

# AFTER SALVATION

*A 5-Week Discipleship Journey*

Relationship • Community • Mission • Christ-Center Commitment

# WELCOME

*We exist to develop and equip every believer to reach their full potential in Christ.*

After Salvation is a 5-Week discipleship tool designed to help both new and maturing believers grow in their Christian faith. We partner with believers, churches, and Christian businesses to provide FREE discipleship training and tools.

The plan offers daily readings, five days per week, along with guided questions for reflection. Participants meet weekly with a disciple maker, mentor, or pastor for biblical guidance on their newfound faith and review daily questions. This structure equips any believer, regardless of maturity level or denomination, with a strong foundation and clear next steps in their walk with Christ.

## The Four Pillars of After Salvation



### Relationship

WEEKS 1 & 2

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.



### Community

WEEK 3

Find your place in the local church and life with other believers.



### Mission

WEEK 4

Step into your calling, share your testimony, and make disciples.



### Christ-Centered Commitment

WEEK 5

Build the lifelong commitment that produces spiritual maturity.

## How The Four Pillars Function Together In The Maturing Believer

Over the next few weeks, we will go over each of these functions and help you understand how they work together in greater detail. Simply put, we aim to have a strong Relationship with God, belong to a Community (the local church), live on Mission, and maintain a Christ-Centered Commitment that holds everything together.



### Important Reminders

#### Daily Questions

We highly encourage you to complete the daily questions. You can access each day's questions at the bottom of the daily reading, or you can find them in the top menu by clicking Daily Questions.

#### Don't Walk Alone

We encourage you to meet with someone from your church or a Christian friend, mentor, or pastor who is further along in their spiritual journey. Choose someone who can have honest conversations and has likely wrestled with similar questions. We grow faster and stronger when we walk with others. If you have any questions, please email us at [roger@aftersalvation.com](mailto:roger@aftersalvation.com)

*"No shortcuts exist to becoming spiritually mature. Growth takes effort."*

— R.L.J.

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## Watch the welcome video

**START HERE**

Scan the QR code or visit [www.aftersalvation.com/start-here](http://www.aftersalvation.com/start-here)



# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

FOUNDATIONS · PART 1 OF 2

Learn how to read, interpret, and engage with scripture.

## How To Read A Scripture Reference

Let's use *John 3:1-3;6* as an example:

John (Book) — 3 (Chapter) — 1-3 (Verses 1 through 3) — ;6 (verse 6)

Figure: 2

John 3 ▾ New International Version ▾

**Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**

**3** Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. **2** He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

**3** Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. <sup>[a]</sup>"

**4** "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

**5** Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit<sup>[b]</sup> gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You<sup>[c]</sup> must be born again.' **8** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."<sup>[d]</sup>

**Chapter**

**Verse**

**Footnotes**

## Who Wrote The Bible?

The simplest way to explain this subject is that the Bible was dually authored. This means that it was authored by God and man. More specifically, it was written by humans but inspired and directed by God.

## How Much Authority Should I Give The Bible In My Life?

As Christians, we believe the word of God is inspired by God Himself, which gives ultimate authority and direction to the believer in his or her pursuit of a Christ-centered life. We should hold the Bible with the highest regard in our lives and learn to understand and apply it in our lives, giving us direction in our understanding of God's will for our lives (*2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13*).

## Types Of Study Methods

There are many suggestions on how to read your Bible, but here are some of the most helpful as you begin. Please understand there are many Bible study methods; these are just a few of many ways.

### S.O.A.P.

1. Scripture - Read & write out the verse or passage you're studying.
2. Observation -What does the text say? Note the facts, context, and what stands out without interpretation yet.
3. Application - What does this mean for your life? How does it apply to where you are right now?
4. Prayer - Respond to God based on what you read and what He showed you.

### OICA+(M) Methodology Of Bible Study

1. Observation - What is being said?
2. Interpretation - What does this mean?
3. Correlation - How does this connect to the Bible overall?
4. Application - How do I apply this to my life?
5. Meditation - Reflection on what you read.

## Helpful Tips

### 1) Pray

Before you read, allow your mind and spirit to get focused on what you are about to read, and ask for help from God, who is a good God, who wants you to understand His word deeper to help form and shape you more into His likeness.

### 2) Historical Context

It's important to take into consideration that the Bible was not written today; it was written several thousand years ago, and it's important to remember which audience the text was speaking to. Also, it's key to understand the historical references or people that the scripture is speaking about. Even though some verses might be talking about historical events, we can see God in the midst of how He has worked in the past and be able to pull lessons, wisdom, and greater understanding from scripture.

### 3) Metaphoric And/Or Exaggerated Language

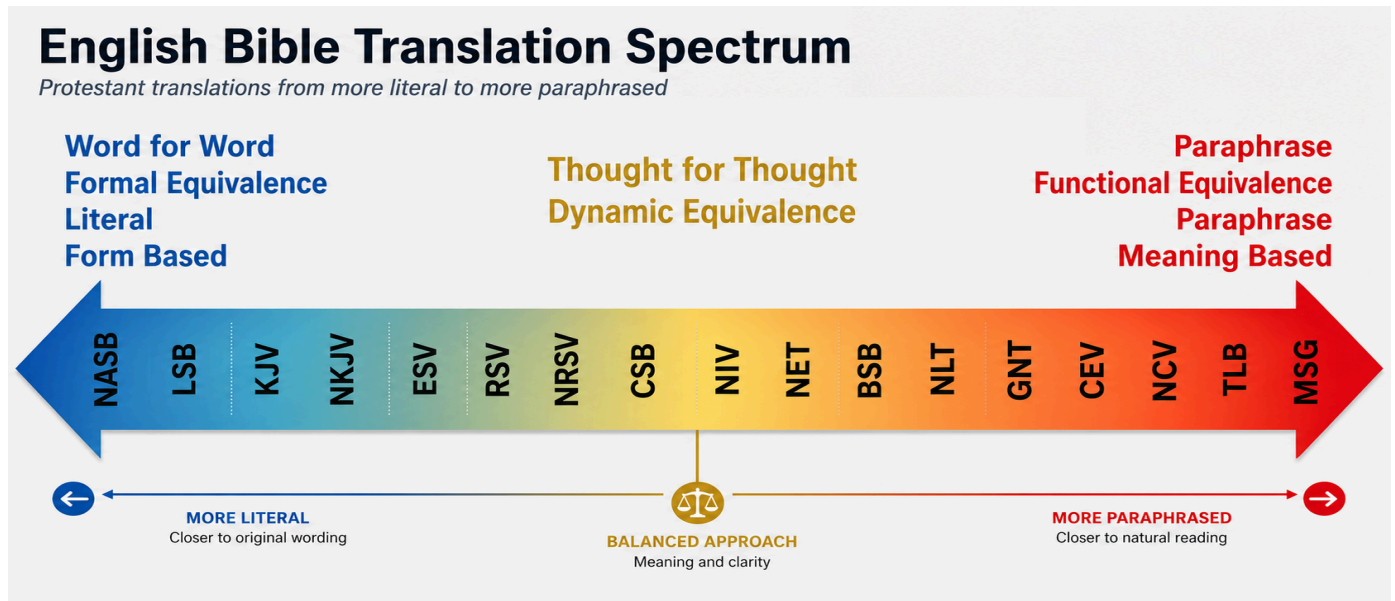
For example, [Matthew 5:29](#) says, "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." This verse is not literal in the sense of plucking your eye out, but a command to remove things in your life that cause you to stumble in your faith.

## 4) Translation Type

What Bible should I choose? There are many versions of the Bible to choose from, especially in the English language. If you walk into a Christian bookstore, you might be a little overwhelmed.

There is also a consensus on how translations are categorized, which includes 3 types.

*\*\*\*Please note this visual is just to help you to understand how translations are roughly categorized.\*\*\**



**Word-for-Word Translations (Formal)** - Formal translations are literal translations that have been translated word-for-word from the original texts.

**Thought-for-Thought Translations (Dynamic)** - Dynamic translations are translated phrase by phrase and use contemporary language for ease of reading.

**Paraphrase Translations** - Paraphrase translations use modern language and try to capture the thought or meaning behind the original text.

## Helpful Tips On Picking A Translation

Take some time to start looking into which Bible would be best for you specifically.

1) Take one verse, for example, like [Matthew 11:28](#), and read it in several different translations. Try using [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) to explore different translations of the Bible and see what best suits your specific preference.

2) Not only are there many versions/translations, but there are different themes. For example, some themes you might see are men's, women's, devotional, sports, theological, archeological, etc. It is encouraged to get some type of "study bible" (regardless of the theme) because it will help you to understand deeper theological insights in your reading.



# THE BIBLE STORY LINE

FOUNDATIONS · PART 2 OF 2

Trace God's redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation.

## Storyline

The Bible is God-inspired. This means men wrote it, but the Holy Spirit guided their direction on what to write. There are 66 books in the Bible. It is divided into 2 significant sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, God creates the world and all that is within it. Adam and Eve were living in perfect union with God, but through the influence of the devil (serpent) and free will, they chose to disobey God's direct command. Through this act, sin enters the world and creates separation between God and man. Throughout, we see the struggle and brokenness of man, but within it, we see a merciful God who, in His love, sets forth a plan that starts with a promise to Abraham to restore all mankind through his descendants, the Israelites. The Old Testament is the prediction and preparation for the coming savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

The New Testament contains Jesus' miraculous birth, life, ministry, death, & resurrection. After the ascension of Jesus (Jesus returns to heaven), the promise of the Holy Spirit came upon those who believed in Jesus (both Jew & Gentile, meaning not Jewish). The Holy Spirit is the seal (or assurance) of salvation and the power through which Jesus's followers live out their lives for God. The New Testament is also a guide for how the church and believers are to live. It is preparation for Jesus's second coming, in which a new Heaven and new Earth will be established (this is yet to come).

## Why Are There Two Testaments, And What Are The Differences?

The word testament means something that serves as a sign or evidence of a specified fact, event, or quality. Throughout scripture, there are pivotal verses that shape major points and themes of scripture. Two verses help identify the differences between the Old and New Testaments. As we look at the two differences, please note that what separates the Old and New Testaments is Jesus. The Old Testament happened before Jesus's birth; the New Testament represents Jesus's birth, ministry, death, and ascension. It also describes the earlier church and predicts the return of Christ.

**Jeremiah 31:31-33** predicts the coming of Jesus, known as the "Messiah," meaning He has not arrived yet.

**Luke 22:20** points towards this idea of a new covenant that Jesus declares.

This helps us see a clear distinction between the "Old" and "New" Testaments within the context of scripture itself.

**Old Testament - Total Book Count:** 39 Books    **Language:** Hebrew & Aramaic

**New Testament - Total Book Count:** 27 Books    **Language:** Greek

## How Was The Bible Formed, And Can I Trust It?

### Can I trust it? Absolutely!

One of the biggest questions I get from any new believer is whether they can trust the Bible. I like to help them understand how it was formed to shed light on how we can trust it. First, you will see a comparison chart showing the number of manuscript copies of ancient works compared to the New Testament. Many ask, "How can we be sure the Bible wasn't changed over the years?" This chart shows that there are 5,795 New Testament manuscripts, giving us strong evidence for why we can trust its preservation. They use these manuscripts to validate what we have today. After you look at the chart, we go through a very brief snapshot of the Old and New Testament and some additional helpful resources.

AUTHOR	WORK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST MSS	TIME GAP	OLD #	NEW
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 BC	c. 400 BC	400	643	1,757
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 BC	10th C	1,350	8	109
Sophocles	<i>Plays</i>	496-406 BC	3rd C BC	100-200	100	193
Plato	<i>Tetralogies</i>	400 BC	895	1,300	7	210
Caesar	<i>Galic Wars</i>	100-44 BC	9th C	950	10	251
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 BC-AD 17	Early 5th C	400	1 Partial, 19 copies	150
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	AD 100	1st half: 850, 2nd: 1050 (AD 1100)	750-950	20	2 + 31 15th C
Pliny, the Elder	<i>Natural History</i>	AD 49-79	5th C fragment: 1; Rem. 14-15th C	400 (750)	7	200
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 BC	3rd C BC (AD 900)	200 (1,350)	8	96
Demosthenes	<i>Speeches</i>	300 BC	Some fragments from 1 C. BC. (AD 1100)	1,100+ (1,400)	200	340
New Testament	-	AD 50-100	AD 130 (or less)	40	5,366	5,795

Source: [The Bibliographical Test Updated - equip.org](http://The Bibliographical Test Updated - equip.org)

## Old Testament

Christianity's historical roots come from a Jewish background and culture, so when we look at the Old Testament specifically, we will have the same books that you would find in the Hebrew Bible (known to Judaism as the Tanak), dating back thousands of years. The only difference that we will find when we compare the Christian Old Testament to Hebrew scriptures is how they categorize these books. The Old Testament books are believed to have been written over a roughly thousand-year span, dating to the mid-second to the mid-first millennium BC. The Old Testament was fully established before Jesus, and we even see Jesus reference the Old Testament during His earthly ministry.

<b>Law</b>  Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	<b>Historical</b>  Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther	<b>Wisdom</b>  Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Daniel	<b>Prophetic</b> ( <i>Major &amp; Minor</i> )  <b>Major Prophets:</b> Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel <hr/> <b>Minor Prophets:</b> Hosea through Malachi (12 Total)
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## New Testament

The New Testament was written roughly around 45-90 AD. These writings were immediately embraced by early Christians as scripture, based on their understanding that these were eyewitness accounts of those who saw Jesus and observed His ministry. Through Logos Bible Software it summarizes Peter Stuhlmacher observation like this, *“The New Testament canon—the collection of 27 books recognized as authoritative Scripture—developed gradually over centuries rather than being established at a single moment. The New Testament comprises a selective collection of early Christian writings from the first 150 years of the Christian era.”*

## *Categories of the New Testament*

### **Gospels & Acts**

Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John  
Acts

### **Pauline Letters**

Romans  
1 & 2 Corinthians  
Galatians  
Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
1 & 2 Thessalonians  
1 & 2 Timothy  
Titus  
Philemon

### **General Letters & Revelation**

Hebrews  
James  
1 & 2 Peter  
1, 2, & 3 John  
Jude  
Revelation

## **Some Helpful Sources**

- <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/old-testament>
- Peter Stuhlmacher - **Biblical Theology of the New Testament**
- Timothy Paul Jones - **How We Got the Bible**
- Robert L. Plummer - **40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible**



# DAY 1: SALVATION

DAY 1 OF 25 · WEEK 1

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.



[aftersalvation.com/week-1](https://aftersalvation.com/week-1)

As we begin Day 1, I strongly believe it is not by accident that you are reading this right now. Wherever you find yourself in this moment, some questions transcend culture, language, time, and background.

## Questions like...

- *Why am I here?*
- *Why do I feel so alone and ashamed?*
- *What is my purpose in life?*
- *Why do we die, and what happens after life?*
- *Who can I really trust?*
- *Why is there so much pain, suffering, and injustice?*

These are honest questions we all ask ourselves, but rarely can we find complete confidence in our search. Maybe you've searched for answers in relationships, careers, philosophy, self-help, or religion, and yet the questions remain. If that's where you find yourself, I want you to know you're not alone. For some of you, even reading this carries risk. Know that your courage does not go unseen by God as you wrestle to find truth.

That's why I want to introduce you to a God who describes Himself as the way, the truth, and the life. If you stay with me over the next 25 days, I want to take you on a journey where we unpack the truth about a God who loves you and desires all humanity to be reconnected to Him. As we begin, you don't have to look far to see a world filled with injustice, brokenness, and suffering. As we start, we will discover why this brokenness exists.

## **How The Curse Of Sin Entered The World & The Consequence**

God desired to create a family, and the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were placed in a perfect world with one clear boundary, not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When the serpent, whom we know as the devil or satan, tempted Eve and then Adam, their choice to disobey God's command changed everything. Genesis 3 describes the fall of man, the point where sin entered the world and became infused into human nature.

The consequences of sin were immediate and devastating. Humanity's nature became corrupted, and our relationship with God was shattered. The world fractured, now marked by suffering, shame, guilt, and death over all humanity. Not only physical death, but eternal separation from a holy God, what the Bible calls hell.

**Romans 5:12** — Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

## What Is Sin?

Sin is failing to live according to the standard of a perfect and holy God. Anything less than His perfect standard qualifies as 'sinful.' Whether it is "willful" or "unwillful," all sin requires us to repent (**Acts 17:30-31**). This also includes both internal and external behavior, including thoughts and desires, that violate God's perfect order. Because God is holy, sin is anything that falls short of His holiness. **1 John 3:4** describes sin as lawlessness, which means acting against God's revealed law and authority.

Scripture (The Holy Bible) gives us many examples of what sin looks like in life. One of the most well-known is the Ten Commandments found in (**Exodus 20:2-17**). But Jesus takes it even further in (**Matthew 5:27-28**), making clear that God looks beyond behavior to the motives of the heart. Jesus teaches that even looking at a woman with lustful intent is committing adultery in the heart. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, sin is consistently portrayed as rebellion against God's original design and order. This is why reading the Bible is important for those who want to understand what truly pleases God. Now that we have a clearer picture of sin, we can begin to understand what salvation is.

## Salvation — Our Only Hope

When sin first entered the world, its impact was felt throughout all humanity. The consequence of sin was death and separation from God. In God's perfect understanding, He desired to restore what was broken, so He sent His very own son, Jesus, to Earth. Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, came to restore the broken relationship between God and man. Jesus took on our sins on the Cross as a perfect sacrifice and paid for the "debt" through His death, so we didn't have to. Salvation isn't just clearing a debt but being adopted back into God's family and having your honor restored before Him.

When Jesus overcame death (which is called resurrection), He conquered the consequences of sin once and for all. Everything about our faith depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation is only given to those who confess and believe that Jesus is Lord and that He was raised from the dead.

When we confess our sins and repent, we acknowledge our sins and choose to abandon them. By believing in our hearts, we are instantly restored to right standing with God. The process of being made right with God is called salvation. It's important to note that this new life was given by God's grace; we did nothing to earn it, it was a gift (**Ephesians 2:8**). Our responsibility within this exchange for eternal life is that we confess, believe, and surrender ourselves to follow Jesus. Jesus gives us new purpose, identity, and eternal destiny, which changes everything about our lives. Next, we will briefly introduce what faith means and why we need it.

## Faith

Next, it's important to understand the concept of faith. Faith is defined as having complete trust or confidence in something or someone. Christian faith is a required element for anyone who has accepted Jesus as Savior. Apart from faith, it's impossible to receive and experience the saving grace of Jesus

Christ. Faith is also vital to anyone as they complete their spiritual journey on Earth. We will go deeper into this topic on Day 3, but this verse is a good starting place to help build our understanding of faith.

**Hebrews 11:6** — *And without faith, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Now that we understand faith, let's simplify our understanding of Salvation.

## Salvation Simplified Through Scripture

1) **Romans 3:23** — *Sin has caused a separation between man & God.*

2) **Romans 6:23** — *The penalty for sin is death & separation from God, but Jesus died to make us right with God & to give us eternal life.*

3) **Romans 5:8** — *Jesus loves us & showed us by dying on the Cross while we had no hope of being made right by God.*

4) **Romans 10:9-10** — *If we confess & believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead & make Him Lord of our lives, we will be saved.*

**Very Important:** Confessing and making Jesus Lord is more than a mere belief in God; it is a serious commitment. You are literally pledging allegiance to Him. This means surrendering every aspect of your life to Him as king and master, placing your full trust and confidence in Jesus. The good news is this: by putting your life in His hands, He will fulfill your life much better than you or I could ever do on our own (**John 10:10**). When we fully surrender and trust in Christ's work, we can be confident that our salvation is secure. We don't have to guess whether we are saved (**John 10:28-29**).

## How To Receive Salvation

As mentioned above, there are 3 major components that we all need to understand for salvation, which are all found in **Romans 10:9**, which says,

*If you declare with your mouth (C), Jesus is Lord (S), and believe (B) in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

**(C) Confess** — Declaring Jesus as Lord means acknowledging that we are sinful (repentance) & we need a savior. (**Mark 1:15, 1 John 1:9**)

**(B) Believe** — Faith is required to be saved. So by faith, we believe God raised Jesus from the dead. (**John 1:12, John 3:16**)

**(S) Surrender** — Surrender is making Jesus Lord, King, and Master of your life permanently.

*(Luke 9:23-24, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 2:6)*

### **Have you ever accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior?**

If you have never accepted Christ or are unsure, follow the steps below to remove any doubt. To accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, simply pray to receive salvation. There is no special formula or person required, and you can do this wherever you are. If possible, find a quiet place and pray, speaking or whispering this simple prayer. The most important thing is to make this a sincere commitment of your life to Jesus.

*"Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and I need salvation. Today I want to make you Lord of my life, and I ask you to be King over me and that you would lead me all the days of my life. I believe that you are the one true God, and I surrender my life to you right now. I believe that you died on the Cross for my sins and rose three days later. Come into my life now. In Jesus name, Amen."*

### **Baptism**

The next step after salvation is something called baptism. Let's walk through some details concerning baptism.

#### **When should a person be baptized?**

As soon as a person trusts Christ, and understands sin and what Jesus did for them. In the Scriptures, baptism is completed fairly quickly. I would encourage you to talk with your pastor or mentor this week about it, don't wait. This pattern of somewhat immediate baptism should be encouraged and followed.

#### **What does water baptism symbolize?**

- The death & resurrection of Jesus. (*Romans 6:3-5*)
- The new life in which a Christ follower now walks. (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)
- Cleansing and washing away of sin. (*Acts 22:16*)
- It's a public step of obedience. (*Acts 10:47-48*)

#### **Through Jesus's example, we see a few things.**

- Jesus taught water baptism. (*Matthew 28:19-20*)
- Jesus was water baptized. (*Matthew 3:13-15*)

## Additional Thoughts On Baptism

### 1. Baptism is the first step of obedience to salvation, not a substitution for salvation.

Salvation comes through confession and belief in what Jesus Christ did for us (*Romans 10:9-10*, *Romans 5:8*). Once genuine confession and belief in Christ occur, that leads us to the next step of obedience, which is baptism (*Matthew 28:19*).

### 2. I was baptized as an infant or as a young child. Am I already saved?

Salvation can only occur when a person is able to acknowledge and understand their sins and recognize what Jesus did on the cross (*Hebrews 11:6*; *Ephesians 2:8-9*). As you mature and grow in your understanding of right and wrong (sin), you will also come to understand who Christ is and what He has done. At that time, you must make a personal decision about sin and the person of Jesus. Therefore, being baptized as an infant or young child does not substitute for genuine salvation in your life. I think it is also important to note, for those with mental disabilities or for young children, the Lord knows their limited capacity for understanding. Because God is a just God (*Deuteronomy 32:4*), Christians believe that such individuals inherit the kingdom of God.

## Baptism Explained

Baptism is a public and symbolic gesture showing that you have accepted Jesus Christ to be your personal Lord & Savior (*1 Peter 3:21*). Going under the water represents you dying to your old life (*Romans 6:3-4*). Being raised out of the water represents a new birth (spiritual birth), and you are now raised to a new life with Christ. Not only does Jesus command us to baptize during the great commission in *Matthew 28:19-20*, but Jesus Himself was baptized as a model for us to follow.

## Have you been baptized?

If you haven't, I would encourage you to get with a pastor or spiritual mentor to discuss how.

# REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. Since we understand that sin is the reason we need salvation (**Romans 3:23**), what is sin (**1 John 3:4**)?

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2. Describe Confess, Believe, and Surrender (C.B.S. in English), and explain why each word helps us understand what happens during salvation. (**Romans 10:9-10**)

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3. After we accept the truth of Jesus Christ, should we get baptized? Why or why not? (**Acts 22:16, Acts 10:47-48, Matthew 28:19-20**)

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4. If someone were interested in becoming a Christian, how would you guide them to make Jesus Lord of their life? (**Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9-10**)

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# DAY 2: DAILY LIVING

DAY 2 OF 25 · WEEK 1

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

Welcome to **Day 2!**

As we begin, I encourage you to get familiar with the image below, which **shows the 4 functions of our faith in Christ working together to mature the believer**. Understanding this can be useful as you begin your new journey in Christ.



I pray that by the time you complete these next few weeks, these four functions will be consistent in your lives: having a strong **Relationship** with God, belonging to a **Community** (the local church), living on **Mission**, and maintaining a **Christ-Centered Commitment** that holds everything together.

## **Developing A Personal Relationship With God**

Any relationship in the world takes work. There is no difference in our relationship with God: we must put forth the effort. There are no shortcuts to spiritual growth; it takes effort. In ([James 4:7-8](#)) it says, we must submit ourselves to God, resist the devil, and draw near to Him, and through that God will draw near. Also, ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)) says, "You will seek and find God when you seek him with all your heart". There is something about the idea of fully committing your entire being (mind, will, emotions) to God, not just the convenient parts of your life, but the entirety of your life. There is no substitute for time; we must spend time with God because it is the only way to develop a real relationship with God. ([Galatians 2:20](#))

## **We do this through the following:**

- Reading the Bible with intentionality and purpose. *Hebrews 4:12, Hosea 4:6*
- Confessing sin to God. *1 John 1:9*
- Prayer (we will go more into it later this week).
- Listening to worship music. *Ephesians 5:19-20*
- Reflecting and having gratitude. *Colossians 4:2*
- Find a church and being committed to those gathering together. *Acts 2:42-47*
- Having trusted Christian friends who hold you accountable while confessing sins, struggles, and wins with one another. *Proverbs 27:17; James 5:16*
- Listening and/or watching sermons/podcasts/audible/books, etc. *1 Thessalonians 5:11*
- Being obedient to His way and putting forth the effort to live out what the Holy Spirit is teaching you. (Example) Giving up pornography in your life because it is very destructive in so many ways for the Christian. *1 John 2:16-17*

## **Understanding Temptation, Sin, & Our Responsibility**

Due to the fall of man and our inherited sinful nature, temptation will be a part of life until we die, but sin is optional for the believer (*1 Corinthians 10:13*). Through Christ, we now have victory over sin. It does not have to dominate our daily lives and enslave us any longer. We have the power to overcome through the Holy Spirit, which provides self-control (*Galatians 5:23*). The catch is that we must continue to submit ourselves to the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so we can have the power to overcome. We also have the responsibility to resist (*James 4:7*).

The concepts of temptation and sin appear throughout the Old and New Testaments. In scripture, you will find that Jesus was tempted in *Matthew 4:1*. Side note: It's important to state that Jesus never sinned. We see great people of faith, like Paul, confessing sin in *Romans 7:15*. To clarify, you can think of temptation more like the attraction, desire, or suggestion toward sinful acts. We must not confuse temptation and sin; they are not the same. Sin occurs when the temptation becomes actively pursued in thought or action.

Temptation can come from inward desires stirred by the sinful nature (*James 1:14-15*). Temptation can also come from external spiritual forces (*Genesis 3:1*). Lastly, even our family, friends, and significant others can lead us into temptation if we are not careful (*1 Corinthians 15:33*). Jesus encourages us that we need His guidance, wisdom, and assistance to avoid temptation. In *Luke 11:4*, Jesus says, "Lead us not into temptation." Notice he doesn't say, "lead us not into sin," but specifically temptation. I point this out because even Jesus understands the strong, compelling factor that temptation has; we need to be cautious, and through Christ, we can overcome. (*1 Corinthians 10:13, Romans 6:14*).

Also, we can be wise in how we position ourselves in our daily choices. For years, I have said, "The best way to avoid temptation is not to put yourself into a situation to be tempted." One example I use is if you

struggle with alcohol and drunkenness, going to bars or parties with alcohol would not be wise; avoid these environments. Over the years, I've heard many Christians say, 'The devil made me do it.' But the truth is, as believers, we must own our choices. The reality is, he didn't make you do it; you pursued the act of sin.

## When Sin Takes Root

Additionally, we can open ourselves up to a prolonged struggle with certain sins through the choices we make (**Romans 6:12**). These choices weaken our defenses and create what we call footholds. Scripture highlights this important topic in **Ephesians 4:27**, which states, "And do not give the devil a foothold."

**Foothold:** *Giving the enemy a small opening into your spiritual life through unchecked sin.*

Although footholds can be overcome through repentance and confession, if left unaddressed they can eventually develop into strongholds. Paul also directly addresses believers in **Ephesians 4:25–32** about specific sins like anger, slander, and stealing (as a side note: these are not the only sins that can become footholds). These sins develop into patterns that eventually become footholds in believers' lives.

In **Ephesians 4**, these specific sins were destroying the church's unity and individually causing them to stumble, pushing them away from God. We must be aware that strongholds can develop when we consistently reject God's correction and counsel in our lives. Correction and counsel can come through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and His Word, or through the body of Christ (other believers).

Strongholds are also mentioned in **2 Corinthians 10:4–5**, where Paul explains that strongholds are formed in our minds when we believe lies.

**Stronghold:** *An unchecked foothold that grows into a deeply rooted lie in the mind, causing the believer to resist God's conviction and truth.*

Strongholds are not demonic possession, but rather our mind and flesh aligning with the lies, accusations, and persuasion of the enemy. When a stronghold takes root, it seeks to cause separation in our relationship with God and distract us from His will. It will consistently condemn us, causing us to believe the lie that we could never overcome or find freedom. Remember, strongholds are not easy to defeat. Tearing them down takes time and effort. We must start by addressing strongholds through confession, prayer, and repentance (**1 John 1:9; James 5:16; Proverbs 28:13**). Strongholds will remain deeply rooted within a believer's life if not. In addition, Paul calls us to use spiritual weapons (**2 Corinthians 10:4**) in this fight, which is the spiritual armor (**Ephesians 6:10–18**). This includes the Word of God (Scripture), because truth pierces lies. Lastly, we need the Holy Spirit-empowered fruit of self-control (**Galatians 5:23**), which helps us obey and overcome.

## How To Fight Temptation And Sin

### Fight With Prayer

**Matthew 26:41** — "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

**Matthew 6:9-13** — *"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"*

## **Fight With The Holy Spirit**

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

**Galatians 5:22-23** — *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law."*

## **Fight With Scripture**

**Psalms 119:11** — *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

**Matthew 4:7** — *"Jesus answered him, it is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

## **Fight With Mental & Spiritual Commitment**

**James 4:7** — *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

**Ephesians 6:11** — *"Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

## **What Is The Most Important Thing I Need To Know As I Start My Journey?**

Commitment to Scripture (the Bible), the Holy Spirit, and the Church must be consistent pieces as you build the foundation of your new life with Christ. Read the Bible with the intent to truly learn it. Don't race through it just to check a box or accomplish a goal or task. We must understand how it can be applied to our lives. I challenge you to memorize Scripture because it brings life to you by helping you combat sin, teaching you what pleases God, and reminding you of the promises of God. Lastly, learn how to hear the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life — it is so important. Be committed to the church and build Christ-centered friendships.

**\*\*\*If you haven't already, I highly suggest you check out\*\*\***

*Day 0 — Biblical Foundations (Parts 1 & 2).*

# REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. How do we have a relationship with God? (**Jeremiah 29:13, Hebrews 4:12, Colossians 4:2, Acts 2:42-47**)

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2. What is the difference between temptation and sin? How do we fight sin? (**James 1:14-15, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7-8**)

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3. What are the 4 pillars of After Salvation? (Hint: R.C.M.C.) How would you explain how they work within a maturing believer?

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4. How do footholds and strongholds affect a believer's life? Also, how do we become free from them? (**Ephesians 4:25-32, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5**)

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# DAY 3: FAITH

DAY 3 OF 25 · WEEK 1

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

## What Is Faith?

As we begin Day 3, I want to remind us of something we learned in Day 1, which is the definition of faith. Faith is "complete trust or confidence in something or someone." Faith is required for anyone who has accepted Jesus as Savior. Apart from faith, it's impossible to receive and experience the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Faith is also vital to any believer as they live each day. Let's look through some passages of scripture to develop our understanding of the concept of faith.

**Hebrews 11:6** — *"And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*

First, we know that faith is a requirement for any believer because of **Hebrews 11:6**. Second, faith is the activating agent to accept Jesus Christ. We know this because of what **Ephesians 2:8** says...

**Ephesians 2:8-9** — *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Since we cannot save ourselves, faith is the only responsibility we have in the process of salvation. Since we understand grace (the giving of something even though you don't deserve it), it presents salvation as a gift for us to accept. Just like when your family member or friend gives you a gift, the only part you play is receiving it. Likewise, through grace, Jesus hands us the eternal gift of salvation, we just have to receive that gift.

When someone receives a gift, they usually respond by using it or enjoying it for its intended purpose. This very simple action shows the gift giver that the gift you received brings you joy and/or is useful in your life, which in return feeds the giver's heart. The Christian life is very similar; now that we have received the gift of salvation, our expression towards God is one of faith. Faith brings joy to the Father because He knows you acknowledge what He has done for you. This is you becoming a part of His family, for He is trustworthy.

## What Is Genuine Faith?

When a gift matters to you, it does two things. First, it creates genuine meaning and thankfulness within your heart and mind. Second, that gift becomes a part of your life in some way. We as Christians need to examine our faith within the same standards of how the gift of the Father affects us.

- Does the gift of salvation and our new relationship genuinely matter to us?
- Do we truly feel a sense of gratitude or thankfulness? If so, has it impacted how we live our lives?
- Is this newfound faith in Jesus a nice thought, or a reality within us?

The reason I bring this up is because of a very powerful verse we find in James.

**James 2:19** — "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."

This verse points to the idea that belief by itself doesn't do much. James connects the thought that even demons believe there is a God, so what does that prove? Let's try to connect this verse back to the idea of "gifts" that we have been discussing. More than likely, you have at least received one gift in your life that you didn't like. Even though the gesture of the gift was thoughtful, you saw no value in it. I'm confident you still acknowledged that person by thanking them, but in the end, it didn't impact your life.

Using this analogy, the same goes for Christians who acknowledge God's existence, and even give God thanks, yet there is no real manifestation that the gift of salvation and new relationship ever made a genuine impact in their lives. You see, anyone can acknowledge that the gift giver existed, thank him, and they can even describe the gift, but the reality is, did you internalize it, and did the gift genuinely impact you?

I like to think of it like this: if you love someone, do you just tell them you love them? Of course not! You also show it through gifts, spending time, honoring them, and many other ways. Genuine faith is the same thing; it's not just talk or belief, it's walking out what you believe. Genuine faith produces a desire in us to have a holy fear of God, to be in a relationship with Him, to pursue His ways, and to live like Jesus.

**1 John 2:3-6** — "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."

## Faith & Action (Deeds/Works)

It's important, as we discuss this topic, that we make something very clear. Neither your actions nor your deeds save you (**Titus 3:5**). Have you ever heard someone say, "I need to fix myself before I come to God"? Below is an illustration of how some view their relationship with God.



It's not as if there's a scale, and God is measuring good and bad deeds. Some Christians actually believe that if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds at the end of their life, it grants them access to heaven. That type of thinking is incorrect. Jesus has already completed the work of salvation; it is finished (**John**

**19:30**). Eternal life is yours; it is by grace you have been saved (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), and nothing else is required from you outside your commitment to your faith in Jesus Christ. The proper way to understand this is demonstrated below.



We must properly understand God's grace. The ESV Global Study Bible states, "*Grace is "unmerited (meaning **not earned** or **not deserved**) favor, especially the free gift of salvation that God gives to believers through faith in Jesus Christ."* Understanding His grace is the connection that places the desire inside of us to 'do good works.' When we properly understand God's grace, it puts our faith into motion. Unfortunately, many new or maturing believers feel like they 'have to' do good things to earn God's love or forgiveness. This is not true. Grace changes us to desire 'to do good things', because we want to honor and worship Him with our lives out of gratitude for everything He has done.

**Galatians 2:16** — *"Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."*

**Romans 5:1-2** — *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God."*

So, within the same line of thinking, we must not abuse God's grace. Some might take this idea to mean that we are saved through faith, so we can just do whatever we want. We are still responsible for our actions (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). We don't just get a free pass to do whatever we like after salvation. I tell you this because the early church struggled with this understanding as well. The enemy and our sinful nature are tricky, and they will try to confuse us as believers. Paul even says this in Romans...

**Romans 6:1-2** — *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"*

Therefore, as we reflect on this topic, we identify that faith and action accompany one another and cannot exist apart from each other as genuine believers in Jesus Christ. So, practically, each morning when we wake up, we have two choices. Will we walk in faith, or will we walk in our own power and understanding?

### **Which will you choose each morning?**

**2 Corinthians 5:7** — *"For we live by faith, not by sight."*

# REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What is faith? How does faith play a role in our salvation? (*Hebrews 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9*)

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2. What does *James 2:19* mean, and how should this impact us as Christians?

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3. Do good works/deeds save us? Why or why not? (*Galatians 2:16, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8-9*)

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4. What is Grace? How does grace help us better understand our faith? (*Romans 5:1-2, Ephesians 2:8-9*)

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# DAY 4: ENGAGE

DAY 4 OF 25 · WEEK 1

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

Welcome to Day 4! You're doing great, keep up the good work! Today, we will be discussing the battlefield of the mind and how we should look at our lives from a Christian perspective. Life tends to challenge our mental game regardless of whether we believe in Jesus or not. Adding the redemptive process into the mix can get very difficult and complicated because you will find great opposition as you strive toward your relationship with God.

## Two Enemies

To understand the battlefield of the mind, we first have to understand who we are actually battling. We as humans are unfortunately hardwired with a sinful nature due to the fall of man. Every human has two enemies, and those are the following:

### The Sinful Nature

**Colossians 3:5** — *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

**Romans 7:20** — *Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

**1 Peter 2:11** — *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*

### The Enemy satan

**Ephesians 6:12** — *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

**John 10:10** — *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

**1 Peter 5:8** — *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

We have these two forces working against us at all times. Since we still live in this world (which is fallen), and our soul dwells in the body and mind (which has the fallen nature), we have to acknowledge these opposing forces so that we take into consideration what actions we should take to battle and win the fight. Daily victory is attainable and very possible, but we have to commit to our faith and practice the right spiritual disciplines to ensure victory. Remember, through Christ's death and resurrection, He has overcome sin and death. In the end, God wins, not the enemy. Therefore, we must consistently remind ourselves of this truth so we walk in victory rather than captivity and defeat. We are overcomers through Christ, who gives us the strength (**John 16:33**).

## Our Daily Target

So, what is the goal for the believer on a daily basis? What is our target or objective? What does it mean to have a daily victory in a practical sense? Let's go through a few verses that will help shape us to understand this concept better.

### 1. We Live Daily To Glorify God

1 **Corinthians 10:31** — *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

This is a simple verse with powerful insight for the believer. Since our lives are now in Christ, everything we do is tied to a greater purpose and meaning because we understand the unique position we now have with God. We are no longer just living for ourselves (**2 Corinthians 5:15**), but we are living to know and honor God by living a life under His Lordship. The personal benefit of following God and dying to yourself (**Luke 9:23-25**) is a life of purpose, meaning (**Romans 8:28**), and relationship (**2 Corinthians 5:17-19**) with the creator of the universe.

The enemy will try to convince you that you are giving up too much of your life for God, but that could not be further from the truth. We see in Luke 9, verse 25, it says, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self." What the enemy and your sinful nature will not disclose to you is the blessing (**Luke 11:28**), the favor (**Psalms 84:11**), and the fullness of life (**John 10:10**) that proceeds from a life of commitment to Him. This doesn't mean that everything will go perfectly in your life. There will be injustices, hard times, and struggles, but you do not face them alone. We have the Lord with us throughout it all.

### 2. We Live Daily For God's Will

1 **Peter 4:1-4** — *Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry. They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.*

We are reminded in 1 Peter that we live for God's will as believers in Jesus Christ. We will go a lot deeper on the topic of God's will in Week 5, but we must recognize that giving glory to God is us living out His will for our lives. So, how do you know God's will for your life? God's will for you is not a destination, nor do you just arrive at God's will one day. God reveals His will for your life step by step through the Holy Spirit, and it requires us to walk in obedience to His guidance. This also means we strive to abstain from anything that leads us away from the will of God.

### 3. We Live Daily To Love God and Love Others

**Matthew 22:37-40** — *Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

This third focus can be simply understood as we love God with our entire being and love others. The heart represents emotion, the mind represents our thinking, and the soul represents the spirit or the spiritual aspect of the human. If we want to gauge our daily living, this is a great measurement of how we are doing. Are we loving those around us? Are we loving God with everything we have in us? As we love both God and others, we are glorifying God (in part) and doing His will (in part) within our lives.

## How To Stay Engaged

So all that we have learned today has led us to this point. We know the enemy, we also know our goal, so how do we stay engaged on a daily basis? There is no perfect answer to this question, but I do want to highlight a few things I truly believe would be helpful through the word of God.

**Romans 12:1-2** — *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

### 1. Become A Living Sacrifice

So, I know this terminology sounds a little barbaric, but it holds so much power. As we have been discussing, this life is no longer ours, as scripture says we are now hidden with Christ...

**Colossians 3:2-3** — *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

To become a living sacrifice means that we offer our lives to God, for His glory. This is the only way we move from conceptual Christians to devoted Christians. If there is no commitment within this step on a daily basis, your spiritual journey will end very quickly and the thought of God and the power of salvation will just become a nice thought, not a reality. Staying engaged takes a tremendous amount of commitment and effort (mentally and physically), but your mind has to be fully engaged to want it — this is why you see in the diagram (at the top of the page) the "commitment arrows". There are no shortcuts to becoming spiritually mature.

### 2. Renewing Our Mind

Below are a few methods to renew our minds. This is a very similar activity to physical training. We have to "train" our minds to stay committed to God daily because we are hardwired to desire and pursue the things of this world. (Please take time to read each verse)

#### How do we renew our minds?

- Scripture — **Joshua 1:8**
- Worship — **Psalms 150:6**
- Taking Every Thought Captive — **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**
- Dependence on the Holy Spirit — **Galatians 5:25**

- Prayer — **1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**

I want to expand upon one last thought to wrap up the conversation for today. To "take every thought captive" is so crucial to you as a believer. You have the power, through Christ, to take every thought captive. Meaning every negative, sinful, lustful thought, etc. As the gatekeeper to your mind, imagine (hypothetically) that you're standing at the front gate of your mind, and the gate is closed. Only you possess the power to open that gate, so when lies, negative thoughts, anxiety, depression, and sinful thinking come to that gate, you now have the power to reject them as a believer. In addition, the Holy Spirit will help you to identify what thoughts are approved; all that you have to do is listen and obey.

## REFLECT

*Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.*

1. What are the two enemies that Christians face? Also, how do they work together against the believer? (**1 Peter 2:11, Ephesians 6:12**)

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2. What are some daily goals we should have as believers? (**1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Peter 4:1-4, Matthew 22:37-40**)

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3. What does it mean to become a living sacrifice? (**Romans 12:1-2, Colossians 3:2-3**)

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4. How do we renew our minds? (***Joshua 1:8, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Galatians 5:25***)

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# DAY 5: PRAYER

DAY 5 OF 25 · WEEK 1

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

Welcome to Day 5, today we will explore prayer and its importance. If you live in America, you probably heard the phrase "communication is key". It is no different within our relationship with God. It's imperative that we take hold of one of the most important tools that we have in building our relationship with God. Prayer can best be summarized as communication with God, and it should be a very familiar practice in your life. So let's start to understand the concept of prayer through scripture.

## How do we pray?

Prayer is simply talking to God, just like you would talk or communicate with any human on earth. The difference is that He is God, but He is our Father, and we are his sons and daughters, so we should approach Him within that mindset. I would dare to say that there is no special formula or structure to prayer. It's not as if you say a prayer a certain way, God will hear you better, but I would tell you that **James 5:16** says, "*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*" So if you are in Christ and are truly devoted to Him, I believe he hears us.

A part of Jesus's earthly ministry was to set an example for us, and He does this for us in many aspects, including prayer. I don't think there is a better example for us to learn prayer from than Jesus himself. The book of Matthew provides us with great insight into this concept.

**Matthew 6:9-13** — "*This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*"

So, what are a few things that we learn from Matthew 6?

### God As Father

**"Our Father in heaven."** It's important to acknowledge God as Father and to know He is not some far off being, distant from His creation, but a personal God who knows you by name. To recognize Him as Father also means we can trust Him and understand that His love for us is real. He desires to restore, protect, provide for, forgive, encourage, and love us well.

### Honor God

**"Hallowed be your name."** Hallow means to make or declare holy, meaning we should approach God with honor and reverence, understanding His Lordship in our lives. This is a sign of respect and honor.

## **Prioritizing God's Will**

**"Your kingdom come."** This acknowledges God's will as a priority in your life. This redirects you away from yourself and back toward His plans and purposes for your life. Imagine waking up each morning, praying the Lord's Prayer, and aligning your mind and heart to prioritize His will above your own. This is a sign of a truly surrendered life.

## **Gratitude & Thankfulness For His Provisions**

**"Give us today our daily bread."** This acknowledges that God is our provider and that everything that gives life comes from Him. Having an attitude of gratitude and thankfulness honors God and helps us place our trust in His ability rather than our own.

## **Repentance & To Walk With No Offense**

**"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."** This reminds us to acknowledge and repent of the sin in our lives. Remember, unconfessed sin separates us and creates distance in our relationship with God. The second part of this verse reminds us that people will sin against us at times. We must be prepared for it, choosing not to walk in offense but to be quick to forgive those who have sinned against us. I think it's important to note that if sexual, physical, or emotional abuse has occurred, forgiveness doesn't mean acting as if nothing happened. Forgiving someone in your heart does not mean you stay silent. You can forgive and still take the right steps to handle what happened. In some cases this will be a process to work through, and I strongly believe the Lord understands that and sees you.

## **See The Schemes Of The Enemy**

**"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."** This simply acknowledges that the enemy will come at us in various ways. It helps us understand and recognize his schemes. We need God's assistance through the Holy Spirit to combat attacks from satan and keep our sinful nature in check. Remember, it is Christ who is victorious and will help us overcome!

## **How Do We End A Prayer?**

The most common phrases to end a prayer are: "In Jesus' Name" or "Amen" (which means to agree or affirm). Again, this is just a suggestion, but we have come up with these phrases because of verses like [John 14:13-14](#) and [Ephesians 3:21](#).

## **Who do we pray to? (Father, Son, or Spirit)**

We will learn more about the Trinity in Week 2, but because God is three in one, you can address anyone of the three depending on the nature of your prayer. I truly believe it gets to God, no matter whom we address, but most commonly we hear the term, "God," "Lord," or "Father" to start a prayer and that is because of [Matthew 6:9](#).

## When do we pray?

Prayer should be the most common activity for the believer. The nice thing about it is God is with you wherever you go. You do not need to be in a church building or have a pastor with you to pray. This is both a private and sometimes public practice of the believer. So, when do we pray? Let's look at a few verses that will help shape our understanding. (Please keep in mind this is not an exhaustive list.)

### Continuously

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** — "Pray continually."

**Colossians 4:2** — "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

**Philippians 4:6** — "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

**Luke 18:1** — "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."

### Battling Temptation

**Matthew 26:41** — "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

### Difficult Times (Health/Sin/Trouble)

**James 5:13-16** — "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

### Seeking God's Guidance & Will For Your Life

**1 John 5:14** — "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

## Group Prayer

When you pray in a group, don't worry about impressing anyone around you. God is not concerned with the elegance of how you pray; He is focused on your heart's attention. **Matthew 6:7**

## Communication Is A Two Way Street

I would like to encourage you as you talk with God, take time to reflect on what God might be saying back to you. As you grow in your faith, the spirit of God communicates to us all the time; we just have to tune in to hear the voice of God. God speaks through scripture, in our thoughts, with internal impressions, and through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Additional Ideas On Prayer

- **Prayer Journaling** — This is writing down your prayers to help you focus, reflect, and see how God answers over time.
- **Prayer Walk** — You can walk and talk to God. You do not always need to be sitting down. Some people find this helpful because it removes them from distractions and interruptions.
- **Prayer Space** — Find a quiet room or area where you are free from interruptions and distractions.
- **Worship Music** — I personally do this often when I pray. I find worship music, or music without words, to help me focus during my prayer time with God.
- **Silence Your Phone** — Simply put your phone on silent or focus mode to avoid distractions.

**Isaiah 30:21** — *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. Why do we pray, and why does prayer matter? (*Matthew 6:9-13, James 5:16*)

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2. When should we pray? (*1 Thessalonians 5:17, Matthew 26:41, James 5:13-16, 1 John 5:14*)

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3. How would you teach someone else how to pray? (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

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4. What part of the Lord's prayer stands out to you the most? (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

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# DAY 6: CREATION

DAY 6 OF 25 · WEEK 2

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.



[aftersalvation.com/week-2](https://aftersalvation.com/week-2)

Welcome to day 6! Today, we will focus on understanding who God says we are and the nature of His design within us. I have heard a few churches use a very thought-provoking phrase: "Created on purpose, for a purpose," and I love that because of the amount of truth this little saying carries. I cannot express to you the importance of understanding that you were never a mistake, God knows and loves you. Since this is true, let's explore what Scripture has to say about this.

## He knows the number of hairs on your head...

**Luke 12:7** — *Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

## You were created on purpose, and God has always known about you...

**Psalms 139:13–14** — *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

## The Lord gives life to our TRUE purpose, to those who know him...

**Psalms 57:2** — *I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.*

## He cares about your worries and burdens...

**Matthew 11:28-30** — *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

## Creation Of Mankind

God created us, and we know this because of Genesis 1 & 2. It describes the creation of the world and gives us the understanding that God created the world and all things in it (**Colossians 1:16**). In addition, we can recognize that He has made us in His own image (**Genesis 1:27**). You and I were made to bring glory to God through perfect union and relationship with Him. The whole reality before sin entered the world is that we would experience the full expression of God in perfect union. So what does it mean to be created in the image of God and be human?

## Created In His Image

There is an interesting phrase that encompasses who we are as humans, derived from the Latin phrase "Imago Dei," which means "image of God." This concept sheds light on us as humans; we are "God's image bearers." Since we are made in his image, God has clearly defined who we are as his children, and although we are not equal to God, He has made us with similar capacities and abilities that He possesses and wants us to have.

## What Makes Us Human?

### Physical Body

The Bible teaches that humans have a physical body formed from the dust of the ground. The body represents physical existence and connects humans to other living creatures and the material world. **Genesis 2:7** states, "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

### Spirit

God breathed the breath of life into the physical body, giving humans a spirit or life force. The spirit separates humans from other life forms and enables fellowship with God. **Ecclesiastes 12:7** says, "the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

### Soul

The soul represents the innermost part of a person, encompassing emotions, intellect, personality, and will. Think of the soul as the decision-making center. **Matthew 22:37** describes aspects of the soul. "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart (will/emotions) and with all your soul (will/emotions) and with all your mind (intellect).'"

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** — *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In summary, according to the Bible, humans are composed of a physical body formed from the dust, infused with the spirit from God, possessing a soul representing their inner being, made in the image of God, and having the capacity for a spiritual connection with God.

## Stewardship

One of those characteristics he has given us is authority or dominion over the earth (**Genesis 1:26**; **Psalms 8:6**). You and I have been entrusted with great power and privilege on this earth to rule it. Unfortunately, because of our sinful nature, we all know that there has been great abuse of that privilege over time in many ways. He has given over ownership and authority to us to manage everything from plants and animals to human life. Genesis 1 says multiple times that what God created was "good". All created things are important in God's eyes, especially human life. No matter the stage of life (conception

through old age), every soul matters to God because He created us all. Through scripture, we see different roles for men and women, but we are equal in God's eyes. In the same way, there are many ethnicities, but no race is superior; we are all equal (**Romans 2:11**, **Proverbs 22:2**, **Acts 10:34-35**, **Genesis 1:27-28**).

## **Creativity**

Next, we also have the ability to create, and we can see the truth of this by simply looking at how man is driven and motivated to build. Through the resources provided by God, we are given the opportunity to create, which reveals His nature within us. We greatly desire to create amazing buildings and structures, music and art, businesses, transportation, technology, etc. We have even been given the power of creation through procreation, to create life (**Genesis 1:28**)! These are some of the amazing gifts and blessings that God has given to mankind. The most important aspect to humans is how we are going to manage this great privilege and trust that God has given to us. As Christians, we must allow the Bible and the Spirit of God to shape our identity in how we are to steward, create, and live our lives (**Romans 12:1-3**). We are a new creation in Jesus Christ, and we have a new life now, which is why the gospel is such great news for those who have Christ! (**2 Corinthians 5:17**)

## **Sexuality**

When sin entered the world, sexual identities and many other aspects of human sexuality were distorted. We see that God said it's not good for man to be alone (**Genesis 2:18**), so he created Eve. This exclusive union between man and woman was formed, but it was broken through the fall of man. We read various passages of sexual perversion addressed throughout the Bible (**Leviticus 18:22**, **Romans 1:26-28**). Even in a natural sense, two males cannot have babies, nor can two females have babies without the help of a doctor. Men only have "seed," and women only have "eggs." Even if doctors help to create babies, we still cannot ultimately deny God's design and His hand in creation.

Please understand that the goal of this short section is not to tell people that God does not love them because of struggles with their sexual identity, but to allow Scripture and the Spirit of God to inform us of who we are. Scripture clearly states two types of genders (male & female), and sin has twisted that truth for unnatural relationships. We can see in **Genesis 1:27** that God made both male and female, only, with no other variations. This has become a big battle over the last several years, but please understand the Bible is very clear on these matters. This will never be a popular view within the world around us, but it is the truth, and it's important to know where scripture stands.

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. If God created you on purpose, for a purpose, how does that shape the way you see yourself? (*Psalm 139:13–14, Psalm 57:2*)

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2. Jesus says His burden is light; what heavy burden(s) are you still carrying that He never asked you to carry? (*Matthew 11:28–30*)

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3. Since every person is made in the image of God, what does that say about the value of every human life, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or background? (*Genesis 1:27, Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34-35*)

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4. Since sin has affected human sexuality, what does Scripture teach about God's original design for gender and intimate relationships (marriage)? (*Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-28, Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:18*)

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# DAY 7: THE TRINITY

DAY 7 OF 25 · WEEK 2

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

It is Day 7, and I'm proud of you for accomplishing what you have so far! The Trinity is a component of our faith that is very complex and profound, making it difficult to fully grasp and understand. Although there is an element of mystery to it, I think what is below will provide some clarity for us, along with the video I have attached at the end of this section. Remember, there are elements of our faith that we must take by faith, and there are mysteries of God that we will never fully comprehend. And that is okay; it keeps us dependent on the Lord. [Deuteronomy 29:29](#)

## Trinity Analogies

There have been several analogies or metaphors used throughout history to help people understand the nature of the Trinity. It's important to note that while there are many analogies to help explain the Trinity, many lack sufficient connections to understand it in its entirety. Instead of attempting to provide an analogy, I pray that these visual illustrations might help you better grasp the concept of the Trinity.

FIGURE 8

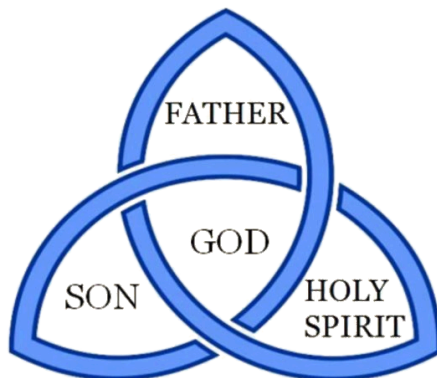
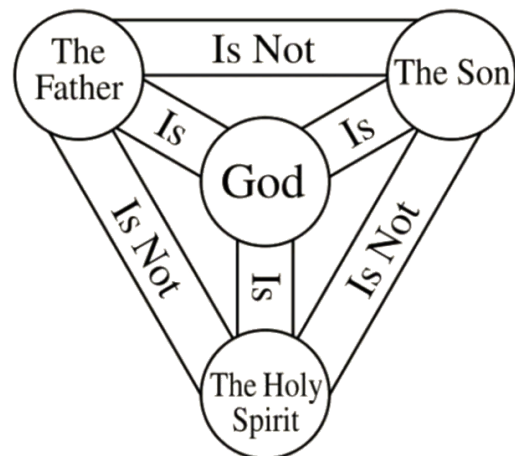


FIGURE 9



## Where do we find the Trinity in scripture?

### Read: Luke 3:21-22

This verse is great at showing us the Trinity. The father is represented in "voice", Jesus is physically there, and lastly, the Holy Spirit is represented as the "dove".

### Read: Matthew 28:19

This verse is Jesus himself identifying all three parts of the Trinity.

## **Read: Genesis 1:26**

Finally, we see the statement from God that he is making humans in "our image," which points to the Trinity. This means before the foundations of the world, Father, Son, & Holy Spirit existed.

## **What are some of the distinct roles within the Trinity?**

Remember, since God is Triune, there are many roles that They share (example: creation); however, this is not an exhaustive list.

### **God the Father**

- Heavenly Father, who loves and cares for His children, wants all to come to repentance. (*John 3:16, Psalm 103:13, 2 Peter 3:9*)
- Oversees and sustains the universe. (*1 Corinthians 8:6, Nehemiah 9:6, Colossians 1:16–17*)
- He sets forth standards of righteousness and is a just God who holds people accountable to His standards. (*Isaiah 33:22, Romans 2:5, Psalm 119:137–138, Deuteronomy 32:4, Acts 17:31, Romans 14:12*)

### **God the Son**

- Savior of humanity who died on the cross for the sins of the world. (*John 3:16-17, Romans 5:8, 1 John 2:2*)
- Mediator between God and humanity. He is the only way to be reconciled to a relationship with God the Father. (*John 14:6, Romans 5:10–11, Colossians 1:19–22*)
- Teacher and example of how to live a righteous and loving life. (*1 John 2:6, Matthew 11:29, John 13:14–15*)
- Jesus is appointed as judge by the Father, in which he carries out judgment. (*John 5:27, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 1:3*)

### **God the Holy Spirit**

- Empowerer and guide of believers, providing spiritual gifts and guidance. (*John 14:26, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:4–7*)
- Revealer of truth and interpreter of Scripture, and draws us to repentance. (*John 16:13, 1 Corinthians 2:10–12, 2 Peter 1:21, John 16:8*)
- Comforter and encourager who brings peace and joy to believers. (*John 14:16–17, Romans 15:13, Galatians 5:22–23*)

## **Is the Trinity three different Gods, or just one?**

The Christian faith sees the Trinity as One God. This is best understood as three in persons, but one being, meaning we hold to a monotheistic belief. We see, the Bible teaches that there is only one God.

Let's break this down:

- Being is defined as "What" you are. For example, I am a human "being".

- Person is defined as "Who" you are. For example, I am Roger, that is my "person." I am unique in my person, there are no others like me on this earth.
- As humans, we are 1 being with 1 person.
- God is 1 being with 3 persons (Father, Son, & Spirit).

## What does Scripture say about God being one?

**Deuteronomy 6:4** — *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."*

**Isaiah 44:6** — *"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last; besides me, there is no god.'"*

**1 Corinthians 8:6** — *"Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."*

A great Theological term to learn is **MONOTHEISM**.

Monotheism: Is the belief that there is only one God.

BONUS HELP

## A deeper look at the Trinity



Scan the QR code or visit  
[youtu.be/fl2q\\_Mg-D58](https://youtu.be/fl2q_Mg-D58)

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. The video on Day 7 talks about the difference between 'being' (what you are) and 'person' (who you are). How does this help explain the Trinity to someone who has never heard of it?

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2. The word 'Trinity' never appears in Scripture, yet we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together (**Matthew 28:19**; **Luke 3:21–22**). How is the word "Trinity" still a biblical term even though the word isn't specifically in the Bible?

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3. What word means that we believe in one God? Where does scripture show that to us? (Hint: **Deuteronomy 6:4**, **1 Corinthians 8:6**)

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4. We must understand that we will not always fully comprehend every mystery about God (such as the Trinity). How do you respond to mystery in your faith, and why do you think God permits mysteries? (**Deuteronomy 29:29**; **Isaiah 55:8–9**)

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5. What are the 4 pillars of After Salvation? (Hint: R.C.M.C.)



# DAY 8: JESUS

DAY 8 OF 25 · WEEK 2

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

As we continue to build our connection to God in Day 5, we must understand more about our savior, Jesus Christ. From the beginning, God had a plan to restore mankind. It's important to understand that we cannot be reunited with God the Father without Jesus. We also cannot have access to the Holy Spirit without Jesus Christ. Lastly, we cannot have eternal life without Jesus ([John 17:3](#)). Jesus is the knot that ties our faith together; without Christ, it's impossible for our faith to hold together. Jesus Christ is the "Good News" that establishes the concept of hope and redemption for all mankind through his love and sacrifice on the cross!

So, as we begin a deeper dive into understanding Jesus, what things should we know about Him?

## **Jesus existed since the beginning of time**

[John 1:1-18](#), [John 8:58](#), [Genesis 1:26](#)

Understanding that Jesus existed before the world started is significant because it establishes his eternal nature and divine authority. It means that Jesus is not just a human being, but rather a part of the eternal Godhead (Father, Son, & Holy Spirit), who played a central role in the creation of the universe. This knowledge provides a deeper understanding of the nature of God and the significance of Jesus' mission to redeem humanity from sin and death.

## **Jesus was prophesied about throughout the Old Testament**

[Isaiah 53:1-12](#), [Isaiah 7:14](#), [Micah 5:2](#)

The prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament are important because they provide evidence of the divine plan for salvation that extends throughout human history. It demonstrates that the coming of Jesus was not an afterthought or a random occurrence, but rather a fulfillment of God's promises and a part of his larger plan for redemption. It also helps to establish the credibility of Jesus as the Messiah.

## **Jesus was born through a virgin birth**

[Isaiah 7:14](#), [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

The virgin birth of Jesus was a miraculous event that sets Jesus apart from all other human beings. It affirms his divine nature and establishes his unique role as the Son of God, who came to Earth to save humanity from sin and death. It also fulfills prophecy as we see in [Isaiah 7:14](#).

## **Jesus is God, in human form**

[John 10:30](#), [Colossians 2:9](#)

Jesus' dual nature demonstrates God's love and grace towards humanity. By taking on human form, Jesus identifies with us in our suffering and shows us the depth of God's love by willingly sacrificing himself for our salvation. Within Jesus's humanity, he sets forth an example of how we should live on earth as well.

## **Jesus lived a sinless life**

*1 John 3:5, 1 Peter 2:22*

The importance of Jesus' sinless life is that it demonstrates His divinity. He is the only human to live without sin. Secondly, His sinless life qualified Him to be the perfect sacrifice (*Hebrews 4:15*), which played a direct role in setting humanity free when He died for our sins. His life also encourages believers to follow His example. Although we cannot achieve perfection, our new life in Christ should develop within us a growing desire to resist sin (*Romans 6:6*).

## **Jesus became a perfect sacrifice to make us right with God forever**

*Hebrews 10:1-18, Hebrews 9:11-14*

Because of the fallen nature of man, sacrifices were used to cover our sins. Since the beginning, as we read in the Old Testament, the Israelite people used animal sacrifices to temporarily cover the sins of God's people, to be made right with God. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that God had a plan to send a savior (Jesus) to make us right with God once and for all!

## **Jesus conquered death**

*Romans 1:4, Luke 23:46, Luke 24:1-35*

Jesus died in His human state, but 3 days later rose from the grave through the power of the Spirit of God (*Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:19-20*). In Luke 23, we can see evidence of Jesus breathing his last breath, and very shortly afterward, we see that He arose from the grave. When Jesus conquered death, this proved His divinity (meaning He was God). This is also an encouragement to the believer: if Jesus conquered death, then what should we fear if we have Jesus in our lives? We have nothing to fear, not even death, for those who are in Him. We are now secure in our eternal life through Christ. *1 Corinthians 15:55-56*.

## **Jesus was seen by over 500 people after his resurrection**

*Luke 24:36-49, 1 Corinthians 15:6*

Some skeptics would say that Jesus's disciples faked his resurrection, stole his body, and hid it in an attempt to say that he was resurrected from the dead. You also might hear skeptics point out and say that "of course" Jesus's followers said they saw him, but it's a completely different story to have over 500 individuals see the resurrected Christ. As we develop our faith, we must understand that this is not just a nice story; Jesus truly resurrected, and many people saw this. There is even non-biblical documentation about these events as well, like Josephus (Ant. 18.3), Tacitus (Ann. 15.44), Pliny (Ep. 10.96), Lucian (Peregrine), and the Talmud (Sanh. 43a). All these confirm Jesus' crucifixion and early belief in His resurrection. This should help build greater confidence in our faith and in who Jesus is.

## **Jesus is the only way to God**

***John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5***

It's important to understand that Jesus Christ is the only way to a life reconciled with God. There are no amounts of works or deeds you and I can do to earn our way to heaven. There are also no other religions or spiritual practices available to rescue us from sin and eternal separation from God. Jesus is the only way. Be cautious – the world around you will try to convince you that there are other ways, but that isn't true because of what we find in ***John 14:6***.

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. The Old Testament prophesied Jesus' birthplace (***Micah 5:2***), virgin birth (***Isaiah 7:14***), and His suffering (Isaiah 53) hundreds of years before He was born. How does this build your confidence that Jesus really is the promised Messiah, and that God's plan of salvation was set in motion long before the cross?

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2. Day 8 notes that over 500 eyewitnesses saw the risen Jesus, and even non-biblical sources confirm His crucifixion. Why does it matter that the resurrection is real history, and how does this shape how you defend your faith? (***Luke 24:1–35; 1 Corinthians 15:6***)

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3. In scripture, it says that Jesus conquered (overcame) death. Why is this important to understand? (***Romans 1:4, Luke 23:46, Luke 24:1-35, Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:19-20, 1 Corinthians 15:55-56***)

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4. Many people today believe that all religions lead to the same God, or that being 'a good person' is enough. But Scripture is clear: Jesus is the only way to God (***John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5***). ***If that is true, what is at stake for the people in your life who don't yet know Him, and what is the best way to approach them?***

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# DAY 9: HOLY SPIRIT

DAY 9 OF 25 · WEEK 2

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

Today, we will be focusing on a major key element that every believer must understand to reach their full potential in their relationship with God. Jesus makes a very important statement that I think is key for us to understand. I'm going to use the Amplified Bible version for this passage reading in **John 16:7**, which says...

*"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]."*

Could you imagine that you have been walking around with Jesus for about 3 years, and he tells you, "I'm going to be leaving soon." I could imagine how His disciples felt at that moment. I bet their hearts dropped. After he makes that statement, he then proceeds to tell you that He should go so that the Holy Spirit would come. I don't know about you, but I would have had a million questions for Jesus. I'm sure you have a few questions as well, so we will look at a few different questions and pieces of scripture that will develop a foundational understanding of the Holy Spirit.

## Who Is The Holy Spirit?

### The Holy Spirit Is God

**Acts 5:3-4** — *Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."*

This verse points out that the Holy Spirit is not just some spiritual entity, but is God Himself. It affirms that if they lied to the Holy Spirit, then they lied to God, which, if you tie the text together, shows that the Holy Spirit is God. Next, we see a very simple but clear example of this idea in John 4.

**John 4:24** — *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.*

## What Role Does The Holy Spirit Play In Our Salvation?

### The Spirit Draws & Helps Us To Recognize Sin

**John 16:7-11** — *But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do*

*not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

**1 Thessalonians 1:5** — *because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.*

The Holy Spirit plays a significant part in our salvation process; we see in **John 16:8** and **1 Thessalonians 1:5** that the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, which leads us to know that we need a savior, Jesus Christ. Take a second to reflect back to the moment you accepted Jesus. Take a moment to reflect on when you accepted Jesus. For most people, someone told them they needed Jesus, but something inwardly convicted them and stirred them to accept Jesus. That, my friend, I strongly believe, was the work of the Holy Spirit within you.

### **The Spirit Is A Part Of Our New Birth**

**John 3:3-7** — *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"*

**Titus 3:5** — *he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

### **The Holy Spirit Is Evidence Of Our Salvation**

**Ephesians 1:13-14** — *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

**1 John 4:13** — *This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.*

### **How Do I Know If I Have The Holy Spirit?**

Your body is the "temple" for the Holy Spirit, meaning God wants to rest His Spirit within man. The only way to have the Spirit dwell within the human being is to be born again, which means you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Remember, it was God who created you; you are His creation, and He designed humans in His image. As image bearers, He wants us to experience the fullest expression of Himself by placing the power of His Spirit within us.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** — *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.*

Next, it's important to recognize that there is a process of maturing in the Lord and recognizing the Spirit's leading. It is natural to question whether you have the Holy Spirit. We have to practice the skill of listening (which includes reflecting and slowing down to listen), but then, by faith, actively live out the Spirit's guidance and direction within our lives, which in return builds our confidence in His leading. Here are a few practical ways to identify when the Holy Spirit is present in your life (this isn't an exhaustive list).

### **When You Desire And Want To Obey God's Way**

**1 John 3:24** — *The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

### **When We See The Manifestation Of The Spirit In Our Lives**

**Galatians 5:22-23** — *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.*

### **When You Sense His Presence**

**Ephesians 3:16-19** — *Pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

### **When His Words And Thoughts Start Forming How We Understand Life**

**1 Corinthians 2:10-12** — *These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Bible does tell us we can suffocate the spirit's leading and voice in our lives (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**), so we have to be cautious about how we live. There will be some things that supernaturally happen quicker than others within our maturing process, but remember if you seek God with your whole heart, He will be found (**Jeremiah 29:13**), and understanding the Spirit's guidance will come naturally as you pursue God. The key is not just listening, it's stepping out in faith and putting his guidance into practice, which will produce confidence in us to hear His voice.

### **What Role Does The Holy Spirit Play In Our Daily Lives?**

*(This is not an exhaustive list.)*

## **Convicts Us Of Our Sin**

**John 16:8** — *When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.*

## **Gives Us Spiritual Gifts For The Works Of The Ministry & To Edify The Church**

**1 Corinthians 12:4** — *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.*

## **Empowers The Believer**

**Acts 1:8** — *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

## **Intercedes For The Believer In Prayer**

**Romans 8:26-27** — *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

## **Produces Good Works Within The Believer**

**Philippians 2:13** — *for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

## **Teaches Us His Way**

**John 14:26** — *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What role does the Holy Spirit play in salvation? (**John 16:8, 1 Thessalonians 1:5**)

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2. How have you seen the Holy Spirit leading, teaching, or changing you since you accepted Jesus? (**John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Galatians 5:22-23**)

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3. Jesus told His disciples it was actually better for them if He left so the Holy Spirit could come. Why do you think having the Spirit living inside you is greater than having Jesus physically beside you? (**John 16:7**)

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4. Day 9 lists four marks of the Holy Spirit at work: obedience, the fruit of the Spirit, His presence, and His thoughts shaping yours. Which do you see most in yourself, and which is harder to see? (**1 John 3:24; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12**)

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# DAY 10: WORSHIP

DAY 10 OF 25 · WEEK 2

Discover what it means to walk with God daily.

This is our final day of focusing specifically on our connection with God. Today, we are going to look at the idea and concept of worshipping God. As we set the stage for what worship is, the most important piece to begin with is how we view God within the context of worshipping Him. God is our Creator and Savior. Most importantly, He is holy and worthy to be praised. Worship is a natural response to God as we grow in our understanding of Him and see Him at work in our lives. I want to break down a few key concepts within this framework. First, let's define what holy is.

Holy — Having the characteristics of moral or ritual purity; context often emphasizes one over the other.

As we look at this definition, I want to focus on two key components. The word "purity" and the phrase "one over the other." In God, there is no sin nor evil; He himself is perfect ([Matthew 5:48](#)), and He is the literal definition of pure and true. He declares what is right, good, holy, and just because he himself is Holy ([Deuteronomy 32:4](#)). He also sits at the highest possible position in the universe ([Psalm 83:18](#)). There is no one like Him ([1 Samuel 2:2](#)).

## Holy Fear

God is our friend ([John 15:15](#)), that is true, but more importantly, He is God. As you develop your understanding, it's important that we develop what many would call a "Holy Fear" of God. Proverbs says the following in [Proverbs 9:10](#), "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Now, this concept of fear is not in the sense that you should run and hide, but it's a high level of respect towards God, meaning reverence and awe. We see this concept spoken about in Hebrews.

**Hebrews 12:28-29** — *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."*

Let's quickly define reverence and awe...

- Reverence — A feeling of profound respect.
- Awe — An overwhelming feeling of fearful wonder.

As we build up our understanding of how to approach God in worship, we must approach God with a Holy Fear. This is something that should be consistent within the believer's life for the duration of his or her life. If I were to define Holy Fear, I would say it's a fearful wonder with a high level of respect for who God is. It's interesting that [Hebrews 12:29](#) says, "For our God is a consuming fire." When you look at a fire, it tends to be captivating, yet you have respect not to touch the fire because of its power. The same goes for God – God is an all-consuming fire: powerful, captivating, but greatly respected.

Just like on a very cold night, the fire keeps us drawn into it to sustain us. The same goes for the Holy Fear of God; it should draw us ever closer to Him because He is the sustainer of life. The fear that we should carry is out of a place of high respect and honor. I like how author John Bevere says, "The fear of the Lord doesn't drive us from God's presence — rather, just the opposite. A good and wonderful fear draws us close to Him." I also heard John mention something I'm going to paraphrase. When we walk with a daily understanding of the proper fear of God, we should fear being away from Him, not fear being near Him. This understanding now sets the stage for us to explore some aspects of worshiping God.

## **Worship God With Our Lives**

After salvation, our pursuit of life and the way we think about our lives should be changing. We now live for God, not for ourselves only. We have a call to worship God with our lives. Worship is defined as the feeling or expression of reverence (respect) and adoration (deep love) for God. I like to compare our relationship with God to marriage. In marriage, you are solely committed (deep love and respect) to one partner and completely sold out to that one relationship. The same goes for our relationship with God; to be committed to God is to worship Him solely, placing Him as a priority over everything, even your desire and will. Worship is genuinely expressed within us when we fully submit ourselves (Body, Soul, Spirit) to Christ. We see this discussed in Romans 12, where it says,

**Romans 12:1** — *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

To "offer your body as a living sacrifice" does not mean you need to die as a sacrifice. Christ has done that for us already. The keyword here is "living" sacrifice. A living sacrifice means you continuously or daily offer yourself in full submission to God. We see this throughout scripture; another great verse is **Colossians 3:3** "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." If this concept is difficult for you to understand, an easier way to consider it is to fully commit your entire being solely to God daily.

This idea of a living sacrifice is vital because it places God as king in our lives, so He is the ultimate authority, and we understand that following His word and the Holy Spirit leads to true life. Second, He directs us on what to do and how we should do it. This is called living out the "Will of God," which will be discussed in greater detail in Week 5. The only way we follow the Lord's leading is if He is fully in control of us; God cannot be co-equal in the leading of our lives. We are flawed by sin, which includes lust for the flesh, pride, envy, selfishness, etc. We, unfortunately, are broken and are in need of His saving grace. True salvation should lead us to desire to submit to God's rule in our lives, and this is how we show genuine worship to Him.

## **Worship God With Our Song**

There are many aspects that go into worshiping God, but there is something powerful in worshiping God with our song. Worshipping God in song is more than just singing words on a screen in the church or over iTunes or the radio. The song should come out of an overflow of our hearts, understanding with gratitude, respect, and awe who God is and what He has done for us. If we choose to sincerely press into singing worship songs, it enables us to take a deep reflection within our hearts. It tends to reposition or even break our hearts back into proper alignment with God. Song is an active way we can worship in our spiritual lives

and elevate God to His rightful place. Song is a way of communicating the sincerity of our hearts' affection toward God. Below are some great verses to reflect on this specific act of worship.

**Psalm 95:1-6** — *Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.*

**Isaiah 12:5** — *Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.*

**Ephesians 5:19-20** — *speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## Worship God With Our Resources

Finances might be one of the most difficult areas for people to trust God in and to even talk about because it is a touchy topic, but the Bible has a lot to say about it. There are different interpretations on the idea of tithing, but I believe this verse describes why this is so important.

**Matthew 6:19-21** — *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Tithing and/or giving is a benchmark in our spiritual maturity, in my personal opinion. I know that we have all read how some church leaders have misappropriated the funds of their respective organizations, but it's key to understand that we don't give to men. If someone misappropriates the funds, God will hold that man or woman accountable, and to be honest, it is not as common as the news outlets might indicate. I believe the enemy uses these rare examples to try to discourage our spiritual development. Remember, this is an act of worship; we give to God to spiritually demonstrate our faith, trust, and obedience to Him. In **Mark 12:17** it says, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.'" The Old Testament and New Testament have several examples, but let me share with you a few that are most often used.

**Malachi 3:8-10** — *Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

**2 Corinthians 9:6-12** — *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work...*

We are called to be stewards of God's resources according to His will. If you think about it, God gives us the health to work and the ability to earn wages. With a healthy biblical perspective on this subject, we realize that no matter if it is a little or abundant resource, it's all the Lord's.

**Deuteronomy 8:17-18** — *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. Holy Fear is described as fearful wonder with deep respect for God. How does that redefine the way you approach Him daily? (***Proverbs 9:10, Hebrews 12:28-29***)

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2. What are the three ways to worship God listed in Day 10? Which of the three areas has been the hardest for you to worship God in so far and why? (***Romans 12:1, Psalm 95:1-6, Matthew 6:19-21***)

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3. Giving is an act of worship that demonstrates your faith and trust in God. What does your current relationship with money reveal about where your heart is? (***Matthew 6:19-21, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Deuteronomy 8:17-18***)

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4. Worship through song should come from an overflow of the heart not just words on a screen. Does your worship feel genuine or routine, and why? (***Psalm 95:1-6, Ephesians 5:19-20***)

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# DAY 11: THE CHURCH

DAY 11 OF 25 · WEEK 3

Find your place in the local church and life with other believers.



[aftersalvation.com/week-3](https://aftersalvation.com/week-3)

Welcome to Day 11! We will turn our direction toward a new pillar within our faith called Community. We were never called to walk this life alone, and the first example of this is found in Genesis 2, where God creates Eve to accompany Adam (**Genesis 2:18**). We learn throughout Scripture that God finds joy in creating and having fellowship with both spiritual and earthly beings. This is an expression of His love and desire. God wants a relationship with us; that is why we are here. In your new life through Christ, you are now adopted into a new family (**Galatians 4:4–7**), a spiritual family called the "body of Christ," which is made up of many different types of people. Even if you never had a biological brother or sister, you now have many brothers and sisters stretched across the earth. This is the beauty of our new life.

## Old Testament "Assembly"

Throughout scripture, we see communities formed out of their belief and desire to worship God. The idea of the "church" actually existed before Jesus came. Instead of using the word church, they would use the word "assembly." If you look up the word church in Greek (ekklēsia), it means assembly. There is a distinction between the words assembly and church because of who makes up "the church," which is Christ's followers.

An Old Testament assembly differed from our experience in today's church service. We see several examples in the Old Testament that give us details on what services were like. Mostly, it was composed of the Israelites, but they did have various people from different tribes or nationalities, named sojourners (**2 Chronicles 6:32-33**), within their gatherings as well.

In some aspects, the Old Testament assembly meetings would look very familiar to us today. In the Old Testament, we see worshipers of God praising/singing, reading scripture, confessing sin, and praying together.

**Nehemiah 9:3** — *"They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God."*

**2 Chronicles 29:28** — *"The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the musicians played and the trumpets sounded. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed."*

We even see in the New Testament where they confirm some of these practices, for instance, in Acts 15.

**Acts 15:21** — *"For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."*

The practice of worship in the Old Testament was very different because it was prior to Christ's offering salvation. A major piece of their services was to offer sacrifices and follow specific guidelines to be made right with God that day. This was practiced and performed continuously because there were no permanent solutions to combat sin. That all changed when Christ came; we no longer had to practice "physical sacrifices" to cover our sins because Christ became the permanent sacrifice, once and for all.

## **New Testament "Church"**

Now, as we fast-forward, we come to the New Testament and meet up with Jesus. While He was fulfilling His earthly ministry, we see that He made a very important declaration for the future community of worshipers in Matthew 16.

**Matthew 16:18** — *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

It is at this moment that Jesus declares that He will establish this community of people that will not be defeated by the works of the enemy nor the flesh, and they will be called the church. We are His people because He is the only way back to the Father, so He is our leader and our Lord.

**Ephesians 1:22-23** — *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

This community will consist of Christ's followers, and it will be made up of Jews and Gentiles (meaning open to all people groups). You can think of Jesus's death on the cross as the unifier of all people and nations because He created a pathway for all to receive salvation (**Isaiah 49:6**, **John 8:12**). Even though sojourners/foreigners were a part of worship services before Christ, it wasn't as common for Gentiles to accept the God of Israel because of their idol worship and devotion to other gods. But this did not exclude foreigners (non-Israelites) from playing major roles in the Old Testament. People like Ruth, Jethro, and Rahab played very important roles in the Old Testament. These non-Israelite figures demonstrate how God's plan of redemption and involvement extends beyond the boundaries of Israel and how God used individuals from various nations to accomplish His purposes in the biblical narrative, which is later affirmed in Ephesians 2. We also see how Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and Jonah served and were used by the Lord to reveal and proclaim the truth of who He is.

**Ephesians 2:19-20** — *"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."*

As you might have concluded, the church is not just a physical location where believers come together in a building: it's deeper than that. It is true that in part we do go to a physical structure called "the church," or you might read it in scripture as temples or synagogues, but overall, the church is a collective group of Christian believers under the authority of Christ. Although there are many people who make up the church stretched all over the world, we are one, unified by Christ Himself and through the Holy Spirit. As a group, we are called by Christ to carry out His will and mission collectively here on earth.

**Ephesians 4:4** — *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.*

## The Body Of The Believer "The Temple"

We have one last step in understanding the church, which affects us as believers on a personal level. Scripture gives us awareness that our own physical bodies are temples. Because we now have the Holy Spirit, as believers in Christ, we are actually hosting the Holy Spirit within our physical bodies.

**1 Corinthians 3:16** — *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?*

**1 Corinthians 3:9** — *For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.*

This is important to realize because we can now have fellowship with God continuously, because we are made perfect through the blood of Jesus Christ (meaning because of His sacrifice). Since this is true, the Holy Spirit has the ability to rest within the believer permanently because we have been purified and made holy by accepting Christ as Lord. This is what enables the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believer. Having the Holy Spirit doesn't mean we will act perfectly in everything we do, but it gives us the ability to live out God's will and His purpose for us.

## The Church

As we have uncovered, the church is a global living, active group of Christ followers that come together to worship and honor God by carrying out His will on earth. We are unified underneath the name of Christ, but as individuals, we each play our part to glorify God. As we continue over the next few days, we will uncover the importance and the details of worship gatherings, spiritual gifts, accountability, and the importance of our roles within the Church.

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What does **Genesis 2:18** teach us about our need for community? How does **Galatians 4:4-7** deepen this idea?

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2. Jesus promised the gates of Hades would not overcome His church. What does that promise mean to you about the community you now belong to? (**Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:22-23**)

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3. Your body is a temple, meaning you carry God's presence everywhere you go, because you now have the Holy Spirit. How does that truth affect your daily life? (**1 Corinthians 3:16**)

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4. The church is not a building but a global body of believers unified under Christ. How does that change the way you think about your role within it? (**Ephesians 4:4, Ephesians 2:19-20**)

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# DAY 12: FELLOWSHIP

DAY 12 OF 25 · WEEK 3

Find your place in the local church and life with other believers.

Welcome to Day 12! Today, we will be discussing the details or components of a healthy church. We are going to unpack what's in [Acts 2:42-47](#) in detail. These verses set the standard and model for us of what the church should be like. As we mentioned yesterday, the church is more than just a building; it's a living entity because we as humans make up the church. For a living organism to survive and thrive, it has to have the right environment to succeed. It also has to have the right nutrients to grow to its fullest potential and to be sustained. Lastly, a healthy church should bear good fruit, meaning it is multiplying itself. This simply means reaching the lost and discipling both new and maturing believers, who then disciple others toward maturity. Now, please read [Acts 2:42-47](#).

## Fellowship Of The Believers

**Acts 2:42-47** — *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

## Teaching

**Acts 2:42** — *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching*

The apostles at that time were instructed by Jesus to teach everything that He (Jesus) taught them, since the New Testament had not been written and fully collected just yet. We know that the Old Testament was used in these teachings because we see it sprinkled throughout the New Testament. One of the most important points to note is that they weren't just making things up. It was about Jesus' teachings, combined with the Old Testament, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are two things we can take from this simple understanding. First, Jesus is the head of this group of believers, meaning they place Jesus in the highest position of authority within the structure of this group. There is a real danger if a man tries to place himself as the sole leader of the church. What happens is that they remove Jesus as head of the church ([Ephesians 1:22](#)) and place themselves as the point of importance rather than God. These are things to be mindful of as you look for a healthy church. Is the primary focus of that church about Jesus, or is it about an individual? Find a church that places Jesus on the rightful throne where He deserves to be.

Second, this passage teaches us that the authority for this group was the word(s) of God. Another sign of a healthy church is to examine how it teaches. Are they teaching ideas from themselves, more self-help than biblically focused? Are they teaching from the Word of God? This is an easy way to know healthy

from unhealthy churches. I tell you these things because the spirit that drives that church (either Spirit of God or Spirit of this world) will instruct you, and it's okay to be selective about who you allow to speak into your life and teach you. A healthy church culture keeps Christ as the head of the church and teaches the word of God.

## **Fellowship**

| **Acts 2:42** — *to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and prayer.*

Fellowship simply happens when a group of people with a shared interest spend time together. Life is too short to place yourself around meaningless conversations and people who are focused on themselves. Find a group of people who care about you and God and are striving towards their purpose in Christ. We see that they shared meals and prayed over one another; these are just a few signs that you have a good group of people to do life with.

| **1 Thessalonians 5:11** — *Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

## **Awe & Miracles**

| **Acts 2:43** — *Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.*

If you remember back on Day 10, we discussed this "awe" factor. Awe is defined as an overwhelming feeling of fearful wonder. It ties into our healthy view of God by having a Holy fear. The early church understood the power and majesty of God. They were filled with awe, especially by the way God moved so amazingly in their midst. In **Acts 2:43**, we see that the apostles performed signs and wonders, meaning miracles. Unfortunately, in some parts of the world, there has been a priority placed on miracles. Let me be clear, I truly believe miracles still happen today, but there is a danger if it is over-emphasized.

## **Caution On Miracles, Signs, & Wonders**

1) We can lose track of the mission if we only chase the miracles. When the body of Christ prioritizes signs over the mission of reaching the lost and discipling others, the church will find itself disconnected from its intended purpose. Miracles are good; they are the byproducts of what God is accomplishing within a person or a people. But we must remember that miracles exist to point us toward a greater love for and devotion to God.

2) Secondly, it can place a greater emphasis on man over God. We may begin to view the person performing miracles as 'special' or 'of greater importance,' unfortunately, elevating them to a 'God-like' status. We must be careful to remember that it is God working through someone. Again, miracles are meant to point us toward the goodness and truthfulness of God, not to man.

It's important to note that Jesus performed many miracles, as did His disciples. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, we see numerous records of miracles. It is simply unbiblical to deny or rationalize miracles away. God is a good Father who gives good gifts; if He decides to demonstrate His love toward us through a miracle, then I say 'Amen!' God provides miracles as an expression of His love and provision,

so it is appropriate to believe by faith and ask the Father for them. However, remember that we shouldn't just chase the miracle itself; we should be chasing the Miracle Maker.

**References:** [Acts 3:16](#) | [Deuteronomy 10:21](#) | [Job 5:8-9](#) | [Romans 15:19](#) | [Acts 19:11-12](#) | [Daniel 3:25](#)

## Unity & Humility

| [Acts 2:44](#) — *All the believers were together and had everything in common.*

Have you ever noticed that the word "community" contains the word "unity" and "unity" starts with "U"! I know that might sound cheesy, and I agree it does, but it also holds a very real truth. We as individuals hold the key to unity, and unity can only be accomplished if we are really "for" one another. To be for one another means we are not "one-upping" each other to make a name for ourselves, but we are striving to be a servant first to those around us, to be trusted, and not to gossip when someone shares failures, hurts, or prayer requests. Gossip and pride are the two keys that destroy unity and hurt the church very quickly. These sinful practices are encouraged by the enemy and give way to the fallen nature. One of the hardest things for the church is to keep unity, but let me encourage you, it is possible. Three of the fruits of the Spirit is "love, peace, & self-control," so pray that the Spirit helps us as individuals to be mindful of the tactics of the enemy and flesh. Remember that unity begins with you! As the body of Christ, let's strive for unification in all things.

| [Ephesians 4:3](#) — *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

## Generosity

| [Acts 2:45](#) — *They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.*

Historically speaking, especially in early church history, generosity is what made the church stand out in the world. They fed those who were hungry, clothed those who needed clothes, and provided resources to those in need. The church is a place of selfless individuals who see people through the lens of Christ, meaning that people matter to God, so they matter to the Christian. Can we truly call ourselves followers of God if we leave a child and brothers or sisters in need? As the body of Christ, we should strive to bless and help those around us. Genuine faith produces good deeds that go hand in hand, as we discussed on Day 3. We love those around us, like we love ourselves ([Luke 10:27](#)).

## Consistency

| [Acts 2:46](#) — *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.*

Consistency in our spiritual lives is a must and is tied to the idea of Christ-centered commitment, which is one of the four key pillars of A.S. To be committed to something means having consistency within that commitment. The same applies to us coming together as the church; the regularity of meeting together produces greater focus and encouragement in our lives.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** — *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

## Gratitude

**Acts 2:47** — *praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.*

We see that the early church had an attitude of gratitude toward God, expressed through worship and goodwill toward one another. Our attitudes set the tone for how we interact with God, both privately and publicly, and with the people around us. A key component for us as the body of Christ is to remain in a state of worship and gratitude as we meet together, realizing what Christ has done for us and allowing that to be the overflow of our lives. In addition, having gratitude helps us to overcome bitterness and self-centeredness in our walk with Christ.

**Psalms 100:2** — *Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*

## Increase

**Acts 2:47** — *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

When it comes to healthy churches, we see that God provides the increase (of people) to the body of Christ. It is the Lord, through the work of the Holy Spirit, who draws people to repentance; that way, no one can boast. This is why we need to strive toward health, so we can be ready for those the Lord entrusts to us. **Acts 2:42–47** highlights to all believers several important factors that define a healthy church.

We all have parts to play within the body of Christ, and those roles are important, but we must not elevate any role or person above Christ Himself (**Romans 12:3**). It is the Lord's church and His ministry; He is the one who draws each individual for His glory, and it is God who provides the increase. Our responsibility is to stay unified and humble in fellowship, meeting people where they are, loving them like Christ, and discipling them toward maturity (**Colossians 1:28**).

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. Day 12 warns that a dangerous church removes Jesus as head and places a man there instead. What are some signs you would look for to know whether a church is healthy or not? (*Ephesians 1:22, Acts 2:42*)

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2. Gossip and pride are the two things that destroy unity fastest. What can we do if we see this in others or find it happening within ourselves? (*Ephesians 4:3, Acts 2:44*)

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3. Consistency in meeting together produces greater focus and encouragement. What is currently keeping you from being consistently connected to a church community? (*Acts 2:46*)

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4. The early church's generosity made it stand out in the world. In your own life, how does this challenge you? (*Acts 2:45, Luke 10:27*)

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# DAY 13: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

DAY 13 OF 25 · WEEK 3

Find your place in the local church and life with other believers.

Welcome to Day 13. Today, we will address spiritual gifts. There is mention of "spiritual gifts" both in the Old Testament and New Testament, indicating that spiritual gifts are not just a New Testament phenomenon. A spiritual gift is 'a gift or endowment characteristic of the presence or enabling of the Holy Spirit.' This means God supernaturally gives and enables gifts to humans for His glory through the power of the Holy Spirit. The difference between the Old and New Testaments concerning the gifts is that the Holy Spirit now rests within the believer because of what Jesus Christ has done. This means the Spirit doesn't just come and go. Below you will see verses that show the power of the Spirit enabling His people both in the Old and New Testaments.

**Numbers 11:25** — *Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied—but did not do so again.*

**1 Corinthians 12:4-6** — *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.*

## Why Are There Spiritual Gift(s)?

Spiritual gifts or empowerment of the Spirit were given to God's people for two purposes:

### 1) To demonstrate the truthfulness of God

We see that the truthfulness of God can come in many forms. One of the ways is through prophecy. This is demonstrated in **Acts 2:14-18** when the Holy Spirit fell upon the believers at Pentecost. At this moment, Peter confronted a small group of people who were saying the apostles were "drunk" because they were speaking in everyone's languages. Peter uses Joel's prophetic words in **Joel 2:28-32** to combat these individuals. The prophetic words of Joel were confirmed by Peter in Acts 2 when he used the reference to attest to something God spoke through an individual long ago.

### 2) To assist and empower the believer to accomplish God's will on earth

**1 Corinthians 12:7** — *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

The ministry (work of restoration) of God started right after sin entered the world. The Spirit's role is not limited to the creation of the world and assisting the believer, but the Spirit is the means to accomplishing the will of God. The coming of Jesus opened up a unique opportunity for God's people to have the Spirit rest upon them. Part of that uniqueness means spiritual gifts would assist the believer's daily life moving forward to accomplish God's will.

Consider Gideon's life (**Judges 6:1–8:35**). God enabled and empowered him to be a warrior for His name. Gideon's personality appeared frail and weak-minded, not suited to lead an army for the Lord. If Gideon focused on his own ability or what others thought of him, he may have never accomplished the work the Lord called him to. Yet through miraculous signs, God empowered him, increasing his faith to carry out his specific calling. This example in Scripture shows us where God adds the "super" to our "natural" for His glory. Spiritual gifts are given by God to build the church and to accomplish His will. If we pursue Him first and foremost, He will guide us correctly.

## How Do I Receive Spiritual Gift(s)?

When you become a Christian, you receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives the gift(s) according to scripture, and we see this in 1 Corinthians. We see in both the Old Testament and New Testament that when the "power" of God comes upon the believer, they receive empowerment by the Spirit. The only difference between the New and Old Testament is that the Holy Spirit can now rest within the believer, since the Spirit doesn't come and go as we see within the Old Testament. We know the Spirit is the one who distributes the gifts based on 1 Corinthians 12.

**1 Corinthians 12:11** — *All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*

## Spiritual Gifts Test

I write this section as a friendly encouragement and to emphasize that, as you pursue understanding your spiritual gift(s), you should first seek God in prayer and self-examination before taking a spiritual gifts test. While I believe that such tests can be helpful, they often come with limitations. Many of these tests seem to focus more on your personality, which can be problematic because it may limit what God is trying to do within you and how He wants to use you within the body of Christ. Also, you might feel that you "don't qualify for that specific gift," which could hinder God's work in you and for His mission. I believe that the authors of these tests have good intentions, but the tests themselves might fall short of what God wants to achieve in our lives.

## Pride & Spiritual Gift(s)

It is important that we do not become prideful about gift(s) that God has given to us. Remember that the spiritual gift(s) and the assignments that God assigns to you are for His Glory, not yours. Stay humble because no matter the number of people God might enable you to reach for His name's sake, this is all for His glory! (**1 Corinthians 12:15-26**)

## What Are The Spiritual Gifts?

There are many types of spiritual gifts that God gives. Below is probably the most comprehensive list of "spiritual gifts" I have ever found, but I will be the first to tell you, there might even be more gifts than this.

The reason I say that is because if we are going by what the Bible describes as "spiritual gifts," which is a supernatural enabling of a person by the Spirit within the human for the glory of God, there may be a variety of ways God wants to move that are not listed or maybe just not identified by this list and would fall under service or helps. We see in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 that the core passages identify spiritual gifts.

## **Spiritual Gifts List**

### **Administration**

The gift of administration is the divine strength or ability to organize multiple tasks and groups of people to accomplish these tasks. (*1 Corinthians 12:28*)

### **Apostleship**

The gift of apostleship is the divine strength or ability to pioneer new churches and ministries through planting, overseeing, and training. (*1 Corinthians 12:28*, Eph. 4:11)

### **Discernment**

The gift of discernment is the divine strength or ability to identify falsehood spiritually and to distinguish between right and wrong motives and situations. (*1 Corinthians 12:10*)

### **Evangelism**

The gift of evangelism is the divine strength or ability to help non-Christians take the necessary steps to become a born-again Christian. (*Ephesians 4:11*)

### **Exhortation**

The gift of exhortation is the divine strength or ability to encourage others through the written or spoken word and Biblical truth. (*Romans 12:8*)

### **Faith**

The gift of faith is the divine strength or ability to believe in God for unseen supernatural results in every arena of life. (*1 Corinthians 12:9*)

### **Giving**

The gift of giving is the divine strength or ability to produce wealth and to give by tithes and offerings for the purpose of advancing the Kingdom of God on earth. (*Romans 12:8*)

### **Healing**

The gift of healing is the divine strength or ability to act as an intermediary in faith, prayer, and by the laying on of hands for the healing of physical and mental illnesses. (*1 Corinthians 12:9, 28*)

### **Hospitality**

The gift of hospitality is the divine strength or ability to create warm, welcoming environments for others in places such as your home, office, or church. (*Romans 12:13, 1 Peter 4:11*)

### **Knowledge**

The gift of knowledge is the divine strength or ability to bring clarity and to understand situations and circumstances, often accompanied by a word from God. (*1 Corinthians 12:8*)

### **Leadership**

The gift of leadership is the divine strength or ability to influence people at their level while directing and focusing them on the big picture, vision, or idea. (*Romans 12:8*)

### **Mercy**

The gift of mercy is the divine strength or ability to feel empathy and to care for those who are hurting in any way. (*Romans 12:8*)

### **Miracles**

The gift of miracles is the divine strength or ability to alter the natural outcomes of life in a supernatural way through prayer, faith, and divine direction. (*Romans 15:18–19, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28*)

### **Pastor / Shepherd**

The gift of pastoring/shepherding is the divine strength or ability to care for the personal needs of others by nurturing and mending life issues. (*Ephesians 4:11*)

### **Prophecy**

The gift of prophecy is the divine strength or ability to boldly speak and bring clarity to scriptural and doctrinal truth, in some cases foretelling God's plan. (*1 Corinthians 12:10, Romans 12:6*)

### **Service / Helps**

The gift of "serving" or "helps" is the divine strength or ability to carry out both small and great tasks for the overall good of the body of Christ. It is essential to note that, for example, the New Testament does not list worship leaders, musicianship, or craftsmanship as specific roles; however, these roles can serve as expressions of the gift of serving when exercised for the building up of the church. (*Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 1 Peter 4:11*)

### **Teaching**

The gift of teaching is the divine strength or ability to study and learn from the Scriptures, primarily to bring understanding and depth to other Christians. (*1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:7, 1 Peter 4:11*)

### **Tongues (and Interpretation of tongues)**

The gift of tongues has multiple dimensions, but it is primarily a miracle involving languages. We first see tongues used in Acts 2, where the disciples spoke in various languages simultaneously, and everyone present understood their own language. This is a clear example of speaking in an untrained language, while others could understand what was spoken. There have been accounts of this still taking place in mission contexts. Some faith traditions interpret another expression of this gift as the ability to pray in a heavenly language to encourage one's spirit and to commune with God, while acknowledging that Scripture does not fully define all aspects of this practice. There is also guidance given in scripture in a

public setting that the gift of tongues is often accompanied by interpretation and should be used appropriately within gatherings. (*1 Corinthians 12:10; 28, Acts 2:3-22, 1 Corinthians 14:4;14;27-28*)

### **Wisdom**

The gift of wisdom is the divine strength or ability to apply the truths of Scripture practically, producing the fruitful outcome and character of Jesus Christ. (*1 Corinthians 12:8*)

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What are spiritual gift(s), and should everyone have at least one after salvation? (**1 Corinthians 12:11, 1 Corinthians 12:7**)

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2. What should we be careful of when understanding our spiritual gift(s)? (**1 Corinthians 12:15-26**)

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3. How does understanding and using spiritual gifts contribute to the overall health and mission of the church? (**1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 1 Corinthians 12:7**)

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4. Take time to pray about your specific spiritual gift(s), and ask the Lord to help you identify yours. What are you sensing from God?

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# DAY 14: GATHERINGS

DAY 14 OF 25 · WEEK 3

Find your place in the local church and life with other believers.

Welcome to Day 14 as we uncover the importance of gathering together. There is something special when God's people gather to learn and worship Him. As mentioned before, we were never meant to walk this life alone; that is why God gave us not only the Holy Spirit but brothers and sisters to do life with. We are made in the image of God, and He created us to have relationships, just like God himself desires to be in relationships.

Human interaction is healthy mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (*Proverbs 18:1* ESV — Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.) It's vital for true spiritual health. I make this point because of a co-worker's experience I had many years ago. This person said to me, "I believe in God and I worship Him on my own, I don't need a church to do that." I was very young when I heard that argument, and I did not have a great answer, but I knew that didn't seem right. As I matured in my faith, I came across a scripture that helped shape my understanding of what I was thinking.

*Hebrews 10:24-25* — And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

## Traps In Gathering Together

As you look to find a good church home, there can be things that come up which I call 'traps.' I have heard so many believers in the West say that these two arguments are why they either don't go to church or why they stopped going. One is based on the idea that 'the church wants my money.' The second is, 'I was hurt by someone last time I went to church; you can't trust anyone from churches.' I want to address these two attacks that the church often faces, which oftentimes push the believer further away from the body of Christ.

### Money

My mother had an experience many years ago when she was very young about this very thing. The story goes that when she went to church with my grandmother years ago, the pastor came up to them and said, "You better start tithing, or you need to go to another church." Now, I'm probably giving a very loose translation of what he said, but it stuck with my mother to this very day.

In scenarios like this, the enemy uses greed from an individual or a small group of people to push an agenda that isn't the Lord's. The enemy distorts the truth to make it seem like "every church" must be like that. The enemy will do everything to push you away from the truth, and as believers, we have to look through that. The truth is this: tithing/giving teaches us to trust God over money, and it's an expression of

our gratitude for everything He has done for us. The enemy doesn't want us to trust God with all aspects of our lives, which includes the tithe.

**2 Peter 2:3** — *In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories.*

**Matthew 6:21** — *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

## Hurt

Over time, if you stay in the church long enough, I can assure you there will be a moment when someone fails you, whether it's talking behind your back or doing something that offends you. The reason I know this is because the church is made up of human beings, and we are all flawed (**2 Corinthians 2:10-11**). No one is perfect, not even the pastor. Ephesians says the following:

**Ephesians 4:32** — *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

If you are truly walking with Christ daily, I would encourage you to model the Lord's prayer in your own words, which is found in Matthew 6. It's very interesting because it prepares us ahead of time that offense will come against us, and we will offend others. That is why the Lord's Prayer says,

**Matthew 6:12** — *"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*

It's preparing us ahead of time that because we are human, and we live, work, and fellowship with other humans, it will get ugly at times, because we are not perfect. So prepare yourself to be kind and compassionate, forgiving one another, and being patient with one another.

## Conclusion

You see, the enemy wants to keep us isolated, away from the body of Christ, away from gathering together. Isolation creates environments of vulnerability where the enemy can attack our thoughts (**Genesis 3:3**) and discourage our faith (**John 10:10**). Being by yourself is not a bad thing, but consistent isolation can and will feed into such things as depression and hopelessness. As emotional beings, we do feed off the fellowship, encouragement, and momentum of others around us. Even if you are introverted, the gathering of Christians still matters, no matter your personality type. It feeds your emotional and mental health, we shouldn't neglect it. Even if someone has offended you, choose not to be offended and forgive quickly. Don't allow that one person or situation to stop you from what God has for you.

*Note: If there has ever been physical or sexual abuse, we can forgive, but it does need to be reported. There can be environments where mental, physical, or sexual abuse might have taken place, but that is a completely different scenario. There are times when we might need to leave somewhere because it has gotten to a place of pure corruption, and that is ok. If I may add, if that has been your experience, I would humbly suggest praying, and at the right time, as you heal, finding a healthy church family. This is vital to your spiritual development.*

## Denominational Differences

There will be different expressions of the body of Christ until Jesus comes. You have probably heard that birds of a feather flock together. Well, to a certain extent, that is true for the body of Christ. In my experience, you have two opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to styles. In fundamentalists, this group would be described as less emotional and more logically based spirituality. Then at the other end of the spectrum is the Charismatic side, which is sensitive to the emotional side of spirituality, but still roots itself in the logic and framework of scripture.

What this comes down to is personality type and personal preference. God made us with all different personality types, and that is the beauty of different expressions within the body of Christ. We are different parts, but we are one in Christ. I have learned there is nothing wrong with either (as long as Christ is anchored within these multiple expressions and the word of God is your foundation). I have been a part of both sides, and God uses both groups effectively. They both have pros and cons because humans are involved. Believe it or not, we even see this in 1 Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 1:11-17** — *My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?... For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

We are all imperfectly trying our best to pursue Christ. Let us be united as one, even though we have different preferences or styles of worship. Let's not tear one another down but build each other up through prayer and encouragement. We are one! Lastly, be cautious, because some churches and leaders feel they are the only ones doing 'things right' in their pursuit of God. Be cautious of these types of leaders and churches that consider themselves the 'pure church' or 'true church.' (**Philippians 2:3-5**) When you find that kind of spirit at work, it is the work of the flesh (pride) and of the enemy, and not of the Spirit of God. (**2 Corinthians 11:14, 1 John 4:1**)

## Types of Gatherings

Lastly, there are many types of gatherings nowadays, from virtual to physical. I want to encourage you again that meeting together 'physically' matters, even if you have a great digital church experience. I am not against online church services, but I still believe, according to Scripture, that physical gatherings matter. **Hebrews 10:25** reminds us, 'not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.' If you are very digitally focused, I would just challenge you to make sure you gather in person as much as possible. I strongly believe you will find value in that physical interaction.

We also see that both gathering sizes, large and small gatherings, are present in scripture. A very simple illustration in **Acts 2:46** "They worshiped together at the Temple each day (large gatherings), met in homes (small groups) for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity."

Throughout the Bible, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, you will see God's people gathering together to worship God; it's what His people do. We see that worship through songs, prayer, fellowship, communion, ministry, and preaching is part of scripture gatherings. It pleases God that we gather together, no matter the size of the group.

## REFLECT

1. How does the enemy use deception and past hurts to prevent Christians from gathering with the church? (*Ephesians 4:32, 2 Corinthians 2:10-11*)

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2. How can believers maintain unity despite different expressions of worship and theology? What is one thing to be cautious about? (*1 Corinthians 1:11-17, Philippians 2:3-5*)

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3. *Proverbs 18:1* says isolation leads someone to break out against sound judgment. What's the difference between healthy time alone and unhealthy isolation? What happens when we are isolated for too long?

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4. *Hebrews 10:24-25* commands us not to give up meeting together. Why do you think the writer felt he had to command this? What pulls believers away from gathering?

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5. What are the 4 pillars of After Salvation? (R.C.M.C.)



# DAY 15: FRIENDSHIPS & ACCOUNTABILITY

DAY 15 OF 25 · WEEK 3

Find your place in the local church and life with other believers.

It's Day 15, which marks our last day focusing on Community. Today, we will be looking at two major parts that truly affect your acceleration of spiritual growth: friendships and accountability. I say these two components affect the "acceleration" of growth because they have such a personal impact on the development of your character. You might have heard it said, "You are the average of the top three people you spend the most time with." This is saying that you will develop the attitudes, behaviors, and values of the people you interact with the most. This significantly impacts your mindset and actions. As you develop your spiritual journey with others around you, there are two results people around you will have: they will either encourage you towards or away from Christ. Who is influencing your life? It says this in 1 Corinthians:

| **1 Corinthians 15:33** — *Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."*

This verse reminds us to be selective about whom we spend time with. You should be very intentional and not allow just anyone to influence your life. The reality is we are all influenced by someone, so again I ask, who is influencing you, and do you want to be influenced by them?

## Friendships

Who we choose to become our close and personal friends does matter. We must try our best to be honest as we examine our current friendships and gauge the healthiness of those relationships with honesty. For new believers, letting go of some long-time friends might be one of the toughest decisions we have to make early in our journey. Some healthy questions you should think about are the following:

- Does this friend or group of friends have a relationship with God?
- Do I find myself drawing closer to God when I'm around them?
- What activities do I find myself involved in when I'm spending time with them?
- Do they in any way discourage me or redirect the conversation if we start talking about faith?

These are just some honest, inward reflection questions to think about concerning your current circle of friends. It's important to note that your friends do matter, and they matter to God. If you find that you have negative influences in your life, I would encourage you to pray for them and encourage them toward Christ and believe in their salvation. I'm not proposing that you tell them, "I don't like you anymore because I'm following God." Please be very careful with that. One thing I can assure you is that if you start talking about your relationship with God more, you will quickly find out if that draws them closer to you or away. It's also important to be cautious in how we approach our conversations about God. Be graceful in how we bring

up conversations about God. We are not trying to condemn them (*John 3:17, Romans 2:4*) towards the cross; we are trying to love them towards the cross.

What I'm suggesting is (with love) placing a greater distance, relationally speaking, between those unhealthy relationships. Sometimes you need to turn and run away from that friendship completely. Examples of this include gang affiliation, drug abuse, and alcohol abuse, to name a few real-life examples. I have seen many cases where this is required. Regardless of whether we are running quickly away from a certain negative friendship or if we are slowly taking steps back away from that relationship, we must guard the inner circle of our life, no matter what. Next, you will see a short list of some examples of friendship types to give greater awareness of this topic.

**Proverbs 18:24** — *One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

## Types Of Friendships

### 1. Acquaintances

People you know of and might interact with occasionally, but don't have a strong personal bond with.

### 2. Casual Friends

Individuals you spend time with in certain social contexts, like coworkers or classmates. Your interactions are generally light and centered around specific activities.

### 3. Friends

People you engage with on a more regular basis, share common interests with, and might spend time with outside the initial social context.

### 4. Inner Circle

These are friends with whom you share a deeper level of trust, understanding, and emotional connection. You confide in each other and offer support through life's ups and downs. Often considered as a best friend with whom they normally have an incredibly close bond. They know each other's secrets, provide unwavering support, and can often feel like family.

As you examine this list, think about what categories your current friendships are in. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment on the types of friendships you have. Depending on when you are reading this, you might find out that you don't have "close" or "best" friends after you examine current relationships. Let me encourage you, God is faithful, ask Him to help you find that inner circle. Be patient in your pursuit of the inner circle, be selective, and guard personal information with a new friend, allowing time and getting to know their character as you develop that trusting relationship.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** — *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

## Accountability & Mentorship

The idea of accountability and mentorship is sprinkled throughout both the Old and New Testaments. We need brothers and sisters in our lives who help us to grow toward maturity. Authentic accountability and mentorship are displayed if that person is willing to tell you the truth with grace and love, to make you better, not to hurt you. If you still haven't found a good mentor or close friend for accountability, please connect with your pastor or the leader of your church. They will love to help you along that journey.

Please be very, very careful with this selection. Examine this person closely before opening up. That is why I encourage you to get connected in a church to find a pastor to help you find a good mentor. If it's a friend, vet them well before the process begins. In this close relationship, you will have to be vulnerable and open about all areas in your life if you want real freedom. This produces healthier results in us and expedites the freedom from the sin that entangles us.

You should be looking for someone who is further in their journey than you are. This person demonstrates a strong walk with God, and their character backs up their talk. They desire to make the time to meet with you and sincerely want God's best in your life. As we wrap up today's conversation, I want to point you to some great verses that talk about accountability and friendship.

**Proverbs 27:17** — *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*

**James 5:16** — *Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

**Galatians 6:1-2** — *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

**Ephesians 4:25** — *Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What should you do if your current friendships are unhealthy? Should you completely cut ties, or should you try to win them to Christ? (**James 1:5, John 16:13**)

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2. **Proverbs 18:24** and **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** show us the importance of strong, godly relationships. Do you have at least one brother or sister like that in your life? If not, how can you begin pursuing that kind of relationship?

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3. Why should we have a spiritual mentor? Also, do you currently have a mentor? If not, create a list of potential mentors and reach out to find one. (**Proverbs 27:17**)

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4. The reading asks, "Who is influencing your life?" Name the top three people you spend the most time with, and honestly ask whether they are pulling you toward Christ or away from Him? (**1 Corinthians 15:33**)

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# DAY 16: THE MISSION

DAY 16 OF 25 · WEEK 4

Step into your calling, share your testimony, and make disciples.



[aftersalvation.com/week-4](https://aftersalvation.com/week-4)

As we begin Day 16, we are going to move to a new pillar within your spiritual life called Mission. The idea of "living on mission" is derived from **Matthew 28:18-20**, where Jesus gives us the famous command to "Go and make disciples of all nations." This last charge of Jesus before His death and resurrection is known as the "Great Commission." If we define the word commission, it means "an instruction, command, or duty given to a person or group of people." Jesus could have said anything in His final address, but He chose to give us a clear directive toward a mission He wanted us to accomplish with His assistance and guidance. As believers, we are all a part of this rescue mission and are called to engage in the mission of God!

## Multiply

One aspect of the Great Commission is the idea of multiplying. You and I are to go out and share the good news with others, which leads to salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit's conviction. After salvation, we have the responsibility to guide new believers to understand their newfound faith. As they mature in their faith, they are to grow to maturity and are called to do the same. This is the concept of multiplication.

**Acts 6:7** — *So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*

**Matthew 13:23** — *But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*

Remember, heaven and hell are on the line for the souls that surround you each day (**1 Corinthians 9:22**, **Proverbs 24:11**). You never know how much time you or the person next to you has (**Job 14:2**). There must be a certain sense of urgency in the believer's life for those around them (**Romans 13:11-12**). When our relationship with God is restored, we should be willing to assist others in full restoration with Him as well. This does not imply that we shove Jesus into someone's face, but that we love them unconditionally toward the cross while sharing what the Lord has done in our own life.

Many Christians face the issue of not knowing how to develop new believers. This is the most difficult problem we as the church are facing. Many people do not understand what they believe, and in turn, they do not know how to guide others on the path toward maturity in Christ. One major reason After Salvation was created over the last few years was to bring a tool to the body of Christ to equip believers for the work

of the ministry. After Salvation is not just a daily devotional with weekly meetings; this is a tool used to assist in disciple-making (**Ephesians 4:11-12**).

In **Proverbs 19:2**, it says, "Desire without knowledge is not good — how much more will hasty feet miss the way!" This is why we talk about there being no shortcuts to spiritual maturity. It takes effort to learn and to grow in understanding and obedience. As you go through these 25 days, learn what we are talking about and take your time to understand the scriptures and some of the things discussed in this, so you will be equipped to help others when the time comes.

**1 Peter 3:15** — *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

## We Are Acts 1:8

At the very end of **Matthew 28:20** (The Great Commission), Jesus says, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." During this statement, Jesus knew that the Holy Spirit was coming, which is why He could say this with such great confidence. **Acts 1:8** confirms this again when Jesus makes a very profound statement right before His ascension.

**Acts 1:8** — *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

## Two Things To Catch In Acts 1:8

**1) Receive Power:** When you become a Christian, you receive the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. The Holy Spirit plays various roles in a believer's life, and sometimes it is the most underutilized and undervalued part of a believer's spiritual life. Realize that Jesus even said that He should go so that you can receive the Holy Spirit or the Helper (**John 16:7**). The Holy Spirit is the helper and power you need so you can be successful in the mission that Jesus has called us to!

**2) Witnesses:** A witness is someone who testifies to what God has done in their life. I encourage you to write your story down on how you became a Christian on Day 20. We are charged to let the whole world know who Jesus truly is. By the power of the Holy Spirit and our testimony, we can change the world. Our job is not to save people, but to share what He has done in our lives and encourage others toward the cross. You have to take risks to share; rejection or persecution could be the outcome. It will not always be easy, but remember, we are not alone; God is with us. To see some come to Christ is why we proclaim the truth, to help them discover the hope found in Christ! It's like you grabbing the hand of someone drowning and pulling them toward solid ground.

Next, we see the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2...

**Acts 2:1-4** — *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they*

*were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

So you and I have the power of God in our lives through the Holy Spirit to carry on His mission, which is called the "Great Commission." Now that we see how this idea of mission comes together, some of the greatest experiences and testimonies with God come when we step out in faith to share Jesus or to pray for someone. Do the same, step out in faith, and learn to trust God in carrying His word to those around you. If you have blurry vision, you know how helpful glasses are when you put them on (as long as they are the right prescription). In the same way, when we accept Christ, we look through the new lenses of Christ to see people the way He sees them. As we wrap up today's session, let us be reminded by scripture what our goal should be within His mission.

**Matthew 28:18-20** — *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What does **Matthew 28:18-20** teach us about our mission as believers, and how should that shape our everyday lives?

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2. What does **Matthew 13:23** teach us about what a healthy believer's life should look like?

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3. What are two things **Acts 1:8** teaches us? How is relying on the Holy Spirit's power different from trying to do the work of ministry or mission in your own strength?

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4. As you read **Proverbs 24:11** and **1 Corinthians 9:22**, how should the reality that souls are at stake shape our mindset? What is one practical way you can take part in God's mission today?

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# DAY 17: DISCIPLE

DAY 17 OF 25 · WEEK 4

Step into your calling, share your testimony, and make disciples.

Welcome to Day 17. We will be focusing on understanding what a disciple is today. We all understand we are on a mission now. All of us (Christians) have a part to play in His rescue plan. So what is our role, and how do we prepare for mission success? What is required of the believer, and how do we know we are truly a disciple of Jesus Christ? Today we will answer these questions and more.

## What Is A Disciple?

If you start in the book of Matthew, you will see that Jesus started off with an original 12 "disciples." The term "disciple" is derived from the Greek word "mathētēs," which means a student who adheres to (and travels with) a teacher in the form of a teaching relationship (**John 8:31**). As you might have guessed, Jesus and His disciples lived life together, and they learned from Jesus daily.

The same model applies to us today; we are called to walk with Jesus daily. The only difference is that we do not have Jesus in physical form, we have two other things, the scripture (which are His words) and the Holy Spirit. We can successfully have a relationship that the disciples had with those two things active in our lives. Just as the original disciples, we are also called to learn and apply what He commands us to do.

## Signs Of An Authentic Disciple

Since we have defined the word disciple, how do we know we are one, what is required, and what does it look like? Scripture is very clear about this, so let's dive into some specifics.

### A person who believes in and follows Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 4:19** — *And He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

### A person who daily surrenders and prioritizes God's will over their own.

**Luke 9:23** — *Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.*

### A person who is consistent in their obedience.

**John 14:23** — *Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."*

### A person who produces good fruit.

**John 15:8** — *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

## **A person who loves others.**

**John 13:35** — *By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

## **A person who is truly committed to God's rescue mission (making other disciples, multiplying).**

**Matthew 28:19** — *Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

When it comes to signs of an authentic disciple, all these are pretty easy to understand, but what does it mean to "produce good fruit"? Jesus and biblical authors use this analogy of fruit-bearing in a few different places within scripture, and it's meant to refer to spiritual health. As an example, a healthy tree produces good fruit; likewise, a spiritually healthy person should produce Christ-like character and actions. A healthy Christian allows the Holy Spirit and scripture to positively impact and transform their mind, which in return creates a Christ-like character and desire for God's will for the glory of God in one's life.

**1 John 2:3-6** — *We know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commands. Whoever says, "I know Him," but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys His word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did.*

## **How Do We Make Disciples?**

So now that we know what a disciple is and some of the signs of a true disciple, how do we go and make disciples? The best example is Jesus Himself. Since He is the one who calls us to do so, how did He model it for us?

### **1) We Invite.**

Jesus would invite those to follow Him, not just hope people would follow Him (**Matthew 4:19**). We should be aware when we see signs of spiritual hunger and open hearts around us. It starts with recognizing and simply asking. If we desire to make disciples, we look for opportunities to invite people into our lives.

### **2) Keep It Small.**

Jesus had a small group of people He focused on called "disciples" (**Luke 6:13**), but He also ministered one-on-one. I can tell you from personal experience that when I was young in my faith, I grew the most from one-on-one interaction or small group interaction. The reason is I had to be fully engaged, meaning interacting and participating in the conversations, and I had to make it personal, which in return makes you examine your faith deeper.

### **3) Have A Plan.**

Jesus would teach His disciples with intentionality, and we should too. Jesus says in **Matthew 28:20**, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." There are many variations and approaches to making

disciples, and this resource is just one way of doing that. AfterSalvation.com was created to be an easy-to-use tool that helps build the foundation of a new believer. Secondly, this was created so that Christians could have a game plan and go make other disciples. I pray that after you complete this, you will be encouraged to use this as a tool or resource to help others on their journey.

#### **4) Commit To Spiritual Maturity.**

We know what Jesus commands us to do, but what is the goal of discipling someone?

**Colossians 1:28** — *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*

A "fully mature" believer has full dependence on God. He or she knows it's about God's will, not theirs. They also understand the importance of their relationship with God, the community of believers, and the mission, and are fully committed to following after Jesus. We should sincerely lock arms with these individuals or this small group of people and help encourage them towards full maturity in Christ. This means being available to talk and text, to pray, and to encourage. We should model for them the love of Christ.

#### **5) Challenge Them To Replicate / Reproduce (Multiply).**

Jesus poured out His life into the 12 disciples, and then He empowered them to reproduce (**Acts 9:31**) what they experienced with Him. We should empower and challenge those we are leading to go out and do what we just did with them. One way of making that happen at the end of the 25 days of After Salvation is to go out and "Invite." They must be aware of the spiritual hunger around them and invest in someone else.

**Matthew 4:19** — *And He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What is a disciple? From that definition, how closely does your life align to that definition?  
(**John 8:31**)

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2. What are the 6 indicators of authentic disciples? (**Matthew 4:19, Luke 9:23, John 14:23, John 15:8, John 13:35, Matthew 28:19**)

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3. Is making disciples solely the responsibility of pastors? What does **Ephesians 4:11-12** teach us?

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4. What are the five key things we discussed for making disciples effectively? (**Matthew 4:19, Matthew 28:20, Colossians 1:28, Acts 9:31, Luke 6:13**)

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# DAY 18: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

DAY 18 OF 25 · WEEK 4

Step into your calling, share your testimony, and make disciples.

It's Day 18, and we are in the middle of understanding the mission of God. One of the most undercommunicated concepts is the spiritual battle we all face as Christians. Yes, we do fight with our human nature; we struggle to submit to God at times, but that is not all. There is a real active force fighting within the spiritual realms of things that we cannot see. With that said, this isn't to put fear into you or imply that every negative thing happens because of satan. Sometimes the choices we make have negative consequences, or we have a lack of self-control, which can cause harm to us or put us in a depressed state.

It has been said that this battle exists because "eternity is on the line." Souls will have a destination after this life. It will be either heaven or hell, and a war rages for all souls, even those who are evil people. There is a stigma on spiritual warfare because certain Christians have taken this topic way out of context or emphasized it so much that it feels like satan is an unstoppable force. We as believers are fighting out of a place of victory, not defeat. The truth is that the enemy doesn't want us to understand the power, freedom, authority, and victory we now possess. If we understood and tapped into that potential, our lives would completely change, and we would become dangerous to the kingdom of darkness. Could you imagine if Christians were all in, not just a little, but 100%, and knew how to fight this battle?

## The Battle

### Battle With The Sinful Nature

As we have highlighted on Day 4, we are in a battle between two forces, and they are the Sinful Nature ("the flesh") and the Spirit. The best scriptural example of the sinful nature comes out of Romans 7.

**Romans 7:14-25** — *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

What Paul is saying here is that we will live with the pull or bend in our human nature towards sin until we meet Jesus. The good news is this (verse 25): we have deliverance through Jesus Christ. We can stand up to the pull of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. If you do not remember how to fight through sin, look back at Day 2. We will not spend too much time on this because of our previous discussions, but I did want to bring this back to your attention as we talk about the battle, because the enemy will try to use our nature against us constantly.

## The Spiritual Battle

The spiritual battle is so real, we do have the ability to see it raging in front of us, but we have to have eyes to see (spiritual eyes). The more in tune with the Holy Spirit we are, the greater this reality becomes, but also the greater peace, life, and understanding we will have (**Romans 8:6**). With that said, it's not like the devil is behind every corner or under every rock. Do not live in paranoia or fear because we have victory through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

**2 Timothy 1:7** — *For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

**Romans 8:37-39** — *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**1 Corinthians 15:57** — *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Since we now know we have victory through Christ Jesus, we should start to understand how the enemy attacks. He usually attacks us when we are vulnerable, off guard, or tired. The first few months are especially vulnerable because you are new to your faith, and you are pressing into God. The enemy will do everything he can to pull you away from God.

**1 Peter 5:8** — *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

Remember, you already have the victory, but you have to walk in it. So, how is it possible that we stay on guard at all times? One of the most effective ways to think of this idea of being on guard is to understand how a soldier thinks. Does the soldier show up daily to war with shorts, sandals, and a t-shirt? No! He shows up in battle gear ready to go and take on the day. We as Christians have to have the same mindset. We should put on our "spiritual armor" every day and have the awareness that the battle is raging daily. The best way to do this is to wake up each morning to spend time with God and remind yourself of what it says in the book of Ephesians.

**Ephesians 6:10-13** — *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

## Spiritual Armor

**We have spiritual armor to fight this battle, and here are the verses that help us to understand what we have.**

***Ephesians 6:14-17** — Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

### **The Belt of Truth**

Truth holds us together, very much like a belt. The truth of God's word, when manifested in our lives, forms character-guiding attributes like stability, integrity, and honesty (**John 17:17**). These truths are marks of a genuine believer, which also reflect the character of who Christ is. Specifically, in verse 14, Paul describes the Roman soldier's armor. One part of their uniform was a "belt" which supported the sword, balanced out their armor, and helped secure key parts of their gear. Truth gives us confidence and clarity about who Christ is and about the Word of God, while also correcting us and keeping our spiritual lives on track.

### **The Breastplate of Righteousness**

The Roman soldier's breastplate protected the heart, lungs, and other vital organs in battle. For believers, Paul refers to this as the "breastplate of righteousness." Just as the breastplate covers vital organs for the soldier, so does Christ's righteousness cover us. So when we put on His righteousness, we are relying on Christ's righteousness, not our own ability to protect ourselves. We are not capable of protecting ourselves through our own righteousness.

In addition, there is a responsibility within the believer to put on the breastplate of righteousness daily (**Matthew 6:33**). We must understand and, most importantly, apply God's word and follow His Spirit. Within this battle that we face, we must avoid and defend against the schemes and attacks of the enemy and our own flesh. Nothing knocks a believer off course more quickly than sin. That sin brings shame, embarrassment, and separation in our relationship with God. Ultimately, it delays the spiritual maturing process that is taking place. That is why "right living" matters in this battle.

### **Feet Fitted With The Gospel of Peace**

We, as believers in this battle, are trying to bring the Good News or the gospel to those around us. In the midst of this, we are in a real battle that is spiritually and physically violent. The gospel gives peace to those who are in spiritual turmoil. Only through a relationship with Christ can humans find true peace, security, and freedom.

Roman soldiers also had sandals as a part of their battle dress uniform, and believers should have themselves fitted and ready to bring the good news of Jesus to those in a spiritual struggle. Allow peace to guide you; the enemy wants to disrupt our peace by frustrating us, but don't let him.

## **The Shield of Faith**

The shield is a very easy-to-understand part of Roman armor. It was used to protect the soldier from arrows, swords, and other weaponry. The enemy will come at the Christian from all angles, and this is the advantage of the shield. It's mobile and allows you to defend all angles of attack. In the same way, our faith covers us in all aspects of attack from the enemy.

Remember, faith is trust and reliance on something or someone, so in this sense, we have trust in God that protects us from the enemy. He is our shield. Specifically, this passage talks about flaming arrows, but it says the shield of faith can extinguish "All" if our trust (faith) is fully reliant on God.

## **The Helmet of Salvation**

Just as a physical helmet protects the head of a soldier, Paul describes the "helmet of salvation" to protect the believer's mind and thoughts. This helmet represents the assurance of salvation and the hope of eternal life in Christ. This, in return, gives confidence to the believer in who he or she is in Christ. This also provides mental and spiritual stability within our thoughts.

satan is a thought-caster, as we see in Genesis 3 when he tells Eve, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The battle of the mind is real, and the enemy will try to convince you of so many things, but knowing who we are and the security we have in Christ establishes great confidence in our new identity.

## **The Sword of the Spirit**

Lastly, this is the first and only offensive weapon mentioned within the passage. It symbolizes the Word of God (The Bible), which is a powerful weapon for believers to use in combating spiritual challenges such as temptation and deception. As mentioned previously, we see Jesus Himself use scripture to fight off and defend Himself against the enemy (*Matthew 4:1-11*), and He does this throughout His ministry. One other note: when Jesus is being tempted in the wilderness, Jesus says "out loud" the scripture. We must not only declare the word of God internally, but it's necessary at times to verbalize out loud the truth of God's words over us in prayer or during moments of being attacked. There is power in His word!

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. Do you truly believe there is an “unseen” spiritual battle occurring? Explain your answer. (*Ephesians 6:10-13, 1 Peter 5:8*)

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2. Today we learned we fight "out of a place of victory, not defeat" (*Romans 8:37-39, 1 Corinthians 15:57*). Do you actually live like someone who has the victory, or does the enemy still convince you you're losing?

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3. How does the enemy use our sinful nature against us, and what steps can we take to resist temptation? (*Romans 7:14-25, Matthew 6:13*)

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4. What is spiritual armor, and why is spiritual armor so important? (*Ephesians 6:14-17*)

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# DAY 19: KINGDOM & CALLING

DAY 19 OF 25 · WEEK 4

Step into your calling, share your testimony, and make disciples.

We are on day 19, and we only have 6 days left. I'm very proud of you! Today, I want to unpack and emphasize the importance of the Kingdom of God and how your calling plays a part in God's ultimate plan. The Kingdom of God was something I kept reading about in the Bible and heard preachers talk about, but when I was young in faith, I had no idea what that meant and why that was important for me to understand! I would read verses like the following:

**Matthew 6:33** — *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

**Matthew 6:9-10** — *This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

**Luke 4:43** — *But He said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also because that is why I was sent."*

One of the best and simplest understandings of this topic, "The Kingdom of God," comes from the Lexham Survey of Theology, which states, "On the most basic level, we may say the kingdom of God is present wherever the king is to be found. Jesus is present by His Spirit both in the church and in the world." So technically, Christians and the Spirit Himself represent the Kingdom of God wherever they go. In other words, since our faith is in Jesus, and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, we are ambassadors of the kingdom of God.

## Ambassadors Of Christ

So, what is an ambassador? An ambassador is a high-ranking diplomat who represents a state or government. They are usually assigned to another sovereign state or international organization. So, in plain terms, just as ambassadors represent their respective countries or governments, Christians represent Christ here on earth.

**2 Corinthians 5:20** — *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

What this verse is saying is that God desires that humans become His representatives here on earth to proclaim or tell the world the good news of Jesus Christ. When Christians get hold of this truth, it is very powerful within their spiritual life. It informs and gives purpose to their actions because now everything they do is not just for themselves, but for Christ everywhere they go and everything they do.

**1 Peter 2:9-10** — *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His*

*wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

We are a part of God's family, and because of the overwhelming truth of His mercy, love, grace, and forgiveness, we should be proud (not prideful) and confident (not arrogant) in who we represent here on earth and in the message we should share with the world.

**Romans 1:16** — *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*

## Kingdom Advancement

Advancing the Kingdom of God calls us as believers to align our lives with God's purposes, allowing us to take part in His will on earth until His return. As we consider these things, we must understand that an end is coming, though we do not know the day or the hour (**Matthew 24:36**). Broadly speaking, most Christian denominations use the theological term "eschatology," which means "the study of the last things." This study focuses on things like the second coming of Christ, final judgment, restoration, and renewal, which we see throughout Scripture and which are brought to completion in the book of Revelation. That is why we can speak so confidently about the victory we have in Christ: we know what happens at the end, and God wins!

It is also important to remember that we do not save anyone; it is the Spirit who works in and through us to convict the world that they need Him (**John 16:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5**). ***We are the vessels God uses to carry that message, and we are the hands that help encourage and assist people along their spiritual journey. As Christians, we have the key that unlocks life and purpose for every soul on earth (Matthew 10:7-8)***, and we should be willing to share that key with everyone who wants it. That key is salvation in Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 16:19** — *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

As Christians, we have been given authority through Christ to carry out God's will on earth. That is why in **Matthew 28:18-19** it says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." Jesus is letting us know that He is passing down His authority to us at this moment. Now that Jesus gives us our directive in Matthew 28, can we be confident that we will have victory in accomplishing this task? We have victory through Christ! Here are some verses that speak on the idea of victory for the believer.

## Verses Of Victory

**John 16:33** — *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

**1 John 5:4** — *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

**Romans 8:31-32** — *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all — how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?*

**Proverbs 21:31** — *The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.*

**1 Corinthians 15:57** — *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## Our Calling

As believers, we are all called to participate in the advancement of the kingdom. So many times, the body of Christ (the church) leaves the responsibility of developing disciples and the work of the ministry to the church leaders. At the same time, church leaders have just accepted that role for various reasons. If we look closely at scripture, we can see a major flaw in this understanding that has taken place in the current church.

**Ephesians 4:11-12** — *So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Friends, we have to change the way we see our role as the church. The true role of the church leaders is to equip or train the church for the work of the ministry (to make disciples). When this proper alignment happens, the church (you) can go make disciples (along with the church leaders) and will see an Acts 2 movement take place (**Acts 2:42-47**).

This is not a spectator sport; this is all hands on deck! The reason so many Christians feel like they are missing something in their spiritual life is that they are not engaged in the calling of the mission that is at hand. They have a relationship with God, and they go to church, but at the end of the day, they still feel empty. The mission fills this gap in the heart of man. The Christian has the Holy Spirit, and with His presence, if you are not engaged in the mission, you are going against the Spirit's leading. The Spirit is always leading us towards the will of the Father, and a major part of God's will is to save that which is lost, those who are far from Him.

**2 Peter 3:9** — *The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

This is another reason I have created this tool ([www.aftersalvation.com](http://www.aftersalvation.com) or After Salvation App). I want you to feel confident and equipped to help others on their journey. You do not need a seminary degree to make disciples; you just need the desire, boldness, and commitment to step out in faith and do it. We are the only ones who can be accountable for our faith, so it is up to us to know what we believe and how to live out our faith. Also, I have heard many times, "I'm not a very influential person. Who will I disciple?" The truth is, everyone has some type of circle of influence. Some are small, and some are big. Regardless, be faithful to those that the Lord has placed in front of you and contribute towards their spiritual growth.

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What does it mean to be an Ambassador of Christ? What does your daily life, your work, your conversations, and your social media say about the Kingdom you represent? (**2 Corinthians 5:20**)

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2. What truth does **John 16:33** teach us about our current circumstances, and how should we face this challenge?

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3. What is so powerful about **2 Peter 3:9**? Also, how does this verse help us defend our faith?

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4. The reading says "everyone has some type of circle of influence," small or big. Who specifically is in your circle right now (family, coworkers, classmates, neighbors) that the Lord may be calling you to pray for and encourage toward Him? (**Matthew 25:21**) Let me encourage you, go and spiritually fight for your circle to know Christ!

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5. Without looking, what are the 4 pillars of After Salvation?



# DAY 20: TESTIMONY

DAY 20 OF 25 · WEEK 4

Step into your calling, share your testimony, and make disciples.

## Your Testimony

Today's lesson will be a little different in that it does not include much reading, but will leave you time to write. Your testimony matters because it is your account about who Christ is in your life and what He has done for you.

**1 Peter 3:15** — *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

Sharing your testimony should be a normal rhythm of the believer's life. We should always be ready to share when the time comes. Today the challenge is to write out your testimony and to share it with your mentor or small group. Even if you feel like you know it well enough, the challenge is still to think it out and write it down. If you don't know how to explain your testimony, here are a few pointers to think about.

### 1) Origin Story

What was your upbringing like? Who were your parents and siblings, and what were the early years of your life like? What were your family dynamics? For example, "I grew up in \_\_\_\_\_. I have 2 brothers, and my mom and dad were a happy couple, but one day my parents divorced." Expand this in your words with greater detail. How did your early childhood affect who you became? What did your family value? What did you value growing up? Was church a part of your life? Did you have a relationship with God in your life early on?

### 2) Life Before Christ

A lot of times, we had very specific moments that built up to accepting Christ. What was it for you? Sometimes it was a crisis, other times curiosity drew you into faith, or maybe your upbringing was the leading factor before you decided on Christ. Give great detail about the build-up to that point.

### 3) Life After Christ

Since you accepted Christ, have you seen a change in your life? What has specifically changed? How would you describe your life with Jesus? Why would you encourage other people to make the same decision that you made? Remember, there is no time limit on this, nor a specific length of writing you need to accomplish. The only recommendation is to think it out and to write it down!





# DAY 21: COMMITMENT

DAY 21 OF 25 · WEEK 5

Build the lifelong commitment that produces spiritual maturity.



[aftersalvation.com/week-5](https://aftersalvation.com/week-5)

Today, we are going to talk about the last pillar of our faith, which is Christ-Centered Commitment. To help bring clarity to the idea of being "Christ-centered," it simply means that everything — actions, decisions, worldview, and more — is now filtered through our newfound relationship with and understanding of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we commit to and obey His ways through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit and His Word, the Bible. Through this, we are enabled to honor and glorify God by fulfilling His will and purposes in our lives.

Our lives are now hidden with Christ ([Galatians 2:20](#)). It is Christ, through His Spirit, who sustains us and gives us the capacity and ability to live with strong spiritual commitment ([2 Corinthians 1:21-22](#)). In addition, you and I are still living our lives in real time. Although our salvation is secure in Christ ([John 10:28-29](#)), we have a personal responsibility to put forth the effort that leads to spiritual maturity and to continual worship and love of God ([2 Peter 1:5-8](#)). We cannot neglect our personal responsibility within our faith. Ultimately, we should desire to honor God as authentic believers, and if we never desire to pursue godly things, we should ask why and examine whether our faith in Christ is genuine ([2 Corinthians 13:5](#)).

## Tying All Four Pillars Together

If you have a Christ-Centered Commitment to your Relationship with God, in your Community (the local church), to the Mission for God, spiritual maturity will follow. This is how Christ-Centered Commitment ties it all together!



A lack of commitment is the number one issue plaguing the modern Christian. We all go through moments in life where we get tired; that's normal as humans. The greater concern is how culture is currently telling us the way to process the concept of commitment, which strongly hinders Christians' commitment. The thought of being committed to something in our modern-day culture is not a strong virtue. You might hear things like "If it's not working, change it" or "*FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)*." We live in a very rapidly changing world where we are focused on getting things "fast" and "now," or on the other side, worrying about "*missing it*." Although some aspects of "now" are very nice at times, there are major spiritual and mental benefits for long-term commitments.

The reason this mentality of "fast and now" is dangerous, especially to the Christian, is that there is a maturity process that has to take place within the believer. There is no substitute for time. You will find that scripture and the Holy Spirit will constantly challenge the inward being throughout the course of life. Our being and will (or desires) are very stubborn, and it takes time to be shaped in the image of Christ. We are shaped by our obedience to what God is calling us to do. Many times when this is happening, it is extremely tough (emotionally/mentally), because God is working things out in us. If we lack commitment in these moments because we are not seeing the spiritual results we want "right now," we miss what God is teaching us, and it delays our spiritual maturity.

Scripture tends to shred and reshape our worldview in a major way. The Holy Spirit will challenge us to do things outside our comfort zone and convict us of things we need to get rid of. Again, if we lack spiritual commitment within those moments, we will find ourselves frustrated and discouraged, which will make us think this "God thing" is not working. We play an important role in our spiritual development, but thankfully, we do have help to break the cycle of our sinful nature, which comes from the power of His Word and Spirit.

## Abiding

As we begin to shape our understanding of biblical commitment, the word abiding is a powerful word for us to understand. To abide simply means "to accept or act in accordance with." This word has a greater meaning for the Christian because Jesus Himself used similar terminology to describe our relationship with Him.

**John 15:4-5** — *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing.*

When you think of a vine and branches, these two parts are woven so perfectly together that they have this unbelievable strength. Since our life is now supposed to be hidden in Christ (**Colossians 3:3**), we should be woven so tightly together, just like a vine and a branch, that we become "spiritually" strong in Christ. If we are apart from Christ, we will not be able to see the blessings and the fruit of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**) manifest in our lives.

When we say blessings, this can be identified as physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual health. God is not a genie in a bottle or a lottery ticket; He is "Abba" (father) and you are His child, and He loves you so much and wants to provide for you (**Matthew 6:26**). There will be times when God answers prayers in a

financial sense, but it is important to acknowledge and see the emotional, physical, and spiritual provisions He provides us as well.

Also, if we find ourselves apart from God, we will not be able to live out the life He intends: "Apart from me, you can do nothing." We need to have a strong trust and dependence on God; that trust and dependence are what form this strong bond in our relationship with God. That is why when people say they need to "fix themselves" before coming to God, this is completely backward from what God wants us to do. He wants us to come to Him first and accept Him as Lord in our lives, then, through this new bond, we can start to be transformed by Him.

## Remaining Healthy

How do we know we are healthy (spiritually speaking) within our commitment to God? If you think about the Pharisees and Sadducees, they were "spiritually committed" but were unhealthy and did not really know God (**Matthew 23:27-28**). Unfortunately, there is a mindset (especially in the West) that once I accept Jesus and get baptized, "I'm good." The reality is, we gave our lives to Christ in the form of a commitment to follow Him.

This pattern occurs within many Christians after salvation and baptism, where they will very quickly say such things as "I don't sense God's presence" or "I don't see God working in my life." One reason this can happen is very simple: they're not abiding in Him. There is no sense of commitment towards God outside of just believing in Him. **James 2:19** says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder." What James is saying here is that real faith is demonstrated not only with thought, but also with action. For us to remain healthy within our commitment, action is required on the part of the believer.

It's important to note that we can experience God through peace, silence, reading, worship, and many other ways. There will be times when God seems silent, not because He does not love you or because He is angry with you, but simply to help you grow in faith and trust Him. Your emotions are not the deciding factor in whether God loves you or in His faithfulness to you. We will speak more about this on Day 25. As you read Scripture, remember that you are reading the highlights of individuals and groups of people whose stories unfold before you. Most of the time in Scripture, you do not see the hours, weeks, and years of buildup, silence, and difficulty that led them to that place.

As we continue with this idea of remaining healthy, there is a verse I want to introduce you to.

**1 John 2:4-6** — *Whoever says, "I know Him," but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys His word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did.*

In this verse, it doesn't say believe in God but do whatever you please; it says we must walk as Jesus did. Living like Jesus is impossible if you are not committed to His leading and direction. This is where the understanding of abiding comes into play, but it's equally important to identify what Jesus commits His life to. As mentioned previously, we have His Word (the Bible) and the Holy Spirit to help us. Since we have

God living inside of us (Holy Spirit), we can live like Jesus, but we must engage our will to be committed to His ways.

## **Jesus Modeled The Four Pillars**

**Relationship:** Jesus modeled for us the perfect example of what a relationship and life with God would look like (*1 Peter 2:21, John 13:15, Matthew 11:27, John 5:19-20, John 16:7*).

**Community:** Jesus established His community, which is called the church, through His disciples. The church would become a movement of people who carry the "Good News" to the world (*Matthew 16:18, Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 18:20, Acts 2:42-47, Ephesians 4:11-12, John 13:34-35*).

**Mission:** Jesus had a mission to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be saved. His goal was to provide a way to restore our relationship with God the Father (*Matthew 20:28, Acts 1:8, John 3:16-17, 1 John 4:9-10, John 14:6*).

**Christ-Centered Commitment:** With just these few verses listed above, we can clearly see that Jesus was committed to showing us how to live on earth in a relationship with the Father. He was also committed to the success of His community, the church, by teaching, modeling, and sending the Spirit of God to equip and guide them. Jesus was committed to His mission of conquering sin and death through the power of His resurrection, to set people free from the bondage of sin. Lastly, we must remain committed to Him in these areas for the duration of our lives.

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What does Christ-Centered Commitment mean? How do **2 Corinthians 1:21–22** and **Galatians 2:20** tie into this pillar?

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2. **John 15:4-5** describes the vine and branches as deeply connected, showing that our strength comes from remaining in Christ. But what happens when we begin to drift from that connection? How do we return to a place of spiritual strength in Him?

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3. After reading today, you should realize that after salvation, you still have personal responsibility in your faith. How does **2 Peter 1:5–8** help us see that?

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4. Now that you understand the 4 pillars of A.S., how do they work together, and what should be the outcome? (R.C.M.C.)

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# DAY 22: RADICAL

DAY 22 OF 25 · WEEK 5

Build the lifelong commitment that produces spiritual maturity.

As we begin Day 22, we are going to uncover how we should prioritize our lives. Some reading this might feel that this is a pretty radical change in their life. In life, no matter the age, you have priorities, meaning you have things that you place a greater importance on than others. This could be family, relationships, careers, school, or sports, but everyone is different depending on what they value the most in their life currently. In different seasons of life, our priorities do change, but specifically when we accept Christ in our lives, there is a calling to reprioritize what we value most.

From the beginning of time, it has always been about God. He wants to be the number one priority in our lives. God created us, and as we have learned, He desires us to be in fellowship with Him. If we go back to the Old Testament, we can see this very clearly.

**Exodus 20:3** — *You shall have no other gods before me.*

**Deuteronomy 6:5** — *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Just from these few passages, we can see there is a call for humans to have this "complete devotion" to God. Since we know what scripture says, how do we know what is required of the believer? That is what I want to dive into next.

## Idols In Our Life

What are idols? An idol is a pagan, material effigy that is worshiped as a representation of, or instead of, a deity. So in simpler terms, an idol is anything we worship and place a higher value on than God. This could mean pagan idol(s) or, as the Bible references them, the "gods" of this world. In **Deuteronomy 6:14**, it says, "Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you." This is speaking directly to the world's religions.

It's important to note that within this same line of thinking, sorcery and fortune-telling would also need to be considered idol worship.

**Deuteronomy 18:10-11** — *Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.*

In addition, this would include astrology.

**Isaiah 47:13-14** — *All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up.*

This verse is referencing a judgment being passed against those who practice this type of worship. The last point on this topic is that we can make idols out of anything in our lives. Whatever we give the most value and credibility to can be idols. As an example:

- ***When a mother makes her children her world, and nothing else matters.***
- ***The athlete who places a priority on perfecting that sport to a point where he or she drowns out all distractions in his or her life.***
- ***The man who values his worth by the money he makes, and places his focus and attention solely on his bank account.***
- ***The musician who plays and practices to the point that he or she eats, sleeps, breathes, and lives music only.***

If these desires are rightly prioritized within us, they are not bad. It is not bad to be a great mom and love your family well. It's not bad to have a desire and passion to play a sport or music and be amazing at it. There is nothing wrong with providing for yourself and your family financially. We just have to make sure that these do not become idols in our lives. The sinful nature tends to place everything but God in its rightful spot. Remember, it is God who gives us the ability to have and care for our children. It is God who makes us healthy enough to play sports or music, or to make money. It is all His anyway! He created all these things, so be careful not to worship the gifts that the gift giver gave to you. I encourage you to be very careful in what you worship in your life and place your Savior, our God, at the top of the priority list.

## **A Radical Commitment**

Please read [\*\*Luke 14:25-35\*\*](#) at this time.

Luke 14 is a strong call that might make you question Jesus about what He is saying. I wanted to bring this scripture to you now, so later in your journey with God, you won't be caught off guard by it, and we can process it now. To follow Jesus takes a radical commitment. This scripture points out the reality of the following ideas:

- ***Your love and commitment towards God should not have any equals.***
- ***There is a cost to truly follow Jesus.***
- ***We must constantly gauge how we're prioritizing God in our lives.***

The biggest thing that catches attention when first reading this is the word "hate." At first, it's hard to understand why Jesus would use such strong language, especially towards the family. It honestly causes some confusion early on in many faith journeys. Throughout researching and asking questions about why the word "hate" was used, two important takeaways emerge.

First, Jesus wanted them to have a deep sense of introspection. Introspection means examining one's thoughts and feelings, or "soul-searching." This forced not only His disciples at that moment, but the crowd as well, to look deep inside, to see if their allegiance was to God or man. It purified their hearts' attentions

toward God and made them examine if they were really "all-in." To this day, Jesus's words from this passage still have the same effect on us. It puts a pause within us to reflect on our commitment to Him.

Secondly, Jesus is using the word "hate" to show us that, as believers, we should have a stronger loyalty to Christ even over family or other earthly relationships. Luke 14 helps frame our understanding to cherish God above all. This word "hate" can best be understood comparatively. In comparison to our love and devotion to God, we "love less" everything else. The interesting thing is that when you place priority on loving Christ, there is an overflow that enables you to love those around you in ways you never have before. You begin to see them through the lens of Christ. The same goes for your life and possessions as well. Through radical commitment, a real transformation takes place in our minds regarding how we view God and life.

When you have radical commitment, you are trusting Jesus above all things, and nothing holds a higher value in your life. For most people, there are four main priorities: family, friends, career, and possessions. Should not these things come secondary to the One who gave you all these wonderful gifts in the first place? Following Jesus is a true sacrifice, but in return, we will have life, and we will experience it to the fullest (**John 10:10**).

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. What does **Deuteronomy 6:5** teach us, and how do we know if an idol is in our lives?

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2. What is Scripture teaching us in **Deuteronomy 18:10–11** and **Isaiah 47:13–14**, and why is this important for those who follow Christ?

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3. What is Jesus teaching us in **Luke 14:25–35**, and how could people misunderstand this passage?

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4. There is a cost to following Jesus, and we know that for the believer, heaven is our future. But we also find Scripture like **John 10:10** that makes a very strong promise to us for the here and now. How do we experience this life to the fullest?

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# DAY 23: GOD'S WILL

DAY 23 OF 25 · WEEK 5

Build the lifelong commitment that produces spiritual maturity.

We are on Day 23, and today we will be discussing God's will. This is a very difficult topic to address in just a few paragraphs, but it's important to build some simple frameworks behind this concept. There are many dimensions to understanding the will of God. Many theologians and pastors agree that there are three main dimensions to God's will:

## **Sovereign Will** (*Isaiah 46:9-10*)

What God is going to do no matter what, such as sending Jesus. In other words, God's sovereign will controls the direction of universal history without fail.

## **Moral Will** (*Matthew 22:37-40*)

This is shown in Scripture through commands, principles, and teachings. God lays out His desire for obedience to His standard of righteousness, expressed through biblical commands. Unfortunately, we as humans have a tendency not to follow them.

## **Personal Will** (*Psalms 32:8*)

This refers to the specific leading of God in an individual's life. This is God's detailed plan for the individual believer, which is not revealed in Scripture and may or may not be accomplished depending on the individual's obedience.

For the sake of time, today we will focus on one aspect of God's will: specifically, God's "Personal Will" for us. This is not an attempt to address every aspect of God's will. One of the most frequently asked questions is, "How do I know God's will for my life?" or "What is my purpose in life?"

## **It Starts With Genuine Faith & Commitment**

As we read about on Day 3, our practice of faith matters in our daily lives. Faith not only pleases God (*Hebrews 11:6*), but genuine faith propels us to a place where commitment to God comes naturally, not forced. That is why verses like Proverbs 3 are so helpful.

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

## **Let's Break Down These Two Verses**

- 1) "Trust in the Lord"** — This communicates our faith and belief in God and His ability to provide all we need.
- 2) "With all your heart"** — This demonstrates that we are fully committed to God in every area of our lives. Not 60% or 95%, but we are all in.

3) **"Do not lean on your own understanding"** — This identifies that when we have genuine faith, we shift our priority from trusting ourselves only to trusting God fully.

4) **"Submit to Him"** — This is the surrendering of our thoughts, ideas, desires, will, and actions before the Lord. If we do this, there is a promise that follows at the end of verse 6.

5) **"He will make your paths straight"** — When God has full access to your life, you are willing to listen and ready to be obedient to what He leads you to do. This positions us to discern the personal will of God.

## A Personal Relationship Is Required

Next, I want to share a passage that completely transformed my commitment to the will of God. When I was in high school, I read these verses, and they reshaped my life.

**Matthew 7:21-23** — *Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"*

What stands out to most people is the phrase, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom." This means that not everyone who believes in God will be saved or enter the kingdom of heaven. Just because someone believes that God exists doesn't mean they have truly made Jesus Lord (master/king) of their life. We can say the right things, do good deeds, and look like a good person, but Jesus is targeting something deeper here.

In the second half of verse 21, it says, "But only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Only God knows what His will is for you, and it's impossible to understand God's will apart from Him (**John 15:5**). To accomplish the will of the Father requires that we know the Father intimately and that He has our whole heart.

It's important to mention that God's will for your life will look different from that of your friends, family members, and spiritual leaders. We cannot inherit the will of God from others, nor borrow from others' experiences to understand His will. There are no patterns or shortcuts, and we even see this in scripture, where everyone's journey is so unique. The Father's will for us is developed solely through a relationship over a lifetime with Him and will vary depending on the person. As you mature, stay close to Him in your relationship and be obedient to what He calls you to; I can assure you it will be very difficult for you to miss His will for your life.

## God Looks At The Motive Of The Heart

In verse 22, it shows these amazing "works" being done, such as casting out demons, performing miracles, and prophesying. These spiritual leaders appear to be doing great things in the name of Jesus,

yet verse 23 says, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers." You might be asking yourself, "How can they be doing great works in Jesus' name, and then Jesus says He never knew them?"

There are many explanations for why God allows signs and miracles to occur through those who do not know Him. Regardless of why these signs and miracles were allowed to take place, one thing is certain: behind the scenes, God knew that their hearts were corrupt. The heart is hard to understand (*Jeremiah 17:9*), and that is true for all of us. These spiritual leaders did not know the Father. They only appeared to be spiritual on the outside, but their intentions were inwardly evil and self-serving. God is more concerned with what is going on within us than with what we are doing for Him. Our motives matter and hold great importance in understanding God's will (*Matthew 15:8*).

### **It's A Journey, Not A Destination**

Lastly, some view God's personal will as a destination or a title, meaning once they marry that person or get that specific role, they are finally in God's will. Your profession and relationship status are simply aspects of God's will being worked out in your life in real time. God's will is not a destination nor a title. Rather, think of God's will as a journey. Eugene Peterson has a book titled *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, and that title alone speaks to how one should pursue the will of God. The way to understand God's will is a journey of consistent and faithful obedience, trusting, and being in a relationship with God throughout your life. It's simple to understand, yet very difficult to accomplish due to our sinful nature and the deceptiveness of our hearts; that is why we must remain close and surrender everything to Him.

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. Identify and explain the three dimensions of God's will. Sovereign Will: (*Isaiah 46:9-10*) Moral Will: (*Matthew 22:37-40*) Personal Will: (*Psalms 32:8*)

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2. What does *Matthew 7:21-23* mean?

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3. *Proverbs 3:5-6* calls us to trust the Lord with 'all your heart,' not 60% or 95%. Are there areas in your life you are still holding back from full surrender, and what is keeping you from being all in?

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4. The reading argues that God's will is a journey, not a destination, and that we cannot inherit it from others. What can we learn from this?

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# DAY 24: MATURITY

DAY 24 OF 25 · WEEK 5

Build the lifelong commitment that produces spiritual maturity.

It's Day 24, and today we will get into the topic of spiritual maturity. Over the last few days, we have talked about some very deep topics that will take time to truly develop and implement in your life. For the believer, what is spiritual maturity, and how do we mature?

**Colossians 1:28** — *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*

In addition, **1 John 2:14** identifies three stages of spiritual maturity: children, young men, and men. These verses right here are the driving force for After Salvation, because we exist to develop and equip every believer to reach their full potential (maturity) in Christ. In **Hebrews 5:12-14**, it shows us the importance of spiritual maturity and relates it to milk and solid food, distinguishing the importance and our goal.

## How Do We Define Christian Spiritual Maturity

Someone who is spiritually mature does not strive to be perfect in the practice of his or her understanding, execution, and approach to life; that produces a religious person. Below are some great quotes from other believers about spiritual maturity.

*"Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God." — Oswald Chambers*

*"Maturity comes not with age but with the acceptance of responsibility. You are only young once, but you can be immature indefinitely." — John C. Maxwell*

*"The mark of spiritual maturity is the ability to see God in every circumstance." — Oswald Chambers*

*"The path to spiritual maturity is a journey of faith that takes time, patience, and a willingness to learn and grow from our experiences." — Author Unknown*

*"Maturity in Christ is not measured by how much you know about the Bible, but by how much of the Bible is manifested in your life." — Author Unknown*

*"Spiritual maturity is not about becoming religious; it's about becoming more like Jesus." — Rick Warren*

*"Spiritual maturity is not a destination; it's a lifelong journey of becoming more Christ-like in our thoughts, words, and actions." — Author Unknown*

## Spiritual Maturity Can Happen

When you have a Christ-Centered Commitment to your Relationship with God, your Community (the local church), and the Mission of God, spiritual maturity will follow.



### Four Additional Areas Of Focus

**1. Consistency** — The spiritually mature believers are consistent in everything they do, not perfect in everything they do. They understand that consistency within their connection to God, His church, and His mission will make a difference in his or her spiritual growth. This is one of the hardest spiritual disciplines to develop within our lives, but it is a key to the mature believer.

**2. Awareness** — As we mature (naturally speaking), we become more aware of the world around us, and we should be able to understand how to work within the context of the culture we find ourselves in. The same should be understood about the spiritual life. We should become more aware of our need for God and the power of His Holy Spirit and of the spiritual and fleshly battles that take place within and around us. Awareness is what separates children from adults, both in the natural sense and spiritual sense, and we become aware by processing knowledge, life events, and practice (obedience).

**3. Relentless Resistance** — Within the mind of spiritually mature people, they make commitments to die to themselves daily. They resist the devil and his temptations with a relentless and unwavering mental and physical commitment. This goes back to putting on the full armor of God; it is up to us to put on the armor of God daily. They understand the seriousness of sin and the destruction it causes. We have the power of the Spirit, which manifests the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, and the last fruit that is listed is self-control. Sin slows the progress of maturity and can sometimes completely paralyze the believer's spiritual life if they allow sin to overtake them.

**4. God's Will** — As we alluded to yesterday, to really know God is to know God's will. The mature believer has a Kingdom-focused mindset, understanding the importance of a one-track mind in Christ. This doesn't mean we aren't allowed to have fun, as not everything has to be ministry-related. This means that God is at the center of their world, and everything they have and everything they do is for His glory. They understand that the most important thing is being obedient to God's direction and purposes in their life.

## Scripture Concerning Spiritual Maturity

**Ephesians 4:13-15** — *Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

**Hebrews 6:1** — *Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.*

**James 1:2-4** — *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**1 Corinthians 13:11** — *When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.*

**Colossians 1:28** — *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*

**1 Peter 2:2** — *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.*

**2 Peter 3:18** — *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

**Philippians 3:12-14** — *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

**Galatians 5:22-23** — *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. **Hebrews 5:12–14** distinguishes between milk and solid food in the spiritual life. What is the passage teaching us about spiritual maturity?

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2. The reading lists four additional areas of focus for maturity: Consistency, Awareness, Relentless Resistance, and God's Will. Which of these four is currently the hardest to understand and/or follow?

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3. **James 1:2-4** says the testing of our faith produces perseverance, which produces maturity. How can trials actually shape our maturity in Christ?

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4. Over the last 5 weeks, we learned the four pillars of After Salvation. They are Relationship, Community, Mission, and Christ-Centered Commitment. How do these work together, and what should they produce within us?

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# DAY 25: REMEMBER

DAY 25 OF 25 · WEEK 5

Build the lifelong commitment that produces spiritual maturity.

Congratulations, you have officially made it to the last day of After Salvation! Thank you so much for trusting me with your valuable time. Please know that I have prayed for you in advance that God will grow and mold you more into His image daily. Today, I wanted to share some personal takeaways from my journey that I hope will be helpful as you continue on your journey with God. Commitment to God is not an easy road, and scripture reminds us just how hard it is to follow God.

**Matthew 7:13-14** — *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

You made it to Day 25, which alone should speak to your level of commitment to God. That is amazing — be proud of that work. As mentioned a few times throughout this journey, no shortcuts exist to becoming spiritually mature. Growth takes effort. Following God is not easy because the enemy and our flesh are constantly trying to fight for our attention and interest.

## Seasons

Life happens! You'll have good times and bad times, as we all do. **Ecclesiastes 3:1** says, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens." This is speaking about life, basically saying that things will happen, so don't be surprised when they do. Be careful and don't allow the difficulty of those life events to sway or push you away from God. The Lord is our anchor, and in **Hebrews 6:19** it says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Jesus never promises a life without difficult times. He tells us there will be trouble, but there is good news in even knowing this.

**John 16:33** — *I have told you these things, so that in me, you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

An important aspect to realize as humans is that we cannot control all events and circumstances. What we can control is this — staying connected and committed to God and relying on the Spirit of God for help and strength. These moments affect us in one of two ways: either they push us to greater levels of faith in God, or drive us away from God. Mentally, we have to be prepared for anything while not putting so much thought into "what could happen" that it leads us to anxiety. God wants you to know that no matter what you face, even death itself, He has overcome it all, so take heart, our hope is not in this world but in our eternal destiny.

## Don't Quench The Holy Spirit

In **1 Thessalonians 5:19**, it says, "Do not quench the Spirit." This is probably one of the hardest things to be sensitive to as a committed Christian. How do we know if we are quenching the Spirit of God in our lives? The tension comes when the believers become out of balance within their spiritual life. To quench the Holy Spirit means we stop listening to the correction and guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The question is, if the Holy Spirit is not leading, who is?

That means our flesh is leading us, and the danger is that this will drive us further away from God, inevitably. In return, this will directly affect us walking in our purpose and understanding His will for our lives. This goes back to Day 24, where we discussed how spiritual awareness helps to bring about spiritual maturity in our lives. Be faithful and aware of the leading of the Holy Spirit and don't drown out the voice of God in your life; the Holy Spirit is your advocate, your helper!

Other times, we can put too much emphasis on one area of our spiritual life and neglect the Holy Spirit. For example, some Christian backgrounds create an environment where the Word of God is elevated to a place where it seems to take precedence over the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is hardly spoken about within their services. There is a tremendous value in knowing the Word of God, and it is what forms and shapes us as believers. Hopefully, over the last 25 days, you have gotten a good introduction to scripture, but there is something to be said about being obedient to how the Holy Spirit is leading you in your life as well.

**John 4:23-24** — *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.*

So, we worship God in both the Spirit (Holy Spirit) and in truth (Bible/God's Word). Both are required for the believer to have spiritual success and growth. Learn how to hear God through His Word and His Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit is actually part of the Trinity, so pay special attention to this part of your spiritual life. When Jesus even says it would be better for Him to leave so the Father could send the helper, the Holy Spirit, we should pay special attention to that (**John 14:25-27**)!

## Your Emotions Are Not God

Lastly, we all struggle with emotions. Some show it more than others, but we all do. Specifically, when times get tough or things are not going our way, we all seem to get emotionally frustrated. We must learn how to separate our emotions. Just because you're having a rough day, it doesn't mean God is mad at you. Also, just because you might not be in the job or role that you want to be in, it doesn't mean God is trying to hold out on you because you must not have great faith.

**Hebrews 13:8** — *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

This is important to recognize because how we feel doesn't mean that is how God feels about us. Some people will say they missed one day of reading their Bible, and their day is going terribly, so "God must be mad at me." A lot of times, that is the failure of our inward expectations expressed by a non-connecting

outward circumstance. God is not mad at us if we don't read our Bible every day. What did the disciples do before the Gutenberg Press, which was created in the 1400s? They didn't have pocket Bibles everywhere they went. They relied on the Holy Spirit, and they did get into the Word as much as they could through temple gatherings and when they gathered together in homes. Furthermore, they shared the disciples' letters to the churches, which we now call the New Testament.

If we feel that way in our lives, what we're experiencing is an inward guilt that convinces us that we need to perform for God's love and favor, which simply is an incorrect way of viewing God. Should we read our Bibles? Absolutely! But, be careful that you don't become subject to what could be called the "good and bad scale." It's this idea that if you do enough good for God, He will love you more, and if you don't do enough religious activities for God that day, He will be mad or disappointed in you.

That is not how God operates. He operates out of grace and consistency. He is a just God, and He knows our heart's intention.

**Deuteronomy 32:4** — *He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.*

**Psalms 139:2-3** — *You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.*

God's love for you doesn't change based on your emotional state. God is the most consistent aspect of our life; He never changes. Your current emotional state does not affect God's love for you or your salvation. You are secure in Christ!

**Would you take the survey?**



*Scan the QR code to open the survey.*

## REFLECT

Use the questions below to reflect, journal, and discuss with your mentor or group.

1. **Hebrews 13:8** reminds us that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,' yet we often feel God's love shifts based on our performance. Why do we struggle with this, and what does God actually desire from us instead?

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2. **1 Thessalonians 5:19** says, "Do not quench the Spirit," and the reading asks a sobering question: if the Holy Spirit is not leading, who is? How do you recognize when your flesh is leading instead of the Spirit, and what does it look like to course correct?

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3. The reading says hard seasons either push us to greater faith in God or drive us away from Him. Looking back at a difficult season in your life, which direction did it move you, and what made the difference? (**John 16:33, Hebrews 6:19**)

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4. Now that you have completed After Salvation, do you feel equipped to lead someone else through it? If so, who is one person you feel could benefit from it?

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