



Acts

THE CHURCH

Spring Session 2022

Acts: The Church

A series about how the first Christians lived and served together, through the Book of Acts.

Throughout this series, we'll see how people who are being re-created in the image of Christ have represented him and his Kingdom, forming a diverse community to accomplish his mission.

Join us as we journey through Scripture reading, teaching, and reflection. Our prayer is that during this series, God will deepen your understanding of who he is and his plan for you through his Church.

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Introduction

to the Book of Acts

Author

Evidence points to Luke, who also authored the Gospel bearing his name, as being the author of the book of Acts. Paul's prison letters (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phm 1:24) mention Luke and reveal that he was a physician, as well as Paul's friend, traveling companion and co-laborer. It is believed that Luke and Acts were written at the same time, somewhere around AD 60 - 65.

Background

The book of Acts catalogues the spread of the good news of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, and then Samaria. The ministries of Peter and Paul depict the spread and growth of the early Church. Peter's ministry was focused in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, while Paul devoted himself to sharing the good news to the Gentiles. The fruit of his work resulted in bringing together Jewish and Gentile converts to form a local church.

Theme

The book of Acts highlights the work of God through the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who devoted themselves to Jesus. As a result of the redeeming work of Jesus, people are united across dividing lines of ethnicity, gender, and class.

Narrative Arc

Old Testament: The story of our creation and fall, and of God's promise to redeem His people.

The Gospels: The story of God's promise fulfilled through Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

The Book of Acts: The story of Jesus' impact on the world as His followers took the gospel message to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

Week 1 Message

The Church: Introduction

Teacher: _____

Baptism

Jesus instructed us to be baptized, so baptism becomes a step of obedience in our walk with him. While it is not necessary for salvation, it demonstrates submission to God.

Baptism is a beautiful,
public declaration of your commitment
to follow Jesus.

What is baptism?

Baptism is an outward and public expression of the inward commitment we make to follow Jesus.

Having decided to trust Jesus, the source of our salvation, we follow him in baptism as a marker of our new life in Christ.

Baptism is a faith event and celebration where believers decide to turn from their sin and follow Jesus Christ.

We immerse at Willamette Christian Church because we believe Scripture shows that Jesus modeled that for us as the way to publicly acknowledge our faith in him.

Who should be baptized?

Every person who believes in Jesus Christ should be baptized. Believers realize their sin separates them from God. They conclude that Jesus Christ's death on the cross bridges the gap between them and God. Having decided to trust Jesus alone for their salvation, they follow Him in baptisms as a marker of their new life in Christ.

- Matthew 28:19-20

What is the meaning of baptism?

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. It illustrates Jesus' death, burial and resurrection and at the same time represents our new life in Christ.

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 6:3-4

Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-39

²⁶ As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”

³⁰ Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³² The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.
And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

³³ He was humiliated and received no justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.”

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” ³⁵ So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶ As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?” ³⁸ He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing.

Notes:

- Circle text that mentions the Holy Spirit.
- Box text that demonstrates God's provision.
- Underline the places where you see the gospel is carried out.

What stood out to you today?

Sin's Power is Broken

Romans 6:1-14

¹ Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? ² Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? ³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³ Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

Notes:

- Underline any text that illustrates death and note how it's correlated to baptism.
- Though a grim reality is found in death, in this passage what does death usher in?

What stood out to you today?

Blessings for All Nations

Isaiah 56:1-8

¹ This is what the Lord says:

“Be just and fair to all.

Do what is right and good,
for I am coming soon to rescue you
and to display my righteousness among you.

² Blessed are all those who are careful to do this.

Blessed are those who honor my Sabbath days of rest
and keep themselves from doing wrong.

³ “Don’t let foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord say,
‘The Lord will never let me be part of his people.’

And don’t let the eunuchs say,
‘I’m a dried-up tree with no children and no future.’

⁴ For this is what the Lord says:

I will bless those eunuchs who keep my Sabbath days holy
and who choose to do what pleases me
and commit their lives to me.

⁵ I will give them—within the walls of my house—
a memorial and a name
far greater than sons and daughters could give.
For the name I give them is an everlasting one.
It will never disappear!

⁶ “I will also bless the foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord,
who serve him and love his name,
who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest,
and who hold fast to my covenant.

⁷ I will bring them to my holy mountain of Jerusalem
and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer.
I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices,
because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

⁸ For the Sovereign Lord,
who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says:
I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel.

Notes:

- Underline where the text points to God's desire for all people to come to salvation in him.

What stood out to you today?

Salvation is for Everyone

Romans 10:5-14

⁵ For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. ⁶ But faith's way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (to bring Christ down to earth). ⁷ And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again)."

⁸ In fact, it says,

"The message is very close at hand;
it is on your lips and in your heart."

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."

¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him.

¹³ For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

Notes:

- Underline text that speaks to faith and salvation.

What stood out to you today?

Week 1: Day 6

Week 1 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15-20 minutes today to rest with God.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: The Holy Spirit

Teacher: _____

God the Spirit

In Acts 2, when the day of Pentecost arrived, the Jewish believers came together and the fulfillment of God's promise took place. The promised Holy Spirit descended upon them and dwelled in them. Throughout the book of Acts, we see the Holy Spirit equip and empower believers to live together as the family of God, to produce spiritual fruit, and to carry the good news of the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

The following series of questions and answers from the "God the Spirit" catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* offer clarity about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

What is
the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, God at work in the world and in the Church even now.

- Job 32:8; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22;
John 14:25-26; 1 John 5:6-8

How is the
Holy Spirit
revealed in the
old covenant?

The Holy Spirit is revealed in the old covenant as the giver of life, the One who spoke through the prophets.

- Galatians 1:1-2; Job 33:4; Psalms 104:30;
Isaiah 61:1-3; Ezekiel 2:2, 11:5; Joel 2:28

How is the
Holy Spirit
revealed in the
new covenant?

The Holy Spirit is revealed as the Lord who leads us into all truth and enables us to grow in the likeness of Christ.

- John 16:13; Acts 1:4-8; 2:16-21; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Peter 1:1-2

How do we
recognize the
Holy Spirit in our
lives?

We recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit when we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and are brought into love and harmony with God, with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with all creation.

- Psalms 139:7; Romans 8:1-11; 10:9; Ephesians 1:13-14; Titus 3:6-7; 1 John 4:13-15

How do we
recognize the
truths taught by
the Holy Spirit?

We recognize the truths taught by the Holy Spirit when they are in accord with the Scriptures.

- Nehemiah 9:20; Psalms 143:10; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Notes:

- Write a prayer of gratitude to the Holy Spirit.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1

¹ In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³ During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before.

⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷ He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

¹⁵ During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. ¹⁶ “Brothers,” he said, “the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. ¹⁷ Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us.”

¹⁸ (Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. ¹⁹ The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means “Field of Blood.”)

²⁰ Peter continued, “This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, ‘Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.’ It also says, ‘Let someone else take his position.’

²¹ “So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus— ²² from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus’ resurrection.”

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they all prayed, “O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen ²⁵ as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.

Notes:

- Underline text that notes how believers relied on God’s provision.
- Mark any time the Holy spirit is mentioned.

What stood out to you today?

Notes:

The Great Commission and the Work of the Holy Spirit

Matthew 28:16-20; John 16:5-15

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

John 16:5-15

⁵ “But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. ⁶ Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. ⁷ But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. ⁹ The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. ¹⁰ Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. ¹¹ Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

¹² “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.

¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’

Notes:

- Underline text describing the role of the Holy Spirit.
- Box the text that details how we are to carry out Jesus' commission.

What stood out to you today?

The Lord's Promise of His Spirit

Joel 2:28-32; John 7:37-39

Joel 2:28-32

²⁸ “Then, after doing all those things,
I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your old men will dream dreams,
and your young men will see visions.
²⁹ In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on servants—men and women alike.
³⁰ And I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth—
blood and fire and columns of smoke.
³¹ The sun will become dark,
and the moon will turn blood red
before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives.
³² But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved,
for some on Mount Zion in Jerusalem will escape,
just as the Lord has said.
These will be among the survivors
whom the Lord has called.

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” ³⁹ (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

Notes:

- Underline text that tells of who the Holy Spirit is promised to.
- Box the description Jesus gives of the Holy Spirit in John 7:37-39.

What stood out to you today?

The Holy Spirit Comes

Acts 2

¹ On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem.

⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷ They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” ¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other. ¹³ But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

Peter Preaches to the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘In the last days,’ God says,
‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young men will see visions,
and your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on my servants—men and women alike—
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will cause wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below—
blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will become dark,
and the moon will turn blood red
before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives.

²¹ But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved.'

²² "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. ²³ But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. ²⁴ But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. ²⁵ King David said this about him:

'I see that the Lord is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

²⁶ No wonder my heart is glad,
and my tongue shouts his praises!
My body rests in hope.

²⁷ For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

²⁸ You have shown me the way of life,
and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.'

²⁹ "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

³² "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the

Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
³⁵ until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet.”

³⁶ “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

³⁷ Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.”⁴⁰ Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

⁴¹ Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

The Believers Form a Community

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Notes:

- Underline any text where the Holy Spirit is mentioned or where the text points to the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to equip the Church with the Holy Spirit.
- Note where you see evidence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in community.

What stood out to you today?

Week 2: Day 6

Week 2 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15–20 minutes today to rest with God.

Consider increasing this time by 5 minutes from last week.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: Fellowship of Believers

Teacher: _____

What Is the Church?

New Testament Metaphors

Acts records the widespread growth of early faith communities and offers historical context for the active, global Church today. Throughout the New Testament, different metaphors for the Church are used to help us understand what this community of believers is and how it is intended to function.

The Body of Christ

Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. - 1 Corinthians 12:20

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. - 1 Corinthians 12:27

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. - Ephesians 4:12

He is also the head of the church, which is his body.
- Colossians 1:18

The Bride of Christ

I promised you as a pure bride to one husband--Christ.
- 2 Corinthians 11:2

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her... - Ephesians 5:25-26

For the time has come for the wedding feast of the lamb, and his bride has prepared herself. - Revelation 19:7

The Family of God

"Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." - Matthew 12:50

We are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. - Romans 8:16-17

"And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." - 2 Corinthians 6:18

We should do good to everyone--especially to those in the family of faith. - Galatians 6:10

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! - 1 John 3:1

The Flock	"So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the kingdom." - Luke 12:32 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." - John 10:11 So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock--his church, purchased with his own blood--over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. - Acts 20:28 Our Lord Jesus--the great Shepherd of the sheep... - Hebrews 13:20
The House of God/ Christ	So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all God's holy people. - Ephesians 2:19 ...In the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth. - 1 Timothy 3:15 But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house... - Hebrews 3:6 And you are living stones that God is building into his holy priests. - 1 Peter 2:5
Lampstand/ Light of the World	You are the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. - Matthew 5:14 "...the seven lampstands are the seven churches." - Revelation 1:20
The Letters	You are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts. - 2 Corinthians 3:3
The People of God	You are a chosen people...royal priests, a holy nation... - 1 Peter 2:9 We are citizens of heaven. - Philippians 3:20 He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God his Father. - Rev. 1:6 "Look, God's home is now among his people! - Revelation 21:3
The Temple of the Spirit	Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? - 1 Corinthians 3:16 For we are the temple of the living God. - 2 Corinthians 6:16 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit. - Ephesians 2:22

Notes:

- Which of the metaphors is the most helpful to you in understanding how the Church is meant to function?
- How do you see these metaphors at work in your local church?

The Believers Form a Community

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Notes:

- Underline how the early Church cared for one another and relied on God's provision.

What stood out to you today?

Seven Men Chosen to Serve

Acts 6

¹ But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

² So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.

³ And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. ⁴ Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”

⁵ Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). ⁶ These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

⁷ So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

Stephen Is Arrested

⁸ Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. ⁹ But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. ¹⁰ None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

¹¹ So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, “We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God.” ¹² This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.

¹³ The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. ¹⁴ We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

¹⁵ At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

Notes:

- Underline how the early Church handled conflict.
- Take note of how the early Church endured persecution.

What stood out to you today?

A Community of Tov

Hebrews 10:24-25; Colossians 1:28-2:3; Psalm 33:1-5

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Colossians 1:28-2:3

²⁸ So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. ²⁹ That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

¹ I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally.

² I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. ³ In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Psalm 33:1-5

¹ Let the godly sing for joy to the Lord;
it is fitting for the pure to praise him.

² Praise the Lord with melodies on the lyre;
make music for him on the ten-stringed harp.

³ Sing a new song of praise to him;
play skillfully on the harp, and sing with joy.

⁴ For the word of the Lord holds true,
and we can trust everything he does.

⁵ He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.

Notes:

- Underline how the Church cares for one another.
- In Psalm 33, note the attributes that make God a good God.

What stood out to you today?

People of Light

Luke 11:34-52

³⁴ “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when it is unhealthy, your body is filled with darkness. ³⁵ Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. ³⁶ If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.”

³⁷ As Jesus was speaking, one of the Pharisees invited him home for a meal. So he went in and took his place at the table. ³⁸ His host was amazed to see that he sat down to eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony required by Jewish custom. ³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, “You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and wickedness! ⁴⁰ Fools! Didn’t God make the inside as well as the outside?

⁴¹ So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over.

⁴² “What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

⁴³ “What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seats of honor in the synagogues and receive respectful greetings as you walk in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Yes, what sorrow awaits you! For you are like hidden graves in a field. People walk over them without knowing the corruption they are stepping on.”

⁴⁵ “Teacher,” said an expert in religious law, “you have insulted us, too, in what you just said.”

⁴⁶ “Yes,” said Jesus, “what sorrow also awaits you experts in religious law! For you crush people with unbearable religious demands, and you never lift a finger to ease the burden. ⁴⁷ What sorrow awaits you! For you build monuments for the prophets your own ancestors killed long ago. ⁴⁸ But in fact, you stand as witnesses who agree with what your ancestors did. They killed the prophets, and you join in their crime by building the monuments!

⁴⁹ This is what God in his wisdom said about you: 'I will send prophets and apostles to them, but they will kill some and persecute the others.'

⁵⁰ "As a result, this generation will be held responsible for the murder of all God's prophets from the creation of the world— ⁵¹ from the murder of Abel to the murder of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, it will certainly be charged against this generation.

⁵² "What sorrow awaits you experts in religious law! For you remove the key to knowledge from the people. You don't enter the Kingdom yourselves, and you prevent others from entering."

Notes:

- Box themes associated with people of light.
- Underline themes associated with people of darkness.

What stood out to you today?

Blessings for People Marked by a Way of Life

Matthew 5:3-12

The Beatitudes

³ “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

⁴ God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.

⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,
for they will be satisfied.

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

⁹ God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about
you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.

¹² Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven.
And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Notes:

- The people described in the beatitudes receive blessings because they are marked by a way of life. Underline those attributes.

What stood out to you today?

Week 3: Day 6

Week 3 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15–20 minutes today to rest with God.

Consider increasing this time by 5 minutes from last week.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: A Church for Everyone

Teacher: _____

Peter's Vision

Acts 11:1-18

¹ Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. ² But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. ³ "You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!" they said.

⁴ Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. ⁵ "I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. ⁶ When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. ⁷ And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.'

⁸ "'No, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.'

⁹ "But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' ¹⁰ This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven.

¹¹ "Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. ¹² The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. ¹³ He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. ¹⁴ He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!'

¹⁵ "As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?"

¹⁸ When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

Notes:

- Underline text that describes the Holy Spirit's work.
- Note the places where the gospel is carried to different groups and points to God's desire for all people to come to salvation in Him.

What stood out to you today?

Opposition from Others

Acts 14:1-21

¹ The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. ² Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas.

³ But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴ But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

⁵ Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them. ⁶ When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. ⁷ And there they preached the Good News.

⁸ While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting ⁹ and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. ¹⁰ So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!" ¹² They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker.

¹³ Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting,

¹⁵ "Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past he permitted all the nations to

go their own ways, ¹⁷ but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.” ¹⁸ But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them. ¹⁹ Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. ²⁰ But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

²¹ After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia.

Notes:

- Underline text describing the reason for division.
- Note the places where the gospel is carried to different groups and points to God's desire for all people to come to salvation in Him.

What stood out to you today?

The Council at Jerusalem

Acts 15

¹ While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: “Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent the delegates to Jerusalem, and they stopped along the way in Phoenicia and Samaria to visit the believers. They told them—much to everyone’s joy—that the Gentiles, too, were being converted.

⁴ When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, “The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses.”

⁶ So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. ⁷ At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: “Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. ⁸ God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. ¹⁰ So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? ¹¹ We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.”

¹² Everyone listened quietly as Barnabas and Paul told about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³ When they had finished, James stood and said, “Brothers, listen to me.

¹⁴ Peter has told you about the time God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself. ¹⁵ And this conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted. As it is written:

¹⁶ 'Afterward I will return
and restore the fallen house of David.
I will rebuild its ruins
and restore it,
¹⁷ so that the rest of humanity might seek the Lord,
including the Gentiles—
all those I have called to be mine.
The Lord has spoken—
¹⁸ he who made these things known so long ago.'

¹⁹ "And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood. ²¹ For these laws of Moses have been preached in Jewish synagogues in every city on every Sabbath for many generations."

The Letter for Gentile Believers

²² Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders—Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas. ²³ This is the letter they took with them:

"This letter is from the apostles and elders, your brothers in Jerusalem. It is written to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings!

²⁴ "We understand that some men from here have troubled you and upset you with their teaching, but we did not send them!

²⁵ So we decided, having come to complete agreement, to send you official representatives, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

²⁶ who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ We are sending Judas and Silas to confirm what we have decided concerning your question.

²⁸ "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements: ²⁹ You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell."

³⁰ The messengers went at once to Antioch, where they called a general meeting of the believers and delivered the letter. ³¹ And there was great joy throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message.

³² Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, encouraging and strengthening their faith. ³³ They stayed for a while, and then the believers sent them back to the church in Jerusalem with a blessing of peace. ³⁵ Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord there.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

³⁶ After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing." ³⁷ Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. ³⁸ But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. ³⁹ Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus.

⁴⁰ Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care. ⁴¹ Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.

Notes:

- What do you notice about the Holy Spirit? The early Church? The spread of the gospel?
- How do you see these themes at work in your life? Your community? Your local church?

What stood out to you today?

Oneness and Peace in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22

Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹ Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. ¹² In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. ¹³ But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. ¹⁵ He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. ¹⁶ Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

¹⁷ He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. ¹⁸ Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

¹⁹ So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

²⁰ Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. ²¹ We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. ²² Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Notes:

- Underline any words and/or language that encourage unity and bringing people together.
- Who is being joined together? What are we being joined together for?

What stood out to you today?

Message of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

¹¹ Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too.

¹² Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. ¹³ If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. ¹⁴ Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.

¹⁵ He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Biblical Definition of Reconciliation

"Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish."

-- Brenda Salter-McNeil

Notes:

- Box every time the theme of reconciliation is mentioned.
- Underline text that talks of the way Christ's love compels us to live.

What stood out to you today?

Week 4: Day 6

Week 4 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15–20 minutes today to rest with God.

Consider increasing this time by 5 minutes from last week.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: Jesus' Return

Teacher: _____

The Ascension of Jesus

Acts 1:6-11

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷ He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

Notes:

- Underline text that states what we are to do until Jesus returns.
- Box text that speaks to what is not for us to know.

What stood out to you today?

Notes:

Jesus, the Way to the Father

John 14:1-14

¹ "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

⁴ And you know the way to where I am going."

⁵ "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

⁹ Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹ Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

¹² "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

¹³ You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Notes:

- Box the "I Am" statements that tell us about Jesus.
- Underline text that helps you know Jesus better.

What stood out to you today?

The Most Important Commandment

Mark 12:28-34; 1 John 3:11-24

Mark 12:28-34

²⁸ One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹ Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. ³⁰ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

³² The teacher of religious law replied, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. ³³ And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.”

³⁴ Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

1 John 3:11-24

¹¹ This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. ¹³ So don’t be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

¹⁴ If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don’t have eternal life within them.

¹⁶ We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?

¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. ¹⁹ Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ²⁰ Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

²¹ Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence.

²² And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

²³ And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. ²⁴ Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

Notes:

- Box the most important commandment.
- Underline text that describes what real love looks like.

What stood out to you today?

The Way of Jesus

Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 16:24-28; Galatians 5:16-26

Matthew 4:18-22

¹⁸ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” ²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him. ²¹ A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²² They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Matthew 16:24-28

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. ²⁸ And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

Notes:

- Underline text that describes what it looks like to follow Jesus.
- Box text indicating how the Holy Spirit empowers us to follow Jesus.

What stood out to you today?

The Least of These

Matthew 25:31-45

³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.

³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

³⁷ "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

⁴⁰ "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

⁴¹ "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.

⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

⁴⁴ "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'

⁴⁵ "And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'

Notes:

- Underline text that describes how we love and follow Jesus – it's about the who.

What stood out to you today?

Week 5: Day 6

Week 5 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15-20 minutes today to rest with God.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: Conversion of Saul

Teacher: _____

Saul's Conversion

Acts 9:1-31

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. ² He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

³ As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

⁵ "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!" ⁶ Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! ⁸ Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. ⁹ He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

¹⁰ Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

¹¹ The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now.

¹² I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

¹³ "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! ¹⁴ And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

¹⁷ So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem

Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. ²⁰ And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!"

²¹ All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?"

²² Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. ²³ After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. ²⁴ They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. ²⁵ So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

²⁶ When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer!

²⁷ Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

²⁸ So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. ³⁰ When the believers heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

³¹ The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

Notes:

- Underline the people who surrounded and supported Saul, and the ways they did so despite his past and their feelings.
- How do you see these themes in your life today?

What stood out to you today?

Notes:

Paul's Message Comes from Christ

Galatians 1:11-24

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. ¹² I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

¹³ You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

¹⁵ But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles.

When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being.

¹⁷ Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

¹⁸ Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie.

²¹ After that visit I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And still the churches in Christ that are in Judea didn't know me personally. ²³ All they knew was that people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!" ²⁴ And they praised God because of me.

Notes:

- Underline the text in which Paul (previously Saul) describes his former life and conversion.

What stood out to you today?

Have the Attitude of Christ

Philippians 2:3-16

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

Notes:

- Underline text describing the attitude of Christ that we are to have.

What stood out to you today?

A Living Sacrifice to God

Romans 12:1–13

¹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

³ Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

⁴ Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function,

⁵ so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶ In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷ If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸ If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

Notes:

- Underline text that teaches about serving others.
- Note sections that speak to how the Church is to care for one another.

What stood out to you today?

Jesus Teaches About Serving Others

Mark 10:35-45

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do us a favor."

³⁶ "What is your request?" he asked.

³⁷ They replied, "When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left."

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?"

³⁹ "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!"

Then Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my bitter cup and be baptized with my baptism of suffering. ⁴⁰ But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. God has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen."

⁴¹ When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant.

⁴² So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them.

⁴³ But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Notes:

- Note text that reveals the importance Jesus placed on serving others.
- Note text that reveals what the disciples valued.

What stood out to you today?

Week 6 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15–20 minutes today to rest with God.

Consider increasing this time by 5 minutes from last week.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: On Mission

Teacher: _____

Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Dorcas

Acts 9:32-43

³² Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of Lydda. ³³ There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. ³⁴ Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!" And he was healed instantly. ³⁵ Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶ There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. ³⁷ About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room. ³⁸ But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!"

³⁹ So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them. ⁴⁰ But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! ⁴¹ He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive.

⁴² The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord.

⁴³ And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides.

Notes:

- Underline any text in which a miracle takes place.
- Note the ways in which people served or were known for serving others.
- Who does Peter give credit to for these miracles?

What stood out to you today?

Jesus Heals in Response to Faith

Mark 5:21-43

²¹ Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. ²² Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, ²³ pleading fervently with him. "My little daughter is dying," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live."

²⁴ Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him.

²⁵ A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding.

²⁶ She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. ²⁸ For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." ²⁹ Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition.

³⁰ Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?"

³¹ His disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'"

³² But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. ³⁴ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

³⁵ While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now."

³⁶ But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith."

³⁷ Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn't let anyone go with him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. ³⁹

He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep."

⁴⁰ The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl's father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. ⁴¹ Holding her hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which means "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. ⁴³ Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat.

Notes:

- Underline the differences in status, support systems, obstacles, etc., between the two persons in need of healing.
- To the woman without an advocate, Jesus calls her "daughter." Notice how Jesus treats those who are marginalized and disenfranchised.

What stood out to you today?

Parable of the Three Servants

Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

¹⁶ “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

²¹ “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²² “The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

²³ “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Notes:

- Underline the quality of character used to describe each servant.

What stood out to you today?

Overflow

Psalm 36

¹ Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts.
They have no fear of God at all.

² In their blind conceit,
they cannot see how wicked they really are.

³ Everything they say is crooked and deceitful.
They refuse to act wisely or do good.

⁴ They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots.
Their actions are never good.
They make no attempt to turn from evil.

⁵ Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

⁶ Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the ocean depths.
You care for people and animals alike, O Lord.

⁷ How precious is your unfailing love, O God!
All humanity finds shelter
in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ You feed them from the abundance of your own house,
letting them drink from your river of delights.

⁹ For you are the fountain of life,
the light by which we see.

¹⁰ Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you;
give justice to those with honest hearts.

¹¹ Don't let the proud trample me
or the wicked push me around.

¹² Look! Those who do evil have fallen!
They are thrown down, never to rise again.

Notes:

- Underline text that describes the abundance and generosity of God.

What stood out to you today?

Living the New Life

Colossians 3:1-17

¹ Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ¹¹ In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

¹² Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Notes:

- Underline the ways in which we are called to live for the sake of others in response to the new life Christ has given us.

What stood out to you today?

Week 7: Day 6

Week 7 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?

What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.

As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15–20 minutes today to rest with God.

Consider increasing this time by 5 minutes from last week.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

The Church: A Generous Church

Teacher: _____

The Believers Share Their Possessions

Acts 4:32-5:11

The Believers Share Their Possessions

³² All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. ³³ The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. ³⁴ There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them ³⁵ and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. ³⁶ For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. ³⁷ He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

Ananias and Sapphira

¹ But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. ² He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. ³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. ⁴ The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

⁵ As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. ⁶ Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

⁸ Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" "Yes," she replied, "that was the price." ⁹ And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too." ¹⁰ Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.

Notes:

- Underline the attitudes and actions of the Church in Acts 4:32-37.
- Underline the attitudes and actions of Ananias and Sapphira.

What stood out to you today?

Teaching About Money and Possessions

Matthew 6:19-34

¹⁹ “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²² “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money. ²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Notes:

- Underline all the times this passage tells us not to worry.
- Put a box around what this passage says to do instead of worry.

What stood out to you today?

A Call to Generous Living

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

¹ Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. ² They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

³ For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. ⁴ They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. ⁵ They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

⁶ So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. ⁷ Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

⁸ I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

⁹ You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

¹⁰ Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. ¹¹ Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. ¹² Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. ¹³ Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. ¹⁴ Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. ¹⁵ As the Scriptures say,

“Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over,
and those who gathered only a little had enough.”

Notes:

- Underline the attitudes of the heart with which the Macedonian Church gave.
- Underline how Paul says people should give.

What stood out to you today?

The Collection for Christians in Jerusalem

2 Corinthians 9:1-14

¹ I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. ² For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving.

³ But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you. ⁴ We would be embarrassed—not to mention your own embarrassment—if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them! ⁵ So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly.

⁶ Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. ⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." ⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. ⁹ As the Scriptures say,

"They share freely and give generously to the poor.
Their good deeds will be remembered forever."

¹⁰ For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

¹² So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.

¹³ As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. ¹⁴ And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you.

Notes:

- Underline all the ways Paul says to give and not to give.
- Note what the mutual outcomes of generosity are.

What stood out to you today?

Caring For One Another

Galatians 6:2; Romans 14:13, 19; 1 Peter 4:9

Galatians 6:2

² Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Romans 14:13

¹³ So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.

Romans 14:19

¹⁹ So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

1 Peter 4:9

⁹ Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

Notes:

- In what ways do you see these verses about caring for one another relating to the concept of generosity?

What stood out to you today?

Week 8: Day 6

Week 8 Reflection

What was a favorite verse or passage from this past week?



What are you grateful for this week? Write a prayer of gratitude to God.



As you reflect on the past week, what is God teaching you?

Based on what he's teaching you, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to repent, and where is he asking you to take steps to live out this teaching?

Rest

Take 15–20 minutes today to rest with God.

Consider increasing this time by 5 minutes from last week.



Be aware of his presence
Listen to his voice

Week 9 Self-Guided Reflection

Reflect back on the series. What did God teach you?

Write a prayer of gratitude to the Holy Spirit who teaches us all things.

Reflect back on the series. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify areas of personal growth. Record those areas of growth here.

Write a prayer asking God for courage and strength to take the next steps of faith required for your growth.

Week 9 Self-Guided Reflection, cont.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify areas of growth within your role as part of one body in your local church. Record that here.

Write a prayer thanking God for the Church. Ask him to use the gifts he has given you to serve others in the Church and for the benefit of those outside the Church.

Write the name of each person in your group. Pray for them today.



Reflect back on the time spent with your group. Write a letter of thanksgiving for those in your group and consider sharing it with them.



