere from six to thirty-six inches. It's not just the concrete that is the stability factor but the work of preparing the soil – otherwise the concrete foundation will break and crumble. This is important to recognize when applying this passage to our life. In Jesus' parable today, He wasn't just focusing on the type of foundation but the effort that went into preparing beforehand. The

man who laid the foundation on the rock dug deep first. There are two actions here – digging and digging deep. Some people dig, but don’t put much effort into it and end up with a shallow foundation. They may be able to withstand some trials but won’t likely have the strength to withstand extreme difficulties or temptations. It is the person who digs deep, prepares their heart and is willing to let God transform them from the inside out who has the depth of soil and solid foundation. Even so, in Jesus’ parable, the house was able to remain standing but that doesn’t mean the storm wasn’t difficult or painful. Would you say you have a firm foundation in Christ? Why/why not?

How have you prepared your heart for His word?

How can you continue to dig deeper?

Memorize: Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. Luke 6:47-48

Tuesday, Day 2

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

Read: [James 1:22-24](#)

Think: Close your eyes for a moment and imagine what you look like – your face with all its details. Is the image you’re seeing clear or fuzzy? What is unique in this is we often remember our image based on how we *think* we look... we may see our nose bigger or smaller than it really is, or we may see more lines than there really are. The point is that our memory can provide a distorted picture. This provides a good understanding of why Jesus used this concept in today’s verses. What does He say about the person who hears the word but doesn’t do anything?

Why is it important to be a doer of the word and not just a hearer?

The problem is an old one... In Israel’s history, they heard God’s word but would not always practice it. Over time as God’s ways were forgotten and abandoned, a distorted version of religion was practiced and the consequences were painful. Without constant, diligent practice of what is heard, read, and learned, people forget and over time will fill in the blanks with what they *think* they know.

In our time, we know people who “hear” the word consistently but rarely practice what the Bible teaches. Why do you think this happens?

For some it may be lack of knowledge, or it can be a choice to not give up selfish desires or they have a distorted view of how they are doing in their faith. The good news for those with lack of knowledge, the more God’s ways are practiced the easier and more natural it becomes. How are you doing with this? Sadly, for those who have a distorted image of their personal faith, or choose to not do what God’s word says, are not only missing out on the amazing life God offers, but are in for a hard reality check when they come face to face with Jesus.

Engage: This isn’t a hard concept to understand... doctors, lawyers, contractors, hair stylists, engineers – you name it – all must *practice* what they learn to remember how to do their job. It’s hands on. Christianity is a “hands on” faith and must be practiced to remain strong in everyday life. Yet when it comes to practicing God’s word, many seem to think it is optional. Is there anywhere in the Bible that says this? Jesus didn’t say be a doer if you feel like it or have nothing better to do! If

it helps, remember that Jesus was the ultimate doer of the word – He is our example. If you have not yet become a doer of the word, how can you begin?

How can you practice what you hear from weekend messages?

If you read your Bible, what are some ways you can practice what you read?

Now go and actually do these things! As a Christian, God has given you His Holy Spirit to teach, guide, and give you the ability to live according to God’s word. If you have questions or struggle with knowing how to apply the Bible to your daily life, we are here to help! Give us a call at (760)384-333 or email ccc@ccc-rc.org for an appointment so we can talk.

Memorize: Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:19-21

Wednesday, Day 3

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

Read: [Hebrews 12:1-17](#)

Think: When times get tough in your life, do you assume it is an attack from Satan or a trial meant to test your faith? These are certainly possible, but have you considered that the challenges you are currently in may also be God's discipline? We often assume that discipline is the painful result of doing something wrong – we are being punished or corrected. Although this can be part of it, discipline is also the instruction meant to train and mold someone into the person God created them to be. It is godly discipline that strengthens us and helps us endure through trials.

In today's reading, what does the writer of Hebrews teach and encourage you regarding God's discipline?

What is the purpose of it?

Turn to [Hebrews 5:7-9](#), what does this verse teach about Jesus?

Did you know that even Jesus had to learn obedience? Because of who He is, we find it difficult imagining Jesus had to learn anything because He is perfect... and He is! BUT, He was born with a flesh and blood human body and struggled against the same things we do. Turn to [Hebrews 4:15](#), what does this verse say about Jesus' humanity?

Again, it is hard to imagine Jesus being tempted the same way we are! What are you tempted by? Anger? Lust? Jealousy? Self-pity? Can you imagine Jesus being tempted this way? He had to in order to learn to resist temptation and perfectly obey His Father to show us it is possible. It is His love for the Father that compelled Him to resist – and according to today's verse – to the point of bloodshed, something we have not done. That is the key – LOVE.

Engage: When you were disciplined as a child, did you respond by telling your parents, "Thank you"? Did you feel more loving towards them? Probably not! Through a child's view, discipline is hurtful and unnecessary, but when we grow up, we understand the need and motive. Hopefully you had parents who disciplined well, and for those whose parents either didn't discipline at all or abused it, please know that godly discipline is ALWAYS perfect and only what is best for you – even if it feels painful at the moment. Is there a situation you are in right now that is painful? Is the pain

the natural consequences of your actions? Is it due to the actions of others? Regardless of how and who, if you view it through the lens of godly discipline, how can and should you respond?

Let's take a look at verses 12-13, what is the instruction and encouragement?

In verses 14-15 what are you to strive for and avoid?

Often, when God allows circumstances for the purpose of discipline, especially when it involves others, we tend to become bitter and gossip, or we sulk and feel sorry for ourselves. Clearly the writer of Hebrews tells us not to do this but rather work toward peace, don't gossip or whine, but do the right thing! How can you strive for peace?

How can you prevent bitterness in your situation?

What can and should you do to live biblically in this situation?

How will practicing this help you be more stable and firm in your faith?

Memorize: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

Thursday, Day 4

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

Read: [Hebrews 12:18-29](#)

Think: When God chose Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, He brought them to Mt. Sinai where He would speak to Moses and the people through a great cloud of fire and smoke. This was a holy place and was to be treated as such and was the place where God gave the Commandments for the people to live by (See [Exodus 19](#)). When God spoke, there was a loud trumpet blast and the earth shook. God's presence there was so awesome and overwhelming, the people didn't want to hear Him out of fear! This is what today's passage is referring to, a reminder to the Hebrew people of God's presence with them in the wilderness.

In the New Testament, Jesus WAS God's presence! He was the voice of the Lord, God came to the people teaching and warning them of salvation and judgment through a body of flesh. From the beginning, God has done all He can to reach out to His creation, teaching, guiding, protecting and warning. The warning is that when we choose to reject Him, our eternal future is set in hell. The encouragement is that to submit to Him and follow Him faithfully leads us to a kingdom that cannot be taken away from us or shaken.

In verses 27-29, what will be shaken and removed?

What will remain?

How should we respond to this and why?

The writer here is referring to the time of the end when God will remove the heavens and earth as we know it (See [Revelation 6:12-14](#), the good news is in [Revelation 21:1-4](#)). These verses speak of a kingdom that cannot be shaken, what and where is this kingdom?

Jesus taught during His earthly ministry that the kingdom of God existed in Him, and it now exists in those who trust in Him for eternity. Read [Luke 17:20-21](#), what does Jesus teach?

Now turn to [Romans 14:17](#), what does the apostle Paul teach about the kingdom?

Based on all these verses, is the kingdom of heaven/God physical or material?

That is the point... everything in this world, including the world itself, is temporary and can be “shaken”. The only thing we have that cannot be shaken, removed, stolen, or rot is the kingdom of heaven! This kingdom is where we reside the moment we choose Christ.

Engage: If you were in Ridgecrest on July 4 and 5 of 2017, you are very familiar with how it feels to have your world shaken. We experienced a 6.4 and 7.1 earthquake in which Trona was the epicenter. Many of us struggle to this day with fear of another earthquake like it. Even so, our peace should reside in a place that can’t be touched by natural disasters, medical diagnoses, job losses, and all the celebrated sinful practices that are growing and gaining speed in our world. It resides in our heart, mind, soul, and spirit as we focus on Christ. Read [Colossians 3:1-3](#), according to these verses, what is our instruction and encouragement?

How does this help you maintain peace in difficult circumstances?

These verses aren’t suggesting we ignore real needs, it is simply meant to help us understand that no matter how bad things get here, we have the promise and hope of an eternal future without all the mess we go through now.

Memorize: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:1-3

Friday, Day 5

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

Read: [Matthew 13:3-8](#)

Think: If you garden, or even if you don't, there's a basic understanding about the necessity of good, healthy soil to get the results you are looking for. Soil that is lacking in nutrients will produce sickly plants. Plants will not grow well if the pH is off or the soil is hard and compacted. Healthy plants require the right amount of micronutrients, organic matter, the right pH, and good drainage. In Jesus' time most people grew their own food and understood the basics of healthy soil. They also knew the hard work of doing every step to prepare the soil for planting. This is why today's parable was a great lesson.

It is still a great lesson, but because we have better technology and live in a world of convenience, we can simply go to Home Depot and buy bags of everything we need. Although there is some work involved, few of us test our soil, aerate it, fertilize it, and add anything else to prepare so we may miss the full value of His teaching. In today's passage, what are the 4 types of soil where the sower sowed seed?

What was the result of each?

Read [Matthew 13:18-23](#). When Jesus taught this parable, His disciples didn't get the spiritual connection, so he explains what the seed and soil represent. Briefly write what the seed and each soil represents.

What is the point of His lesson? Soil! The soil represents our heart and its readiness to receive God's word (the seed) and produce spiritual fruit. Part of the purpose of preparing soil when we are planting is so the roots can spread out and grow deep. This ensures the plant has a better chance of enduring heat, wind, and other issues. How does this apply to our ability to remain unshaken when we experience the heat, wind, and storms of life?

Like a solid foundation to a house, a heart that is soft and tender can not only receive God's word, but will grow in spiritual wisdom and maturity over time.

Engage: Jesus describes two types of soil that most of us can identify with – rocky or shallow soil and soil with weeds and thorns - representing those times in life when we don't have the maturity to know how to handle temptation or when we are distracted by money, stress, or other common issues in life. List a few things that can cause your soil to be shallow or filled with weeds.

What are reasons your heart can become hardened?

If you have experienced moments like this, how did you handle it?

What did God teach you?

Another key need for growing plants is proper watering. Without water, even the best soil won't help. Read [Psalm 1:1-3](#), these verses describe the person who is able to resist sin and temptation. What does he NOT do in verse 1?

What does he do in verse 2?

What is the result in verse 3?

Our success depends on these! First, we must be very careful who we go to for advice when we are struggling. We may have friends who love us very much but don't or won't give biblical advice. It is important to understand we surround ourselves with godly people who will point us to God's word. Second is the watering... meditation, or focus for the purpose of learning and application, on God's word is the water of life! This week we have learned that simply hearing the word isn't enough – we must do what it says. Finding scripture that teaches us how to engage life in good and bad times, and practicing what it says is necessary for growth and stability. Finally, when practiced over time, we will enjoy the peaceable fruit of righteousness. If you don't have any verses yet, look up some verses that can encourage you and memorize them. If you're not sure where to look, here are some that can help: [Galatians 5:16-23](#), [Ephesians 4:17-32](#), [Philippians 4:4-9](#), [James 1:2-4](#), [2 Timothy 1:7](#). Within each of these portions of scripture you will find godly counsel and wisdom for interpersonal relationships, fear, anxiety, and basic Christian living. As you read through these passages, choose some verses to memorize and practice.

Memorize: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law[b] of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:1-2

Saturday, Day 6

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

Read: [2 Timothy 3:1-17](#)

Think: When a new movie comes out, it can be very tempting for those who have already seen it to spoil the surprise ending. Do you know people who like to do this? There is nothing more disappointing! However, there are also times in life when we would love to know what's coming or what the end result will be so we can be prepared. The Bible is many things... it is a historical document, it is filled with poetry, prophecy, godly living, and most of all it is God's love letter to us. What many don't realize is it also tells us the future - our future. What many people miss is that God already knew what we would face in life, He already knew what our world would be like, He already wrote the end of the story, but it's not a secret! He tells us what to look for, what to expect and how to handle it. His word instructs, encourages, and corrects us. In a way it's a cosmic spoiler alert! Turn to [Amos 3:7](#), what does this verse say God does for us?

How does it encourage you to know that God reveals His plans to those who serve Him?

In today's reading the apostle Paul is instructing and encouraging the young church leader, Timothy, to stand strong. Reading through Paul's letters to Timothy, it becomes obvious he struggled and frequently needed encouragement – we still do today. As you read through verses 1-7, what does Paul tell Timothy to prepare for?

It is easy to recognize these issues in our world now. Does this surprise you? Why/why not?

How does it impact you to know that this was written almost 2,000 years ago and is still 100% true today?

This is evidence of the validity and truth of the Bible as the standard and authority on all things. It is not only accurate in what we can expect, but also in how to endure and overcome. The challenge is that many people give little effort then blame God if things didn't work out. The problem is never on God's end; it is always us. We tend to tweak the rules to fit our agenda, we are unfaithful and give up too soon. The wonderful news is that not only does He tell us what to expect, but the promise of endurance, character, maturity, and wisdom when we are faithful to Him.

Engage: Verses 10-17 give us two things needed to remain unshaken in this life, what are they?

The first one may not be so obvious – someone you can look to as a great example and encouragement. Call this person a mentor, teacher, or friend, they are the person you watch and learn from. They aren't perfect and sinless, but faithful, humble, repentant when needed and their love for God is obvious. Do you know someone like this? If so, how does their life encourage you?

If you don't, start looking. Conversely, *you* may be that person for someone whether you realize it or not. That is something all Christians must understand – we are being watched!

The second thing needed, is what we have been learning throughout this study – the necessity of the Bible. In verses 16-17, Paul teaches four specific things God’s word is good for. List them.

This is a method of study and application of what we read in the Bible that can be used at all times. If you use this template consistently it will become natural to you. Let’s practice using one of your favorite verses or a verse from this study:

Frist, write your verse out, then go through these questions.

1. What is the verse teaching you? (what does it teach you about God, Jesus, Christian living, etc.)

2. Is this verse revealing an area of your life that needs to change? (Reproof – an action, habit, or thoughts that need to stop)

3. What is this verse teaching you to do instead? (Correction – what biblical behavior should you start doing?)

4. What is a practical way you can implement this in your daily life? (Training in righteousness – a specific and strategic plan to resist temptation and respond biblically).

Again, the encouragement and promise is that as you do this faithfully, over time you will find it becomes easier to remember and apply verses, which will help you stand firm and know how to respond in a way that will be an example to others and glorify God.

Memorize: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17