

Lessons from the Past

Daily Study Guide

Crossroads Community Church

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

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

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

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

We invite you to join us for weekend services:

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

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

Sunday Morning at 10:30am

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

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

Week 1

Chosen

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

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: [Genesis 12:1-4](#)

Think: How do you view the Old Testament? Is it an outdated and antiquated collection of stories? Do you believe it is true? Do you think it has application to you now in 2026?

Depending on where you are in your faith journey, the Old Testament may seem overwhelming and hard to understand. Many people avoid reading it for these reasons, and sadly, there are some popular pastors and teachers who have decided it is no longer relevant. However, the Bible, in [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), teaches us that all of God's word, including the Old Testament, is profitable to teach, correct, guide, and equip us for everything in life! In addition to this, the apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, [1 Corinthians 10:11](#), also teaches the purpose for Old Testament history, read this verse and note the purpose.

If God intended the Old Testament to be an example and instruction, then let's discover what we can learn from the past! In this study, we will learn from men and women that God chose and used for His purposes to bring salvation to the world. This week we will begin with learning how and why God chose certain people and how it applies to us today.

What does it mean to be "chosen"?

Whether we remember as kids in school being chosen for teams playing kickball at recess or at work being chosen for a role, we tend to view being chosen based on skill level, talents, or worth.

Chosen, in Webster's dictionary means, *one who is the object of choice or of divine favor: an elect person OR selected or marked for favor or special privilege.*

We will find, in this study, that when God chose certain people, it wasn't because they were perfect people... they were deeply flawed in many cases, but they were willing and faithful. Turn to [1 Samuel 16:7](#) and [Isaiah 6:8](#) – according to these verses, what does God see?

How did Isaiah respond to God's call?

When God chose to set a nation apart from other nations to be His own, to be a demonstration of His goodness and power, these qualities were what he was looking for. In today's reading, Genesis 12:4, who did God choose?

What did God ask him to do?

What did God want to do through him?

How would this blessing impact other nations?

Does this promise exist today? What was Abram's response?

What does his response tell you about his heart and faith in God?

To help us understand where we are in this, let's go back in time. Approximately 1500 plus years after creation, humanity became so corrupt and evil that the Lord decided to start over. Finding only a few people (Noah and his family) that remained faithful (not perfect) to Him, God brought a global flood that destroyed everyone. Many people struggle with this, finding it cruel. However during the 100 or so years it took Noah to build the ark, he preached and warned the people of what was to come. They had every opportunity to repent and be saved, and perhaps many were when the waters broke open and they realized their mistake. Fast forward another 400 years or so, the earth has had a chance to grow and repopulate, and they grew in their sin and rebellion against God... again. Since God promised never to destroy the earth through water again, He chose to use these imperfect people to show the way by demonstrating His holiness through how they lived – set apart, different... holy ([Leviticus 19:1-2](#)). God's plan was to choose a people for Himself to accomplish this and carry out His ultimate plan to redeem the world through His Son Jesus Christ. Abram, or Abraham, is the man through whom this nation and the Redeemer would come! A quick look at [Matthew 1:1-17](#) shows the genealogy of Christ starting with Abraham – 28 generations of people, approximately 2,000 years until His birth. For a bible timeline, go to: www.gotquestions.org/Bible-timeline.html, and <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-timeline/>

Engage: How does it impact you to know that God has had a plan from the beginning of time to reconcile the world to Himself through Christ?

What are your thoughts on how He chose to bring this plan about?

Another 2,000 years later, we continue to be part of God's plan! If you have chosen to follow Christ, do you know that you are also chosen? How can your life show who God is?

If God were to ask you to "go", or do something for Him, what would be your response?

Memorize: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

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: [Esther 4:1-17](#)

Think: Today's lesson from the past takes place around 483BC, in the kingdom of Persia ruled by King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes). At this time the Persian empire was the largest in the world, covering the area now known as Turkey, as well as Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel; it also encompassed sections of modern-day Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. Ahasuerus married a young Jewish (unbeknownst to him) girl we know as Esther. Esther was her Persian name, but her Hebrew name was Hadassah. Esther was chosen to be the new queen after King Ahasuerus threw a banquet and requested his then queen, Vashti, to appear before the people and all the officials to show off her beauty. When she refused, he rejected her as queen and by the suggestion of his royal council, he searched for a new queen by gathering all the young, beautiful women from surrounding areas to choose for himself a new queen. Through this process, Hadassah was part of the women gathered to be prepared and presented before the king, and because of her character and beauty, she was chosen ([Esther 2:15-17](#)). However, her heritage as a Hebrew had to be hidden, per the instruction of her uncle Mordecai who raised her and held some type of official position in the Persian government, which allowed him access and proximity to the king's gate. It was here that Mordecai overheard two of the king's servants devising an evil plot to kill the king, so Mordecai told Esther, who told the king and the men were hanged ([Esther 2:19-23](#)). Sometime later, the king promoted a man named Haman to the highest position of all officials and he demanded all people bow to him, but Mordecai would not. Haman was furious and when he found out Mordecai was a Jew, he devised a plan to destroy all the Jews ([Esther 3:1-6](#)). Mordecai then appealed to Esther to go to the king on their behalf to save their people... and here's where we come to today's lesson.

Read today's passage from Esther 4:1-17. When the news had gone out that the king decreed the Jews be destroyed, how did the people respond?

Fasting, weeping and dressing in sackcloth and ashes was a cultural demonstration of grief for the Jewish people and/or indicated repentance from sin or a response to national disaster. When Esther asked why Mordecai was doing this, what did he ask her to do?

What was Esther's initial response in verse 11?

What reply did Mordecai send back in verses 13-14?

How did Esther respond?

What did she tell the people to do on her behalf?

This story ends on a happy note... God showed Esther favor when she went into the king. She was able to tell him about Haman's plot and all Israel was saved. To this day, the Jewish people celebrate this time with the Feast of Purim, a time to remember how God saved His people from annihilation.

Engage: At the time of this writing, Israel and the US have been striking Iran for about 6 days due to the attacks Iran and other anti-Israel groups and nations have waged on Israel since October 7, 2023. It is interesting to note that the Ayatollah Khamenei was killed on the day of the Feast of Purim this year, Feb. 28, leading some Christian teachers and Messianic Jews to believe we are seeing prophetic movements of God. For an interesting video tying Esther's time to today from author Jonathan Cahn, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUKstmztpoE>.

However, our question is how does Esther's life apply to us today? We may not be in a position of royalty, however, the key lesson for each Christ follower today is found in verse 14 of chapter 4... in the same way Mordecai believed Esther had been specifically chosen by God to save Israel at that time, YOU have been born into this time in history for a reason! Do you believe that? If this is the case, how does it change how you view your purpose?

If you haven't thought of this until now, ask God to show you where in your life He wants to use you for His purposes. It is amazing to realize that you were born at exactly the right time, at this specific point in our political and economic history, in the specific job, friendships, etc. for a specific purpose! How can you continue to be mindful of this each day?

For further study on Esther and the feast of Purim, check out these links: <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Esther.html>, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Esther.html>, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Feast-of-Purim.html>

Memorize: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

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: [Luke 5:1-11](#) and [27-32](#), [John 1:43-46](#), [Matthew 10:2-4](#)

Think: When we think in terms of people in the Bible who were chosen for a specific purpose, we might naturally go to the twelve disciples. They were chosen, but the question is why them? These twelve men weren't the only disciples who followed Jesus – at one point the Bible records a following of at least 120 ([Acts 1:15](#)) but not all were chosen to become what we know as apostles. The apostles were the disciples who were with Jesus during His earthly ministry and to be an apostle, one had to fulfill certain requirements... ([Acts 1:21-22](#)) he had to have been with Jesus during the three years of His earthly ministry and an eyewitness to His crucifixion and resurrection. It's hard to say whether any others outside of the twelve also fulfilled these requirements, but one we do know is the apostle Paul. Although he wasn't one of the disciples, he was witness to the resurrected and glorified Christ on the road to Damascus, and Jesus personally chose Him to preach the Gospel and suffer for His sake ([Acts 9:1-19](#), <https://www.gotquestions.org/apostleship.html>).

In the verses from today's reading, list the disciples Jesus chose and their occupation if noted.

Why do you think Jesus chose average men with average lives rather than Jewish scholars?

Out of all the people who had been following Jesus, what do you think made these men stand out from all others?

When Jesus came into human history, He came to establish His church. Although He is the Head of the Church, He chose men who would faithfully adhere to and teach His teachings without compromising or contaminating them with false doctrine. Although there is nothing wrong with formal theological instruction, there can be times when it prevents a person from being sensitive to the leading of God's Holy Spirit. This was one of the problems with many of the Pharisees of Jesus' day – in their knowledge, they refused to believe and accept Jesus was who He said He was. Although they adhered to God's commands, they had become calloused and legalistic. The disciples were just real people, and they fully understood the challenges of living in the real world.

As Christians today, we are chosen for the same reasons. Every Christian is given the command to make other disciples and teach them how to follow and obey Jesus' teachings ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). Does this include you? Why/why not?

Jesus had the ability to see into the heart of man so we can surmise that He saw something special in these men, but what is the one clear attribute from today's verses you *can* know that was present in each of them?

Engage: The men and women who advanced God’s kingdom 2,000 years ago are still at work today through God’s word. When you read of these amazing people who went before you, how does it encourage you?

What do you learn from them?

Is this information for you alone or does God want you to teach others what you are learning? Making other disciples means we must be aware that there are people in our lives we are supposed to disciple or teach. Make a list of the people you can share the gospel with. Some may be very new to Christianity while others are further along... how can or does your own faith journey and life experiences help you know how to approach these people?

As you do this, pray for each one and thank God that He will provide you with the right words at the right moment.

For a little more information on the disciples, go to: www.gotquestions.org/twelve-apostles-disciples-12.html

Memorize: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

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: [Exodus 7:1-7](#)

Think: Some of the hardest questions people wrestle with are: “why does God allow evil in the world?” or “why doesn’t God just fix things?” Another reality Christians must face and deal with is God’s sovereignty. Websters define this as “supreme power” or “autonomy”. Biblically speaking, this means that God has ultimate control and authority over all creation and can and will do what He must to bring about His perfect plans. For us, we often have difficulty because we don’t understand His ways - turn to [Isaiah 55:8-9](#), how does God describe His ways?

Understanding that God is sovereign is often the only way we can accept His decisions, and this brings us to today’s lesson from the past... In today’s reading, what does God tell Moses and Aaron He is going to do?

What did He say about Pharaoh?

What is your understanding of this?

This is where things can get difficult – at first glance, it looks as though God is being unfair to Pharaoh, but it is impossible for God to do anything to or for anyone that isn’t for their good, so what’s going on here?

The book of Exodus records God calling Moses to be His instrument to free the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. Although God could have intervened directly, He chose to demonstrate His power through Moses and his brother Aaron. Pharaoh feared the Hebrew people because they were so numerous and worried they would rise up against him ([Exodus 5:5](#)), so he made them work harder. Where many people get stuck is the verse that says God *hardened* Pharaoh's heart as it seems that God gave him no choice. Do you struggle with this? Why/why not?

There are a couple of things to consider here, first – God *could have* purposely hardened Pharaoh's heart, but if this is the case, the question is then, "why"? Second, just as God saw into the hearts of the men and women who were willing to obey Him faithfully, He also sees into the hearts of those who are already hardened against Him. If this is true, what does this tell us about the condition of Pharaoh's heart?

The truth is that God will work through the person who will best serve His purposes in bringing about His plans, whether they are obedient or opposed to Him. God already knew Pharaoh's heart was hardened and therefore chose Him to show His power and glory. We see this as we read about Moses asking Pharaoh to let the people go and each time he refused, God would send a plague upon the Egyptians until they finally relented.

There is so much we can learn from this part of history, but for this study the focus is on the fact that when it comes to being chosen, God will often choose **bad** people to work out His plan. Whether leaders of nations, companies, or families, we will always face the reality that we won't always understand why God chooses certain people, but what we should be doing is asking Him what He wants us to do to glorify Him.

Engage: Have you ever experienced working for someone who was a bad leader? How did you handle it?

There will always be a time in our lives we will need to submit to or work with someone who is unfair or even mean and the hard part is understanding that God has allowed it for OUR GOOD! Do

you recognize this? Read [Romans 13:1-5](#), what does this passage teach about how we should handle submission to authority?

What is the purpose?

Who places this authority in our life?

How does this impact your view of how you should respond to bad leadership – bosses, teachers, even parents?

To be clear, this is not suggesting we must obey when it becomes a sin issue, but that we must recognize who is truly in control and that we have an opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity as well as be used by God for His glory.

Memorize: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

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: [Acts 9:1-19](#)

Think: Today's passage is the incredible account of two men who were chosen, Saul – who would become an apostle of Christ, and Ananias – a faithful follower asked to take a huge risk. Read through today's scripture and briefly summarize it highlighting some of the key points of being chosen for both men.

When we read certain Bible verses, [Ephesians 2:10](#), [Proverbs 16:9](#), [Jeremiah 10:23](#), what are we told about our life?

This means that Saul, or Paul as we know him, and Ananias were both chosen for this specific time and task before they were even born! Not only that, but no one else could do what they did. Paul was a leading Pharisee known for imprisoning followers of Jesus, but it was his knowledge of the scriptures, his passion for God, and his character that made him the perfect person for God to use to spread the gospel – he just needed one thing, JESUS! Do you think Paul would have believed in the living Christ had he not met Him the way he did? Why/why not?

Do you think Ananias would have responded by any other means than a vision from the Lord? Why/why not?

What we are learning here is not only that people are chosen and why, but HOW they are chosen. God set up what we might call “divine appointments” in the lives of these two men. God still sets divine appointments for people... think about your own life – can you point to some times, places, or people that looking back on it now, you recognize as God's activity? What was the situation?

What did you learn through it?

These appointments are not always easy or good, they can often be very painful, but it is often the painful ones we remember the most.

Paul went on to establish most of the churches we read about in the New Testament, bringing the Gospel to the area of Asia Minor, salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike, persecuted for following and preaching Christ the same way he persecuted followers before his conversion. His divine appointment was fulfilled to the end and when he was martyred for his faith, he stood before His Savior and Lord hearing the words, “well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master!” ([Matthew 25:21](#)) For more about the life of Paul, go to: www.gotquestions.org/life-Paul.html

Engage: It was mentioned a few days ago that our past or pre-Christian experiences are often part of our faith journey now, giving us the ability to identify with certain people or circumstances. We can have confidence that all of our past experiences can be used for good when we let God have them. In fact, we are promised this – turn to [Romans 8:28-29](#). What does the apostle Paul teach here about what God does with our past?

What is God’s goal for us in this?

What are some “all things” or past situations in your life that God can or has turned to good?

How did it become good?

God continues to make divine appointments in our lives – for our good and the good of others, but we must be on the lookout for them. How can you learn to do this?

As you do, ask God daily who and how He wants you to fulfill His plans for you, commit your ways to the Lord and He will guide your steps!

Memorize: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

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: [Hebrews 11:1-40](#)

Think: Being chosen by God for His purposes doesn't always guarantee we will see the end result. Think of the people you have shared the Gospel with... some of them may have moved, some may have passed away. Think of the grandparent who taught their grandchildren about Jesus but dies before they know whether they choose to follow Him. Our life as Christians is a life of faith – not only in God but in His working out our faithful obedience.

Read through today's passage and note some of the acts of faith the men and women of old did. Did they see the results of their faith? What was the foundation of their faith?

How did it impact their obedience?

What did some of them endure for their faith?

You may not think you would stand up to that kind of test, but God knows you better than you do! Do you think the people in this chapter felt confident they would stand up to their tests of faith? One of the reasons we have difficulty in saying “yes” to God whether simply choosing to follow Him or saying “yes” to something specific He wants you to do is FEAR. Fear of failure, persecution, rejection, pain, or suffering can inhibit us – but that’s what Satan wants! Turn to [Matthew 10:19](#), how does Jesus encourage us?

Jesus is telling us we will be given the courage, strength, and words we will need at the moment we need them! Not before, not after but perfectly WHEN! The thing about fear is that it is rooted in the unknown – we stop before we even get started, however God did not create us with a spirit of fear... read [2 Timothy 1:7](#), what do we have?

How does this encourage you?

Engage: The Bible was given to us for instruction, encouragement, to correct us, and train us for everything God has for us. When we read it, we might be tempted to think that the Bible doesn’t include the history we are writing at this very moment. Turn to [Hebrews 12:1-2](#), how do these verses help you understand that God’s story for you is not finished yet?

Who should you look to when you get discouraged? Write how you can do this.

The next time you struggle with fear or discouragement thank Jesus for showing you how to be strong and faithful.

Memorize: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

Week 2

Leading Others

Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10

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: [Exodus 3:1-12](#)

Think: One of the greatest lessons on leadership can be found in the life of an Old Testament great... Moses. For many people, Moses is only thought of in the account of the plagues of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. Or for some, he is the movie Moses played by Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments* in 1956! There is SO much more to his life than these extraordinary events in history – so much that his life from birth to death is covered in four books of the Old Testament: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We won't be able to cover his entire life in a few days, but we are going to look at what we can learn about leadership from him.

Let's begin with a brief backstory... Moses was a Hebrew born during the reign of Pharaoh Ramesses II (as most scholars believe). Because the Hebrew people were growing in number and the Pharaoh worried they would overtake Egypt, he gave a command for all Hebrew boys born to be killed. When Moses was born, his mother and father hid him for three months, and when they could no longer keep him hidden, they trusted in God, putting him in a reed basket and sent him down the river where Pharaoh's daughter found him and raised him as her own. Moses grew up as an Egyptian but he knew he was Hebrew, and as he grew older seeing one of his people being beaten by an Egyptian, he killed him and buried him in the sand. It was when he discovered his crime was known, Moses fled and ended up in Midian where he met his wife, had children, and worked as a shepherd for her father, Jethro (Exodus 1-2, [Acts 7:17-34](#)). This brings us to today's reading...

For 40 years Moses lived peacefully as a husband and father when at 80 years old, God called him. In verses 1-6, how did God appear to Moses?

Why do you think God chose to appear this way?

We have all likely seen a bush on fire – living in the desert where it is dry, a lightning strike or carelessly tossed cigarette can quickly ignite, but we have never seen something on fire that didn't burn! If you saw that would you stop to take a look? Why?

As we go through life, we can become so used to the daily activity of life, the routine and rhythm, that God will show us something incredible to capture our attention. There are many things that can “wake us up” and do this... the birth of a baby, the loss of a job, a health issue – all times in life where God wants to grab our attention, talk to us and let us know He is present. Each one of these requires an adjustment to life and often compels us to reach out to Him. What is one time in your life where you know God was doing this?

The key is our response – how did Moses respond when he heard God calling to him?

What did God tell Moses in verses 7-10?

What was Moses' response in verse 11?

This is such a normal response for most of us! It is important that we notice that God didn't tell Moses what He wanted him to do until He had Moses attention, then when he responded to God, He told Him the plan. For us, we usually want to know the plan first and how it will all work out **before** we answer God, but God doesn't always work like that. Our willingness to follow Him should be based on love and trust not what we will be asked to do. Why do you think Moses' first response was “who am I”?

Moses was right to question himself and his own ability, but what God was asking of Him only required one thing, willing obedience. In fact, if Moses responded with “sure Lord, I got this!” do

you think God could have worked through him? It is possible that when Moses first fled Egypt as a feisty 40-year-old, he would have responded that way. It may be that the reason God waited another 40 years to call Moses was he needed to mature. This is an important lesson, when we are young, we may have passion for something but not the wisdom or maturity so God will wait until we are ready to be led by Him before we can lead others.

Engage: We may not consider ourselves leaders, but the truth is we all lead somewhere and in some capacity... as parents, in our circle of friends, at church, or work. Where we get stuck is our definition of leadership and what we think it involves. The definition of leadership is basically someone who leads or is in the role of leading and can be based on skill or even simple seniority. Google AI defines it this way: *the process of social influence that maximizes the efforts of others toward the achievement of a shared goal. It is not defined by title or power, but rather by the ability to inspire, guide, and empower individuals to work collaboratively, often involving skills like empathy, communication, and integrity.*

This is a great way to explain it! thinking of it this way, rather than asking where you lead, the better question is “*who do you influence*”? Also, “*how do you influence them*”?

God knew He would use Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, but work had to be done. Moses needed time to learn and mature before he was ready, the Egyptians needed time to “forget” who he was, and the Hebrews needed to come to maximum crisis so they were willing to be led away from their oppressors. Even then, the road wouldn’t be easy. God has already chosen you for something and at this moment may be working on maturing you and putting all the pieces together so He will be glorified through you. Are you ready to be led by Him?

Memorize: *Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:10*

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: [Exodus 4:1-17](#)

Think: Do you ever argue with God or doubt His plans for your life? If you have, you're not alone! The good news is that God is not afraid of our questions or doubt, as long as we are willing to hear Him, trust and obey despite them. We also find that Moses had some concerns as well... in verse 1 of today's reading, what was Moses worried about?

This conversation between God and Moses started back in verse 13 of chapter 3 – Moses said, “What if they don't believe me?” “What if they ask your name”? ([Exodus 3:13-14](#)) to which God replied, tell them “I AM WHO I AM”, that is my name. This was not a new name God gave, it represented the known YHWH (*Yahweh*) a name known and highly revered to the Hebrew people. Even with this, Moses continued to worry that the people wouldn't believe God sent him. What did God tell Moses to do in verses 2-9?

These would be some pretty convincing demonstrations! However, what did Moses then tell God in verse 10?

What was God's response in verses 11-17?

What do you think is going on here? Why is Moses so bent on giving God reasons why he's not the right guy for the job?

If God knew us in our mother's womb, and sees all our days laid out before Him ([Psalm 139:16](#)) – do you think He knows us better than we do? Do you think He knows what you are capable of? Do you believe He will equip you with the time, talents, and resources needed to do what He asks you to do? Like Moses, we see ourselves with current capacities, limitations, skills, and so on. God already knew how Moses spoke, He created Him!!! So, what does this interaction between Moses and God reveal about God's character?

Engage: How does it impact you to know you can be real and honest before God?

Like we mentioned in last week's study, fear will often stop us from fulfilling God's plans for us because we worry about the process and the outcome. How does or would it change your response to God if you had absolute faith that God would do for you what He did for Moses?

Not that you'll be turning sticks into snakes at work... but just knowing that He is with you, guiding and teaching. Read [Romans 8:31](#), what does this verse teach?

If God has chosen you, He will patiently wait and work with you to accomplish all He has for you, and as [Ephesians 3:20](#) says, He is able to do abundantly more than we can think or ask! If you know God has been leading you to do something, what worries, arguments, or doubts have you given Him?

Based on today's lesson and the verses from Romans and Ephesians, what is God offering you?

What is the first step you need to do to begin this miraculous journey?

As you step out in faith, continue noting the next step and the next – taking one at a time – and how God is leading you.

Memorize: Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:10

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: [Exodus 17:1-7](#), [Numbers 20:2-13](#)

Think: When God sets us free from the slavery of sin, we are not done. Our life afterward is the process of learning to live as a free person relying on Him for all things. When God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt, they were not done, they now had to learn to live as free people and rely on Him for everything.

In life, and leadership, as Christians, we must learn to rely on God for all things – wisdom, endurance, patience, etc. The entire account of God leading His people through the wilderness to the Promiseland was a test of faith and trust. Where is God leading you through a test of faith right now?

In today’s study, we will read about two phases of Moses leadership journey. To begin we’ll start at Exodus 17:1-7, in this passage, what did the people complain about?

How did Moses respond?

What did God tell him to do?

In our daily life, whether at work, home or school, when someone has a need or complaint they are instructed to go to HR or the “complaint dept.” Moses WAS the complaint department for all of Israel, but he knew His only hope of leading God’s people was to go directly to God. As a Christian leader, manager, supervisor, or any other role that requires decision making or dealing with people, who do you go to when there are complaints or needs to be met?

Christians are often met with the need to learn how to lead as a Christian while also following company policy or even old ways of doing things. For us, it often has less to do with the “what” we are to do and more to do with the “how” we do it. Maintaining godly character and practicing love, patience, joy, and kindness in the process is now our goal. We will soon learn that Moses started out in complete dependence on God, but as the years went by and the people became more rebellious, he also found it more difficult to lead them. Isn’t this how it goes? We begin with a positive attitude, goals, and ideas that become dampened when we learn not everyone we work with, live with, or spend time with is cooperative! Let’s move on...

Approximately 40 years later, we come to another moment where Israel makes their need known. In Numbers 20:2-5, what did the people come to Moses for?

What was their complaint?

Do you think they remembered how God provided for them in the past? We can assume that many people had since passed on but there is the good possibility that the story had been passed down through the generations. What is noticeable in both incidents is that we are told the people “quarreled” with Moses – they didn’t come asking nicely! In verses 6-8, how did Moses and Aaron respond to this?

What did God tell Moses to do?

Then in verses 10-11, what did Moses say to the people?

What did he do to get water from the rock?

Is that what God told him to do? Why do you think he did this?

We must be very careful that we don't allow anger and frustration to cloud what God tells us. In moments like this, it is our own pride that causes us to respond with anger, frustration, and partial obedience. Moses' anger with the people overshadowed what he heard God say and rather than obeying, he brought water from the rock the way God told him the first time. There are a few lessons here... first, we must be careful how we respond when we are being attacked, blamed, or treated spitefully by others. It is too tempting to respond in our flesh even when we go to God for wisdom. The other lesson is the caution of partial obedience. Moses isn't alone in this, Aaron was also responsible, but if we look back in biblical history, partial obedience started in the Garden of Eden and it continues today. One of the best examples of how we justify this is found in [1 Samuel 15:1-15](#) where Israel's first king, Saul, was commanded by God to completely destroy all Amalekites – men, women, children, and even animals – yet in verses 8-9, what did Saul do?

When the prophet Samuel finds out, what does Saul tell him in verses 13-15?

Did Saul obey fully or partially? How did he justify his actions?

Leading others is a great privilege and a great responsibility! Wherever and whenever we are leading or influencing, we must be mindful to do all we can to glorify God as we do as well as influence those around us.

Engage: In your experiences, have you been challenged by how others treat you or what they expect from you? How do you respond?

One of the points in today's lesson is the fact that we often think God will work the same way in all situations. For Moses and the people, they had the same problem – lack of water – but God wasn't going to provide it exactly the same way He did before. Have you had a situation where the problem or need was the same but God provided for each in a different way? What did you learn from it?

If you have a need now, how are you praying for an answer?

Are you truly listening for specific guidance or assuming you should deal with it the same way as in the past? How can you practice complete obedience in your life?

Memorize: *Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10*

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: [Exodus 18:13-26](#)

Think: A good portion of leading others is helping them through challenges, differences, and even conflict. If you are parenting children, work as a teacher, or lead in an office or church setting, you understand the importance of doing this well. When in this situation, what is your goal?

Why?

What is God's goal?

As Moses continued leading the people, keeping in mind that there were upwards of a couple million people (www.gotquestions.org/Israelites-exodus.html) they encountered conflict of all types. How to handle all of this...? In verse 13 of today's reading, what was Moses doing?

What was the timeframe?

Could you imagine how exhausting that would be? In verses 14-23, what did Moses father-in-law instruct him to do?

What were the specific requirements of the men Moses should choose to help in this (vs. 21)?

What was their role (vs. 22)?

Did Moses take this advice? What are the ways this system would benefit Moses and the people?

No one person can lead all people – think about the areas of your work, our government, and church... how is leadership delegated to multiple people?

What is the purpose?

When it comes to our internal systems of judging matters, building companies, establishing churches, and so on, giving people the opportunity to lead and serve in their gifting is imperative to its success. God has created each person with skills, abilities, capacities, and spiritual gifts (for Christians), to do His work.

In addition to this, the longevity of all we work to build will rely on being able to “pass the baton” to another who will carry on in our absence. In [Deuteronomy 31:1-8](#), after another 40 years, Moses has come to the end of his leading the people. In these verses, who does he name as the man to lead the people into the Promiseland?

Choosing the next leader is an awesome responsibility and should be done with great care, time spent with God, and the help of others who will provide wise council. Out of all the people of Israel, one man was found worthy... why?

[Deuteronomy 1](#) gives a summary of what happened. When the people came to the land God was to give them, they went to spy it out and see what they were facing. Although the land was beautiful and fruitful, the people there were strong and many and the men who were sent came back with a negative report ([Numbers 13:25-33](#)) – they didn’t believe God would help them defeat the people already in the land, so they were not allowed to go into the Promiseland. Only Joshua and Caleb believed that God would fight for them ([Numbers 14:6-9](#)). Joshua was Moses second in command and a mighty warrior, but more than that he had complete faith in God. We are told that God doesn’t look at outward appearances but into the heart of a person. If a person is willing and

faithful, He will equip them in any way necessary for the work he has for them. Joshua was the right person because he had the right heart – faithful, pliable, teachable, and humble, wherever God has you is because you are the right person with the right heart! If you are in a position to mentor others for what you do at work, home, or church, ask God to help you see the person’s heart and character rather than depending on skill alone.

Engage: Delegating roles and tasks are not simply a way to distribute the workload – it is meant to help people be the best they can be and continue to grow. Assessing and identifying who you can invest in can take time, but it also means establishing a trust relationship – people want and need to know you have their best interest in mind. Even in parenting, when kids must be disciplined, they need to know it is for their instruction and training to help them become the people God created them to be! As you think about who you are leading, mentoring, or considering for a role, how are you investing in them?

Do you have a plan? What is your goal?

If you hadn’t thought of this, list some steps you can take and how you can do this biblically – even if you work in an environment that prohibits Christianity, you can act, think, speak, and behave in a godly way without overstepping work policy.

Memorize: *Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:10*

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: [Luke 9:1-6](#) and [23-25](#), [Matthew 13:34](#) and [10-12](#), [John 20:30-31](#) and [21:25](#)

Think: In week 1, and in yesterday's study we learned the importance of identifying and teaching others to carry on. When Jesus began His earthly ministry, His whole goal was to choose and train the people who would continue His message after He was crucified, risen, and ascended to heaven. Right before He returned to heaven He gave them specific instructions – read [Matthew 28:19-20](#), what were these instructions?

If they were to teach others, then clearly Jesus taught them everything He wanted them to teach. We don't have time in this study to cover all of Jesus' teachings, but what we can discover is how He taught and gave His disciples the opportunity to practice before He was to be crucified.

Reading through each passage for today, what do you learn about Jesus' teaching methods?

In the Jewish culture, a rabbi (teacher) would teach his disciples (students) all he knew to prepare them to teach others. Jesus did this as He traveled and taught people about God, the true way to obey, what it meant to love the Lord and others, healed people, and the truth of salvation in Him alone. In today's passages we see that He then gave His disciples the opportunity to practice by giving them clear instructions, the opportunity to go out and practice what they were taught, what to do if they weren't accepted, and answered their questions when they didn't understand. He also taught them what this life would cost them.

Leading like Christ does cost us... it can cost popularity, our pride and selfish desires or goals, rejection, or even sleepless nights, but the reward far outweighs the cost! What does Jesus promise in Luke 9:24?

What does the apostle Paul encourage us with in [Galatians 6:9](#)?

Engage: In yesterday's "Engage" portion you were asked about those you are investing in and your goals and plans for them. How can you incorporate today's lesson on how Jesus taught His disciples into your plans?

As Christians, this is vitally important as we are commanded to disciple others. Our faith isn't meant to be kept secret or for us to enjoy alone, it is meant to be shared. Christian parents have the greatest responsibility in training kids in the instruction of the Lord, and teaching them how to become godly students, friends, and leaders as they grow. If you struggle in this area or are new to faith and would like to know more, we are here to help. We would love to talk with you and support you any way we can. You can call the office at (760)384-3333 Weds – Fri, 10am-4pm, for an appointment or send us an email at ccc@ccc-rc.org. You can also check out this link for a summary of what Jesus taught and His purpose. www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-teaching.html. GotQuestions.org is a great site for any questions you may have about what the Bible says about many subjects.

Memorize: *Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10*

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: [Ephesians 6:5-9](#), [Colossians 3:23-24](#)

Think: As we finish this week learning about leadership, we finish with a final encouragement – not only for those who lead but for those who are being led, whether by a Christian or non-Christian. In today’s passages, what are the instructions for bondservants (employees)?

What is the instruction for masters (leaders, bosses, etc.)?

Why is this important?

One of the worst testimonies a person who says they are Christian can give is making it known they are Christian at work, then behaving in ungodly ways. Those who say they are Christian but treat their coworkers or those they lead as “less than”, or gossip about everyone, or do their work poorly, or not at all are NOT glorifying God in any way. Some reasons this can happen is the person is not truly saved, they are new to faith and are learning or they are under the mistaken impression that they need to act this way to be given respect. However, who will you respect more – the coworker or boss who is kind and encouraging or the one who is cruel? Even if we are being treated poorly, scripture doesn’t give us an opt-out regarding how we respond. When we struggle in this way, if we keep our minds and heart focused on all Jesus went through for us ([Hebrews 12:1-2](#), [Philippians 2:3-8](#)) the shame of torture and crucifixion, never putting His own needs before others, we can gain the strength and endurance needed to follow in His ways.

Engage: Take a moment to reflect on all we have learned this week and evaluate how you are doing at work, home, church, school, or sports team. Are you leading like Christ? Learning about the challenges of leadership like Moses? Understanding the importance of honoring God at work? How has this week encouraged or challenged you?

What is God asking you to do?

Memorize: *Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10*

Week 3

Resisting God

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

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: [Jonah 1:1-17](#)

Think: When you think of the word *resistance* or *resist*, what do you think of? Opposition, a force that prevents movement...

In our time, the word is more often used to define *an act of refusing to comply* which covers many areas. Our children may resist instruction and rules, people resist authority, even a group of people can become A resistance – This is a negative definition of resistance, but there are times when resistance is beneficial – in exercise, resistance builds muscle, and in our spiritual life it can be an act of God preventing us from harm. This week we will study both definitions of resistance – when we resist God and when God places resistance or restrains us.

We will start with a Prophet of God whose story is one we may be familiar with but for different reasons... Jonah. Most likely, what people know of Jonah is what they learned in Sunday school as children. The story of Jonah and the whale, and as adults if we have no other knowledge of the whole story, we take it simply as a children's story used to convey a message but certainly nothing based in reality. However, in four short chapters, we can learn so much about ourselves through Jonah, and God's grace and desire to save all people through Jonah despite his resistance.

Let's start by getting to know Jonah a little. Jonah was an early prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel around 793-753BC. At this time in Israel's history, prophets were used by God to give His message to the people – they became God's "mouthpiece" as He spoke through them to guide, instruct, and discipline His people and call them to repentance and faithful obedience. Being a prophet was not an easy task and because the messages were often a call to repentance, and the consequences of disobedience, prophets were not well liked... it could be a very lonely existence.

Although we know very little of Jonah outside of this book, we can learn a great deal about his heart. In verses 1-3 of today's reading, what did God ask Jonah to do and where did He ask him to go?

How did Jonah respond to this?

At this point it helps to understand Jonah's response was due to the fact that Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, a pagan nation that was a constant threat to Israel. The phrase, "call out against it" means God wanted Jonah to call this city to repentance! For Israel, and for Jonah, offering repentance to a pagan nation was unheard of! This is why he resisted God.

Jonah was so confident in his resistance to obey, what happened in verses 4-6?

What was he doing?

Why do you think he was able to sleep during all of that?

In verses 7-10, how did God reveal that it was Jonah that was causing the problems?

The fact that the men on the ship were afraid when they heard who Jonah was and who he worshipped indicates that the God of Israel, whether a person worshipped Him or not, was known for His power and might!

Verses 11-16 reveals even more about Jonah's character as well as the mariners'... when they asked Jonah what needed to be done, what did he tell them?

Did the men do as he said at first? When/why did they relent and throw him overboard?

What happened when they did?

What did God do for Jonah in verse 17?

Engage: There are many lessons in this account. Let's start with the last verse – being swallowed by a great fish was not something God did TO Jonah, it was something He did FOR Jonah – that fish saved him from certain death by drowning. What we learn from Jonah at this point is that he thought he could run away and hide from God. He was also willing to throw other people under the bus when it came to doing what was necessary to stop the storm! It may make us wonder why God chose Him to be a prophet to begin with, but as we learned in week 1, God chooses people good or bad to fulfill His purposes.

When God wants His children to do something, He will pursue us until one of two things happens – we relent and obey or we continue to resist and hardened our heart. There's a third option as well, obey with a hard heart. It may seem odd to us that a person as important as a prophet would even consider resisting the Lord, but it comes down to the fact we are all human and not all prophets, pastors, leaders, or Christians are obedient, intentionally or unintentionally.

Take a moment to think about where in your life you have resisted God. What were the circumstances?

Did you ultimately obey or continue resisting? How did it end up?

For Jonah and the crew, the storm grew worse until Jonah was tossed overboard and in our own life we will often experience trials, pain, or suffering when we resist the Lord. He will allow us to continue suffering consequences and increasing pain until we submit to Him. The storms in our marriage will continue until we submit to His ways, the pain of sinful habits will increase until we submit to Him. Have you experienced this? If you are currently in a storm, ask God if it is because you are resisting or running from Him somewhere in your life.

www.gotquestions.org/Jonah-Tarshish-Nineveh.html, www.gotquestions.org/life-Jonah.html

Memorize: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

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: [Jonah 2:1-10](#)

Think: For Jonah, he hit rock bottom in the belly of that fish! When we hit rock bottom, feeling swallowed by life and have nowhere to turn, what do we do? What do you do?

Jonah did the only thing he could do – PRAY. In this chapter, when does Jonah call out to God?

How does he describe what was happening to him?

Does it sound like he was drowning?

This is common to most people. There is a saying, “there’s no atheist in a fox hole”, meaning when we think we are about to die, we cry out to God – even if we have rejected Him our entire lives! Looking at verses 8-9, Jonah speaks of vain idols and sacrificing to the Lord. Does this seem out of place to you? God’s commands to His people were not to worship idols and our sacrifices to Him are thankfulness for salvation. That said, what would you say is Jonah’s “idol”?

Jonah may not have literally worshipped a pagan idol, but he worshipped his life and own way of thinking. He also realized his only way out of this predicament is to submit to God. When we resist the Lord, who becomes god in our life? WE DO! We are either interested in fulfilling our own desires, we don't want to make the sacrifices it may take to obey God, we are afraid He's going to change our plans, etc. We don't know exactly how long Jonah was in the sea, we have an idea that he was literally sinking down to "the roots of the mountains" and he was tangled in seaweed, so he may not have been in the water long but the point is, we all have a tolerance for pain before we cry out to God. In the story of Moses and the Exodus, it wasn't until the workload and oppression for the Hebrew people became so severe that they cried out to God. That's the problem... for each time we experience some pain, we tend to build a tolerance to it to keep doing what we're doing. As time goes by, we tolerate more and more pain as it becomes a "normal" part of life. It's not until we are overwhelmed, physically ill, lost relationships and jobs that we cry out to God – why? They are idols... even pain itself can become an idol! As we finish, what did God do when Jonah prayed?

Engage: Are there idols in your life that are dragging you down to the "depths of the sea"? Do you feel like you're drowning? Have you called out to God? When we do, it is important to understand that we don't simply ask God to save us. Even in that prayer it can be self-centered. The key is found in verses 8-9, repentance. When we cry out to God to save us, we must recognize and repent from our sin – anything that has become an idol – in our lives. However, this prayer must be a genuine prayer followed up by life change, not the "get me out of this one and I'll worship you forever" prayer. If you are in a trial and have been praying, think about how and what you are praying for. For a true prayer of humility and repentance, read [Psalm 51](#) and pray that prayer. Note how your motive and thoughts change as you do this.

For more interesting details about Jonah – fish or whale, did he live or die in the belly, go to: https://answersingenesis.org/bible-questions/jonah-and-bigger-fish/?srsltid=AfmBOoomjTl_x2QMt3mGrcTA8ClodJJ0kJpeRK4L5MCg6vSLF9PPYVfj

Memorize: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

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: [Jonah 3:1-10](#)

Think: So many people struggle to find a God of love and compassion in the Old Testament. Here in Jonah's story, we see a God who is not only loving but incredibly patient with us. Not only did God save Jonah from drowning, He didn't give up on him. He could have found a more obedient and willing person to take the message of repentance to Nineveh, but He didn't! In verses 1-2, what did God tell Jonah?

When God has a specific job, role, or plan for us, He will continue to pursue us even when we resist Him. He will never force His will on us, but will continue to direct our path to Him with the hope we will choose His plans for us.

In the remaining verses, did Jonah obey God? When he did what God asked, how did the people of Nineveh respond?

How did God respond to their repentance?

What makes this account so unique is that it demonstrates God's desire for all people to know Him. It is incorrect to think, as Jonah did, that salvation was for Jews only. What is harder is that God was and still does offer salvation to people that are truly evil. Think of people and situations we may be more familiar with – Hitler, Stalin, our current situation in Israel. How about other evils... serial killers, thieves, pedophiles – does God want them to be saved? If He asked you to preach

repentance, forgiveness, and salvation to one of them would you do it? What if it was someone who hurt you or your family?

We have a hard time making sense of the immeasurable grace of God unless we are the recipient! This was Jonah's battle too. Jonah did obey God and it produced miraculous results! Can you imagine? What if this happened in Ridgecrest? In the United States!

Engage: We look at situations like the repentance that happened in Nineveh and we probably think this is impossible now. From our perspective and from what we know in the bible, not all people will choose this, but that shouldn't stop us from trying. Like a pebble tossed into a pond, the ripple effects can be far reaching when we stop resisting God and take a risk. Is there someone in your life who you would consider an evil person? Maybe they are cruel, hurtful, practice all manner of sin – is God asking you to “call out to them”? It may not be that He intends for you to be confrontational, but to reach out to them in some way, invite them to church, offer to pray for them if they are going through something. [Luke 6:27-36](#) and [Matthew 6:14-16](#) show what Jesus teaches on this subject. What does Jesus say we are to do concerning those who are enemies?

Is this active or passive? This is often the most common area we resist God – loving and forgiving our enemies. Like Jonah, we tend to justify how we feel and our resistance to obey, however Jesus makes it clear this is not a suggestion, this is a command! www.gotquestions.org/Nineveh-in-the-Bible.html

Memorize: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

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: [Jonah 4:1-11](#)

Think: Today we find out if Jonah’s heart truly changed after his near-death experience. Have you ever had a frightening experience – car accident, medical diagnosis, or even something with your child or family member? Did you plead with God to save or heal? How did it turn out?

There are many stories of people that God “snatched out of the fire” only to have temporary repentance and then return to old ways shortly after the pain subsides.

When Jonah walked through Nineveh, calling the people to repentance, it seemed he had a different view of what would happen. In verses 1-2, what was his attitude toward the people’s response?

Why was he angry?

In verse 3, what did he ask God to do?

It is incredible to think that he would be so angry about God relenting His anger toward the people of Nineveh so soon after relenting His anger toward him for trying to run away! He wasn’t just angry, he actually wished he was dead! This may seem outrageous to us, but if we are honest with ourselves, we might find that there is that one person who has hurt us so deeply we can’t even be happy for them if they became a Christian – more than that, mad at God for forgiving them. Our

sense of justice can be one sided if we're not careful – wanting God's grace, mercy, and justice for ourselves while withholding it from others.

In the remaining verses, what did Jonah do?

When it became hot, what did God do for Jonah?

We can identify with this here in Ridgecrest! During the hot summers, shade from a tree is a gift, and Jonah was happy about his gift, but God had a lesson planned in it. What was God's lesson for Jonah?

How does it strike you that Jonah was angry about the plant dying?

Again, this may seem outrageous to us, but there are many people inside the church who claim to be Christian who do the same thing – harboring anger over a person with a past who God and others have forgiven. Based on Matthew 6:14-16 from yesterday's reading, what is the danger in this?

We don't know what happened to Jonah, as he seems to fall off the history books, but if we understand this story correctly, can he be forgiven if he truly repents? That is the message – God is patient, He is faithful, He is merciful and He will always pursue us no matter how resistant and rebellious we are. How does this encourage you?

Engage: It is possible the reason we don't know what happens with Jonah after this is so that we focus on what God wants us to learn through his story rather than where he ended up. What has God taught you about yourself over the last few days?

Is there anything He wants you to change? Do you hope Jonah ultimately repented? The beauty of Christianity is the joy and celebration that will take place in heaven when we see people there we never would have expected – and they may be surprised we are there too 😊

Memorize: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 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: [Numbers 22:22-35](#)

Think: The next two days are going to focus on another aspect of resistance – when God puts resistance in our life or He resists us. This is not a resistance to saving faith but the kind that will save us or bring about His plans at the right time.

Today we meet another prophet of God and one who is also not the best example... Balaam. His story can be found in Numbers 22-24 but today we will focus on a small portion of his life.

For some context, another pagan nation, Moab, who wanted to weaken the nation of Isarel out of fear of being overcome by them, asked Balaam to pronounce a curse on God's (and his own) people. The king of Moab, Balak, offered Balaam money to do this. God asked Balaam who the men were who came to him with this request and when Balaam told him, God said do not go with them. The king was persistent and sent messengers again with an increase of money for cursing Israel. Again, Balaam said no, and God came to him again saying if the men ask you to go with them, go but don't do anything unless I tell you. In the morning, Balaam went with them and that's where we pick up today.

In verse 22, how did God respond to this?

This is one of those moments similar to Moses when we think we are doing what God said but act out of our own knowledge or desires. God said “if” the men have come to call, yet we see that Balaam didn’t wait for them to come to him, he assumed God gave him permission.

Have you ever had a plan to do something that you asked God whether or not you should pursue it? Did you wait long enough to get an answer? If so, how do you know if the answer was from God?

One of the challenges we face as Christians is the desire and process of wanting God to approve our choices, plans, or actions. A great example is when a person who is Christian begins dating someone who is not. Turn to [2 Corinthians 6:14](#), what does this verse teach about this?

The idea of being unequally yoked is taken from the picture of two oxen yoked together for plowing. If the oxen are not the same size and strength they will work against each other. It may seem that the Christian in a dating relationship can influence the other and bring them to Christ, and it has happened, but it is rare and is a huge risk. More often than not, the non-Christian influences the Christian for the worse (See [1 Corinthians 15:33](#)) and both are lead astray. In the process, because God gives us some “slack” so to speak, we assume He is approving our plans.

In verse 23, what did God do to stop Balaam?

Who saw the angel?

In verses 24-27, how many times did this happen and what was Balaam’s response?

Why do you think he didn’t stop to consider that God may be the one bringing resistance to his plan?

Since Balaam continued going, what did God do in verses 28-30?

Wait... a talking donkey?!?! Not only did the donkey speak to Balaam, Balaam had a conversation with it! Sometimes we get so focused on what we want that even the unusual doesn't phase us, and apparently Balaam's anger overshadowed his ability to see the truth in front of him. Have you ever done this? We can become blind to the truth when our heart and mind are focused on getting what we want. Even when God sends resistance, we keep going. For many people, they push so hard God gives them their way and they discover it wasn't the best idea after all.

In the remaining verses, God opened Balaam's eyes so he could see the angel the donkey was avoiding. How did Balaam respond?

Thankfully, he did what God told him to do. Three times Balak asked Balaam to curse Israel and each time God told him to bless Israel instead. Sadly, Balaam's story doesn't end well... he eventually found a way to do what Balak wanted so he could get his money. He told the Moabites to tempt Israel with idolatry and prostitutes thereby bringing the curse upon themselves.

Engage: God will never force Himself on people or force us to obey. He will put obstacles in our way to stop us from going down the wrong path into sin, but ultimately it is our responsibility to obey Him. The story of the talking donkey is fun and unique, but we must be sure we don't miss the message. We are often oblivious to the talking donkeys in our own life! Is there a path you are currently pursuing? How are you working with God to know if it is what He wants for you?

The best way for us to know is to be sure we are reading the Bible, but we can also take a look around our life for talking donkeys. Are you meeting any resistance in your plans? If so, have you asked God if it is from Him? If not, take some time to do so. As you do this, keep in mind that God will not ask or approve of anything that goes against His word, so if you aren't sure, ask yourself – does this line up with the Bible? If you need help with this, we would love to talk with you. You can call the office at (760)384-3333 Weds – Fri, 10am – 4pm for an appointment. You can also email us at ccc@ccc-rc.org. www.gotquestions.org/Balaam-in-the-Bible.html

Memorize: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

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: [Acts 16:6-34](#)

Think: Not all times of resistance are bad. There are moments, when resistance has redirected us for God's purposes. Have you ever had a desire to do something for God that you couldn't carry out because of resistance? Every time you tried to move forward you were met with challenges, blocked, or even shut down? Did you take into consideration that God was allowing these to redirect you?

In today's reading, we meet the apostle Paul who is on his second missionary journey. His plan was to revisit churches he had already planted, but God had other plans for him. In verses 6-10, list the places Paul tried to go and what stopped him. Being told in a vision to go to Macedonia, what conclusion did Paul come to?

Although visiting the already established churches wasn't a wrong thing to do, God wasn't finished using Paul to preach the gospel to other places. Because Paul obeyed God what was the result in verses 11-15?

Lydia is the first person recorded to have been saved in Europe and although we don't know much about her, the fact that she is recorded as well as the fact that she was with a group of women who Paul preached to should show us the importance of the role of women in the Bible and that salvation is for all people, men and women – Jew and Gentile – slave and free ([Galatians 3:28](#)). For more about Lydia, go to: www.gotquestions.org/Lydia-in-the-Bible.html . God's plans don't stop here...

While Paul and the others were on their way to the place of prayer, something else happened. Briefly describe what took place in verses 16-21.

Then in verses 22-24 what happened to them?

This is not a redirection anyone would choose, but God's plans far exceed anything we can imagine and even when the situation is frightening and painful, He will work in it.

Because Paul was faithful to God, he and Silas were beaten and arrested. What do we find them doing in verse 25?

Do you think you would respond the same way if you were in their position? In the remaining verses, what was the result of their faithfulness, even in prison?

In ancient times, if a jailer lost a prisoner, they paid for it with their life! This was a supernatural event that God ordained for the purpose of advancing the kingdom in this part of the world. This entire situation brought salvation to the jailer and his entire household to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and we won't know until we are in heaven how many others came to faith through this jailer and his family!

Paul didn't know what lie ahead when he started out for Aisa, but he was willing to hear from God for directions. Look at how many people were saved because he listened and obeyed! When God redirects us, it is always for our good and the good of others... how does this encourage or challenge you?

Engage: For many of us, the challenge we face in making plans and pursuing them is that we don't get visions of people telling us what to do. That *can* happen, but it's not likely. If you think God has done this, what do you do to confirm it is really from Him?

You may have noticed that we are not told what specifically happened that Paul discerned the Holy Spirit was preventing him from going to certain places. How do you think he knew?

The key to knowing if something is from God is to truly know Him. This means reading the Bible so you are familiar with His character, nature, how He would guide you, etc. It is also important to keep in mind that it is not always the easy path that God shows you – the easy path isn't always a "yes" answer. Sometimes the right path is the harder one. However, we have these promises to encourage us - read [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) and [Proverbs 16:9](#), what do these verses tell you about how God will direct you?

What is your role in it?

More often than not, our plans are simply just moving forward with what we would like to do with the heart and mind of honoring God in each part of your decision. Be willing to look for times of redirection, pray and look for open doors and closed doors... resistance isn't always a "no" answer, it may be a "not yet" answer. Be willing to obey God as He directs, redirects, or even closes doors.

Memorize: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

Week 4

Good Idea or God Idea

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

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: [1 Chronicles 13:1-14](#)

Think: In the movie *A Christmas Story*, the main character, Ralphie, is a young boy who's dream it is to have a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas. He daydreams about the gun and when his parents ask him what he wants for Christmas, he tells them and when mom says, "no – you'll shoot your eye out", he's crushed. All is not lost yet! When given a writing assignment at school, "What I Want for Christmas", Ralphie's hopes are renewed and he writes his paper convinced his teacher, Miss Shields, will be thrilled. When turning in his paper, he daydreams that Miss Shields is so enamored with his writing that he gets an A+++++ and the kids cheer for him, putting him on their shoulders carrying him around the class like a true hero! Have you ever had an idea, or wanted to do something that you thought was so great everyone would want to be part of it and cheer you on? Did you do anything about it? If so, how did it work out?

In our efforts to bring our good ideas to life, we may not truly understand the planning and preparation involved and needed. Our excitement overshadows reason and even common sense, and it may not go as well as hoped. As Christians, there's another layer to this process in our lives now... what does God think? What does He want? How does He want this done?

Over the next few days, we will explore a portion of the life of king David, God's chosen king over Israel. Even as a chosen king, described as a "man after God's own heart" ([1 Samuel 13:14](#)), David often made mistakes, relying on human thinking rather than checking with God. Today is one of those moments... but first we need a little back story.

God's people, Israel, had a fierce enemy in the Philistine people. At one point, they took the ark of the covenant, the golden box that contained the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, that also had the mercy seat where God's spirit would dwell, from the Jews. (For more on this, go to: www.gotquestions.org/ark-of-the-covenant.html) The ark of God was holy and was to be treated as such. Because the Philistines, who did not worship God, put the ark in the house of their false god, God sent a plague on the people, so they planned a way to get rid of the ark. Not knowing what to do, they sent it away and ultimately it came to the house of a man named Abinadab and there it stayed for many years.

Now in today's reading, David is king, and his greatest desire is to bring the ark back to its rightful home. In this chapter, how and with whom did David make plans to do this?

What did the people think about his plan?

How did they bring the ark... on what?

What happened to Uzzah when he tried to keep it from falling?

Does this seem odd or harsh to you? Although this does seem extreme when all Uzzah was trying to do was keep the ark from falling, the problem is David's failure to transport the ark the way God commanded from the beginning. Turn to [Exodus 25:12-14](#) and [Numbers 4:15](#), according to these verses, how was the ark to be carried and by whom?

The ark was not only to be treated with the utmost respect at all times, it was to be carried only by its poles and only by Levites, specifically the sons of Kohath at all times, so the problem here was although David had a good idea, how it was done wasn't God's idea. In their excitement they didn't adhere to God's commands and rather than take the time to do it right, they rushed and overlooked some very important requirements. For more on this, go to: www.gotquestions.org/Uzzah.html.

Engage: "Trust the process" is a common phrase these days to encourage people to not give up on something when the process seems like it won't work or it's taking too long. God is as

concerned with the process of how we do things as much as the end goal. In our life as a Christian, how we live that out is as important as the decision to become Christian – why is that?

It is our daily actions, how we talk to people, the choices we make, and how we respond to trials that are a greater testimony to those around us than us simply telling them we are Christian. When we believe God has called us to do something for Him - start a ministry, international missions, pursue a career, marriage, family, etc. we must consider the process as much as the outcome. Do you currently have a goal, vision, or dream of doing something important? Write it down here. Write any plans you have made to carry it out (you don't need to be too specific here).

As you have planned, how have you taken them to God – not for a stamp of approval, but in a genuine desire to know if this is what He wants for you?

Have you considered how your plans will impact others? Our excitement to get to the end result can often dull our hearing and blur our vision, so these are all things to be taken into consideration to be sure we are hearing from God and seeing the path He has laid out for us.

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

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: [1 Chronicles 16:1-36](#)

Think: At the end of yesterday's reading, we are told that when David saw their mistake with how they were transporting the ark, they stopped and placed it in the home of a man named Obed-edom, who was a Levite. It was there for three months, and all his household was blessed because of it. In the meantime, as David is building houses for himself in Jerusalem, he also prepared a place for the ark and made plans to have it brought from Obed-edom's home to Jerusalem. However, this time would be different... turn to [1 Chronicles 15:1-5](#), what did David do differently than the first time he tried to bring the ark back?

In [1 Chronicles 15:25-26](#), what did God do?

What a difference! David and his leaders took the time to stop and think about what was missing. You may have noticed in yesterday's reading that at no time does it say David or his men went to God – they made assumptions, possibly that God would be so pleased with their idea that He would overlook the requirements. Don't we do that sometimes? This time, David did it right.

Reading chapter 16 of 1 Chronicles, how did David and the people celebrate?

What a party! And this time it was good and God was pleased. However, David didn't simply throw a party and give everyone food, what else did he do in verse 4?

As you read through David's song of thanks, list what we are to do.

You will notice words like thank, sing, seek, remember, ascribe, and worship – these aren't passing suggestions, they are vital to our relationship with God. If we don't do all these things on a regular basis, how easy is it to forget what God does for us? In ancient times, and in some places now where the written word or reading isn't available, cultures depended on oral tradition... consistently telling stories of their people for the purpose of remembering and keeping their history alive. It appears David recognized this problem with the people and himself and that was the reason for their failure in their first attempt at bringing the ark to Jerusalem, so he made the necessary changes, and the results were very different.

Engage: It is great news that we have recorded in the Bible, a historical book, imperfect and flawed people we can learn from! This is God's choice! David is one of those people that, whether man or woman, we can identify with – chosen but flawed, passionate but hasty, great at leading people but not always himself. One fact about David is that no matter how bad his sin, he did have a humble heart and was always willing to repent and change. Does that describe you? If you have made some mistakes in your life, God is ready to forgive when you repent with a humble heart and are willing to change. Even in your goals and planning, has He revealed anything to you that may need to change? God is interested in every area of life, not just our spiritual life – He is interested in every relationship we have, the work we pursue, the hobbies/activities we spend time doing – there is NOTHING we can't invite Him into. The question is, will we? If we do, we might see different results.

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

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: [1 Chronicles 17:1-15](#)

Think: After many years of being on the run and in battle, King David is finally at a place where he can be settled. He is living in a beautiful palace surrounded by good things when another good idea hits him. In verses 1-2, what was his idea?

How did Nathan, the prophet respond to this?

What do you notice about this short interaction?

Even though we may have some times when God shows us we forgot to ask Him about our plans, we may still fall into the trap that our idea is so great, God-focused even, that we don't bother talking to Him first. At least in this instance David talked to Nathan, the prophet. This is the prophet that confronted David when he had an affair with Bathsheba. It can be a common thought for people in the church to ask someone they view as very godly for advice. Is this okay? Of course it is! Part of the process of learning to hear God is to seek godly counsel, but it should never be the only way. Those in the church may be deeply devoted to God, but they are still human. Nathan's problem in verse 2 is that he also didn't go to God before answering David. What happened next in verses 3-4?

What did God say about David's idea in verses 5-6?

There was a specific reason why God told David "no" to his desire to build God a house - turn to [1 Chronicles 28:2-3](#), what was the reason?

This was not a punishment for David, it was simply a matter of God having a different path for David. Since David wanted the temple to be a "house of rest" it had to be built by a man of rest – it would be his son Solomon who would ultimately build the temple. In the remaining verses of chapter 17, what did God tell David He was going to do for Him?

David needed to be reminded that God was still in control! God doesn't need anything from us – He doesn't need our money, He doesn't need us to build Him a spectacular building. The only building or temple He needs is our heart, see [1 Corinthians 3:16](#).

Engage: God's plan for David was to build an everlasting kingdom through him. If you trace the genealogy of David (See [Matthew 1:1-17](#)) you will find it leads to Jesus. Sometimes the ideas we have are good and it is exactly what God wants, but you are the one to carry it out. You may be part of the plan along with many others, but He may have someone else chosen for the final steps. The apostle Paul describes this as planting and watering in [1 Corinthians 3:5-9](#).

Christianity, and life, is a team sport – it takes many people to carry out plans and goals. Where can you see that God is using multiple people to work out a plan?

Think about your own life – how many people did God place in your life that attributed to where you are now – in faith, work, relationships?

Who are you witnessing to now?

Are there other people involved?

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

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: [Genesis 15:1-6](#)

Think: As children, you may have played the game “operator”. Kids sit in a circle and one person whispers something to the person next to them - something like, “Sally has brown hair and likes ice cream”. The goal of the game is to continue around the circle with all the kids whispering what they heard to the one next to them and when it gets to the last child, they say what they heard out loud. It is usually nothing like the original message! This is a great example that demonstrates even when we hear something directly, we can get it wrong.

Over the next couple of days, we are going to see another great example of the difference between a good idea and a God idea. Meet Abram and Sarai... Abram, a descendant of Noah and several hundred years after the flood, is called by God. God chooses Abram (later re-named Abraham) to bless him and make him the father of many nations ([Genesis 12:1-2](#)) who ultimately become the nation of Israel. There is not a lot of information on Abram up to this point, but what we can surmise is that God saw Abram’s heart and knew he was faithful. This can be seen in the fact that when God

called him, He told him to go, but he didn't say where, yet Abram didn't hesitate to obey the Lord. In our reading for today, we pick up with Abram and Sarai after they had settled for a while and God visits Abram again. In Genesis 15:1-6, what does God remind Abram?

What does Abram tell God?

Did Abram obey God? How was it credited to him?

Abram was about 75 years old when God called him and he had no children. Both he and Sarai probably felt the proverbial biological clock ticking when it came to being able to have kids. Turn to [Genesis 16:1-6](#), what did Sarai decide to do to "fix" this problem?

How many years had gone by?

What was the outcome?

It must have been painfully difficult waiting that long to see God's promise, all the while knowing you're not getting any younger! As each year went by, their hope of having a child likely diminished, so Sarai took matters into her own hands. Why do you think Abram agreed to this?

On a side note: in the culture, it was common for a man to have children with concubines as well as his wife. In many cases concubines had similar rights as a legal wife so in Sarai's case, Hagar's son would be the legitimate heir.

It is interesting that when God told Abram to gather all his family and possessions and move, he had faith. The real test of faith was time. He became impatient, maybe even discouraged thinking God had forgotten him. He may have assumed this was what God meant for them to do to fulfill the promise or maybe he simply felt bad for Sarai. Regardless, this was NOT what God said. God doesn't always give us timeframes when He has something for us to do, and we can become impatient and take matters into our own hands. Have you done this? How did it work out?

If we're not careful, it can cost us dearly just like Sarai and Hagar.

Engage: One of the most challenge aspects of Christianity is patience - patiently waiting on God. However, when we are "waiting" on God we must be careful not to view this as God being the problem. If we are waiting on Him, it is only because He is waiting on us! What is He waiting for? What might need to take place in our lives before God can proceed with His plans?

Turn to [Numbers 23:19](#), what does this verse say about God's character?

How should this encourage us when God is waiting for us?

Is there something you know God wants you to do but it is taking time? How is your patience doing?

Has it impacted your faithfulness in any way? If it has grown, how has it grown?

If it is faltering, why?

Have you tried to make things happen on your own? How has that worked out?

The good news is, like Abram and Sarai, even when we try to hurry things along, God will work with what we're giving Him. It may not result in what He has planned, but He may still bless it in some way. What we need to remember is that even in this, we may experience some painful lessons.

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

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: [Genesis 17:15-21](#)

Think: Fast forward another ten years or so, and God is talking with Abram again. What does He tell him in today's reading?

Did Abram believe God? Why not?

God is... well, God! He is I AM, creator of the universe, infinite and immortal. Why do we doubt Him? Could God have carried out His plan through Hagar's son Ishmael? Of course, but that wasn't the plan. Why is this important? The reason is that Hagar was an Egyptian woman and God's people were meant to be pure Hebrew. It is important for us to understand that this isn't a race issue – we know this because in the genealogy of Christ, there are non-Jews in the family line. We also know this because God loves all people – the real issue is that people of other nations would introduce their false gods and worship into the Jewish homes and it caused rebellion against God.

Not long after this, Sarah overheard men talking to Abraham (it is believed these men were angels) telling Abraham that she would have a son by that time next year. When she heard this, she laughed within herself because she was around 90 years old! Would you laugh too? But God is faithful, and He is a God of miracles! Turn to [Genesis 21:1-5](#), what took place the following year?

How old was Abraham?

Abraham and Sarah waited around 25 years for the son of promise. How difficult do you think that was? How does it encourage you to know that even though they struggled with doubt, fear, and taking matters into their own hands, God kept His promise to them?

Although this was a tremendous blessing to Abraham and Sarah, God keeps His promises to glorify Himself – He wouldn't be God if He went back on His word. To this day, we see the evidence of God's promise in the nation of Israel in the fact that they exist. It is also taught that the Muslim people are the descendants of Ishmael - Abraham was truly the father of many nations!

Engage: God spoke directly to Abraham and told Him great and wonderful things. Yet both Abraham and Sarah seemed to struggle with patience and timing. Do you think you would have an easier time following God faithfully and trusting in Him if He spoke directly to you? We might think that, but one thing the Bible isn't ashamed to show us is how our flesh can fail us even when we are faithful to God. Learning to trust God in all things is the test of faith – following Him when we can't see what's ahead, believing when we know the outcome may not be what we want. How are you doing in this area? Do you believe that even if the outcome is not what you hoped for that it is what's best for you? Why/why not?

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

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: [Isaiah 30:21](#), [John 14:26](#), [Proverbs 1:7](#)

Think: The one thing that sets us apart from the people of the Old Testament, is that we don't often, if ever, have God speak audibly to us the way He did with David, Nathan, and Abraham. He doesn't often tell us His plans the same way, in fact, many people struggle because they say they don't "hear" from God, so what is happening Did God stop talking to us?

When it comes to our relationship with God, how we grow spiritually, how we discern which direction to go in our life, God is still communicating to us! However, if we are waiting for an audible voice, we may be waiting a while. What does God give us to communicate with Him (See [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) and [Hebrews 4:12](#))?

As you read the verses from Isaiah 30 and John 14, what does God do for us so we can hear Him?

For Christians, we have God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us – guiding, teaching, and reminding us of what we've learned. We must faithfully and consistently read the Bible to learn what God's "voice" sounds like. Then when we hear that little voice – our conscience – that sense, or you somehow just know what to do, we can know it is from God.

Engage: When we have a good idea, we must remember that because it seems like the right thing to do, doesn't always mean it is – you know the saying, "just because we can, doesn't mean we should", and we should have the wisdom to know the difference. What does Proverbs 1:7 tell us about where wisdom comes from?

The word fear in this sense is “respect” or “awe” as much as it can also mean terror. All three uses of the word should be in play when we come to God with our plans. Wisdom is developed by practice and the desire to please the Lord. You may also discover that as you mature in your faith, the things you thought you wanted to do are no longer a priority – now you have new desires. Have you experienced this? What was the situation?

How did it change as you matured in Christ? Turn to [Psalm 37:4](#), what does this verse say about our desires?

Does this mean He will give us what we want? What does it mean?

If you have experienced a radical change in desires, goals, plans, or future dreams – and it is more in line with God’s ways, you understand what this verse is saying. A heart that is delighted in the Lord is ready to receive His desires for you and your life.

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

Week 5

Build and Protect

But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

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: [Nehemiah 4:7-14](#)

Think: Today's passage requires some backstory...

Nehemiah was a governor for the Persian king Artaxerxes and the account in the book that bears his name starts around 446BC. After the nation of Israel had been taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC, the Jewish people had finally returned to Jerusalem, but it was in shambles. During the time of Ezra, one of Nehemiah's contemporaries, the temple had been rebuilt but the walls of the city had not. In ancient times, cities had very large walls that surrounded them for the protection of the people. Jerusalem, without a wall would remain vulnerable to her enemies – of which there were (and are) many. Although Nehemiah was living as governor, around 800 miles away, his heart was to know how God's people and city were doing, and what he found out was devastating. The Jews returned to Jerusalem, but they were suffering, starving, and barely surviving – at this news Nehemiah mourned for several days. Nehemiah's role was cupbearer to the king – a very important position and it gave him access to the king, so when Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah was sad, he asked what was wrong and Nehemiah told him about the state of his people. Turn to [Nehemiah 2:4-5](#), when the king asked what Nehemiah's request was, what was the first thing he did?

What was the second thing he said?

What makes this interaction important is it demonstrates the unique relationship built on trust between the two men. It also shows the kind of man Nehemiah was and he shows us something we can practice in our own life. There are those times when we are faced with the need to make a decision very quickly that we toss a “popcorn” prayer to God before we speak. These are those prayers or requests we make in the moment... they are also called “open eye” prayers as they often happen in the middle of a conversation! Have you experienced this? How did it help you?

We often rely on our own thoughts and experiences to make our choices, but God is always pleased when we try to go to Him first, and He will direct us. In Nehemiah’s case, God gave him favor by having the king agree to his request to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall.

However, not everyone was happy about this. There were men who bullied them, mocked them, tried to make them stop by saying they were weak and will never finish. Their plan worked for a while – it caused fear for the Jews. That brings us to today’s reading. In verses 7-9, what did Sanballat and the others try to do?

What did the Jews do together?

What did they ask for?

In the remaining verses, how did Nehemiah structure the people to protect the wall?

Engage: Protecting ourselves and our family from danger is usually a very high priority. Do you have a Ring camera or other type of home protection system? Most people do and we all know why... there are many dangers out there. However, dangers from thieves and any other person who means harm aren’t the only things we need protection from. For the Jewish people, rebuilding the wall was a huge step toward rebuilding their relationship with God, but the wall around their heart had to be removed first. The reason they were in this position to begin with is because they rebelled and disobeyed God and the consequence was they were taken into exile for a period of time.

Whether you are new to Christianity or have been a Christian for some time, we all have some work to do to rebuild and restore our relationship with God and most likely other people. Who is/are the people you need to rebuild with?

Do you have a plan? What we learn from the Bible, and Nehemiah, is God must be the first part of the plan – go to Him in prayer for guidance, wisdom, and words. Ask Him to reveal anything in your relationship with Him and others that need to be dealt with. Then, as we will learn, Christian living is a two-part life – building AND protecting from outside forces trying to stop or defeat you. For more on Nehemiah, go to: www.gotquestions.org/when-was-Nehemiah-written.html, www.gotquestions.org/life-Nehemiah.html

Memorize: But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

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: [Nehemiah 4:15-23](#), [6:15-16](#)

Think: The job ahead of the Jewish people wasn't an easy one – everything seemed against them except for one very important fact... Who was FOR them? Turn to [Mark 10:27](#) and [Romans 8:31](#), what do these verses teach about God?

How does this encourage you?

For Nehemiah, rebuilding the wall was a matter of knowing who the Builder was. We often feel so defeated before we even start something new in our life... why is that?

We tend to get overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task, the time it might take, the energy and effort it will require, and we surmise we can't do it, but Jesus tells us ALL things are possible with God.

Read the verses from chapter 4 and note how Nehemiah structured the work and protection for the wall and the people. How did they help each other?

We will go over this in more detail in a couple days, but this is a beautiful example of how the church should function! It takes every, single person in the church to do their part to build and protect God's church. When we do this, nothing can damage God's church.

In the verses from chapter 6, how long did it take to build this wall?

How did Israel's enemies respond?

What did they learn about God?

Engage: This wall was no garden wall like we see around the homes of Ridgecrest. This wall covered a perimeter of 1.5-2.5 miles or approximately 250 acres and was 6.5 feet thick! To build a wall that big in under 2 months seems impossible to do – even with a large crew (by the way, portions of this wall still exist today – check out the link below). BUT GOD! When we ask God to lead our plans, miracles can happen. What things seem impossible in your life right now?

Have you asked God to lead you through it? Are there others that need to be involved in the process? How does Nehemiah's faith and ability to lead and organize encourage you?

How does this passage demonstrate the importance of both building and protecting at the same time? <https://bibleiscoverytv.com/history/2020/nehemiahs-wall/>

Memorize: But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

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

Think: When it comes to being able to build and protect anything, the first thing that needs to happen is planning, creating, and accomplishing steps that lead to the goal. However, as we move forward in our plans, we will often find the need to adjust as we go. In our personal life as a Christian, this plan starts with us – we must first focus on our relationship with God before anything else can happen. So how do we build our relationship with God while also protecting ourselves from enemies?

What kind of enemies are out there?

One of the reasons many people who start out in faith, lose hope and walk away is because they were never prepared to face the trials of life biblically and/or their expectations of God were incorrect or misplaced. Jesus knew this so as He is teaching, He tells them a parable to help them and us and understand the importance of laying a firm foundation. In today's reading, how does He describe the importance of the foundation of our faith?

What does it take to have a firm foundation?

Here, Jesus is drawing the line between hearing and doing – many people “hear” His words but fail to do them – or put them into practice. The question is... what is He telling us to do? Take a minute to briefly scan through the preceding verses ([20-45](#)) – list the subjects He is teaching.

Now turn to [Matthew 22:36-40](#), what is the lesson here?

These are just a couple of examples of Jesus teaching us what our foundation is made of, but the key in this is WE must do the work of applying it in each situation and practicing. Later, after Jesus had been crucified and resurrected, we find His half brother, James, reminding us how important this is. Read [James 1:22-25](#), what is the difference between the hearer and doer in this passage?

As we build our faith, we must also protect ourselves from the attacks of the enemy – In [1 Peter 5:8-10](#) and [James 1:12-15](#) where do attacks and temptations come from?

As you see, not only does Satan come after us, we do a fine job on our own if we don't make a plan to resist temptation. In [Hebrews 12:12-13](#), how can we do this?

Strengthening and bolstering our faith is our responsibility and comes with memorizing scripture, prayer, study, and inviting others to help if needed. Like Nehemiah, we must hold a tool in one hand to build and a sword in the other to protect and both come from scripture.

Engage: Take a minute to evaluate how you are doing in building and protecting your relationship with God. Are there areas where you are struggling? If so, what is missing – the building or the protecting or both? If you are already working on practicing this, but still suffering, this may be a moment of discipline and instruction for you. What does [Hebrews 12:11](#) say about discipline?

Discipline can be a time of correcting certain behaviors, but it can also simply be instruction, but as we know this is always easy. Take a minute to thank God for His loving discipline and word to teach and guide.

Memorize: But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”
Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

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: [Proverbs 5:15-19](#), [1 Corinthians 7:3-5](#), [Ephesians 5:21-31](#), [1 Peter 3:1-7](#)

Think: Never let it be said that the Bible is boring! As you will discover in today's verses, God has something to say even about the most intimate areas of our life.

One of the most important areas we need to focus on building and protecting as Christians is the marriage relationship. We must be reminded that the foundation of our marriage is built on each person's individual relationship with God. We would be foolish to think our marriage could withstand the storms of life if we are not on a firm foundation personally. In addition to this, we must also recognize that Satan's goal is to destroy the marriage relationship... why? It is something beautiful, created by God for our good, and it is a demonstration of the intimacy of the relationship between us and Jesus and Jesus and the church ([Ephesians 5:31-32](#)). Anything God has created, Satan has and continues to attack and destroy. In our world today, what are some things that can damage the marriage relationship?

Husbands and wives must put real effort into protecting their marriage – not only from outside forces but from the inside as well – temptations, pride, selfishness, and so on. The bible has relatively few verses about marriage compared to other subjects, but as we mentioned already the health of our marriage is entirely dependent on our ability to practice godliness in our marriage. However, for today we are going to look at some passages that do speak directly to marriage and learn how we can build a Christlike marriage and protect it at all times.

Let's begin with Ephesians 5:21-31 and 1 Peter 3:1-7; these verses focus on how we should treat one another – what do they teach about how husbands are to treat their wives?

Why is this important?

How are wives to live?

Why is this important?

When first reading this it may seem odd – even offensive, because in our society we have been taught for many years that women should assert themselves, demand equal treatment, be completely independent of men. There is an incorrect understanding that to be a biblical wife we must give up our rights, bow to our husbands, and lose our individuality. That couldn't be further from the truth of what God's plans are! If wives try to live this way in a marriage, the battle for leadership and control can destroy the relationship – even if she isn't aware she's doing this. If husbands demand this, the damage is equally as great. What these passages are teaching is a relationship of **mutual** submission and humble care and love. Biblical submission as a wife is a great comfort as the husband leads the home in a Christlike manner. According to Ephesians 5:25, what did Christ do for the church?

This means the husband is to **sacrificially** love and protect his wife! In 1 Peter 3:7, husbands are told to treat their wives as the weaker vessel – this means physically, not intellectually or spiritually. He is to care for her as a precious treasure that needs to be cared for and protected, and there is a reason – what is hindered if he chooses not to do this?

If a husband is harsh, unkind, demanding, or abusive to a wife, he shouldn't think God will listen to his prayers. The Bible teaches that all sin that we refuse to repent from will hinder our prayers ([Psalm 66:18](#), [Isiah 59:1-2](#)). Wives have responsibility too! A contentious and argumentative wife can cause damage to the marriage as well, turn to [Proverbs 21:9](#) and [Proverbs 27:15](#), what do these verses teach?

Both have an enormous responsibility in the marriage relationship to practice godliness and encourage the other to do the same – and if one spouse is not a believer, that humble and loving attitude of the believing spouse can win them over to Christ!

Another aspect of marriage we must protect is the physical relationship. What do the verses from Proverbs 5 and 1 Corinthians 7 teach about this?

There is so much in the world that is meant to tempt men and women into sexual sin, whether addiction to pornography, unfaithfulness, or even controlling one another using sex as the hostage. God creates sexuality to be pure, beautiful, and enjoyable – and this happens when it is cared for the way God intended. A proper biblical understanding of this subject can bring healing to many who have experienced painful past relationships, abuse, or bad teaching – in fact the Bible has quite a bit to say about it. Since this is a bigger subject than we have time for, check out this link www.gotquestions.org/sex-in-the-Bible.html.

Engage: So many people come into marriage with certain ideas and expectations... what are/were some of yours?

Have you found that these expectations are realistic? What did you learn about marriage that surprised you?

It is important for us to know that the Bible offers a great deal of instruction that is meant to grow us in our marriage, and aside from parenting, it is the marriage relationship that will stretch us and grow us in every area. There are many things that will impact husbands and wives negatively – stress, work, fatigue, health issues, sin, money, personality differences, etc. What do you struggle with the most?

Following the Bible's instructions, how can you start intentionally building godly practices in your marriage?

What can you start doing?

What do you need to stop doing?

Is there an area of weakness that needs protection?

How can you protect your marriage from sexual sin?

How can you help and encourage one another to be your best?

If you are not yet married, this is a great opportunity for you to undo any misconceptions and learn God's plans for a healthy and wonderful marriage.

Memorize: But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”
Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

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: [Deuteronomy 6:1-9](#)

Think: In America, church attendance has been part of our heritage for many generations. Our nation was built on Christian principles, but over the years we have seen a steady decline of faith as well as church attendance. In the last 60 years or more, we have gone from families regularly attending Sunday services (even if it was more habit than real faith), to children opting out to “find

their own faith”, to families being too busy, to Christmas and Easter only, to a complete detachment from any church experience at all. The reasons are many and varied, but some of the most common are that people have had bad experiences in churches, and when kids grow up and go out on their own they realize they don’t know what they believe because they were only going to church because “it’s just what the family did”.

Back in 2006, the book “The Last Christian Generation” by Josh McDowell predicted this would happen. At the time, it seemed overly dramatic, but the results are in and it appears the kids of that decade (or maybe earlier) were, in fact the last Christian generation, so what do we do?

How do parents swing the pendulum the other way for their family?

How do we turn the generational tide back to church – more than that, REAL faith?

The good news is that the data suggests the younger generation is looking for something – hope – and are more willing to explore Christianity. The caution is that they define themselves as “spiritual” which can mean anything, so we need to put them on the right and REAL track to Christ.

The real problem is the difference between attending church versus having a relationship with the living God. What is the difference?

It was once explained this way, *you can stand in a garage all day, but it doesn’t make you a car*. Silly as that may sound it makes the point perfectly... going to church doesn’t make us Christian, but church is where we can learn what it means to be Christian. The reason for the decline we have seen over the years is lack of salvation, real abiding faith in Christ and following Him in every area of life. When it comes to building faith in our family, our children, and protecting them from evil influences, it must start there.

God gave parents a clear command in the Old Testament, in today’s reading in Deuteronomy, what is the role of parents?

Who is to follow God's commands first?

How often are parents to take the opportunity to teach and remind their children?

God instructs parents to be the main spiritual teachers in their children's lives. The church is here for support, encouragement, and equipping parents to lead their children, but it is not the church's job to make children into Christians. This is often where things break down for families and the church is seen as the failure.

However, many parents feel overwhelmed at the thought of teaching their kids about God and the Bible. Why do you think this is?

It can feel daunting when we feel like we don't have the answers, but that's ok! For most families this can be an opportunity to learn together. It is okay to tell our kids, "I don't know" when they ask a question, but we can follow it up with, "let's look together". This shows kids we are genuine and are willing to learn along with them.

How do we protect our kids from the influences in the world? Read [Psalm 119:9-11](#), what do these verses say will guard them?

What does it mean to "store up God's word"?

The only way we can build and protect our children is by reading the Bible and finding ways to apply it to real daily life. Help them learn how to take God's word and practice it at school and with their friends and teach them how to avoid and/or resist temptation (See [1 Corinthians 15:33](#), [James 1:13-15](#), and [1 Timothy 4:12](#)). As you do this together, they will remember the lessons from the Bible (stored in their heart) which will guide them through life.

Engage: If you are parenting, or interact with children on a regular basis, what are some of the main issues you and they face today?

There are probably quite a few – bad influences, social media, video games, etc. many of which influence their attitude and behavior. Biblical parenting starts with parents... how are you modeling what you want in your children?

How are you handling social media, bad influences, etc.?

As a church, we recognize this is a much bigger subject than we have time for here, so we are here to help if needed - you can call the office for an appointment. But for now, to get you started, pick ONE area you would like to work on with your kids. Find a Bible verse that correlates to it, memorize it together, and talk about how you all can practice it throughout the week. An easy example is the need for obedience doing chores. What does the Bible say about this?

Turn to [Ephesians 6:1](#), what does this verse instruct children to do?

Don't miss where it says, "**in the Lord**" – this verse can be used incorrectly by parents to demand obedience because "the Bible said so" but fail to see that what it is teaching is that children's obedience to parents is a reflection of their heart for God. It is the motive that matters! For parents, this should also shift their perspective that what we are teaching is what loving God and others looks like. For parents, [Ephesians 6:4](#) is an important lesson – what is it?

Parenting out of anger, inconsistent discipline, and expectations all are ways parents "provoke" their children. This again brings us back to motive... learning and teaching that making the bed, picking up clothes off the floor, or doing dishes is a matter of love – we do this because we love God, we appreciate what He's given us and we want to be good stewards of His gifts.

www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/decline-of-christianity-in-the-us-has-slowed-may-have-leveled-off/, www.christianitytoday.com/2025/09/study-gen-z-leads-church-attendance-average/,

Memorize: But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”
Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

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: [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#), [1 Peter 2:1-5](#), [2 Peter 2:1-2](#)

Think: The final area we will cover this week is building and protecting the church. What is your role in this?

If you're not sure, that's ok – we will take a look at what scripture tells us.

When we began this week, we started in Nehemiah reading about his work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. He structured the people in such a way that they all shared in the work, and they all carried a weapon to protect their work from enemies. This is a great picture of what we should all do in the church! It is the responsibility and privilege of every believer in the church to help build, strengthen, and protect Christ's church, but how do we do this?

First, we must recognize the true interdependence of the church family... in 1 Corinthians 12, how does the apostle Paul describe the church?

How does this demonstrate how we should work together?

How are we to care for one another?

Second, we must recognize that our individual relationship with God and our growth in Christ is a vital part of the overall strength and structure of the church. In 1 Peter 2, how does he explain this?

Each believer is a stone in the structure of Christ's church! Imagine a block wall with many missing blocks – how stable do you think it will be? The church is often limited only by the fact that not all people who are believers see this truth. Although there will be seasons where we are more or less actively serving, remaining attached as part of the church for the purpose of strength is necessary. This may be demonstrated in encouraging others and praying for them when they need it. Our strength also encourages those who are exploring Christianity as they move toward Christ.

Finally, we must also recognize our responsibility in protecting the church from those who would try to destroy the church. According to the verses in 2 Peter 2, who are these people and what do they practice?

The question for each of us is how will we know these people? Turn to [Titus 3:9-11](#), what are some of the actions or characteristics of these people?

How is this to be dealt with?

This is one of the more challenging areas because we worry about being called judgmental. However, tolerating anyone or anything in the church that is meant to divide – whether by gossip, arguing over non-salvation issues, refusing to forgive others, etc. should not happen. Another challenge is our ability to recognize false teachings. The only way we'll know if something is unbiblical is to know the Bible or at least be willing to check what we're being told against the Bible.

We should never assume everyone who says they're a Christian is a Christian, we should never assume that because someone has the role of pastor, teacher, leader, or elder they are perfect, and we should always make sure we are checking ourselves against God's word.

Engage: If being part of building and protecting the church is a new concept for you, how does today's lesson impact your understanding of this?

The church will be much stronger if we all consistently worked on each of these areas. Take some time to reflect on each part of caring for the church and list any ways you can build and protect as part of the body of Christ, in your personal relationship with Jesus and being more aware of false teachers and divisive people. Finally, also reflect on this week's lesson and make a plan to work on building and protecting each area in your life.

Memorize: But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

