



RUNNING THE RACE

DAILY STUDY GUIDE

STEPS TO BECOMING A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWER

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

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

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

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

We invite you to join us for weekend services:

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

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

Sunday Morning at 10:30am

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

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

Mile 1

RUNNING THE RACE



MILE 1:
WARM UP

February 2nd – February 7th

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Monday, February 2nd, 2026

Day 1

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

Read: [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#)

Think: Is there a process, method, or formula to becoming a Christian? Well, yes and no... there is no formula per se, but there are different paths to Jesus because there are different personalities and different ways of learning. We will have a season of exploring and discovering, and once we've chosen to follow Christ, there are disciplines, practices, qualities, and external evidence that should be present.

The encouragement in this is to endure throughout the process. Coming to saving faith and growing into a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ is very much like a race, an endurance race, and one that we hope to win. In today's reading, how did the apostle Paul express this?

How do you view this?

Do you believe you can run the race of faith and win? Why/why not?

This series will walk us through the process of discovering who Christ is, coming to understand what true salvation is, and choosing it for ourselves. We will continue down this path as we learn the

importance of Bible reading, the work of the Holy Spirit, and connecting in the body of Christ to grow and thrive in our faith.

Engage: Devotionals and Bible study are more than simply reading words, they are meant to change lives. Change only comes when we apply what we learn and practice it every day. Engaging the scriptures for the purpose of real and lasting life change is a key factor for the Christian who wants to win the race. In verses 25-27 today, what actions does Paul say are necessary to win the race?

Self-control, having a direction or goal, and discipline are all needed... Where, or in what area, can you practice self-control?

What is your goal in your faith?

Where/how do you need to practice discipline to accomplish this?

Engaging scripture also comes with scripture memory – it helps us remember what we learned and gives us focus when we become distracted. Memorize the verse below and recite/review each day to store God's word in your heart and mind.

Memorize: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026

Day 2

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

Read: [Psalm 139:23-24](#)

Think: Before a person begins any journey, whether physical or spiritual, we must decide **where** we want to go – our destination. For Christians, our destination is heaven and eternity with God after we die, but getting there requires some personal evaluation and simply being honest with ourselves. Just like planning to run a marathon, we must be honest about our physical health and ability before we take off running! We might need a medical exam, we may need to change our diet, we need to make sure we can finish the race. So today, you will examine your spiritual health... in Psalm 139, what does King David ask God to do?

This is a brave request! If you asked God right now to check your heart, what would He find in there? Many people tend to downplay sin and rely on good intentions to put them in good standing with God, but we must be completely honest with ourselves and know that we are sinners who need to repent. David understood this, but only after he was confronted in his sin (he had an affair with a married woman, got her pregnant, then had her husband killed in battle to cover it up - [2 Samuel 11](#)). He didn't really think about it until the prophet Nathan confronted and rebuked him ([2 Samuel 12:1-14](#)) revealing his sin, and then David repented. However, there **were** consequences.

It is wonderful to know that God truly wants all people to be with Him in heaven, but we must not deceive ourselves into thinking we are “okay” with God and neglect truly examining our heart and motives.

Engage: Take a moment to ask God to examine your heart and mind. Next read [Galatians 5:16-25](#) and note which qualities describe you. It is natural to see a little of both in each one of us, but what should be the goal?

What is your goal?

If you find many works of the flesh are present in your life, follow David's prayer of repentance in [Psalm 51:3-4](#) and [10](#). The process of growing as a Christian will be letting go of these areas of sin – putting off the old ways – and learning to walk in step with the Spirit. Hanging on to our old sinful habits while trying to be Christian is like eating a candy bar and bag of chips before a marathon... you won't have enough quality fuel to finish the race.

Memorize: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Wednesday, February 4th, 2026

Day 3

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

Read: [Colossians 2:4-10](#)

Think: If you have ever been to a buffet in Las Vegas, you know that the number of choices can be absolutely overwhelming. There are foods for all cultures and preferences and while all that food for the low, low price of \$30.00ish bucks is a steal (remember the days of \$1.99 buffet?), the truth is we just can't eat that much food, and more choices aren't always better.

You might think this is an odd analogy, but the overwhelming choices or "buffet" of religious options, belief systems, and worldviews can have the same challenges of knowing what to pick at

a Vegas buffet. More is NOT better – especially in our faith. When you were first exploring Christianity, did you do research on other religions? Why/why not?

Some folks do research other faiths – Muslim, Hindu, New Age, and even the variety of denominations within the Christian church community. This is a great way to discover the clear differences in each system as well as discovering that they cannot all lead to God (<https://www.gotquestions.org/so-many-religions.html>, <https://www.gotquestions.org/world-religions.html>), but at the end of the day we need to decide what is the right way to faith in Christ.

Multiple beliefs and philosophies are not a new phenomenon, based on today's passage, how do you know the early church was faced with the same challenges?

What is necessary to remain grounded in the truth?

What are we to be careful of?

This letter to the church in Colosse was written by the apostle Paul and was an encouragement and warning. In verse 8, he tells his readers to not be “captured” by the false teachings and human philosophies, meaning – don’t become captivated or lead astray by them. The reality is that many of these teachings sound good, plausible, or correct and unless we are rooted in Christ and reading God’s word, we may not be able to tell if they are wrong. The biggest problem we have right now is what is called syncretism, a melding of religious and secular views to create a new and compromised system of belief (<https://www.gotquestions.org/syncretism-religious.html>, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-humanism.html>). This would be an example of an empty human philosophy that could capture the mind of a person looking for answers and be lead away from God’s full truth.

Engage: What did today's scripture teach you?

Take some time to evaluate your current belief system... is it grounded in the Bible? Are there secular teachings present? When a person becomes Christian, there may be several humanistic philosophies that we will need to leave behind, but the process often takes time as God reveals His truth as you read the Bible and learn through study... this is ok! If you are a mature believer, what human philosophies have you left behind?

How did God reveal them to you?

If you are just learning, take heart... God is faithful and will show you His truth.

Memorize: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Thursday, February 5th, 2026

Day 4

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

Read: [John 8:44](#), [1 Peter 5:8](#), [2 Corinthians 11:14-15](#)

Think: The battle for truth started with the first man and woman – Adam and Eve. It was inside God's perfect creation that Satan captured the mind of both man and woman through deception – the kind of deception that sounds like the truth. Satan appealed to their desire to be like God and

even if we were to assume that Eve's motives were genuinely innocent, wanting to be like her creator the way a child wants to be like their parent, she still chose to disobey. Satan has been lying to us ever since. But Satan doesn't come to us in a red onesie with horns and a pitchfork... today's reading describes his character and how he presents himself. List how he is described.

As we run the race set before us, we will be running with many others – some will be on our team and others will be the opposing team – but they might appear to be on our side. We might think it would be obvious when we are being lied to or when a person is fake, but if Satan can disguise himself to look like an angel of light, we should be prepared to recognize him. How can you know if what you are watching, reading, or listening to is from the Lord or a lie from the devil?

We must always remember that Satan was bold enough to tempt the very Son of God, Jesus, while He fasted in the wilderness. Read [Matthew 4:1-11](#), what did Satan use to tempt Jesus?

It's in the letter from John, the apostle, in [1 John 2:15-16](#) that he condenses how Satan comes to us and whispers lies into three main areas... what are they?

Satan appeals to our flesh! He knew that Jesus was fully human while on earth and so tried to tempt Him in the areas of the flesh and that's how Satan gets at us now – before, during, and after choosing Christ. We must be prepared the same way Jesus was in the wilderness – go back to Matthew 4 and note how Jesus responded to each temptation. What do you learn from Him?

Engage: You may have noticed that it was when Jesus was at His weakest, humanly speaking, after He had fasted for 40 days, that Satan came to Him. Satan does that now – he waits until we are in a weak moment to throw temptation and lies our direction. Have you ever taken the time to think about the areas of your life that are the weakest? This will be very important in your life as a Christian. If we never learn or choose to ignore these areas, we won't have the strength to resist. Even if you have done this in the past, it is always good to reevaluate where we are – take a minute to think about the areas, times, or situations you are weakest. It could be as simple as when you are overly tired, stressed at work, etc. The next time Satan attacks, remember how Jesus responded – recognize the battle and turn to scripture. Keep in mind, what Satan will offer doesn't always appear bad – it could even be disguised as godly!

Memorize: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Friday, February 6th, 2026

Day 5

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

Read: [Luke 19:12-27](#)

Think: This week's memory verse is a reminder that in our faith we don't just run, we run to win. But in this race, there is no cheating and everyone does not get a trophy! We live in a world where the idea that everyone is a winner, everyone gets a trophy, whether they worked for it or not, simply to keep people from bad feelings has taken over. This is not how God's kingdom works.

When we started this week's study, we mentioned that part of the race for Christians is knowing our destination – or goal. What is your goal? Our goal is not just making it to heaven, but the process of how we get there. Some people want an easy life, with no difficulties and others are willing to do anything for the Lord.

In today's passage, you may recognize this familiar parable. Briefly describe the parable Jesus teaches.

You may have also noticed some differences in this parable... Matthew's record of this parable was written for a Jewish audience and Luke, a Gentile, wrote his account from that perspective, but the lesson is the same. Jesus has entrusted His followers with kingdom responsibility, and He will return for an accounting of what we've done with our time here. However, the amount we are given, or the result isn't the focus, rather the faithfulness with which we use what we've been given.

Yes, our goal is to go to heaven, but if that's all we focus on, we can forget that there may be a lot of time between here and there or we think the goal is accomplished simply because we have decided to believe in Christ for forgiveness. However, that would be like signing up for a marathon and then believing we have won simply because we registered and put on the running shoes and bib, yet never actually running the race!

What Jesus is teaching in this parable is simply to be faithful with our time here. The mina, a Greek currency, was worth about 4 months wages, and it represents what God gives His people at salvation. We have spiritual gifts and talents that are meant to be used to strengthen and encourage the church, serve God and others, and hopefully bring others to Christ. That is the goal! Our focus should be HOW we run the race, not just getting across the finish line. God looks at our faithfulness, and He will produce the results – like the slaves in this parable – they focused on investing what they were given but they didn't necessarily have control over the results.

Engage: It is wonderful to have the desire to be with God in heaven for all eternity, but it is equally as wonderful living a faithful and obedient life until we get there. Write HOW you would like to run this race.

WHO would you like to bring with you?

How would you like to impact and encourage others?

Memorize: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Saturday, February 7th, 2026

Day 6

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

Read: [Hebrews 12:1-3](#)

Think: Are you ready for the adventure of a lifetime? The Christian life is not always an easy one, but it IS more rewarding, fulfilling, and powerful than you could ever imagine. We've talked a lot about what it will take, and we will work together over the next few weeks to teach and encourage you every step of the way. But we have One who has gone before us to show us the way and how to endure. In our verses today, who is the author and perfector of our faith?

What did He do for us?

What can we do because of His going ahead of us?

What do we need to do to run with endurance?

What makes Christianity stand out from all other religions is that we have a God who came to humanity in human flesh so He could identify with our weaknesses ([Hebrews 4:15-16](#)) and give us help when we need it. He sacrificed His life to open the door to eternity for all who choose Him and He loves us more than we could comprehend!

Engage: Have you ever tried to run while holding something heavy? Maybe you ran while holding your child or maybe a set of weights, but even if you haven't it is easy to understand how difficult it is to run while holding things. In the Christian life, the only way we can run with endurance is to set down anything that slows us down or holds us back. Verse 1 calls it weight AND/OR sin. Hanging onto sin will hinder us in our faith and so will other things that aren't sin... overwork, poor priorities, unfruitful activities are all "weights" that can zap us of energy in our faith. Take a moment to look at your life and note if there are any sinful habits or other things that you need to set down and leave behind. Now that we're at the starting block... Ready? Set... Go!

Memorize: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Mile 2



February 9th – February 14th

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Monday, February 9th, 2026

Day 1

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

Read: [Romans 3:9-12 and 23](#), [Romans 5:1-11](#)

Think: In the Christian church, certain words are used to describe or define people, situations, concepts, etc. One of those words is “saved” or “salvation”. Whether you are new to Christianity or have been around for a while, what do these words mean to you?

When we hear the word *saved*, we might wonder – what are we being saved from? This is an important question because making the decision to become Christian should be taken seriously and requires us to know where we are starting from.

We are all familiar with the idea that we can't save a person who doesn't know they are drowning and being saved or salvation for a person who doesn't truly recognize their spiritual condition can lead them down a false path, so this week we will focus on where we all begin, at the starting line, and what we need to know about the decision to become Christian.

Let's start with the bad news... According to the verses in Romans 3, what is our spiritual condition?

Do you believe you are a good person? Why/why not?

This is the classic question... if you were to die today, would you go to heaven? Why/why not?

In many instances, when asked, people respond with, “I’m a good person”, but how is “good” defined and by who? For many folks, the standard of good is their own, which presents a huge problem... everyone has a different standard! In [Romans 6:23](#), what is the penalty of sin?

Although this is the bad news, we must understand the importance of knowing our condition and eternal future so we don’t take God’s gift of salvation for granted.

The fact that it is God who sets the standard should be a comfort to all people – we are all in the same boat! And that means we all have the same offer of being saved. How does the passage from Romans 5 explain this?

What are we saved from and who saved us?

Engage: We are all born with a conscience – a natural inner voice that knows right from wrong, so we naturally have a sense of good and evil ([Romans 2:14](#)). However, as we grow up, we adopt certain beliefs, habits, and practices that can lead us away from God. Even those who have grown up in the church need to be reminded where we started so we never take God’s gift of love for granted. Regardless of where you are in this journey, how does today’s scripture help you understand your need for God?

Have you ever, or do you now rely on your own standard and definition of good? Again, regardless of where you are in your faith, take a moment to examine if anything needs to change.

Memorize: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Tuesday, February 10th, 2026

Day 2

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

Read: [John 3:1-21](#)

Think: As we continue to learn what it means to be saved or have salvation, we see another term used in the Christian church. In today's reading, one of the prominent Pharisees, Nicodemus, comes to Jesus to talk with Him. What does Jesus tell him in verse 3?

Born again... how is this possible?

To be saved by Christ means we are saved by His death on the cross from eternal punishment – if you remember from yesterday, Romans 3:23 – the wages of sin is _____, so “saved” means to be rescued. We have salvation, meaning we have been delivered, or transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus ([Colossians 1:13-14](#)), and this transfer happens when we are born again. Nicodemus' confusion was his misunderstanding of the word “again”. In the Greek, this word can mean either, *again* or “from above”, which was what Jesus was referring to. Jesus' response points out that Nicodemus wasn't getting what He was saying, even though he was a teacher of the scriptures.

When we talk about salvation and being born again, it means we understand we are born sinners and we need to recognize this and know the need for true repentance. We admit our need to be saved from eternal destruction by the only One who can save us – Jesus Christ. When we make that decision, we are transferred, our old nature and spirit dies and we are reborn, spiritually speaking, with a new nature and Spirit ([Romans 6:3-4](#)). God's Holy Spirit dwells in us and gives us the ability to faithfully respond to Christ. What was God's motive for doing this in verses 16-18?

Engage: Just as people may think they are basically a good person, they also believe that because God is love, He wouldn't send anyone to hell. That is actually a true statement, He doesn't send people to hell, **they choose to go** when they reject Him. How do we know this? Review John 3:17-19... what did the people choose?

Loving the darkness more than the light simply means there are those who will choose to continue living an unrepentant and sinful life, rejecting the grace Christ gives. People will choose hate rather than forgiveness, gossip rather than kindness, sexual immorality rather than purity all the while shaking their fists at God and blaming Him for their problems. However, letting go of our old life is the hardest most rewarding and wonderful thing we could ever do! There is nothing in this world that can satisfy a starving soul like the blood of Christ. Are you choosing life and light? Have you or are you ready to be born again? Even if you've been in the church for many years, it is wise to check we have not mistaken activity in the church for salvation – it is very common for people to think church involvement means they are saved or born again.

Memorize: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Wednesday, February 11th, 2026

Day 3

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

Read: [Romans 10:5-17](#)

Think: If you have ever experienced a church sermon, conference, or revival meeting, you may have heard the pastor at the end of the conference ask the attendees if they want to receive Christ and to repeat a prayer he gives. This prayer usually goes something like this... *"Heavenly Father, I admit that I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus is Your Son, that He died for my sins, and that He rose again. I confess Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and I commit to following Him. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Amen."* This isn't bad, there's admission of being a sinner, belief that Jesus died for sins, and a commitment to follow Him – this is also known as the ABC prayer Admit, Believe, Commit – is there anything missing?

There are many “sinners prayers” out there and there is no formula, but the important part is having a genuine heartfelt commitment knowing the decision we’re making and not just saying the words. Let’s take a look at today’s reading... what do verses 9 and 10 say are necessary to be saved?

Now turn to [James 2:19](#), what does this verse say about believing in God?

Yikes! What is the difference between the two?

You may notice that Romans says we must openly confess Jesus is Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead, while James says the demons also believe. Belief, by itself is not salvation. The demons believe in God because they are fallen angels who once resided in heaven with Him. They believe in Jesus too, but they chose to reject Him as LORD. The word for Lord in Greek is *kyrios*, meaning master, owner, and one who has control over. When we confess Jesus as Lord, we are saying He is master over us, He owns us and controls us – this is not something the demons will do.

When we decide to become Christian, we are not just securing our place in heaven and asking for forgiveness, we are handing ourselves over to the ownership of Christ and becoming what is known as a bond servant - a willing slave in the best sense of the word – and owned by the very One who took our punishment for sin.

Engage: We’ve talked a lot about having a repentant heart and understanding what salvation means, so if you’re ready to make the commitment, you can talk to God, confessing your sins and committing to live in His ownership. For some additional information, you can read our “Am I

Heaven Ready" brochure on our website, go to: www.crossroads-ridgecrest.org, click on "Resources", the "Brochures and Guides", then "Am I Heaven Ready" (<https://crossroads-ridgecrest.org/media/j2fdtyw/am-i-heaven-ready>).

Memorize: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Thursday, February 12th, 2026

Day 4

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

Read: [Ephesians 2:1-10](http://www.bible.com/101/ephe.2.1-10)

Think: When you were a child, did you ever try to earn or work for a special treat? Did you ever do extra chores to get out of being grounded? Maybe you tried to earn someone's love... Part of the reality of salvation is that it isn't something we can do for ourselves. We can't work hard enough, feed enough people, or donate enough money to earn salvation. According to today's passage, by what are we saved?

Why is this important?

How does it impact you to know God's plan of salvation for you existed before you were born?

It is for our benefit that we can't earn or work for grace because no amount of effort would come close to the requirement needed. But just as people may make the mistake of trying to earn God's love, many others take it for granted and abuse it. Turn to [Romans 6:1](#) and [11](#), what question does verse 1 ask?

How does verse 11 say we should view our new reality?

There is a common false teaching called hyper grace or what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, author of "*The Cost of Discipleship*" called cheap grace – basically taking God's grace for granted then continuing to live in sin to "demonstrate" God's grace further. We will discuss this in more detail in the following weeks, but we must understand that although being a Christian is a process of learning and growing that lasts our entire life, we MUST change. [Romans 6:18](#) tells us what we are to be slaves to instead. It is important for us to know that as Christians we no longer need to follow our sinful temptations, we can now live for Christ!

Engage: Do you or have you ever taken God's grace for granted? Any time we knowingly sin with the thought that we'll ask for forgiveness later, means we have stepped into hyper grace. Have you ever tried to earn God's love and grace? It is normal to serve passionately from a grateful heart as a response to salvation, but it is not a means of achieving salvation. Take a moment to check where you are in these areas and make any changes needed.

Memorize: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Friday, February 13th, 2026

Day 5

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

Read: [Luke 9:23-27](#)

Think: There is so much power in these few verses! In last week's study, Day 6, we read in Hebrews 12 that we are to run with endurance which requires laying down every weight and sin that so easily trips us up. However, this isn't the end of what is needed to win the race in front of us! It was necessary to set things down so our hands and arms are free to pick something up that we absolutely need to have... according to today's verses, what are we picking up?

How often must we do this?

When we put these verses together with those from Hebrews 12, we have a clear picture. Salvation is the intentional and informed decision to deny our selfish desires and sinful habits and then picking up our cross to follow Jesus. The people of Jesus' day knew very well what taking up their cross meant... a criminal sentenced to death by crucifixion often carried the very cross they were to be nailed to – just as Jesus did ([John 19:17](#)) and it was a gruesome death.

Although Jesus only had to die once to cover all sin for all time, we are never in short supply of selfishness, pride, anger, jealousy, and other self-focused issues that can hinder our faith. It is necessary for us to pick up our cross every day, not just once or occasionally, and like anything else, we can't pick it up until we set something down. Each day we must put to death the works of the flesh – it is a choice - and each day we must choose to live like Christ.

Engage: Are you still holding on to anything Jesus wants you to set down? Self-centered living and pride can be sneaky areas and present themselves as well-intentioned or even noble attitudes. We often need to dig deep, where it gets painful, to root out things that God wants to remove from our lives so we can grow and honor Him. Are you willing to do that? Take a moment and ask God to give you the strength and courage to do this. Then, examine if you are picking up your cross each day. What does that mean? For example, if we set down pride, we must pick up humility ([Philippians 2:3](#)).

Memorize: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Saturday, February 14th, 2026

Day 6

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

Read: [John 14:15-27](#)

Think: Whenever we decide to start something new... a job or a hobby, we will need someone to teach us how to do our job or hobby. In most instances, you will have someone to teach you the ropes so you can do well and learn to do your work on your own. Christianity is similar. One of the biggest challenges for people who are new to the Christian life is in the “how”. We often know there are certain things we should start doing, like reading our Bible, praying, go to church consistently,

join a Bible Study group, but we might need help in this. The disciples had three years with Jesus, learning from Him, watching Him heal and transform lives and they knew He was teaching them to do the same ([Matthew 10](#)). But Jesus knew He would soon be crucified and He would no longer walk with them on earth, so He needed to give them a teacher or “coach” to help them after He went back to heaven ([John 14:12](#)). In today’s reading, Who is this Helper?

What will the Helper do for the disciples?

There is a Christian movie, “Overcomer” about a teenage girl, Hannah, with asthma on a track team who believed her father was dead. In the movie she discovers he is not only alive but was also a track star in his youth, but now is blind and suffering from illness. Their relationship has a rocky start but as their relationship grows, he is able to give her advice for running track. On the day of the championship race, because he can’t be there with her, Hannah’s dad gave her earbuds and a recording of him coaching her through the race – how to take the hills, how to set her pace, and how to push through the pain. This is a perfect example of what the Holy Spirit does for followers of Christ. Jesus was no longer here physically, but He left us with God’s Holy Spirit to teach and encourage us every step of the way. There is a condition though, found in verses 12 and 21, what is it?

Only believers receive God’s Holy Spirit to come dwell in us and it is His Spirit that helps transform you from the inside out.

Engage: What are some of the difficulties you face as a Christian?

Where do you turn for help?

If you have been a Christian for some time, do you recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? How do you know it’s Him?

Next week we will spend time learning what life as a Christian looks like and how to practice faithful living each day in all areas of life.

Memorize: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Mile 3



February 16th – February 21st

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Monday, February 16th, 2026

Day 1

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

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

Think: When we watch any kind of sports event, we know that every athlete has spent countless hours training for their sport. Each sport has specific training requirements and within those requirements are specific exercises for strength, speed, and agility. Did you know that many football players have practiced ballet or other dance styles to help them with balance? The fact is, we *expect* athletes to train hard and know it would be foolish to put someone on the football field with no training and no protective gear! Yet when it comes to Christianity, this can happen – whether the new Christian simply doesn't know what to do next or they stop at salvation and think they don't need to do anything else – it is foolish to think we can stand against the schemes of the devil or mature spiritually without training and protective gear. This week is all about training as Christians... this is where we start the “how” of walking with Christ as we deny ourselves and take up our cross each day. Let's start with a reminder of who our Team Owner and Coach is and what He provides us.

In today's reading, what does our heavenly Father give us?

For what purpose?

What do you notice about the nature of what God provides His children?

In this passage, abundance seems to be the theme. This incredible prayer from the apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus remains an active prayer to believers today. How does it impact you to know that God gives an abundance of all we could need to follow Him and grow up into Christ?

Engage: For many people who become Christian, they willingly accept the abundance of love God lavishes on them but fail to recognize that abundance is also poured out in every area of their lives so they can not only experience Him personally but show the world who He really is through their lives. Paul's prayer is that you would be strengthened in your inner being – what does that mean?

It is usually our inner self we battle more than anything. Thoughts, temptations, and emotions can be powerful inhibitors to spiritual growth. This week, we will begin with two things... first, what is currently inhibiting your spiritual growth? Second, take a step back from what you think you may know about how the power of God can work in you - many of us have an incorrect view of what God wants to do in and through us – and be ready to learn about the abundance God wants to give you to be able to live for Him at home, work, in your marriage, and parenting.

Memorize: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Tuesday, February 17th, 2026 **Day 2**

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

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

Think: Athletes don't live like athletes only when they're in a game or competition, they live like an athlete every day. They must maintain their diet, sleep schedule, and workout schedule on a daily basis, some going so far as to take such scrupulous care of themselves that they refuse to drink alcohol, eat sugar, or do anything that could compromise their ability. They also study their sport, learn the latest techniques, and often watch recordings of themselves to learn where they need to improve as well as learn the tactics of their opponents. They *live* their calling... what are some other careers or hobbies that people spend that amount of time and practice?

Christians have the greatest calling in all of life! In these verses out of Ephesians 4, what does Paul urge his readers to do?

How are they to live out this calling?

According to verses 3-6, what is important to understand about this calling?

People often get stuck on the idea of a “calling” in Christianity. Have you ever heard someone say, “I’ve been called” to do this or that or go on a mission trip? Some folks say they are still waiting for their calling and often worry they won’t get one. They are speaking of a specific role or area of ministry they are led to work in however, the understanding of calling is simply that it’s an invitation. That means, as Paul is pointing out, every Christian has a calling and based on verse 1 every Christian has the same calling – what is it?

He is urging his readers to live a life that conforms to their saved status before God. Why is this important?

Engage: We may not have the kind of status and popularity a well-known professional athlete does, but we *are* being watched... first and most importantly by God, and by those who know we are Christian. There is a certain expectation that Christians are to live a certain way, one that matches the character and nature of the One we follow. This is where we need to understand that we have an abundance of power through the Holy Spirit to live as we are called. Read [Galatians 5:22-23](#), what qualities are listed in these verses?

Where do these qualities come from?

So, based on what we've studied so far, if you have been invited, or "called", into the family of Christ, and you have accepted this invitation, do you have what you need to live as a Christian? This is another area of confusion and frustration for many people thinking that as a Christian they will immediately be patient, kind, have self-control, etc. This can happen, but what this means is not that we have been handed a basket full of fruit, but that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us who embodies each quality and gives us **the ability** to be patient, kind, and have self-control. BUT! And there's always a "but" ...**WE** must do the work of **practicing** patience, kindness, self-control, and the rest of the fruit or qualities that match those of the One who called us.

Do you understand that as a Christian you have the power and ability to perfectly practice love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control? Much of our battle is shifting our mindset from "I do not have" or "I can't" to "with Christ I can" and "because of Christ, I will". This week, remind yourself of this when you are feeling impatient with others or you are lacking peace and joy and PRACTICE!

Memorize: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Wednesday, February 18th, 2026

Day 3

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

Read: [Ephesians 4:17-32](#)

Think: Now that we know we have all we need to live faithfully for the Lord, let's learn **HOW** to use what we've been given. It's one thing to know we need to, or want to, have more patience or feel more peace or joy, it's quite another learning how to practically apply it. As we continue reading Paul's letter, we can be thankful that he gives us very specific direction and examples how to do this... starting in verses 21-24, what does he teach believers to do?

There are three actions taking place here, first – “put off” or in other translations, “lay aside”. Lay aside means to “put off” or “cast off” more like the action of throwing something aside. This is part of what it means to deny ourselves so we can take up our cross. What is the second action in verse 23?

(The second action is needed for both putting off and the third action of “putting on”.) This word “renew” has the idea of a renovation or reform and helps us understand the process. Have you ever remodeled or repainted a room in your home? What was one of the first things you had to do to get started? Move everything out! Yeah... we've all done the “squish everything in the middle and cover it” plan, but realistically we still bump into things, there's no space to move around and if we are getting new furniture as well, we can't just add it – we have to take out the old before we can put in the new! It's the same with us – casting off the old to make room for the new is an intentional decision to change the way we think. If we read [Romans 12:1-2](#) we see this repeated, the mind/body connection in our faith. Before we can put on the new person, created in the likeness

of Christ, we must mentally choose to do what is necessary and this putting off, changing how we think, and putting on is a process we will do for the rest of our lives – but it does get easier!

Engage: Putting this to practice – read verses 25 – 32 and list all the “put offs” or actions/words to stop, or change, that Paul lists.

Next, list all the “put ons” or actions/words we are begin doing instead.

Now take a moment to think about the mental shift or renewal that needs to take place to start practicing these changes. You may not struggle with stealing or anger, but you do struggle with something... what is something you currently need to put off?

What is the mental shift and intentional choice you need to make to change this?

What would the put on be?

Part of renewing the mind comes with spending time reading the Bible and memorizing scripture to help the mental battle when we face temptation. Turn to [1 Corinthians 10:13](#), what hope does this verse give?

God usually doesn't pluck us out of trials or temptations, but He gives us His word, Spirit, prayer, and practical life choices to resist – this is part of our training and growth process.

Memorize: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Thursday, February 19th, 2026

Day 4

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

Read: [Ephesians 5:1-21](#)

Think: In the time of Jesus and the disciples, they traveled to many towns and cities preaching the Good News and healing people and their main method of travel was walking. For the disciples of Christ, and the disciples of many rabbis, to walk closely behind a rabbi so the dust kicked up by the rabbi's feet covered them represented a deep commitment to learning and imitating the rabbi's teaching. As Christians, Jesus is our Rabbi, our teacher, and we are to walk so closely behind Him that we are covered in His dust! Would that describe how you live or want to live?

We also find the word "walk" in the Bible was often used to describe or refer to the way a person lives. In today's reading there are three references to a way of "walking" ... what are they?

In doing so, who are we imitating?

Yesterday, we started learning about putting off our old ways and putting on new ways of living by making intentional choices in changing the way we think (renewing our minds) and Paul gave specific examples of how that would look in daily life. Then in verse 1 today it starts with the word "Therefore", which indicates a continuation of thought and subsequent outcome of this change in us – imitating God and the way we walk in life.

In verse 16, Paul tells us to make the best use of the time and why. Do you believe we are living in evil days? Conflict and division have permeated our society so deeply, people are just angry all the

time. Even Christians can easily be pulled into fighting with each other about current topics, so it is even more important we are intentional about how we interact with one another. In verses 19-21, how are we to speak and act toward one another?

Verse 21 is key, we are to submit, or defer, to one another but who and what is our motive?

There will always be times, when it is not a sin issue we're dealing with, but a simple difference of opinion, that we will need to submit or defer to another person to demonstrate our love for Christ. This may not always be easy, but we must remind ourselves, we are learning how to "walk" as Christ walked.

Engage: Paul shows us what it means to walk in love, light, and wisdom... for each one, write the put offs, or what we are to stop doing, and the put ons, or what we are to start doing. Take some time to examine your thought life, how you interact and talk with others, and the activities you participate in. How do you "walk" in each one?

If there are changes to be made, how can or should you "walk" in each one?

How can your life as a Christian offer people hope and help them know who God is?

Memorize: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Friday, February 20th, 2026

Day 5

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

Read: [Ephesians 5:22-33](#) – [Ephesians 6:1-9](#)

Think: When we left off yesterday, we were instructed to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Let's spend a moment on this before we go forward. The subject of submission is one that has been the most misunderstood, poorly taught, and frequently abused. How would you define submission?

Where did you learn this?

For many Christians our understanding of submission changes as we learn what **godly** submission is... the action of voluntarily placing oneself under the authority of another. This is a frightening thought for many, especially women/wives, who fear they will be controlled by their husbands. The beauty and true meaning of mutual godly submission is that it ALWAYS has the other person's best interest in mind.

Let's focus on a different word here... **reverence**. This word, in Greek, is phobos, meaning fear, dread or terror – does this seem familiar? It is this word that has been adapted for the modern psychology of phobias and means an abnormal or irrational fear of something. This is NOT the kind of fear we read in the Bible. Yes, we should have a deep and reverent fear of God as Head of all creation who is sovereign and powerful. Turn to [Matthew 10:28](#), what does Jesus teach about this?

This is a healthy fear, one that is meant to keep us safe, not harm and a reverence that is rooted in love. Knowing this and learning that this is the motive for godly mutual submission, let's look at the specific relationships it is applied to. In the passages for today's reading, list each relationship and the example of submission.

How does your understanding of submission change knowing the motive is to revere Christ?

Engage: Some of the evidence that we are growing as Christians is that our love for God and people grows and it becomes the motive for faithful obedience to God's word. As our love grows, obedience becomes easier – even in the most difficult circumstances and with the most difficult people. Let's be clear, Paul's instruction for how to demonstrate submission in relationships is not a suggestion or only warranted under certain circumstances – think for a moment, **why** is he writing this to the church? Is it possible they were struggling with some of these issues? Submission is not optional for Christians. Let's put it this way, is it logical or rational for a Christian to say, "I will submit to God but not people"? Why not?

Did Jesus submit to His parents ([Luke 2:51](#))? Although Jesus never married, did He demonstrate submission in marriage ([Ephesians 5:23](#))? As a Rabbi and leader, did He demonstrate submissive authority ([John 13:14-17](#))? If Jesus submitted in every way, and we are to follow Him, is there any other choice? Take some time to list how you can practice godly submission in the relationships in your life.

Memorize: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Saturday, February 21st, 2026

Day 6

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

Read: [Galatians 6:7-10](#)

Think: When it comes to training for athletic competition or any other important role, we know that what we get out of it is in direct proportion to what we put in. No one who slacks off on workouts and healthy diet can expect to endure the physical requirements of competition. If we didn't study for our finals, we shouldn't expect to get an A. So, should we be surprised that our relationship with Christ and our life as a Christian is also in proportion to what we put in? This is the basic concept of sowing and reaping. What do today's verses teach about this?

Why do you think Paul includes the fact that God will not be mocked?

Any person who expects God to give them good things and bless their lives, while continuing to live in sin, is in effect mocking God. They are taking His patience, love, kindness, grace, and mercy for granted and although punishment may be delayed, people must not take it to mean it won't happen.

The challenge is weariness. How difficult is it for you to continue practicing the fruit of the Spirit, resisting temptation, and godly submission with what seems to be no results?

How hard is it to continue showing love and mercy to people to take it for granted? How hard is it to be patient as we watch our world implode? If it's difficult for us, can you imagine how difficult it is for the One who died to save us from all of this? God's promise is that when we endure, in spite of the difficulties, and we continue serving Him and others, we will reap our reward - eternal life!

Engage: When running a marathon, or any distance really, we often reach that “wall”, the place where we feel like we just can’t go on. We’re tired, our legs feel like they weigh 1,000 pounds, and all we want to do is stop. The problem is if we stop, getting started again is almost impossible. However, there may be times when it is necessary to go from a run to a slow jog or walk – we’re not stopping, just slowing down to catch our breath, and that’s OK! The point is to not give up. The term here has the meaning to not faint from exhaustion, so how do we train to not faint? What can you do to prevent weariness in your walk with God?

When you do become weary, how can you prevent exhaustion and giving up?

Part of this answer will be found in next week’s study about the team we have around us and how being part of a family keeps us going.

Memorize: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15

Mile 4



February 23rd – February 28th

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Monday, February 23rd, 2026

Day 1

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

Read: [Psalm 1:1-6](#)

Think: You have likely heard the quote, *“Life is a team sport”*, to emphasize the importance of teamwork in all aspects of life. It is the understanding that we are not meant to be solo players and when responsibilities, goals, and even trials are shared, we can accomplish so much more. Another quote that we may not be as familiar with comes from the Rugby Hall of Fame inductee, Brian O’Driscoll, *“The great thing about playing team sport is you win and lose together, and the pain is never as bad when you share it.”* Interestingly, this also describes the life of Christians very well... Christianity is also a team sport, we often win and lose together and when we go through painful times together, it makes it easier to bear. One of the things that made Brian O’Driscoll a great rugby player was the partnership he had with his teammate, Gordon Darcy, working together they were able to defend each other from the other team’s attacks, but their partnership came with time spent together and knowing each other well.

We will learn this week that Christianity is not meant to be a solo act... in fact, we thrive when we are surrounded by other Christians who can encourage and support us in our faith and life. This means that for many people choosing to walk with God, some adjustments need to be made regarding the people in their lives, where and who they look to for advice, and who they spend time with. In Psalm 1, King David teaches that a person is blessed when they avoid certain types of people. Who are they?

As a new Christian, we quickly become aware that the lifestyle we now live is radically different than our old life and some of our closest friends are no longer comfortable around us or may even try to pull us back into our old life ([1 Corinthians 15:33](#)). As difficult as it may be, the truth is we must be prepared to lose friendships when we choose Christ, but the good news is that as Christians we immediately receive a new family! Part of the process of growing in our faith is understanding this, we are not walking/running alone – we have a team, and we are meant to grow together.

Engage: As we walk through life, there will be times we need advice or encouragement – as Christians where and who do we go to?

What does King David say in verse 2?

Our source of wisdom, encouragement, and comfort comes from the ultimate “playbook”, the Bible. When we meditate, or focus on God’s word, not only do we learn how to deal with the situations of life, it is also the standard by which we measure everything we read and everyone we listen to. Who do you currently turn to for advice or counsel?

If you are Christian, how do you know if their counsel is biblical?

Even in our friendships, as much as they may love us, they may not always give godly advice – not only that, but as Christians, WE also need to be sure we are giving solid biblical counsel or advice to our friends and family. If this is new to you and you need help with this, we would love to talk with you. Please give us a call and make an appointment, 760-384-3333. If you have friends or family who frequently come to you for help, how can you use the Bible for guidance?

Part of practicing today’s reading is to look for opportunities God will give you today to use what you’ve learned and/or share it with other believers to encourage them.

Memorize: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Tuesday, February 24th, 2026

Day 2

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

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

Think: As Christians, and as a family, we have a responsibility to one another... to help each other in our time of need or season of trial. The help that we're talking about today is when we see another Christian trapped in a cycle of sin. According to these verses, what are we instructed to do?

How are we to engage the person?

What are we to watch out for?

The responsibility of helping another Christian is truly an honor, but it is also a double-edged sword. Too often Christians either ignore the issue of another Christian trapped in sin, or they think it's none of their business OR they respond with legalism and condemnation – how well do you think these tactics will work?

Have you ever personally experienced this? What did God teach you in the process?

Another very important aspect to this is that when we do try to help, even in a loving way, it is often seen as being judgmental. There is a lesson here as well, turn to [Matthew 7:3-5](#), what do these verses tell us to do before we talk to someone else about their sin?

This is where many Christians feel they are not qualified to say anything – thinking that because they also struggle with sin they have no place to hold anyone else accountable, but if we were to wait until we were sinless to help someone, would anything ever get done?

What both passages are teaching here is that even after we become Christian, we may still struggle with a particularly difficult area of sin. Even with efforts to stop, we may not be successful and so this is where our church family can help. Sometimes we need someone to come alongside and give us support, loving confrontation, and guidance. This is what Galatians is referring to – in “bearing” one another’s burdens Paul is not suggesting we take on the person’s problem, but much like a teammate will assist another who has twisted their ankle while running, they help them to the sidelines to get medical attention. This is what we are to do in the church, all the while making sure we have and are dealing with any areas of sin in our own life so as not to be revealed as a hypocrite.

Engage: If you saw an irregular or suspicious mole on a good friend or family member, would you encourage them to go to the doctor? Why?

When we love someone, we want them to be healthy and live a long life. So why wouldn’t we want the same thing for our brothers and sisters in Christ? If we see something that leads us to believe there is potential damage, pain, or even spiritual death, should we say something? A skin cancer left alone will eventually lead to physical death, but a spiritual cancer left alone will lead to spiritual death and change a person’s eternal outcome. The question is, do you love your church family enough to take the risk? If there is someone you suspect or know is struggling, how can you lovingly approach them and ask if they need help?

If you are the person needing help, who can you ask?

You can also make an appointment for FREE counseling at the church by calling 760-384-3333, Weds - Fri from 10am-4pm.

Memorize: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Wednesday, February 25th, 2026

Day 3

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

Read: [Acts 2:42-47](#), [Hebrews 10:24-25](#)

Think: You've heard the expression, "There's no 'I' in team". Although we may think we will be fine on our own, it is a dangerous thing to try to navigate the Christian life, and life in general, by ourselves. Our society with all the dangers, pitfalls, pandemics, wars, political division, and everything else people deal with every day has caused an increase of social anxiety, fear, and the desire to isolate. But that's exactly what Satan wants! The Bible describes him as a lion that prowls, looking for someone to devour ([1 Peter 5:8](#)), and like a lion on the hunt, they go after the prey that is either weak, sick, young, or isolated, so the fact is... there *is* strength in numbers. Read [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#), how do these verses explain strength in numbers?

What are the benefits?

It is commonly taught that the three-fold cord pictures a relationship between two people with God as the third strand of the cord. Many use it as an example for marriage but it can also apply to any relationship. Many people who have suffered through pain or hypocrisy inside the church, choose to live by the idea that you don't have to go to church to be a Christian. Is this true? What does Hebrews 10 say about this?

There may be times when going to church is impossible – no transportation, living in an area where there are no churches, physical handicaps, or even being forbidden by a spouse or family member – but these situations are rare. Choosing not to attend when there is nothing prohibiting is going against God's word and design.

God created us for relationship from the beginning, so we *need* each other! We help each other learn and grow, we can support one another through trials, and we are part of the family of Christ. After Jesus was resurrected, He gave His disciples the instruction to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came ([Acts 1:4-5](#)). On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and gave them the ability to speak in different languages (tongues) and Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, gave a powerful sermon declaring that Jesus, whom they crucified, was indeed the Christ! Many people became believers that day and as new Christians they wanted and needed to learn more. We are told in Acts 2, what these new believers did during this time. What four things does verse 42 say they were doing?

These new Christians were learning from the apostles all the Jesus taught them AND they were building relationships - fellowship. The Greek word here is koinonia, and it describes a community or relationship. This isn't a passive relationship but real connection with others in the church where people do life together. Do you have koinonia in church?

Engage: Building relationships can be hard these days with our biggest challenge being time. Sadly, busyness has become so normal for most people we accept it as normal, but the problem is that it can also hinder our growth as Christians when it prevents us from building relationships in the church. At the same time, there are those who are lonely and in need of relationship. One of the best ways to connect with others, learn, and grow is through life groups – bible studies where you can not only learn what's in the Bible but how to apply it to daily life. Doing this with others on the same journey gives us the ability to share experiences and have the support needed. This group of people becomes an extended family – people we can share our joys and hurts with, pray with, and have fun with. Are you part of a Bible study? If you are, how has it impacted your faith journey?

If you aren't, what is stopping you? If time is a factor, take a moment to honestly evaluate if there is something you can stop doing so you can become part of a community group. If we are being totally honest, we can find the time, we just need to make the decision. As a church we offer several midweek community groups or Bible studies: Tues. Ladies group, Weds. Men's group as well as a mixed group, Thur. mixed group (all meet at church at 6pm) and two Sunday School classes at 9am. We also invite you to Sunday Social at 10am Sunday morning – a time of coffee and donuts to spend a few minutes spending time together before service, and our monthly "Gathering" potluck so we can "break bread and fellowship".

Memorize: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Thursday, February 26th, 2026

Day 4

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

Read: [Hebrews 12:3-17](#)

Think: In most professional sports, after the game is over, the team gathers to watch the game for the purpose of studying each play and player – both theirs and their opponents. Why do they do this? This is how they learn where there may be a weakness and what needs to improve for both the individual player as well as the team itself. Often, these meetings can become a matter of discipline. We often misunderstand what discipline is meant to do. The Greek word for discipline is, *paideuo*, means to train or instruct, but it can also mean to correct or chastise – not punish. A couple days ago we learned in Galatians 6, that we are to help each other when someone is trapped in sin and often this will require discipline, training, or correction. Discipline is meant to help us

mature and like our parents disciplined us as children, God also disciplines us when we are off course. How does the writer of Hebrews explain this in today's reading?

What is the goal in verse 11?

Some discipline happens when we are reading our Bible – the word of God will convict and correct us, but we can also receive discipline in our life group when someone can lovingly point out where we have an area of weakness or we need to change our game plan. Discipline can be painful, but godly discipline is always meant to help us. Turn to [2 Corinthians 7:10](#), what is the difference between godly grief and worldly grief?

This word, grief (*lype* in Greek), can also mean, annoyance, sorrow, pain, or affliction and is the same word used in verse 11 for painful. We are meant to share in each other's pain as much as we are to share in joy, and part of discipline is course correction, and our church family can help us do that.

Engage: Discipline isn't just a matter of pointing out what needs to change but also taking next steps. When a sports team watches their game to find errors, they don't stop there, they make the necessary changes to prevent it from happening again. How do verses 12-13 explain this?

Whose responsibility is it to do this?

Although it doesn't specifically say in this passage, how can church family help in this?

The point of this portion of scripture is to not grow weary in discipline, looking to Jesus as our example. Some of us need more discipline than others and we can become discouraged – keeping our eyes on Christ and what He endured as well as having a loving church family or life group around

you to encourage you in the process will help. If there is an area in your life that God is disciplining you, how does today's study impact your understanding?

List some specific ways you can "lift your drooping hands and strengthen weak knees"? How can your church family help?

Memorize: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Friday, February 27th, 2026

Day 5

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

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

Think: Next week we will be learning about the church as the body of Christ, and the different gifts and abilities we are given to serve others and build up the church. The apostle Paul goes through this in depth in 1 Corinthians 12, and in the next chapter, as a continuation of thought, he then reminds us that for all the good we can do, volunteering in the church and community, it is useless if it isn't done in love. Again... it's all about love. However, we are not talking about feelings or the shallow kind we watch on TV, but love that is chosen and intentionally practiced. How does Paul describe this kind of love in today's chapter?

How many of these qualities are dependent on feelings?

Hopefully you said, “none”. We *will* have feelings, loving or otherwise, but godly and biblical love has an engine, something that propels it forward regardless of circumstances – what, or WHO is that engine? Jesus is the WHO that moves us to love others the way He loves us – sacrificially and practically. It is also that love that binds us in unity – turn to [John 17:20-23](#). This passage is a portion of a prayer Jesus prayed before He was crucified... what did He pray for?

Who did he pray for?

Why do you think He prayed for this?

As a church, not only are we to love one another we are to be unified in our mission. Love maintains unity **and unity maintains love – if we can focus on practicing those two, we can change the world!**

Engage: If you are Christian, you are part of the church family, and your role is to maintain unity and practice love. This is how we protect our church from Satan’s schemes to destroy. This isn’t for certain people, pastors, and leaders and teachers, but EVERY person who claims the name of Jesus. Take some time to reflect on today’s verses and list how you can practice the qualities of love and unity to maintain the mission of Christ and protect His church.

Memorize: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Saturday, February 28th, 2026

Day 6

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

Read: 1 John 3:9-24

Think: It is common to hear people say, “God is love”, but when it comes to the church, do they say the same thing? Is love associated with the church as well? That is our hope! However, it does depend on those inside the church. Churches are filled with people... flawed people, and many of them are learning what it means to love as a Christian. If someone is looking for a building filled with perfect people, they'll be disappointed! We are like any team and any family, we have our ups and downs, our differences and conflict, but if we are truly following Christ, we will work through these issues with love, grace, and forgiveness.

In today's scripture, the apostle John teaches how we can and should live as a family. In verses 9-11, what do Christians not practice and stop doing?

What are we to practice?

The key word here is *practice*. We understand what this word means, but let's remind ourselves of the true nature of the word – to practice something means we are intentionally working at a task or activity with the intent to get better at it. Sports teams have regularly scheduled “practice”, even doctors “practice” medicine, and whether we realize it or not, before becoming a Christian we spent our lives “practicing” sin. John gives an unusual example of how Christians should not live in verse 12, what is it?

Why do you think he used this example?

As Christians we are to look to the example of our Savior, Jesus, who literally gave His life for all humanity. He did this because of love. The truth is the evidence of following Christ IS love and demonstrating that by how we treat others. How does verse 16-18 explain this?

The point John is making is that we must not close our hearts against anyone. Before we move on, it's important we understand why he also brought up the example of Cain and Abel... turn to [Genesis 4:2-7](#), as you read about them, what is the difference between their offerings to God?

What was Cain's response when God rejected his offering?

What did God ask him?

People often want to try to justify Cain's anger, but we must understand God didn't reject Cain, but the offering he brought, because Cain didn't bring the best of what he had. Let's take a walk through some scripture to understand the problem with anger - read [John 8:44](#), [James 1:20](#), [Matthew 5:21-22](#), and [Ephesians 4:26-27](#). What do these verses teach about anger, where it comes from and what it does?

Anger has a path and when left unchecked it can contaminate our heart and mind.

Engage: When the Bible talks about loving others or hating others, we need to be mindful of how we view this. There are many ways we can demonstrate love for one another... list some ways you can do that.

Not only is love shown by giving someone what they need to meet physical needs, often what a person needs is grace, forgiveness, compassion, or mercy. In the same way, there are many ways we can "murder" someone. We cannot say we are Christian and hold on to malevolent feelings about someone, or refuse to meet their needs, refuse to forgive, refuse to reconcile and justify our position. We must do a heart check and recognize there are things that fuel anger - stress, lack of sleep, jealousy (Cain), busyness, can all fuel feelings of anger. How can you prevent this from happening?

Memorize: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Mile 5



March 2nd – March 7th

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Monday, March 2nd, 2026

Day 1

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

Read: [Ephesians 2:1-10](#)

Think: When we decide to start jogging, our first few times out, we may notice we can't get too far before we become short of breath and our muscles become fatigued. We also notice in the days following our muscles are sore, which makes it difficult to keep going. However, over time, when we are diligent in training properly, we see the results! Part of training for a marathon is learning to pace ourselves. The easiest way to understand this is that during training you find your target timing and effort that is sustainable to finish the race. Of course, this will be different for each person.

Setting our "pace" as Christians is similar. Our hope is to find our target speed where we can keep running and finish the race well. There have been many people with stories of "burn out" in churches... people who have poured out untold amounts of time and energy into ministry who ultimately walked away, never to return. Why do you think this happens?

There can be a few reasons... one is that the person may not have been truly saved. If we are "working" for a reward, we may burn out and without the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we are relying on our own strength to do God's work. Another possible reason is that we are serving in an area or way we weren't created to. Yes, there will be times we need to help in an area with a need for a short time, but we must be careful here to stay focused on God. It could also be due to being obligated by a church leader to fill a role for a set period of time, say 2 or more years, or poor

leadership and training. The fact is, God created us for a purpose, and this purpose is meant for a life time!

For this week, we will learn about pacing and what is needed to sustainably and effectively train and run for Christ so we can cross the finish line. Let's start by reminding ourselves where we started... in verses 1-3, what was our condition?

Who did we follow and how did we walk?

What did God do for us in verses 4-7?

Do we deserve this? What was God's motive?

God did this for us, but we still need to choose Him. So how are we saved (vs. 8)?

What is salvation NOT dependent on (vs. 9)?

Then we come to verse 10... what were we created for?

When did this happen?

How are these works we are created for different than the works mentioned in verse 9?

The word "works" in Greek is *ergon* and means: *business, employment, that which any one is occupied, that which one undertakes to do, an act, deed, thing done.* Works or ministry,

volunteering, and serving should be a response *to* salvation, *not to acquire* salvation and they have a specific purpose. Throughout this week we will learn **about this purpose, hopefully discover our purpose and spiritual gifts so we can glorify God.**

Engage: How does it impact you to know that God has a purpose for you that He planned long ago?

If you are Christian, what are, or have you done to fulfill His purpose for you?

Do you struggle with this? If you do serve in the church, or have in the past, how was your experience?

Did you grow in the process? Did you experience burnout? If you are not serving now, what is the reason?

Take some time to reflect on how and why you got started and note if any of the reasons stated above applies. If you are new to Christianity, and this is all new to you, the wonderful news is that you have a future filled with purpose waiting for you!

Memorize: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026

Day 2

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

Read: [Ephesians 4:11-16](#)

Think: In yesterday's study, we learned that God has a plan for His children. What is so unique and wonderful about this is that He has a plan for ALL people, but as we know, not everyone chooses to follow Him. Today, we continue in a portion of the letter the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, where he explains the roles and purposes of some Christians, keeping in mind, everyone has a different role and purpose – BUT the same goal!

In today's scripture, what are the 5 roles Paul lists?

What is their purpose?

This passage is describing church leadership and their purpose is to teach and equip the church, you and me, to learn and mature in our faith so we can have a solid foundation in Christ. In addition to this, it is everyone's role to work together, in unity, to grow and strengthen the church. You will notice in the following days that Paul frequently refers to the church and its function, the way a body functions to help us understand how we are to live. Let's take a look at these roles:

- Apostle: a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders. The title of apostle, was given to the twelve disciples who were witnesses to the resurrected Christ, one of whom was

Paul “as one born out of time”([1 Corinthians 15:8-9](#)). Although there are churches who anoint some of their members with the title of apostle, there is no evidence that this type of chosen apostle exists today. However, the spiritual gift of apostleship is still given by the Holy Spirit and is best understood as one who is a missionary or church planter.

- Prophet: a person who speaks God’s truth to others. In the Old Testament, God gave direct words to the prophets to speak to Israel. Prophets were sent by God to preach repentance and give specific messages often about the future. This was to be taken very seriously, and the prophet must be faithful to give the message exactly as God said. Some believe the biblical gift of prophecy no longer exists, that God no longer speaks directly through His people. We certainly don’t see much of this today, but there are those to claim to “have a word” from God or they will speak a prophecy over a person in a way that is more like a prediction of something in their future. The BIG question though, is how do we know if what they are saying is right? Turn to [Deuteronomy 18:21-22](#), what did God tell His people about this? What can you do to apply this?
- Evangelist: simply means a “bringer of good tidings”. This is a preacher of the Gospel!
- Shepherd: a herdsman - one who cares for and protects others; a pastor – one who oversees, manages or directs.
- Teacher: one who teaches concerning the things of God and duties of man.

These spiritual gifts and roles are meant to lead the church, help it grow and strengthen for the purpose of impacting the world around us, and very much like any team or business, genuine and effective leadership can mean the difference between success and winning, or loss and pain.

Engage: Although we will learn about the special gifts God gives us through His Holy Spirit, the focus should be on what they are to be used for rather than what they are. It is also possible to have these gifts without serving in a specific role in the church, and honestly that is necessary. As we will continue to learn, it takes each person doing their part in the church for the church to function at its best and it’s not necessary to have a formal role to accomplish this. Do you love missionary work – either local or outside our borders? Do you find that you can easily see the consequences or outcome of the actions or choices of others – especially if they are headed down a dangerous path? Do you feel compelled to tell them? Do you find yourself always telling others about Jesus for the purpose of their salvation? Do you feel “protective” of the church and God’s people? Does it excite you to pass on to others what you have learned in the Bible, as well as the

background and cultural details? If so, God may have given you a spiritual gift... take some time to pray and ask Him what He wants you to do.

Memorize: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Wednesday, March 4th, 2026

Day 3

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

Read: [1 Corinthians 12:1-31](#)

Think: The world in which the apostle Paul lived and wrote letters to the churches is not unlike our world today, filled with pagan idols - think political ideologies, false religions, Darwinism, the occult, celebrity worship, etc. For a person who is new to Christianity, we must not assume they know what is right or wrong or what dangers to look for. In Paul's day it was common for people to have "gifts" or abilities to perform miracles, speak prophecies, play instruments, create art, and so on while not being Christian – more to the point, they were doing these things for profit and for pagan gods. So, it was necessary for Paul to teach the Christians at Corinth about true spiritual gifts that come from God.

We have learned that God created us with a purpose, works that He planned for us, so He created us with unique personalities and abilities. Many people have a natural talent, something they are good at and enjoy doing... what is yours?

There are also people who feel they have no talents, but this is not true, it may be that their talent isn't outwardly obvious, but they have a unique ability to provide compassion or care at just the right time.

Taking all of this into consideration, let's look at Paul's teaching in verses 4-11. In Christianity, who is it that gives believers spiritual gifts?

Who decides what spiritual gifts are given?

In verse 7, what is the goal?

Included in these verses is a partial list of spiritual gifts – list the gifts Paul mentions.

How would a church that works together, exercising the spiritual gifts given function?

How would it impact its community?

One of Paul's teaching methods was to use practical examples that everyone could identify with. He does this in the remainder of the chapter as he uses the physical body, something we all have, to explain how Christians are to work together inside the church. In your own words, describe what he teaches.

How does this help you understand the function of the church as a whole?

How does it help you understand the importance of your role in the church?

Engage: There are many people who have physical challenges – an illness, a disability, or other limitation that impairs daily life. Typically, these folks learn to adapt, other areas strengthen to compensate for the weaknesses they suffer. Those who are blind notice their other senses increase, those who have lost a limb learn to balance differently and strengthen in other ways. Although this is good for the physical body, it is not necessarily what we want to see in the church. There are times when a temporary “disability” in the church requires another person or ministry to come in and help, but this shouldn’t become normal or long term. Sadly, most churches function in this reality – a handful of volunteers take the lion’s share of the work. They do it happily, but the church can’t function at full capacity this way. This isn’t meant to be a guilt trip, rather the encouragement to be part of God’s work to bring people to Himself. Those who are Christian but not serving as part of a life-giving team in the church are shortchanging themselves of the blessing it is to serve. Sometimes we feel we have nothing to offer, but this is impossible when we belong to God. Do you currently serve on a team? If so, how has it changed you?

How has it helped you grow in your relationship with God?

If you are not currently serving, what is the reason?

There may be many reasons, but taking those first steps toward serving in your church is a matter of faith in God... faith that He has/will equip you, faith He will give you the time, faith He will reveal more of Himself to you in the process, faith that you really are making a difference! How can we help you get started? If you would like to know more, you can email www.ccc-rc.org, call 760-384-3333 or visit the Connections Counter during weekend services to find out what's available or make an appointment to discuss your area of interest.

Memorize: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Thursday, March 5th, 2026

Day 4

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

Read: [Matthew 5:13-15](#)

Think: [Ephesians 2:10](#) tells us that each person was created by God for a purpose. Do you feel like you have a purpose? Why/why not?

Many people struggle with this, especially today with the prevalence of anxiety, depression, fear about the future, and so on, it's all we can do to get through the day let alone find our purpose. But that's the point! We don't have to find our purpose – our purpose has found us! (We learned this in day 1)

We tend to overcomplicate this – especially in the church. You may hear people talking about “callings” – “I've been called to missions in Africa” or I've been called to serve the homeless. Yes, God does give specific passion for certain people groups, but the truth is we ALL have the SAME calling, or purpose, as Christians. According to today's verses, what IS our calling or purpose?

What does this mean?

In ancient times, salt was incredibly valuable. It's odd for us now, especially for those on a low sodium diet due to hypertension! However, salt was used for many purposes... not only is it a flavor

enhancer, it was used to preserve food, and it was also used as a type of money. In fact, Roman soldiers were either paid with salt, or their pay was for the purchase of salt, the word “salary” comes from the word used for this, meaning “salt money”. In addition to all of this, salt was frequently used in agreements between two people – eating salt together (a salt covenant) made the agreement legally binding. Who knew that little saltshaker on your dinner table was so important! We might wonder, how can salt lose its flavor? This happens through dilution as in water, when impurities are introduced or it becomes contaminated by other substances. Jesus is telling believers that we are to “flavor” the world around us, improve it and preserve it while being careful not to dilute or contaminate our testimony by continuing to live in our old sinful lifestyle.

Jesus also calls us light! If you have ever driven 395 at night, coming over the hill, what do you notice? Lights! The house lights, streetlights, business lights, and Inyokern airport all illuminate the area... when you see that, what does it tell you? There is life! Light guides and directs us to good things, and it is the same in our faith. Our purpose is to show others who are wandering in the dark how to come to the light of Jesus. We know the way because we were once in the dark as well! The true light of Christ in a person is obvious and can be seen by others but like salt, the light can be covered when we choose to hide it. When people hide the fact they are Christian, or again, live by the world’s standards instead of God’s, like a dying battery in a flashlight, our light grows dim until it is out completely. (See [1 John 1:5-7](#))

There is GOOD NEWS though! Considering that Jesus is the giver and source of light and producer of salt, we can be restored if we choose to ask Him! There may be times of temporary lapses in faithful living, but we have this hope and promise in [1 John 1:9](#), what does this verse teach?

Engage: We have learned that God gives His children spiritual gifts for the purpose of serving Him and others and today we have added they layer of being salt and light. This is our ultimate purpose! What are some ways you can apply this to your daily life?

In your relationships, work life, parenting, etc.?

Is there any area where your salt is losing flavor or your light is growing dim? What can you do to change this?

It is also important to remember the teaching of salt and light also applies to the use of spiritual gifts! Turn to [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#), here the apostle Paul teaches the importance of love while serving. What does he say we are like if we serve without love?

How does this concept apply to serving without salt and light?

We must be mindful of all areas of our life and practice being salt and light in everything!

Memorize: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Friday, March 6th, 2026

Day 5

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

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

Think: Real faith, like true love, is active. It compels a person to respond to the source of faith out of a grateful heart with demonstrated actions. Think of it this way... when two people say they love each other do they often do things for them? If you are married, when you and your spouse were first dating, how did you demonstrate love?

For most people there are gifts, flowers, the opening of car doors, meals cooked, and endless hours of conversation getting to know the other person. However, over the years, what tends to happen? We become comfortable and the gifts, flowers, and other special things fade. This is a good example of how faith in Christ works. When we are new believers, we are excited and filled with energy - we get involved quickly, but often the energy and passion cool off. Like marriage, faith must be nurtured, developed, cultivated, and demonstrated, not only to have a healthy relationship with God but as an outwardly observable testimony to our friends, coworkers, family, and community.

In today's reading the author, James, who was Jesus' half-brother, is explaining the importance of demonstrating our faith. What does he say is necessary to have besides faith?

What sobering statement does he make in verses 17-19?

How does this impact you?

This passage has been the subject of debate for many years with some arguing that it teaches salvation by works. However, when reading it, James makes it clear that works are an outcome of faith and our faith can be in question if not accompanied by the evidence.

Engage: As we learned a couple days ago, there are times when works or serving are not possible... disability, illness, season of life, etc. There's another issue here – works does not always apply to physical serving. What are other types of works that can demonstrate your faith in God?

Spending time in prayer, Bible reading and study, financial or resource support (tithes and offerings), actively working on changing old ways and habits, and sharing the Gospel with others are all ways we see the evidence of faith in our life. Take a moment to evaluate where you are in this. Is your faith simply belief in God or is there other evidence? If you are demonstrating your faith outwardly, is it from love and gratitude or obligation? If it is from obligation or you are not doing anything at all, take some time to examine your heart. Read [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) and [Psalm 26:2](#) (NLT) and pray through these verses noting what God reveals to you. If you need guidance with this, please let us know – we are here to help!

Memorize: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Saturday, March 7th, 2026

Day 6

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

Read: [Mark 6:30-44](#)

Think: We have spent the last 5 weeks learning about God's demonstration of love for humanity through the cross and how it changes every aspect of our life. Our prayer is that you have chosen to follow Christ and/or your relationship with Him has deepened to another level. The desire all believers have at the end of their life, is to hear the most wonderful words that can ever be said... "well done good and faithful servant ([Matthew 25:23](#)) ... enter into the joy of your Master"! Is that what you want to hear Jesus say to you when you step into eternity?

Our pace as Christians is our faithfulness – our ability to serve for a lifetime with what God has given us. God is more concerned with our faithfulness and willingness to give Him our time, talents, and resources than how big or how much – He will take care of the results! We see this in this portion

of Scripture where we find a small boy with a very small offering. In these verses from Mark 6, the disciples had come from a period of preaching, healing, and casting out demons and needed to rest. Based on verse 31, how busy were they?

There are times in ministry when the wise thing to do is take a break and get some rest – God established this in the very beginning by resting on the 7th day and establishing the Sabbath day for us to rest.

We can get so busy and so focused on serving that we fail to do this, or we feel like we just don't have the reserves to keep serving, especially when the needs are so great. In verse 33, what were the people doing?

How did Jesus respond to their needs?

When it became late, what did the disciples suggest?

What did Jesus tell them in verses 37 and 38?

What did they find?

There are a couple of lessons here. First, we often make the mistake of looking for the obvious answer to meet needs. The disciples knew there wasn't enough food for that many people so they didn't even entertain the thought that Jesus could or would do something about it. Do you ever find that you don't ask God for big things because of your own ideas and experiences? Jesus told them 2 things... YOU do it and LOOK around. The church has ways we can support people in certain needs, motel, gas, and shower vouchers, minor financial assistance, food, etc. However, there are times when Jesus tells us YOU do it! But what is often our first response? Like the disciples our initial thought might be – HOW?

Jesus will encourage us to “look around”. This may be looking outside the box at the ways we can offer help, or like our second lesson we see here, invite others into the miracle! The boy who offered

what he had certainly had to know it would never feed 5,000 men (with women and children it was likely closer to 10-15,000) but it didn't stop him from giving it to them. What did Jesus do with this meager offering?

This is one of the greatest miracles of the Bible and one of the greatest lessons. If we give God what we have, no matter how small, He can do great things with it. Have you ever experienced this? If so, what was the situation and how did He provide?

One aspect of this account is often overlooked – what happened in verse 43?

God is not a God of “just enough” He is a God of abundance! What this means is that when we answer His invitation to give Him our offering AND invite others to join in the adventure, He will do more in us than we could ever imagine, think of, or hope to have. How does this encourage you?

Engage: If you are in a place where you feel you have nothing to offer or what you have is too small, how can you think outside the box? Is there something you are holding back because you don't think it is good enough? Is there someone you know who isn't serving? Invite them to serve with you, or encourage them to look for their own place. If you have been serving or ministering to people and are feeling drained or empty, follow Jesus' example and go to a “desolate” or quiet place and spend some much-needed time to refresh.

Memorize: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

