



THE DEVOTIONAL TO END ALL DEVOTIONALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Week 1 5

Week 2 13

Week 3 19

Week 4 23

Week 5 27

Week 6 31

Week 7 35

Week 8 39

Week 9 43

Week 10 47

Week 11 51

Week 12 55

Week 13 59

Week 14 63

Week 15 67

Week 16 71

Week 17 77

Week 18 81

Week 19 85

Week 20 89

Week 21 93

Week 22 97

Week 23 101

Week 24 105

Week 25 111

Week 26 117

Week 27	119
Week 28	121
Week 29	123
Week 30	125
Week 31	127
Week 32	129
Week 33	131
Week 34	133
Week 35	135

WEEK 1

"...Followers of Christ should learn to study God's Word for themselves because, as they study it, the Holy Spirit will open their eyes...and transform the way they think and live. Bottom line...It is the chief way that they will come to know and understand God." Jeremy, Pastor

WEEK 1, DAY 1

Congratulations! You have just taken the first step in developing one of the most beneficial habits that you will ever develop. We encourage you to commit right now to see this journey through to the end. You have obviously made a commitment to learn more about God and ways to follow God's plan for your life. This study is written to help you

- Experience real life change as a result of having personal Bible study as a priority in your life.
- Take responsibility for your own spiritual growth.
- Gain a strong foundation of Bible knowledge to build on as you grow and mature.

Because this study is designed to help you meet these very specific goals, it is very important that you work through the daily lessons in the order that they are presented. If you miss a day, pick up where you left off so that you don't miss any important information that you will need to build on later. Do not skip ahead! This study will start slow and then grow as the weeks progress. The goal of this study is to help you learn to read the Bible on your own, without an outside guide like this one.

Some tips as you get started...

This study should take about ten minutes each day to complete. Take a hard look at your schedule and decide where you can carve ten minutes out of your day. If possible, pick a time that won't change from day to day or week to week. Consider this time your appointment with God, and don't stand Him up! The ten-minute study time is a beginning point; over the weeks this time should grow as you learn to study and spend more time with God in prayer.

Come to your appointment with God prepared to learn. Bring your Bible (a study Bible with concordance if you have access to one), a pencil/pen (and a highlighter if you have one), and a notebook that you can use only for personal Bible study notes.

Meet with God in a private place with as few distractions as possible. Begin your time with God by praying each day to ask Him to clear your mind of distractions. Confess any sin that might get in the way of your hearing Him clearly and hand over to Him any worries that might distract you and cause your thoughts to wander. Expect great things! God's Word is powerful. Turn in your Bible to Hebrews 4:12 and read the verse at least three times. Think about what you pray God will do in your life in the next few months of study.

Then, spend a few moments in silent prayer.

- Tell God how excited you are to learn more about Him and grow spiritually.
- Thank God for speaking to you through the Bible and ask Him to give you a craving for truth.
- Tell God when you plan to meet with Him every day and ask Him to bless your time together.

Right now, begin preparing for your time with God tomorrow.

- Gather the items listed in today's reading and put them in the place that you plan to meet with God tomorrow.
- Write down the time that you plan to meet with Him and lay it on top of those items in plain sight.
- Tell someone that you trust about your plan and ask them to check up on you to see if you followed through on your promise to God.

WEEK 1, DAY 2

Before we begin, make sure you have your Bible, a notebook and a pen with you. Start the time by asking God to help you stay focused on the study today. Let's get started!

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines are "the means by which we gain God's perspective and align with His will" and include things like Bible study and prayer. While the Bible talks about, encourages, and even commands us to practice many of the habits that we consider spiritual disciplines, it doesn't give us a definite list of spiritual disciplines to follow and does not actually use the term spiritual disciplines.

Over the years, many believers have used the Bible to put together a list of habits that they consider to be the most important to the spiritual development of followers of Christ. Over the next few days, you will learn about a few of these spiritual disciplines that we consider the most basic and most important to your personal spiritual growth. They are:

- Bible Study
- Prayer
- Connection with a local church
- Worship

It's important that you make these spiritual disciplines a priority in your life. They are the gas in the car of your faith and will help you get where you want to go spiritually. Without them, you are spiritually stalled right where you are and may begin to roll backwards, if you aren't careful. Don't let that happen! Great things are ahead of you.

Write today's date and the title of today's study in your notebook. Write the references of the verses that we read and the answers to the following questions there.

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-9.

Look at verse seven. What is God telling you to do?

Look at verse eight. What promise do you find in this verse?

Do you have any spiritual goals? Think for a minute about what you would like God to do in your heart and life. Write down this spiritual goal.

Keeping today's verses in mind, how do you think that you will reach this goal?

PRAY:

- Read your spiritual goal out loud to God and ask Him to show you His spiritual goal for you as you study His Word in the days ahead.
- Promise to train spiritually by making the spiritual disciplines a priority in your life.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

(This section is for those who want to learn more about the day's topic and further practice their Bible study skills.)

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. How is spiritual training different from other training you may have experienced? Which is more important? Why?

WEEK 1, DAY 3

Ready? Get your materials together, and let's dive right in. Date and title today's study in your notebook.

BIBLE STUDY

Some people hear the word "study" and cringe, but studying the Bible is more exciting than many other types of study that we do because what we learn from it has the power to change our lives and the lives of those around us. It teaches us about our creator, the secrets of the universe and the purpose of our life...real stuff, important stuff, stuff that we can actually use for the rest of our lives!

Read Matthew 4:1-4 and Psalm 119:105. (Don't forget to write the scripture references down and your answers to the questions below in your notebook.)

Think about these two verses for just a moment. Why is it important to study the Bible?

Just so you know, reading the Bible and studying the Bible are two different things. We read the Bible to hear truth. We study the Bible to swallow truth and draw strength from it like food.

PRAY:

- Thank God for the Bible and for loving you enough to give you a road map for your life.
- Ask God to help you want to really study your Bible.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Read Psalm 119:105-112.

In general, how would you describe the writer's attitude toward God's Word? What can you learn from him?

Write down a verse that stands out to you from Psalm 119:105-112.

WEEK 1, DAY 4

FEEDING YOURSELF

Like food, God's word is meant to be chewed, swallowed, and used. We need it like we need food, but many believers are content to have one or two meals a week (Sundays and Wednesdays) and to eat those meals from someone else's hand (in the form of a lesson or sermon) like a toddler who can't handle a spoon yet. No wonder so many Christians are weak in their faith. They have starved themselves. It's really very sad because it's not hard to learn how to handle "the spoon" of personal Bible study and get truth for yourself.

During this year, we are going to teach you how to feed yourself spiritually by introducing you to three different Bible study methods. They will be your eating utensils. We will start with the simplest and move to the more challenging. By the end of this year, you can be skilled at using each and then you can choose which method to use in order to get the most out of your personal Bible study. You may even choose to use all three in one sitting, just as you might use a spoon, fork, and a knife in a single meal. Sound good? Let's begin.

The God/Follower method of Bible study is made up of just two simple but powerful questions that can be asked of any passage of scripture:

1. What does this passage tell me about God?
2. What does this passage tell me about how to follow God?

Let's practice this method.

Read Matthew 4:1-4. (Got your notebook handy?)

You read this verse yesterday and answered a question about it. However, you will learn that each time you read a passage from the Bible, God can continue to teach you new things.

Let's find out by using the God/Follower method of Bible study. (Try to answer the following questions on your own before looking at the possible answers.)

1. What does this passage tell me about God?
2. What does this passage tell me about how to follow God?

Possible answers:

- This passage tells me that every word that God speaks is important, and that God is the source of what I need to live.
- This passage tells me that, as a follower of God, I should consider God's word to be at least as important as food and depend on God's word for guidance and life. It also tells me that God's word is important when I have temptations to do things wrong.

Your answers may be worded differently, and you may have gotten a bit more or less information from your study of this passage. Don't be concerned. The important thing is that you to concentrate on the scripture and to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Be careful not to read anything into scripture that isn't there, or to overlook what may be uncomfortable for you to think about.

Did you find that there was more to be learned in this verse than you originally thought? If so, then you have taken a step toward feeding yourself spiritually. You are beginning to understand what people mean when they tell you to "dig into God's Word." True Bible study is like eating an apple down to the core or getting the last bit of meat off of a bone. It requires effort, but it pays off!

PRAY:

- Thank God for speaking to you today. Tell Him what you learned and how you plan to use it.
- Ask God to help you learn to hear His voice more clearly and to continue to get better at understanding what you read in the Bible.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Read Psalm 119:73. Practice the God/Follower method of Bible study on this passage and thank God for what He teaches you.

WEEK 1, DAY 5

DIGGING IN

You can use the God/Follower method of Bible study to study both individual verses and longer passages of scripture.

Let's practice doing both by taking a look at a passage within Psalm 119. We will start by asking the God/Follower questions of just one verse within the passage and then ask the same questions of the passage as a whole.

Read Psalm 119:97. (Don't forget your notebook!) Use the God/Follower method of Bible study to study this verse. (Make your own notes in your notebook, before you read the "possible answers" below.)

1. What does this passage tell me about God?
2. What does this passage tell me about how to follow God?

Possible answers:

1. This passage tells me that God gave us the Bible and that it is good.
2. This passage tells me that God's truth should affect me all day long.

Now read Psalm 119:97-104. Think about this passage as a whole for a minute or so and try to get a feel for the overall message. Answer the God/Follower questions about the passage as a whole.

1. What does this passage tell me about God?
2. What does this passage tell me about how to follow God?

Possible answers:

1. God gave us the Bible to make us wise and to protect us.
2. If I love the Bible and concentrate on what it teaches, it will help me become wise. Knowing the Bible will allow me to understand life even more than people who are older than me who do not study the Bible. The truth of the Bible will protect me from evil and from making dumb mistakes.

Compare the answers that you got from reading one verse to the ones that you got from reading the passage. How are they different?

Does it help to look at the verses surrounding an individual verse that you may be studying? How?

Now, let's move backwards. On your own, practice the God/Follower method on one of the other individual verses (not verse 97) within the same passage:

1. What does this passage tell me about God?
2. What does this passage tell me about how to follow God?

How are your answers different from the answers that you gave over the passage as a whole?

Does it help to stop and take a closer look at the individual verses within a longer passage you may be studying? How?

PRAY:

- Thank God for the Bible and the edge that it gives you over your enemies.
- Ask God to teach you how to use His word to fight temptation.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Read Psalm 119:113-120. Using the God/Follower method, study the passage as a whole first, and then study an individual verse within the passage.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Kings 2:1-4, 3:3-15.

This is just part of the story of King Solomon. Use the God/Follower method to study these passages of scripture and see how the truths that you have learned in Bible study this week play out in the life of Solomon. How essential is God's Word in a life that really counts? Do you treat it that way?

WEEK 2

WEEK 2, DAY 1

" When I really let God speak to me and apply the Bible to my life, I start to hear God's words come out of my mouth in place of my own, and He says things a lot better than I ever could!"

Jordan , High school senior

TAKING BITES

Any time that you sit down to study your Bible, resist the temptation to find the quickest or most obvious answers to the questions that you ask just so that you can be finished and move on to other things. As you've learned from Psalm 119, studying God's word is the key to becoming a successful follower of Christ and living a life of meaning and joy. Many people want to grow in Christ or change their life direction; but few people want to actually get their face and their mind into God's word so He can work in their heart.

So, how do you know whether you have studied enough to change your life? That's a tough question to answer. Only God knows what He wants you to learn during your Bible study on any given day, and only you and God know whether you gave your study your full attention and best effort. The key is submitting yourself to God's leadership as you study the Bible so that when you discover truth in God's word you evaluate how it applies to your life. Usually, if you have studied well and done your best to apply the Bible to your life, you will come away from your time alone with God with a sense of having learned or experienced something significant. Whether you feel convicted or inspired, you will know that you have taken a bite of truth and given your heart and mind something to chew on all day long.

Let's experiment...

Read Psalm 119:58-60. (Notebooks ready!) Use the God/Follower method of Bible study with this passage just as you have been.

1. What does this passage tell me about God?
2. What does this passage tell me about how to follow God?

Look at your answers. Could they be more specific? For instance, instead of answering the second question like this, "I need to seek God with all my heart," you could be more specific and say something like this, "I will go to church, read my Bible, and listen to lessons and sermons closely so I can learn more about God."

Use the God/Follower method again using the same passage. This time, try to be more specific, especially in your answer to the second question.

By answering the questions listed in the God/Follower method carefully and specifically, you develop a sort of "game plan" for your own life that you can begin following immediately when you get up from your study time. What will you take away from your study today? What's your game plan? Have you given yourself something to think about through the day?

PRAY:

- Ask God to give you a heart that wants to hear His commands and obey them.
- Ask God to teach you what it means to seek and follow Him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Use the God/Follower method to study 2 Timothy 2:15. Concentrate and give your best effort, being as specific in your answers as possible.

WEEK 2, DAY 2

CHEWING

Now that you know how to study your Bible without help, let's talk about what you do with what you've learned.

In order to digest a bite of food, you have to chew it. To get all of the truth from a passage of scripture, you have to meditate on it. Many religions promote meditation, but the kind of meditation that God tells us to do is different than any other. God doesn't want you to empty your mind to think about nothing or to concentrate on words spoken by man. He wants you to meditate, or think about, His Word, the Bible, as you go about your day, allowing your mind to explore what you have studied and see how you might apply it as you go through your day.

Though you should meditate on God's word all the time, always keeping it on the desktop of your mind, it's important to set aside time to be alone with God. There's something about sitting still and listening quietly as you think about God's word that makes it easier to hear the Holy Spirit speak to your heart.

Sometimes, the bite of truth that you have taken in your Bible study time is just too big or too important not to take additional time at some point during your day to just sit quietly and chew on it awhile, waiting for God to explain it to you.

Sometimes, you need to sit and wait for God's direction and guidance, and sometimes, you just need to talk to God and wait quietly for Him to comfort you by reminding you of the truth as you've read it in the Bible. Remember, reading the Bible is not like reading any other book. The goal of reading the Bible is not to finish the story; it is to know God and how to follow God.

From this point until a new method of Bible study is introduced, please use the God/Follower method of Bible study when told to "study" a certain passage of scripture.

Study Psalm 5:3; Psalm 1:1-2.

PRAY:

- Thank God for speaking to your heart through the Bible.
- Ask God to remind you of what you studied today as you go about your daily routine so that you can practice meditating on His word.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 139:23-24.

WEEK 2, DAY 3

GETTING STRONGER

As we discussed yesterday, it's important to find time to be alone with God so that He can explain His truth to you, comfort you, and guide you. Most often, God will do these things by reminding you of things that you have read in the Bible. You stand a much better chance of being able to hear God's voice clearly and making sense of what He is doing in your life if you memorize scripture. Each time that you add a verse to your memory bank, it's like adding words to the vocabulary that you and God use to communicate, and it deepens your relationship with Him.

Let's face it; you will not have your Bible open all the time in your hand for quick reference. When you choose not to memorize scripture, you choose to face life unarmed and you will fail more often than you would if you had taken the time to pack the verses that you need the most in your mind.

God/Follower Study Proverbs 3:1-6.

CHALLENGE

Let's see if you can memorize just one verse per month throughout the course of this study. Not too hard, right? Not at all.

Let's start with Psalm 119:11.

Read over it a couple of times and then write it down on a piece of paper. Hang that piece of paper where you will see it several times a day (on a bathroom mirror, by your bed, in your car, etc.).

Every time that you see it, read it. Practice saying it from memory a phrase at a time until you can say the whole thing at once without looking. Whether it takes several days or just a few minutes for you to memorize a verse, the important thing is that you are arming yourself against the enemy and taking steps to make sure that you live a life that pleases God.

See if you can find a scripture memory buddy. At the very least, let your friends or family quiz you on what you have learned. You will find it easier to stay motivated when someone else is checking up on you.

PRAY:

- Thank God for giving you the Bible so that you can be a successful follower of Christ.
- Commit to begin memorizing scripture or to continue to add to the scripture that you have already memorized.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Romans 12:19-21. Notice how Paul quotes scripture when he writes to the church in Rome? Wouldn't it be helpful to have scripture handy like that when you need it?

WEEK 2, DAY 4

USING WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

God/Follower Study Matthew 4:1-11. If an individual verse within this passage stands out to you, study it again after you have handled the passage as a whole.

PRAY:

- Thank God for equipping you (giving you what you need) to face temptation and win.
- Ask God for the strength to use the weapon that He has provided when you get the opportunity to do so.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 Peter 3:8-12.

Notice how Peter, like Paul, quotes scripture to prove a point? Why is it important for anyone who wants to lead others spiritually be able to apply the Bible to his/her own life first?

WEEK 2, DAY 5

KEEPING TRACK OF GOD'S ACTIVITY IN YOUR LIFE

As you continue to grow in your relationship with God, it is smart to keep track of God's activity in your life so that you can stay focused on following Him and take encouragement from the change that He has already brought in your life. Journaling is one way, if not the best way, to keep track of God's activity in your life.

Journaling may sound tedious and boring, but it doesn't have to be that at all. Your journal is just that, your journal, and you can choose to use it as little or as much as you want to use it. Your journal may include any one or all of the following things:

- A list of prayer requests and the dates/ways God has answered them.
- Notes from your personal Bible study time (which you have already been doing as a part of this study in your notebook).
- A list of scripture to memorize.
- A list of questions that you hope to answer in future Bible study.
- Any personal thoughts/comments that you may have about what is happening in your life.

As you continue to journal, you will discover what type of journaling works for you and what weighs you down or discourages you from wanting to study your Bible. You may even discover ways to journal that are not listed above. Some people consider journaling to be a spiritual discipline, while others do not journal at all. We encourage you to try to keep a journal, in some form, as you continue to follow this study so that you can discover from personal experience whether journaling might serve as a valuable tool in your spiritual growth. Those who journal have found the habit to be helpful in many ways. Here are a just few:

- As a reminder of God’s faithfulness in the past.
- As a guide in decision-making. By looking at where God has led in the past, you may be able to better determine where He is leading now.
- As a prayer/scripture memory guide.
- As a place to record personal thoughts/questions that may never be spoken out loud.
- As a means of watching the change that God has brought in your heart over time.
- As a source of accountability for the commitments that you have made.
- As a resource for encouraging others
- A place to write down what God has said to you

The key to journaling is to remember that your journal is for your eyes and God’s only. Don’t ever write to impress others or to impress God. (What’s the point? He knows you better than you know yourself.) Your writing doesn’t have to be any more readable or detailed than necessary for you to make sense of it later on.

That said, let’s take a look at why it is important to make an effort to keep track of God’s activity.

Keeping in mind today’s discussion on journaling, study Hebrews 11:29-12:1-3 as a whole and Hebrews 12:3 as an individual verse.

PRAY:

- Look back over the journal that you have kept so far in this study. Thank God for specific things that He has taught you.
- Thank God for the encouragement of His activity in your life and the lives of others that you are able to read about in the Bible.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 77:11-12.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Joshua 24:1-27.

This is just part of the story of Joshua. As you study this passage, consider the importance of accountability in the life of a child of God who truly wants to live the way that God wants him/her to live. Why is it so important? Try to think of ways that you can build accountability into your own life.

Be sure to practice your memory verse!!!

WEEK 3

WEEK 3, DAY 1

PRAYER

Prayer is “two-way communication with God” and is one of the most basic and important spiritual disciplines. In scripture, Jesus is the best example that we have to follow when learning how to pray. He not only teaches us what to pray, how to pray, when to pray, and where to pray, but He models the correct attitude to take both when praying and when receiving an answer from God.

Let’s take a look at the most recognized prayer that Jesus prayed, what we commonly call “The Lord’s Prayer.”

For now, just read Matthew 6:5-13.

Notice that Jesus describes His prayer as a model to be followed, not necessarily a script to be repeated, although it is perfectly acceptable to repeat Jesus’ prayer if your attitude is sincere and you speak the words from your heart.

Over the years, believers have also developed other useful prayer guides. One of those is the “A.C.T.S.” acrostic.

- A** Adoration (Talking about God’s character, majesty and power)
- C** Confession (Admitting to God our sins)
- T** Thanksgiving (Being grateful for what God has done in our life)
- S** Supplication (requesting something of God)

Notice any similarities between the ACTS acrostic and the Lord’s Prayer?

By praying through the acrostic, a believer can be more thorough in their sit-down prayer time. Sometimes when you sit down to pray, you focus on just one area of prayer (like supplication or confession) and forget to be grateful and remember God’s power and majesty. The ACTS acrostic helps keep your prayer more balanced as you learn to pray. However, many times shorter, more casual, prayers that we pray throughout the day (over a meal, before a test, when you are upset at someone) seldom include more than one or two of the areas of prayer listed in the ACTS acrostic prayer guide and that’s just fine.

Because every day is new, the content of your prayers will vary from day to day. Some days, you may be full of questions for God. On other days, you may just need to vent to Him about the things that you are going through. Sometimes, things will be going so well that all you want to do is give God compliments and thanks. As long as you approach God with the attitude illustrated in Jesus’ prayer, there is really no wrong way to pray. The important thing is that you pray.

PRAY:

In your prayer time today, follow Jesus' prayer as a framework for your own thoughts or practice following the ACTS acrostic as a prayer guide.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Matthew 6:9-13 as individual verses.

WEEK 3, DAY 2

SUBMISSION IN PRAYER

God/Follower Study Matthew 26:36-44, focusing on Jesus' attitude, actions, and words.

PRAY:

Use one of the prayer guides we have discussed to pray as you feel led and include the following:

- Ask God to be honored by your prayer.
- Ask God for the courage to put your will aside in exchange for His will for your life / day.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Matthew 6:5-8.

WEEK 3, DAY 3

PRAYING WITH A HUMBLE HEART

Study Luke 18:9-14, keeping in mind what you learned yesterday.

PRAY:

Keeping the prayer guides we have discussed in mind, include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to remind you of His perfection when you pray.
- Ask God to give you a humble heart.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 2 Chronicles 7:14.

WEEK 3, DAY 4

PRAYING GOD'S WILL

Study John 14:13-14.

As we have discussed, when studying the Bible, it's important always to look back on what you already know to be true and to continue to build on that. When people remove a passage of scripture from the rest and try to interpret that passage without considering the rest of God's word, they fool themselves and others into believing things that are false. The Bible always builds on and reinforces itself. It is a unified whole that must be studied that way.

At first, today's passage seems to promise that God will do anything that we want Him to. Now, using your journal, look back at the other scripture that we have read this week. Consider what you learned from those passages and take a fresh look at today's passage.

Who is Jesus really talking to? What kind of prayer is He promising to honor?

Look at John 14:13.

It's important to note that the phrase "in my name" is more than a good luck charm or catchy phrase that you can add to the end of your prayer ("In Jesus' Name, Amen") to try to make God respond the way that you want Him to. In Jesus name means "as my representative." When you pray it, you are saying, "To the best of my knowledge, I believe that what I just prayed is consistent with what Jesus would have me ask and say."

Now read John 14: 12-14.

See what a difference it makes just to back up and read one more verse than before?

The Bible is our weapon against evil and should be handled carefully. Those who don't study their Bible, meditate and test what they have learned are like children running with knives.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Commit to pray according to God's will, not your own.
- Thank God for being more than a genie in a bottle to do whatever you want, when you want it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Matthew 21:21-22.

WEEK 3, DAY 5

GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

To review, prayer is “two-way communication with God.” God answers prayer. It is up to us to wait, watch, and listen. You will never pray a prayer that God does not hear. But, often our timing, our request or our desires are not God’s timing or path for us.

Study Psalm 91:14-16; Psalm 130:2-6.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise God for His faithfulness in answering prayer.
- Ask God to bring your desires in line with His and to help you respond appropriately to His answer to your prayer.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Samuel 1.

This is the story of Hannah, a woman with a very specific prayer request. As you study this passage, think about how the story relates to what you learned this week about prayer. What can you learn from this woman?

WEEK 4

WEEK 4, DAY 1

CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH (THE BODY OF CHRIST)

The church is made up of all believers everywhere. Together, we are the “Church” that Jesus refers to in scripture. However, because we are so spread out, and there are so many Christians, it is impossible for all of us to get together in one place and create tight-knit community. So, we meet in smaller groups in the form of the local church body. You probably have several churches in your town, but God has placed you in one particular church so you will have a place to learn and grow with other believers.

Because God intends for us to function as a whole, participation in the local church body is a spiritual discipline essential to the spiritual growth of all believers. No church is perfect, but God takes your responsibility to your local church body very seriously, and so should you. You have a job to do in your local church, there is a reason that God put you in that church.

Study 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27, Romans 12:4-8.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His church and the privilege of being a part of it.
- Ask God to deepen your commitment to His church.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Acts 2:41-42.

WEEK 4, DAY 2

COMMUNITY

Community is “a cooperative spirit or kinship shared by a group of people.” Community is a connection with others that is deeper than just knowing their name or where they live. God never intended for you to “attend” church, His design was “community.” God’s plan was that you would have connection with other people that know Him. If you think church is about showing up or attendance, you have missed God’s purpose.

Study Acts 2:46-47.

Think for just a moment about our culture, our schedules, our games, our gadgets, our goals, etc. What keeps us from having the kind of community that God intends for us to have?

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to show you the importance of spending time with the other members of your church (of all ages).
- Ask God to give you a desire to invest time in your church relationships.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Ephesians 3:20-21.

WEEK 4, DAY 3

SERVICE AND GIVING

Study Ephesians 6:7 and Matthew 20:25-28.

Include in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the way that He has blessed you. List some of the ways in your notebook.
- Ask God to create in you a generous heart.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Acts 4:32.

WEEK 4, DAY 4

"Without discipleship, there is no such thing as a healthy church... Jesus Himself modeled the importance of mentoring and discipleship. He didn't hold classes or take people through a curriculum. He lived and taught life to his disciples on a daily basis. He poured into their lives and then expected them to do the same for other disciples....I believe everyone needs a Paul in their life who will challenge them to grow in their faith...." Bill, Pastor

DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is "the training that one follower of Christ receives from another" and can be a very beneficial part of a believer's spiritual growth process. Everyone should have a spiritual mentor, a "father" or "mother" in the faith, and everyone should invest in someone younger in their faith, a son or daughter in the faith. Who has trained you and who is training you? Have you ever considered training someone younger in the faith than you? You are starting to learn more and more about the Bible and church, maybe it is time to consider passing down what you have learned.

Study 2 Timothy 2:1-2 (written by Paul to Timothy) and Colossians 3:15-16.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- If you don't have a spiritual mentor, ask God to send you one. If you do, ask God to bless them and to give them wisdom as they train you up in your faith.
- Ask God to allow you to influence the life of a younger believer and to give you the wisdom and integrity to be a responsible mentor.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Titus 2:1-8, 15.

WEEK 4, DAY 5

EVANGELISM

Evangelism is “the sharing of the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ.” All followers of Christ are to be evangelists and share the gospel with others on a regular basis.

Study 1 Peter 3:15 and Matthew 10:19-20.

Now study Matthew 28:18-20.

Jesus knew that twelve disciples could only reach so many people with the gospel. He knew that they would need to train new believers to share the gospel like they did in order to multiply their efforts. That’s why he told them to take the time to disciple new believers (teach them what they needed to know). He knew that the disciples’ trainees would have opportunities to take the gospel into places that His disciples would never be able to go themselves.

Evangelism is a group effort. As a follower of Christ, you have a responsibility both to your brothers and sisters in Christ and to those who don’t know Christ yet to share the gospel. It’s not right to depend on others to do your job. If you don’t know how to share the gospel, find out how. And when someone invites Jesus into their heart, don’t leave them to fend for themselves. Help them teach others how to do what you did for them. It really doesn’t matter how many people are on your team if only a handful of them show up to play, does it?

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the person(s) who took the time to share Christ with you.
- Ask God to give you the chance to share Christ with someone this week.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 2 Timothy 4:5.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: the book of Jonah (it’s not very long at all)

This is the story of Jonah. As you study this short book of the Bible, consider how Jonah’s story relates to what you learned this week. What do you have in common with Jonah? What can you learn from his mistakes? How seriously does

God take our obedience to Him?

How is your scripture memory coming along?

WEEK 5

WEEK 5, DAY 1

WORSHIP

Worship is “giving God His worth by responding appropriately to Him.” Worship is so much more than singing songs on Sunday or Wednesday. This spiritual discipline is more than a habit: it is a way of life. It is the moment-by-moment opportunity to please and honor God that begins with your obedience to Him, and it can happen when you are alone or when you are with a group of people. Because God is not limited by time, place, or circumstance, our worship of Him is not limited by time, place, or circumstance.

Study Romans 12:1-2.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God who He is to you. Thank Him for being a God worthy of your worship.
- Ask God to broaden your view of worship and increase your desire to worship Him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 100-101:3.

WEEK 5, DAY 2

RIGHT ATTITUDE IN WORSHIP

Study Mark 12:30-31 and John 4:24.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Consider each area of worship mentioned in Mark 12:30-31. Ask God to show you any area of your life that you do not live in worship to Him. Give it to Him.
- Ask God to show you how to worship without worrying about what other people think of you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Luke 7:36-50.

WEEK 5, DAY 3

MORAL CHARACTER

A person's moral character is "the sum total of all the choices an individual makes" and is an outward expression of inner faith. You live what you believe. If Jesus is truly your Lord, your life shows it. You are a walking illustration of God's ability to change the human heart, a poster child for the salvation and the exciting life available to everyone willing to let Jesus take control of their life.

Study 2 Corinthians 5:17 and John 10:10.

On the other hand, if you are one of those "believers" who tell people that Jesus is your Lord and then continue to live in a way that is not like Jesus' plan for you, then you are a walking contradiction. Not only are you interfering with God's plan to rescue the lost, but you are missing out on a very satisfying adventure of following Jesus, and you are probably making decisions along the way that you regret.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God how much you want to please Him.
- Ask Him to give you the desire to live like a new creation so that others will want to know Him like you do.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Galatians 2:20.

WEEK 5, DAY 4

THE DIFFERENT LIFE

As you learned yesterday, accepting Jesus as your Savior is the beginning of a brand-new life for you. What does that new life look like? How is your life different from the life that you lived before or would be living if you had not accepted Christ as your Savior? Let's find out.

Study Galatians 5:19-26. Which kind of life sounds more stressful? More enjoyable?

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you a clear picture of what your new life in Christ should look like.
- Ask God to give you the desire and strength to get rid of the habits in your life that don't please Him.

Different? Yes. Weird? No.

God requires His children to live a life of obedience to Him. That obedience causes us to stand out from the crowd. It makes us different, but it doesn't make us weird. God intends for us to lead people to Christ, not alienate them.

So, if you live a consistent life of obedience to God, depending on the Holy Spirit for strength and direction, people will be drawn to Christ in us. At least those seeking truth and life will be. That's not weird, it's awesome!

Too many believers think that they must work at “taking a stand” for Jesus. Their devotion to God causes them to strike out on a misguided mission to be “odd for God,” something God never intended. All God requires is obedience. He will do the rest. In fact, going above or beyond what God has asked of you can interfere with His activity in the lives of others. Listening for the direction of God and being obedient to God’s direction is the best option.

Study 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

Do these passages support the idea that you must be weird to be a follower of Christ? Do you have to work at standing out?

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the chance to lead others to Jesus through your obedience.
- Thank Him for making you “one of a kind” and allowing you to be yourself while living for Him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Ephesians 4:31-5:2 and 1 Peter 2:9-12.

WEEK 5, DAY 5

FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST

The different life that we lead as followers of Christ gives us the chance to be friends, real friends, with Jesus.

Study John 15:14-15.

How can you recognize a real friend of Jesus? How will he/she stand out? Let’s look and see.

Study John 15:12, 17 and John 13:35.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask Jesus to pull you into deeper friendship with Him.
- Ask Jesus to teach you how to love Him by loving others.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study John 15:13.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 37.

This is just the beginning of the story of Joseph. As you study this passage, consider how it relates to what you learned this week about worship, attitude, moral character, and living a life that stands out. Was Joseph a good role model in these areas in his younger years? What did God allow to happen in order to shape this young man for leadership? What can you learn from his mistakes?

Make sure that you know Psalm 119:11 by heart. We will learn a new verse next week!

WEEK 6

WEEK 6, DAY 1

DYING TO SELF

To be Jesus' friend, you must "die to self."

Before you accepted Jesus as your Savior, you were powerless to live the kind of life that God wanted for you. Without the Holy Spirit leading, guiding, and warning you, you lived in sin and were unaware of your sinful nature. When you accepted Jesus as your Savior, He freed you. He gave you the power of the Holy Spirit, who came to live inside of you, so you could enjoy peace and freedom in Christ.

The problem is that we humans are creatures of habit, bad habits mostly. Though complete freedom and peace are ours, we tend to wander back, over and over again, to the sin that once held us.

"Self" is our natural tendency or desire to live life on our own and for ourselves, and it leads us into sin without fail. Self is difficult to overcome because it is engrained in us. It takes the supernatural power of God to fight it. If you truly want to stay out of the cage of sin that once held you, you have to "die to self." You must permanently sever all ties to the sin that controlled you before you were made new by Jesus. The more that you practice letting God take control and direct your daily focus, the easier it will be to live life away from your old life.

Study Romans 6:6-7, 20-23.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for setting you free from the sin that once controlled you.
- Ask God to teach you how to let go of things that keep you from living the way He intended and enjoying the blessings that He has for you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Romans 6:11-14.

WEEK 6, DAY 2

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Freedom in Christ is the ability to live outside of the control of sin. Because Jesus' blood paid the price for all of your sins, past, present, and future, you are guaranteed a place in Heaven. Some immature believers take advantage of this "free pass" from sin, thinking that they can do whatever they want because it won't keep them out of Heaven. They take advantage of God's grace and willingly choose sin, thinking to themselves, "I can always ask God to forgive me, and He will (1 John 1:9)." This attitude is both foolish and arrogant and shows no respect, gratitude, or love for the Heavenly Father who sacrificed His Son to give us that freedom. It is also very short

sighted. Sin is sin because it has consequences in this life. When God directs us away from sin, he is directing us toward a life that is free of the consequences of our bad choices. God directs us toward a great life when he directs us away from sin.

God had more in mind than Heaven when Jesus died on the cross. He wants to give you a fuller, better life right here on earth, but you will only experience it if you live within the guidelines that He has set for you.

Reread John 10:10 and study 1 Corinthians 6:11-12.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank Jesus for setting you free from sin.
- Ask God to give you the desire to live within His guidelines and the strength to make choices that will bring you the fuller life He has for you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Galatians 5:13.

WEEK 6, DAY 3

ATTITUDE

What kind of attitude should a follower of Christ have? Let's find out.

Study Ephesians 4:22-32.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to shape your attitude toward Him and toward other people.
- Ask God to give you the chance to serve someone willingly today.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Ephesians 5:1-8.

WEEK 6, DAY 4

"To guard my heart, I choose not to look at some of the commercials and stuff on TV... A lot of things that people watch for pleasure just end up making them feel bad and wrong instead. It's not worth it. "

Hunter, middle school student

GUARDING YOUR HEART

In order to live a life that pleases God, you have to guard your heart.

Study Proverbs 4:23-27. Isn't it interesting that those who chase after sin looking for a fun life destroy the source of that life in the process?

CHALLENGE

It's time for a new memory verse! Let's add Proverbs 4:23 to our arsenal. If you are feeling ambitious, keep going and add the rest of today's passage one verse at a time. Remember to read it, write it, and post it. Learn it a phrase at a time and don't get frustrated if it takes you a while. The important thing is that you are working at it!

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to take control of your mouth.
- Ask God to help you keep your focus on Him and make wise choices.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Matthew 12:34.

WEEK 6, DAY 5

PURITY

Study Psalm 119:9.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you an intense desire for purity and the peace that it brings.
- Tell God how much you want to be close to Him and to know Him more.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 24:3-4.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 39-40.

This is a continuation of the story of Joseph. Study this passage closely. Has Joseph begun to reflect the presence of God in his life yet? How did God use difficulty to shape Joseph? What can you learn from Joseph's example in relation to the topics that you studied this week?

Work on your new memory verse(s) this weekend! When you are ready, practice out loud to someone else.

WEEK 7

WEEK 7, DAY 1

HONESTY

Study Proverbs 12:22 and 2 Corinthians 8:21.

It's helpful to practice using the ACTS prayer guide from time to time. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.... remember?)

Today, practice using the ACTS acrostic and include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His truth.
- Ask God to give you the courage to speak the truth.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Colossians 3:9-10.

WEEK 7, DAY 2

INFLUENCE

Study Proverbs 27:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Commit to let God choose your closest friends.
- Ask God to mold you into the type of person that draws others into a closer relationship with Him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Proverbs 13:20.

WEEK 7, DAY 3

HEALING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Because we struggle to “die to self” on a daily basis, we followers of Christ don’t always get along with one another. We get selfish. We make mistakes. We get mad. Sometimes, we even try to get “even.” None of it is God-honoring, and none of it is acceptable in God’s eyes. When His children are at odds with each other, God’s message is loud and clear, “I don’t care who started it, just fix it!”

Study Matthew 5:23-24.

God requires more than emotional forgiveness or a new attitude, things you can take care of within yourself without having to interact with someone else. He expects us to take action and be the first one to try to make things right in a relationship that has gone wrong.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to help you kill the human desire to be “right” and justify your actions in order to “win” an argument.
- Commit to make God’s glory your only priority when faced with conflict.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Romans 12:18.

WEEK 7, DAY 4

“EVERYTHING we say affects people. Words really can’t be taken back. They need to be processed through the right filters and some of them just don’t need to be said. We choose to speak or not to speak. It is a constant battle...I think those within the Body of Christ who have wisdom recognize those times when things shouldn’t be spoken almost as well as those times when it is truly necessary to put voice to conviction...I feel that some of the greatest effect we have on people occurs when most people don’t know that it really happened...it’s in the small right decisions that you just make...one controlled moment at a time.” Mike, Worship Leader

CONTROLLING YOUR TONGUE

Study Luke 6:45 and James 1:26.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to make you more aware of the words that you speak and their impact on others.
- Commit to right any wrongs that you may have committed with your mouth.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Proverbs 12:18.

WEEK 7, DAY 5

SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

Study Romans 13:1-6.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the role that ALL of the authority figures in your life play and have played in God's shaping of you. Think through the people that God has put in authority over you in each place that you go.
- Ask God for the humility to respond to ALL authority figures in your life with the proper attitude, keeping a tight rein on your tongue.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Ephesians 5:21.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 41-42.

Joseph's story isn't over yet. Finally, his time of testing and preparation is over. Does Joseph rise to the occasion and lead well? As you study, consider this: It's one thing to live a public life that honors God, and quite another to live a private life that honors God. Public life comes with accountability, but the choices that you make in your private life are the ones that show whether or not you have truly "died to self."

Do you think that Joseph's heart is fully surrendered to God? Has he conquered his pride? Have you?

Work on your memory verse(s)! If you are ready, challenge yourself and add more of the passage now.

WEEK 8

WEEK 8, DAY 1

RESISTING TEMPTATION

Study 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 and 1 Timothy 6:11.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His faithfulness and ask Him to give you the strength to remain faithful to Him.
- Commit to run from temptation.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 2 Timothy 2:22.

WEEK 8, DAY 2

LIVING FOR CHRIST ALONE

Study 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 and Colossians 3:17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell Jesus who He is to you.
- Ask God to show you whether you serve any other “gods” in your life and confess your worship of those things as sin, accepting God’s forgiveness.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Exodus 20:3.

WEEK 8, DAY 3

LOVING OTHERS

Study Matthew 5:43-48.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to teach you to love as Jesus does.
- Ask God to demonstrate His love to others through you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 John 4:7-12.

WEEK 8, DAY 4

"When I choose not to forgive someone who has wronged me, I find myself moving farther and farther away from Christ. At that point, I have taken Christ out of control of my life and put myself in charge. When I finally do forgive, I guess the other person feels better, too, but I actually feel better and not so guilty anymore. In the end, it's always my job to make relationships right between me and other people." Aaron, Media specialist

FORGIVING OTHERS

Study Matthew 6:14-15.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His willingness and faithfulness to forgive you over and over again.
- Ask God to help you kill the selfish desire to hold a grudge and replace it with a real desire to see unity in the body.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Colossians 3:12-15.

WEEK 8, DAY 5

SHOWING HOSPITALITY TOWARD OTHERS

Romans 12:13 and 1 Peter 4:9-11.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the hospitality that other believers have shown to you.
- Ask God to make you aware of the needs of those around you so that you can show them hospitality in His name.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Matthew 25:31-40.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 43-45.

This is the “conclusion” of the story of Joseph and his brothers. Is Joseph a good example of resisting temptation, loving others, and forgiveness? What can you learn from him? Who received the ultimate glory in the story of Joseph and his brothers? Thinking back over the story, can you see God’s hand in Joseph’s circumstances? Can you see His hand in yours?

Don’t forget to work on your memory verses! Do you still remember Psalm 119:11? Remember to keep the truth fresh in your mind so that it will be there when you need it.

WEEK 9

WEEK 9, DAY 1

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT...

Let's move past the actions and attitudes of a Christian and discuss some basic Bible doctrine, or "teachings" that every follower of Christ needs to know and understand. Don't let the word "doctrine" scare you. Understanding what the Bible says about a certain subject will help you know more about it and know how to talk about it to other people when they ask questions.

GOD

There is only one God, but that God exists in three distinct persons. We call that three-in-one Godhead the "Trinity" (a word not found in scripture, but useful in describing this difficult idea of three in one). The "Trinity" is made up of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though all three persons of the Trinity have the same power and character, we understand each uniquely. It is not that God the Father created Jesus and then Jesus created the Holy Spirit; God has always been three and He has always been one. Jesus is not God Jr., and the Holy Spirit is not God the Third. (Does your head hurt yet? It will). When discussed as a whole, we refer to the Trinity simply as God, using the pronouns He, Him, and His. The Holy Spirit is not "it" while Jesus and God are "He." In fact, the Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the Spirit of God and sometimes as the Spirit of Jesus or sometimes another name (like the Counselor or Spirit of truth).

Keeping what you've just learned in mind, study John 16:5-15.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise God for being too amazing for you to fully comprehend and so completely worthy of your worship.
- Ask God to give you insight into His truth and an understanding of scripture that makes you want more.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Keeping in mind what you've learned today, study I John 1:1-7, 2:23.

WEEK 9, DAY 2

MORE ABOUT GOD

As human beings, we are limited in our knowledge and understanding of an infinite God, but the Bible gives us some insight into His character and nature. We will never know everything about God, but we can know some things about God from the Bible.

We know that God has existed from the beginning and that nothing existed before Him.

Study Genesis 1:1.

When you see creation, you know there must be a creator. Everything that exists must have a cause. God is the creator of everything we see, smell, understand and touch. Everything. Not even time or space existed before God created it. The hard part to understand is that God was not created, He has always existed. God is not a created being; He is the creator.

Study Romans 1:18-20.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His creation and for creating you.
- Tell God why He deserves to sit on His throne, and you don't.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Acts 17:24-30.

WEEK 9, DAY 3

THE NATURE OF GOD, NOT GOD IS NATURE

"When things went bad, I used to think that I had done something wrong, that God was punishing me. I've learned that is not always true. It's just that He has so richly blessed me that I've become spoiled and expect every day to be hassle-free and happy. Every believer should expect trials and hard times...that's just part of living here on this earth full of sinful people.... But, because I know my gracious and merciful Heavenly Father and know how much He loves me, I can live a life of joy in the good times and the bad. Now I can appreciate a normal day for the blessing that it really is." -April, Sunday school teacher

Here are some more truths that you need to know about God, and this is just the tip of the iceberg!
God is everywhere.

Study Psalm 139:7-12.

God is sovereign. That means that He decides what happens.

Study Ephesians 1:3-5.

God is unchanging.

Study James 1:17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God that you trust Him with your life.
- Thank Him for being steadfast and unchanging in a very uncertain world and for being with you wherever you go.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Romans 11:33-36.

WEEK 9, DAY 4

THE NATURE OF GOD

God is truth. Remember as you read the following verses that all parts of the Trinity share the same character and power.

Study John 14:6.

God is just, or "fair."

Study Acts 17:31.

God is holy, or "righteous, perfect."

Study 1 John 1:5.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for being the truth upon which all believers can agree and be unified.
- Ask God to make you holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 139:11-12.

WEEK 9, DAY 5

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

God is full of mercy and grace. In other words, He is compassionate and forgiving.

Study Ephesians 2:4-5.

God is love.

Study 1 John 4:16.

God is our Provider.

Study 1 Timothy 6:17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His grace and mercy. Praise Him for His love.
- Praise God for His provision for you. List to Him the things that He has provided.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 57:1-3.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 22:1-18.

This is the story of Abraham and his son Isaac. As you study this passage, consider what you learned yesterday about God's mercy, grace, love, and provision. You'll find that this story isn't so much about Abraham and Isaac as it is about God. What encouragement do you find in this story?

Make sure that you have a firm hold on Psalm 119:11 and Proverbs 4:23-27. We will learn a new verse this week!

WEEK 10

WEEK 10, DAY 1

GOD THE FATHER OF JESUS

God is the Father of Jesus. But, Father and Son does not mean that God has a wife and Jesus is His child. Jesus has always existed, just like God the Father has always existed. Jesus did not come after God the Father. Prepare to have everything explained and then still be confused.

Study Colossians 1:16-20.

Because He loves us, God himself came to earth to rescue us. Jesus showed us God's love, power, mercy and so much more.

Study John 3:16.

Because of that gift, we can be forgiven of our sin and become children of God ourselves.

Study John 1:12-14.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for loving you enough to send Jesus to pay for your sin.
- Thank God for His forgiveness and the chance to be His child.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 John 1:7.

WEEK 10, DAY 2

GOD OUR FATHER

God is not just a good father. He is THE Father, perfect in the way He interacts with us.

Study Matthew 7:9-11 and Hebrews 12:7-11.

CHALLENGE

It's time to memorize more truth. Let's add 1 John 1:9, a very reassuring verse for those of us who make mistakes (that's all of us) and a fantastic verse for sharing hope with those who feel hopeless. What a promise! Read it, write it, and post it.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the good gifts that He has given you.
- Thank God for loving you enough to discipline you and commit to take that discipline with the right attitude.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 John 5:3-5.

WEEK 10, DAY 3

JESUS CHRIST

In the Bible, Jesus is sometimes referred to as “the Word” because He is the embodiment of God’s truth, the Bible. Jesus’ life and words are God’s truth communicated through visible actions and audible words. All events in the Bible lead up to, stem from, and hinge on the existence of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and the redemption (rescuing) of man-made possible by Him. So, in essence, He is the Word in living form.

Jesus is God’s Son and was with Him in the beginning. Though He is a part of the Trinity and fully God, He became a man while on this earth, experiencing the same trials and temptations that we do. Only He lived life on earth without ever committing one sin.

Study Philippians 2:5-8 and Hebrews 4:14-16.

Because Jesus was without sin, He was the only perfect sacrifice for the sin of all men. His death and resurrection made it possible for us to be forgiven and to become children of God.

Study 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 5:8.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise Jesus for being a Savior who truly understands what you are going through.
- Tell Jesus how His sacrifice has changed your life.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Keeping in mind what you’ve learned today, study Mark 14:32-36. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus faced His death with all of the same emotions that you would have experienced in the same situation and still went through with it?

WEEK 10, DAY 4

"Without Jesus, I would be a wrecked and miserable person." — Melinda

THE PURPOSES OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus came not only to provide the sacrifice for our sin, but also to show us what God is like.

Study John 14:8-11.

Jesus came to be an example of how we should live.

Study 1 Peter 2:21-25.

Jesus came to destroy the devil's work.

Study 1 John 3:7-8.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Think of all that Jesus gave up in Heaven to spend a difficult time here on earth just for you. Thank Him for His sacrifice.
- Praise Jesus for being a living example for you to follow and ask Him for the courage to stand up to the devil when he messes in your life.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Colossians 1:10, 13.

WEEK 10, DAY 5

JESUS IS WITH US AND HE IS RETURNING...

It may sound strange to say that Jesus is already with us and that he is returning, but it is true. When Jesus forgives your sin, the Bible is clear that His Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life. But, the Bible is also clear that there will be a day when Jesus will return for all Christians and time on earth will come to an end. People have waited for Jesus' return for 2,000 years, but we can be certain that He is coming back just like we are certain that He came 2,000 years ago.

Study 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Acknowledge that Jesus is coming back and that things will not always be like they are now. Think about how you should live since you know that one day Jesus will return for you.
- Thank God for the promise of eternal life with Him in Heaven.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 2 Peter 3:3-13.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Matthew 25:1-30.

This passage contains two “parables” that Jesus used to describe His future return. Parables are teaching stories that use metaphors to explain or illustrate a point. As you study this passage, see if you can figure out where you fit into each story. What is God trying to tell you through Jesus’ stories?

Remember to practice your new memory verse!

WEEK 11

WEEK 11, DAY 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is a difficult thing to understand that when you accept Christ into your life, the Holy Spirit moves within you and takes permanent residence in your life; marking you forever as a child of God and anointing (equipping) you for Christian service. The Holy Spirit is an equal person of the Trinity of God. The Holy Spirit is not “it” or less than God or even the “latest form of God.” God has always been one and has always been three; Father, Son, Spirit.

Study 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 or Ephesians 1:13-14.

Once the Holy Spirit comes to indwell (live in) your heart, He never leaves. His presence brings change and new life.

Study 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for making His presence in your life a permanent thing.
- Ask God to help you understand what it means that His Holy Spirit lives inside of you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Titus 3:5-6.

WEEK 11, DAY 2

THE INDWELLING VS. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The “indwelling” (coming to live within) of the Holy Spirit happens only once in a person’s life, at the moment you accept Christ. He stays with you through your good decisions and the bad. However, the Holy Spirit’s presence in your heart does not prevent you from sinning. Though the Holy Spirit will guide, teach, and warn you against sin, you still have the ability to sin after you accept Christ. When you make poor choices, it grieves the Holy Spirit within you, interrupts your communication with God, and distracts you from following God.

Study John 14:15-17 and Ephesians 4:29-32.

God commands all believers to be filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never leaves you, but you can make decisions to ignore God, not have prayer time with him, not study His word or do something that you know is wrong. When you choose to not walk God’s way or not take in His word, you are choosing not to be directed by God. If you had a drinking glass full of stones, you could fill the glass with water; but you really do not have a full glass of water, most of the glass is full of rocks. If you took the rocks out of the glass, you would see that there is much more room for water. That is a simple picture of being filled with the Spirit. Asking God to help

you remove anything in your life that distracts you from Him and then filling your life with His power, love, wisdom and presence.

Because being filled with the Spirit is a direct result of your choice whether or not to submit to God's will for you as a believer, that "filling" can come and go. In the book of Acts, we read about the disciples being filled with (or controlled by) the Holy Spirit long after they initially received the permanent gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31). You must continually dedicate your life to following God if you want to stay filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit and experience God's power in your life.

Study Ephesians 5:18 and Galatians 5:25.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God for the desire to please Him in your thoughts, actions, and attitudes.
- Commit to be filled with the Spirit so that you can experience life in Christ the way that God intended for you to experience it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Romans 12:1-2.

WEEK 11, DAY 3

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One way that the Holy Spirit enables a believer for service is by giving that believer one or more spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are not places of service or titles (like a Sunday school teacher, preacher, or missionary), but are God-given abilities that are given to each follower of Jesus to help the church function best. God gives the people of each local church a mixture of gifts so that the ministry can be done as the people of the church serve together.

Study 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Let's look at some of the spiritual gifts listed in scripture.

Study Ephesians 4:11-12.

Note that spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of spiritual service, not for the glory of the one possessing the gift. Though they are given at salvation, spiritual gifts should be developed in order to be used more effectively.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for your spiritual gifts. If you don't know what they are, ask Him to reveal them to you through your service to the church.
- Commit to use your spiritual gifts for God's glory and not your own.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

WEEK 11, DAY 4

*"The Holy Spirit is the framework within which the church exists and moves...
Whatever we seek to accomplish within God's will for the church happens, or should happen,
through the power of the Holy Spirit. If we step outside of the Spirit's influence, we then are acting
outside of what God has intended and created the church to be."*

-Todd, Youth Pastor

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Study the following passages of scripture and see if you can determine what some of the other ministries of the Holy Spirit are.

Study John 16:12-15, Romans 8:13-16 and Romans 8:26-27.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the chance to experience God through the Holy Spirit living inside of you.
- Commit to lean on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study John 7:37-39.

WEEK 11, DAY 5

ANGELS

Angels are powerful spirit beings created by God for God before the creation of the world. They are not reincarnated human beings. Though it may be comforting to think that loved ones who have passed on may continue to guide and protect us as angels, it simply is not true. We do not become angels when we die; people and angels are distinctly different creations of God.

Study Hebrews 1:1-14.

Throughout scripture, we see angels doing God's bidding, making announcements, and standing by to be summoned by God. Study the following passages and see if you can determine the value of angels in a believer's life.

Study Acts 27:21-24 and Luke 16:19-22.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for creating you the way that He did, with the ability to become His child, an opportunity that the angels, though powerful, do not have. 1 Peter 1:10-12
- Thank God for the ministry of angels in your life.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Luke 2:4-15.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Judges 13:1-25, 16:1-20.

This is the story of Samson, a judge of the Old Testament. As you study, think about what you have learned about the Holy Spirit's power in the life of a follower of God. What role does the Holy Spirit play in Samson's life? What happens when a follower of God chooses friendship with the world over his/her relationship with God?

Remember to work on your scripture memory!

WEEK 12

WEEK 12, DAY 1

WHY BOTHER?

We've talked about the fact that God is the Creator. He created absolutely everything that exists (seen and unseen). Have you ever wondered why? Why would a perfect God, who knows everything before it happens and doesn't need anything from anyone, create the world knowing that mankind would abuse the freedom He gave them to make their own choices to turn away from God? Why would He create the world knowing that a battle between good and evil would be waged within it?

The simple answer is, we don't know. Maybe someday God will reveal all of that to us. As it is, our limited understanding draws us closer to a very mysterious God.

Here's what we do know...Creation exists to bring glory to God and God alone. In other words, creation puts the spotlight directly on God. Creation proves that a Creator exists and it is a visible illustration of God's power, majesty, and wisdom.

Review Romans 1:18-20 and study Psalm 8.

God alone sustains His creation. If He were to let go for even a second, all would be destroyed. But He doesn't let go. God remains intimately involved with every aspect of His creation, demonstrating His love, His mercy, and His grace so that no one has any excuse to reject Him or His gift of eternal life.

Study Acts 17:24-28.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Take time to thank God for specific things that He created, telling Him what each teaches you about Him.
- Ask God to make you sensitive to His presence and what He wants to teach you through His creation.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Job 38-39.

WEEK 12, DAY 2

TAKING CARE OF GOD'S CREATION

God created man and woman (In this study, we may use the term "man" to describe both at the same time.) in His own image. We did not evolve from some lower form of life. Each and every one of us is unique, which shows us that God is smart and creative. He doesn't make clones, but designed us to be genetically diverse as we continue to reproduce the way that He always intended.

As beings created in God's image, all men and women have been given the awesome responsibility of ruling over and taking care of God's Creation. It is our privilege to care for what belongs to God. Adam was assigned this task before sin ever entered the world.

Study Genesis 1:26-2:25.

Although God allows us to care for and rule over His Creation, we must remember that it doesn't belong to us. We don't get to make the rules. Instead, it is our job to submit to God's authority and carry out our responsibility according to the rules laid out for us in His Word, guiding others to do the same, even if some of God's rules seem inconvenient or unpopular at times. For instance, if God says that it is wrong to take human life (and He does!), then we should care for human life. God is the creator of life and we are the caretakers of life.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the privilege of caring for His Creation and commit to take your responsibility seriously.
- Ask God to give you both boldness and sensitivity as you guide others to uphold His law and follow rules they may not fully appreciate yet.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study Psalm 139:1-18 and Psalm 104.

WEEK 12, DAY 3

SATAN

We know why and when some things were created, but some parts of creation are a mystery to us. For instance, there are many things about the spiritual world that we do not understand. The presence of evil, Satan and demons is a great mystery for certain. From the first moments in the Garden of Eden, we see the temptation of evil (Genesis 3:1). God has the power to crush evil, but He chooses not to destroy all evil yet; though the Bible is clear that there will be a day when all evil will end (Revelation 20:7-10).

The origin of Satan is unclear. We know he was created by God, but we do not know why. We are taught in scripture not to fear Satan, but we should respect his power and understand that we cannot stand up to him without God's authority. Satan is more powerful than any person, but he is not more powerful than God. Satan is the one who accuses us, tempts us and works to destroy us. In his hatred toward God, Satan seeks to destroy all that God loves, especially God's children.

Study Jude 8-10 and 1 John 4:1-4.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise God as the one true God, the only one worthy of your worship.
- Ask God to take away any pride or arrogance in your own heart as you deal with temptation.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 John 3:7-10.

WEEK 12, DAY 4

SATAN'S LIMITED POWER

*"When the devil tries to mess me up, I just think about how he can't take my Jesus from me."
-Hope, second grader*

The Bible tells us that Satan has emotion, will and intelligence. In scripture, he is referred to as; Satan, Devil, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Belial, Evil one, Tempter, Prince of this world, God of this age, Prince of the power of the air, and the Accuser of the Brethren. He appears as the Serpent, the Dragon, and an Angel of Light. Satan is powerful and effective in his attacks. He is also a liar and a deceiver.

However, as a created being, his power is limited. For instance, he does not know everything as God does, nor can he be everywhere at once. God has put limitations on him and he can be resisted by Christians.

Study James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:6-11.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Acknowledge God as being more powerful than Satan in your life.
- Commit to lean completely on God and to resist Satan's attacks.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 Corinthians 10:12-13.

WEEK 12, DAY 5

THE WORK OF SATAN

Satan was an active enemy of Christ while He lived on this earth, tempting Jesus and using people like Judas Iscariot to try and keep Jesus from carrying out His mission. The Devil is still at work, trying to distract people from God and God's mission. But, you can stand against the temptations. You do not have to give in. Your faith and consistent walk with God are a constant defense.

Study Ephesians 6:11-18 and 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Pray for those who are lost, that they would come to know Christ and be freed from Satan's control over them.
- Thank God for rescuing you from the influence of Satan.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Kings 18.

This is the story of Elijah vs. the prophets of Baal. It is a great story about God's power over the enemy. As you study, be encouraged by Elijah's boldness and confidence in God's power. What can you learn from his example?

When you work on your scripture memory, be sure to review the verses that you have already learned so that you don't lose them!

WEEK 13

WEEK 13, DAY 1

PEOPLE

It may seem silly to study people when you are learning about God, but in some way, we understand the creator more when we understand His perspective on His creation. God created people with both a tangible (touchable) body and an intangible (untouchable) soul and spirit.

Let's discuss the tangible first. Man's body is fragile, and, sooner or later, every person will die a physical death. Following that death, a person's body is buried, but the spirit of a person lives on. After death, those who have accepted Christ as their Savior will go to Heaven, and those who have rejected God will go to hell and endure eternity separated from God. That may sound harsh, but it is just and fair. Mankind is the one who rejected God and His way. In reality, it is God's grace and mercy to any person that defies logic.

Study Genesis 1:27, Hebrews 9:27-28.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for creating you and giving you the opportunity to know and love Him.
- Thank God for His mercy.

Are you still using your ACTS acrostic to be sure that you are praying in the following ways?

A Adoration

C Confession of Sin

T Thanksgiving

S Supplication (requests) for yourself and others

Do your prayers center mostly on yourself and your own relationship with God? If so, it is important to remember that we play a vital role in the lives of others when we pray for them.

Today we will start a new rotation of people to pray for each week. It is important that you develop the habit of praying consistently for your family, your friends, the people around you that do not know Christ, people around you with needs and your church.

Each Monday remembers to pray for your family. Pray for their needs, your role in the family, extended family, etc.

Remember it this way...I pray for My family on Monday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

John 5:28-29

WEEK 13, DAY 2

MORE ABOUT PEOPLE

The intangible part of a person is complex. In the Bible, many parts of a person are discussed, soul, spirit, heart, conscience, mind, strength and flesh. As you study the passages below, write down in your journal how God affects all the parts of a person when Jesus comes into their life. Think about how God is changing all of you because of your time each day reading and studying the Bible.

Study Mark 12:28-31, 1 Peter 2:11, and Romans 12:1-2.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to rule in all parts of you.
- Ask God to help you follow Him more in one of the areas of your life (heart, soul, mind or strength).
- Commit to listen to His voice and obey.

Today we will begin adding prayer time for your church each Tuesday. You can pray for the leaders at your church, teachers, staff, etc. Also, remember to pray for the mission of your church. Ask God to help your church to know the right thing to do to reach people. Also, ask God to continue to allow you to serve in some role at your church. Remember it this way...I pray for the Church I belong TO on TUESday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Hebrews 4:12-13.

WEEK 13, DAY 3

"I am reminded how much I need Jesus when I have tried to operate under my own power and realize He would have done a better job than I did."

Bob, High school teacher

THE FALL OF MANKIND

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He gave them the option to disobey. Adam and Eve were not prisoners of obedience. God told them not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil to test their obedience. Satan appeared in the form of a snake and convinced Eve that there was another plan for her other than God's plan. Like so many of us, she believed that her way was better than God's way and so she ate the fruit. Then she convinced Adam to eat the fruit. Adam's disobedience to God introduced sin into the world. It brought death and caused separation between man and God. The issue was not the fruit, it was doing what they knew was wrong.

Read Genesis 3.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise God for rescuing you from your sin and making a way for you to have a relationship with Him.
- Commit to make the most of the grace that God has shown you.

Witness Wednesday is a weekly time when you can pray for people that do not know Christ and for your role in helping them know God. God designed us to represent Him, so it is natural for us to pray that we would share His truth and His love consistently.

Remember it this way...On Wednesday, I pray for my Witness.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 5:12.

WEEK 13, DAY 4

SIN (EVERYONE HAS IT)

Sin is a condition that you are born with; everyone from childhood has a desire to sin. Sin is anything that doesn't match the character or plan of God. While some of the sin committed by individuals is intentional, it is possible to sin without knowing that you have sinned. You do things wrong without even thinking about it. Even after accepting Jesus as your Savior, you will continue to struggle with sin. Your only defenses against sin are God's Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit within you.

Study Psalm 19:12-13 and Psalm 119:11.

When you choose sin over God, you will feel far away from Him. Fortunately, there is a way to make that relationship right again. For the believer, forgiveness is always just a prayer away.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for setting you free from sin. Ask Him for the strength to stand up against the temptation to sin and the desire to live like He wants you to.
- Thank God for His forgiveness. If anything in your life is making you feel far away from Him, confess it and put it behind you.

Each Thursday you can spend time praying for people that are "thirsty" around you. It may be people that are overlooked, people with pain or specific needs, people who do not know Christ around you, families that are in trouble, or any other need that you know of around you.

Remember...pray for the thirsty on Thursday!

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 John 1:6-9

WEEK 13, DAY 5

THE SUBSTITUTE

When a teacher is gone, you have a substitute. To make a drink sweet without sugar they add a substitute sweetener. When the time comes to pay for sin, either a person pays for their own sin, or they find a perfect sinless substitute. The penalty for sin is death, or separation from God. Since death is required to pay for your sin, your substitute must be perfect and sinless, and they must be willing to pay death for you.

Study Romans 3:23, 6:23.

Only the shedding of blood, the giving of life, can "atone" for (pay for) sin and restore a person to God. A long time ago, people used to sacrifice clean animals every year as payment for their sin. But when Jesus came, He became the one perfect, sinless sacrifice for all of us. Jesus is our divine substitute. He endured the punishment that we deserved, shedding His blood and giving His life on the cross to pay for our sin. His "substitutionary atonement" made it possible for us to be freed from the bondage of sin and gave us the opportunity to become God's children.

Study Hebrews 9:22 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise God for sending Jesus to be your divine substitute.
- Thank Jesus for enduring the punishment that you deserved on the cross.

Each Friday is a day to pray for your friendships and how God can help you in your friendships. Ask God to help you represent Christ faithfully to your friends, for God to take care of your friends and for them to make great choices.

Remember it this way...On Friday, I pray for my Friends.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Study 1 John 5:18

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Matthew 27

This is the crucifixion story. As you study, consider what your freedom from sin cost Jesus. Express your love and appreciation to Jesus for what He has done for you. Is the way that you are living your life an appropriate response to His sacrifice?

Make sure that you know this month's memory verse. We will learn a new one next week!

WEEK 14

WEEK 14, DAY 1

SALVATION

"If believers really understood what a gift their salvation truly is, they wouldn't worry so much about the 'things' that otherwise seem so important. They would spend more time meditating on what a great and gracious God we serve. They wouldn't set their salvation on a 'shelf' just to take out and admire, but would use it daily to live a life that pleases God."

Karen, Middle school teacher

When we do something wrong, we are punished. We understand choices, consequences and punishment. But, did you know that the choices you make to disobey God also bring consequences? Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are saved from the ultimate punishment that we deserve for the sin in our life, eternal separation from God. This "salvation" is a free gift from God, and it begins the moment that we repent and give God complete control of our lives in exchange for His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. This moment is commonly referred to as a believer's "salvation experience" and is a specific moment in time that anyone who calls him/herself a believer ought to be able to remember and talk about, whether or not they know the specific words that they prayed or the details of their surroundings.

Study Romans 10:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Salvation is about surrender. It is a once-and-for-all giving over of yourself to the only one who can rescue your soul. We live our life for God because of our incredible gratitude for His forgiveness.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for your salvation.
- Commit to share your salvation story with others.

Remember intercessory prayer... My family on Monday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Matthew 7:15-23

WEEK 14, DAY 2

THE EVIDENCE OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE

If your salvation experience was real, your life will show it. Like a flamingo that turns pink from eating pink food, your life will begin to show evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in your heart. We call that evidence the "fruit of the Spirit," and it will show up in the way that you live your life, in your words, actions, attitudes, etc. People can

tell you belong to God because of the evidence of God coming out of your life. The fruit of a tree lets you know what kind of tree it is, the actions of your life show who is inside of you.

Study Galatians 5:22-24.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to live through you in such a way that others would know that there is something different about you.
- Commit to follow through on God's command to love others and to obey when God gives you a chance to serve.

Intercessory prayer...The Church I belong TO on Tuesday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 John 3:23-24

WEEK 14, DAY 3

GOD NEVER ABANDONS HIS CHILDREN

Once you become a Christian, you cannot lose your salvation. You do not have to live in fear that one day God will get mad and abandon you. When Jesus died on the cross, He died for ALL of your sin, even the sin that you would commit after becoming a Christian. You did not know that you would do "that" sin later, but God knew it and He still loved you and received you when you were saved. Future sin doesn't have the power to change the fact that you are a child of God, but it will make you feel farther from your Heavenly Father and make it more difficult to hear the Holy Spirit. When you confess your sin it gets rid of the relational "static" that sin creates. But, that relational static does not change the fact that once you are a child of God, you are always a child of God.

Study Romans 8:38-39 and John 10:27-30.

CHALLENGE

It's time to memorize a new passage of scripture. Let's add 1 Corinthians 10:13. What a promise! And at the same time, it takes away all of our excuses! Read it, write it, and post it. Remember, a phrase at a time will get it done over time. Start with verse one and go from there.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God that you don't have to worry about losing your salvation.
- Commit to live a life of gratitude for the peace of mind that He provides for you.

Intercessory prayer...My Witness on Wednesday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Ephesians 4:13-14

WEEK 14, DAY 4

CAN YOU BE KICKED OUT OF GOD'S FAMILY?

So, what about those people who seem to have a real relationship with Christ and then turn away from God? Are they really Christians? Were they ever really Christians?

Anyone can pretend for a while, but the power to live a life of obedience to God is only possible through the Holy Spirit living inside of you. Sooner or later, someone who is pretending to be a Christian will get tired of pretending and give up. They will turn away from their "pretend faith" and do what comes naturally to anyone without Christ, live in sin. The big word for this sequence of events is "apostasy."

Sometimes a true believer gives in to temptation and becomes distant to the Holy Spirit because of the relational "static" that sin creates in a believer's heart. They stop coming to church and stop following God's plan for their life. They are usually miserable and have lots of problems in their sin. God doesn't give up on His children. He disciplines them until they return to Him. He does this in love, knowing that it is better for them to suffer some discipline for a short while than live life without His guidance and protection for a lifetime. When we run from God, we make really bad choices and often hurt ourselves, our future and other people. Sometimes the pain of our sin wakes us up to the rebellion in our life and helps us to return to God.

Study 1 John 2:19-27.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Pray for those you know who have turned their back on God.
- Ask God to help you be compassionate toward His children who have wandered away instead of arrogant and pious.

Intercessory prayer... The Thirsty (the lost and hurting) on Thursday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Hebrews 12:11

WEEK 14, DAY 5

HEAVEN AND HELL

Both Heaven and Hell are very real places. They are not made-up incentives to "be good" like some people would like to think. Heaven is a place of eternal relationship with God, reward and friendship with anyone from any time who knows and follows Christ here on earth. Hell is a place of pain and eternal separation from God and other people for anyone who has rejected God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Bible has made it clear that the price for sin is eternal punishment. We either allow Jesus to pay the price for our sin or we reject Jesus and we pay the price ourselves. Some people argue that God is too loving to allow anyone to go to hell. But, God has already shown His love to everyone by dying on the cross for our sin. If we do not accept His gift of life, it is our choice to go to hell. If a person does not accept Jesus here, God will not make them follow Him after their death.

Study John 14:1-6 and Luke 16:19-31.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for providing a way for you to escape Hell and spend eternity in Heaven with Him.
- Ask God to keep your focus on Heaven and the reward that you have there instead of on the temporary things around you.

Intercessory prayer...My Friends on Friday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

2 Peter 3:8-14

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Acts 16

This passage gives us just a glimpse into the exciting and challenging life of the apostle Paul as he set out to fulfill his life purpose according to God's will. What miraculous things might you experience if you choose to live in obedience to God without any thought for yourself? Hmm...

Work on your new memory verses!

WEEK 15

WEEK 15, DAY 1

THE BIBLE

"The Bible is God's Word to us. Scripture is alive...2,000 years after it was written, it's still relevant to our day-to-day lives. The Bible is God's standard by which we can check our actions, motives, and lives...and know what He wants for us. Without the Bible, we would be like sailors at sea with no compass or stars to guide us..."

Tyson, Youth Pastor

The Bible is God's message to man written down and it is the ultimate authority for our lives. When we hear "Bible," we think one long book. The Bible is actually a library of sixty-six books all bound together. There are two sections, the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). The Old Testament is before Jesus and the New Testament is the story and teaching of Jesus and His disciples. The books of the Bible were written by many different authors, in three different languages, over a thousand years in many different countries. Most of the writers of the Bible did not know each other (or even live in the same time period). When you read the Bible, remember the Bible was not written to give us a complete history of the world; it was written so that we would know God and know how to follow Him.

Study 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 2:20-21.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for making the effort to communicate with us even though He doesn't have to explain Himself to anyone.
- Thank God for the answers to life's questions found in His Word.

Remember... My family on Monday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Jeremiah 30:2 or Exodus 17:14

WEEK 15, DAY 2

GOD'S WORD

The Bible, otherwise known as God's Word, is absolute truth. It does not contradict itself, and there are no mistakes (errors) in it. We know that the Bible is "inerrant" (without errors) because God is the author, and there are no mistakes in Him. His word is perfect and trustworthy. But, we have a couple of challenges when understanding the Bible: first, we do not have the original copies of the books of the Bible (we have hundreds of copies) and the second major issue is actually living by His word.

Many scholars have spent their lives researching and studying the hundreds (and with some books thousands) of handwritten copies of the original text. The original text was written in mainly Hebrew and Greek, but it has been translated into hundreds of different languages, including English. Some of these copies have some variations in them of a few letters or a number. Scholars work to discover which copy made the minor mistake when copying the text and which is the accurate original. It is important to anyone who studies the Bible that they can be confident that what they are reading is as close to what the writer wrote as possible. The good news is that ALL the major copies of the books of the Bible have no major disagreement on significant content. You can trust that the Bible that you are studying today is almost exactly what the original writers wrote down thousands of years ago.

The second issue about the Bible is tougher; deciding that what is written in the Bible will actually change our daily lives. The Bible was written so that we could know how to follow God, but we must decide if we are really going to live the truth of God's word.

Study 2 Peter 1:16-21.

Those who don't know Jesus as their Savior have a hard time making sense of the Bible, but those who have the Holy Spirit inside of them are able to interpret what they read with His help.

Study 1 Corinthians 2:13-14.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Praise God for His perfection and for being faithful and trustworthy.
- Thank God for helping you understand what you read in the Bible.

Remember...The Church I belong TO on Tuesday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 3:19-21

WEEK 15, DAY 3

THE CHURCH

The Church is a group of baptized believers organized to carry out God's ministry and mission here on earth. God's Church is worldwide, but it is broken down into smaller groups that take the form of the local church so that its members can function more effectively and support one another on a more personal level. Each church member has a distinct gift and function within the church, to make the local church body whole. We need each other in order to be complete.

Study 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

In the Bible, Jesus is called the Head, the Cornerstone, and the Bridegroom of the church. All of these terms illustrate Jesus' intricate and intimate involvement in the Church and the Church's complete dependence on Him

in order to function in a God-pleasing way.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ (those you enjoy spending time with and those you don't) understanding that each of you is necessary in the body.
- Acknowledge Jesus as the Head, Cornerstone, and Bridegroom of the church. Ask Him to guide your church and care for the members within it as you try to do His will as a group.

Remember...My Witness on Wednesday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Colossians 3:11-15

WEEK 15, DAY 4

"RIGHT-NESS"

To be "righteous" is to be blameless. The Bible calls believers to be righteous, to live in such a way that brings glory to God. The problem is the only way to do that is to daily depend on the Holy Spirit within us for power and guidance. The moment that we begin to rely on ourselves or something/someone else to do life right, we lose the power to live a righteous life and please God. We can live kind or moral on our own, if we choose to, but we cannot live righteous without God's help.

Study Psalm 1: 1-6 and Psalm 24:3-6.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God how much you want to bring Him glory in the way that you live your life.
- Commit to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to live a righteous life.
- Remember...The Thirsty on Thursday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Matthew 5:6

WEEK 15, DAY 5

HOLINESS

To be "holy" is to be pure for God's use. God calls His children to be holy because He is a holy God. When we live holy lives, we stick out and people understand that God has made a difference in our lives. Holiness is not acting spiritual or religious, it is actually being pure and Spirit led.

Study 1 Peter 1:13-19 and Leviticus 20:26.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God that you want to be used by Him. Ask Him to give you the desire to live a holy life so that you can be used.
- Tell God how much better He is than anything the world has to offer.

Remember...My Friends on Friday.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Daniel 1:1-21

This is the story of Daniel and his friends, who were kidnapped from their home and forced to live in a culture that didn't support their convictions (way of life). Sound familiar? Keeping in mind what you learned during your personal Bible study this week, what can you learn from Daniel and his friends?

Study your memory verses! If you haven't done so yet, say them to someone out loud.

WEEK 16

WEEK 16, DAY 1

SET APART TO SHINE

Some words in church and in the Bible immediately make us glaze over or skip them, words like: "sanctified." No one uses the word "sanctified" anymore, so we don't know what it means when we read it. To be "sanctified" is to be "set apart" or made different or usable. There are three kinds of sanctification; the kind that happens when you ask Jesus into your heart (one time in the past), the kind you work toward after you ask Jesus into your heart (always happening, every day), and the kind that happens when you get to Heaven (one day in the future).

When you asked Jesus into your heart, God sanctified you; He pulled you out of the world and out of your sin and set you apart as His own. You were adopted, given Christ's name, and made a permanent member of God's eternal family. No matter what you do, you cannot reverse this adoption. Even better, the world no longer has any power over you, and Satan no longer controls any aspect of your life unless you let him. This is great news, when you became a follower of Christ you were forever set apart by God.

Study 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Though you were forever set apart as God's child, God is also always growing you up spiritually (sanctification). God has given you the Bible and the Holy Spirit to teach you more about Him so that you can grow closer to Him and join Him in His work. When you follow God in obedience, God's love will shine through you. You will stand out in a good way, setting you apart once again from those who don't know Christ. However, if you choose not to put forth the effort that it takes to grow spiritually, your life will look like the lost people around you. Though you are still God's adopted child, you will not enjoy the joy of your relationship with God. You are not allowing God to grow you up spiritually each day.

Study 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.

The rhythm of God is different in everyone's life. He teaches us different things at different times, in different ways and we all respond to Him differently. Some of us grow slowly and steadily, and some of us experience spiritual growth spurts. Some of us become spiritual adults, and some remain spiritual infants. However, once we get to Heaven, God will finish what He started and sanctify us by making our outside match our inside. Being the awesome Father He is, He will take over and end our frustrating struggle with sin forever. Now that's more good news!

Study 1 John 3:1-3.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for sanctifying you as His child and for promising to one day finish what He started in you.
- Ask God to make you more like Jesus while you are still here on earth.

It's Monday. Who are you supposed to pray for today? If you don't remember, look back at last week. On Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Thessalonians 5:23

WEEK 16, DAY 2

JUSTIFICATION

Here is another word that makes us glaze over, "justify." To be "justified" is to be made innocent when you are actually guilty. This is not just overlooking the thing that was wrong, this is making it right again. When a crime is committed, someone should pay for there to be justice. Someone has to be punished. As human beings, our crime is sin. We should be punished. But Jesus took our place and paid for our sin on the cross. Those who put their faith in Him are free from the ultimate penalty for their sin. It's that simple. Because of what Jesus did for us, we are declared innocent by God and treated as if we are innocent. We are justified, forgiven, and made right.

Study Romans 3:22-26.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank Jesus for taking the punishment for your sin.
- Commit to live a life that shows God how much you appreciate your freedom.

Who or what do you pray for on Tuesday?

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 5:16

WEEK 16, DAY 3

"I believe that my purpose as a follower of Christ is to seek Him in everything I do, love and influence others for Him, and follow His plan for my life."

Caitlin, High school senior

YOUR LIFE PURPOSE

Now that you have an understanding of some basic Bible doctrine, let's explore your life purpose. It's simpler than you may think!

First, it's important to remember that God created you for Himself and you will have the greatest joy (fun, life, laughter, freedom, peace, hope and more) when you are living life with God. Life with and for God is not boring and restricted; it is challenging, joyful, peaceful, frightening and rewarding all at the same time.

Study Psalm 139:13-14 and Colossians 1:16.

He knows everything that will happen in your life before it happens, and He chose you to be His child. Amazing!

Study Psalm 139:15-16 and Ephesians 1:4-5.

God created you to have a relationship with Him. Just as the rest of creation exists to bring glory to God and point people toward Him, you exist to bring God glory in the way that you love and follow Him. God will use your life to draw the people around you into a relationship with Him; just like He drew you. He will probably even choose to use your mouth to tell them about the forgiveness they can find in Jesus. To put it simply, part of your life's purpose is to point others to God through your words and life just like someone pointed you toward God.

Study John 6:41-51.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for being the only one that knows you completely and still loves you the way that He does.
- Thank God for choosing you to be His child.

How should you pray on Wednesday?

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

2 Thessalonians 2:13

WEEK 16, DAY 4

YOUR CALLING

You may think that only preachers and missionaries are "called" by God. That is not true. Every believer is "called." Our "calling" is to a person, Jesus Christ, not a position or a job. While Jesus leads some of His followers into vocational ministry, most of His followers actually lead what people might consider very normal lives.

Study Matthew 4:18-20 and Romans 1:6.

Titles and positions are not as important as calling. Obedience is the key to living out your "calling," no matter where Jesus chooses to lead you for a job. God created you with a purpose and interests. He knows what you enjoy, He made you. Sometimes we think that our interests are a distraction to God's call, when often they are the signpost toward His call. When you live out God's call in your life, you will be fulfilled knowing that you are doing what you were made to do. Remember, God doesn't measure success the way that men do. His requirements are very simple.

Study 1 Samuel 16:7 and Micah 6:8.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for calling you to Jesus and for giving you the faith to answer that call.
- Ask God to help you view spiritual success the way that He does so that you won't live to please or impress man.

For what group of people do you pray on Thursday?

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Galatians 1:10

WEEK 16, DAY 5

YOUR MISSION

When you let God have complete control of your life and commit your life to following Christ, you will become more concerned about seeing God work through you. You will see how God can use you in the lives of other people. You will want to be a part of God's plan to rescue the world from the consequences of sin. It may sound a little bit overwhelming at first, and you may wonder what kind of difference you, one believer, could make. But that's for God to know and you to find out! Your mission is not to develop the plan, but to discover it and follow it, trusting God to work in and through you.

Study 1 Peter 2:9.

God will tell you what to do.

Study Philippians 2:13.

God will tell you what to say.

Study 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

The most effective "missionary" for Christ is not the one with the most influence and power, but the one with a completely surrendered and willing heart. Do you ever wonder what God could do with your life?

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God that you trust Him completely and that you believe that He can accomplish His purpose through you.
- Commit to rely on God for direction, encouragement, and the courage to obey Him.
- Ask God to help you know how to follow the plan He created for you.

Who will your prayers impact on Friday?

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Corinthians 1:25

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: The book of Esther

This is the story of Queen Esther, an ordinary girl with an extraordinary calling. Keeping in mind what you have studied about your purpose, your calling, and your mission, what can you learn from Esther? Did Esther or Mordecai dream up their life purpose or did they simply obey?

How are those memory verses coming along? Keep on keeping on!

WEEK 17

WEEK 17, DAY 1

REPRESENTING JESUS

Your life has been changed by God. Most people are not spending time today reading the Bible and asking God to lead them, but you are. In fact, you have spent more time in the Bible the past few months than many people do their entire life. You are learning more and more about the God who made you and is changing you.

As a follower of Christ, you are His ambassador, His representative to the world. Every day, your life paints a picture of Jesus for the world to see. Your words, attitudes and actions either paint a clear and accurate picture of Jesus that draws people to Jesus or your life will paint a lie that could push people away. If you are going to represent Him well, you've got to know Him well.

Study 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to use you in the lives of those around you.
- Commit to make His name famous.
- My family Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Ephesians 6:19-20

WEEK 17, DAY 2

WHAT YOU WERE MEANT TO DO

Though every follower of Christ is an ambassador, you are not an ambassador to every person on the earth, doing every ministry on earth. Each Christian is assigned his or her own ministry and ministry zone. Usually, that ministry zone is the place where you now live and breathe, and your focus is the people who are already a part of your life. Sometimes, though, God assigns you a ministry outside of your normal routine of life. Either way, God has given you a specific set of gifts, talents, and abilities to do the ministry that He has given you to do.

People sometimes make ministry sound like a mysterious or prestigious pursuit. But ministry to others is nothing more than giving God's love to others as He gives you the opportunity. True ministry is not fancy and flashy, and it rarely gets your name in the paper, but it is real and eternal and more worthwhile than anything else you will ever do.

As ministers, we serve according to God's will and rely on His power to guide us at the right time. His power brings results in the lives of other people. Ministry is allowing God to use your life in their life for His glory. When you understand that simple truth, you stop being focused on yourself as you care for other people.

Study 2 Corinthians 3:1-6, 4:1-7.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you a vision for your personal ministry zone.
- Commit to rely on God's power alone in ministry so that you don't get too proud of yourself.
- Your Church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 16:6-10

WEEK 17, DAY 3

"I don't know what God wants me to be when I grow up, but I know that He wants me to obey Him. Right now, that means being a good example where I am in the way I talk and act and the way I am with my parents and teachers." -Josh, middle school student

RUNNING YOUR RACE

As followers of Christ, we all have a race to run (a life to live) that has been laid out for us by our Heavenly Father. Each and every step in your race is an act of obedience, taking you one step closer to God and one step further away from self. Disobedience causes you to fall behind in reaching your goal, maybe even taking you off course, which is a scary and lonely place to be in life.

Though we are all trying to live a life of obedience that will please God, each runner's course is unique. Each life is made up of specific events, tasks, and ministry goals chosen by God for that specific runner. No person's life looks exactly like anyone else's life. When we understand this fact, it keeps us from getting jealous of each other or competing with each other. Instead, we want to help each other along instead of knocking each other down.

Study 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you an intense desire to complete the race that He has laid out for you in a way that pleases Him.
- Commit to stay the course God laid out for you, no matter the cost.
- My Witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 20:17-24

WEEK 17, DAY 4

KEEPING YOUR FOCUS

As a follower of Christ, an ambassador and a minister, you play an important role in God's plan to redeem the world to Himself. You are a part of something much larger than yourself. While it's easy to get caught up in your own race (life) and become preoccupied with each and every little step you take, it's important that you keep your eyes on the bigger picture - the goal.

Runners who watch their own feet fall because it is difficult to keep their balance with their head down. However, those who keep their eyes trained ahead are more aware of what's going on and they meet the challenges ahead with more confidence. Don't become a self-absorbed runner, always focused on you, how hard you are working or how well you are doing. Instead, be grateful for the chance to simply run and live a life that really counts for something.

Study Hebrews 12:1-3, 12-15.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the example of those who have finished the race in a way worth imitating. Thank God specifically for some older adults at your church who have lived with Jesus for years and are setting a good example of finishing well.
- Commit to run your race with your eyes locked in on Jesus, not on yourself.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

2 Timothy 4:6-10

WEEK 17, DAY 5

JUMPING HURDLES

Study 2 Corinthians 4 and Ephesians 6:10-20.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for equipping you with all that you will ever need to run your race successfully.
- Ask God for the will and the strength to stay focused and to meet challenges in His strength, not yours, so that you can stay the course.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Galatians 5:7-10

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Exodus 2-4

This is just the part of the story of Moses. As you read, pay close attention to the unusual path that Moses' life took, especially at the beginning. Note, too, how each and every event in his life prepared him for a special task that God planned for him to complete later in his life. If anyone ever openly acted as God's ambassador, it was Moses...right in his hometown, too!

New memory verse next week! Are you ready?

WEEK 18

WEEK 18, DAY 1

SET APART TO SHINE

For the past three months, you have been using the “God Follower” method of Bible study; asking two simple questions - what does this say about God and what does this say about how to follow God? Today it is time to learn a new method of Bible study. This is another tool that you can use to feed yourself God’s Word. It’s called the “Target Method.” Taking an outside to inside approach, the Target Method of Bible study helps you apply God’s Truth to your own life, encouraging you to respond honestly to God and to act immediately on what you have learned.

The Target Method uses just three questions to guide you through the Bible study process. Picture in your mind a round “bull’s eye” target with two rings and a heart in the center. Each of these three elements represents one of the questions included in the Target Method.

First Question: Outer Ring-

What does it say? (Summarizing the passage)

Second Question: Inner Ring-

What is God saying to me? (Taking it personally)

Third Question: Center Heart-

How will I respond? (Planning for change)

You will practice this method in today’s lesson. Remember that you will get out of your personal Bible study only what you put into it. Don’t rush. Listen. Think. Be thorough.

APPLYING SCRIPTURE TO YOUR LIFE

Using the Target Method, study James 1:19-27. Take time to answer each question as completely and thoughtfully as possible, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you the desire and courage to live what you learn in His Word so that you can live out your faith in a real way in front of the world.
- Commit to listen carefully when the Holy Spirit reminds you of truth you have studied and obey His instructions.
- My family Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Use the Target Method to study 1 Corinthians 8:1-3.

Keep going if this passage piques your interest and see what God reveals to you. Remember that it’s okay to have questions. Hopefully, you are still keeping a journal and can keep track of the questions that you have.

WEEK 18, DAY 2

WISDOM

Spiritual wisdom is "knowing how, when, and where to practice God's Truth." People that do not know God have their own version of truth that is very different from God's truth. Let's see how the two compare.

Use the Target Method to study 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for revealing His Truth to you and giving you the chance to share in His wisdom.
- Commit to be a good steward (caretaker) of His Truth.
- Your church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Use the Target Method to study Psalm 19:7-14 and Proverbs 3:7-8.

CHALLENGE

It's time to memorize a new passage of scripture. Let's add Proverbs 3:5-6. Want to live a life that pleases God? Live by this passage. Remember to read it, write it and post it.

WEEK 18, DAY 3

"My favorite verse is Luke 1:37. It tells me that nothing is impossible with God. Every time that I feel discouraged, it reminds me that God is still in control and is over everything."

Jennifer, high school student

GETTING WISDOM

Use the Target Method to study 1 Corinthians 2. Remember to write down any questions that you may have and record the answers when you find them.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to deepen your understanding of His Word and to use your words to bless and encourage others.
- Commit to let go of fear and doubt and allow God to speak through you, even if you don't think others will respond well to what He has to say.
- My witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Use the Target Method to study James 1:5-8.

WEEK 18, DAY 4

SHARING WHAT GOD TEACHES YOU

Once we understand how big and wonderful God is and how amazing it is that He lets us understand even a little bit about Him, we want to know more. We start to look for opportunities to learn, understand, and grow spiritually by studying His Word; and the great thing is we don't have to wait on someone else to explain it to us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can learn truth on our own.

When we learn something cool, we should feel free to share what we know with others. We don't have to know everything there is to know about God to talk about Him. All we have to do is tell what we know from personal experience. Just don't make things up if you do not know them. If we get it wrong now and then, more mature believers should set us straight and we can hit the ground running again. But you would never want to teach something to someone that is not true, just because you spoke before you studied.

Use the Target Method to study Galatians 1:11-2:10.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to stir in you a craving for His Word.
- Ask God for the courage to speak the Truth and the confidence to overcome any self-doubt that might get in your way.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Use the Target Method to study Acts 18:24-28.

WEEK 18, DAY 5

WHAT IT MEANS TO "LIVE BY FAITH"

Before you begin today's study, review James 1:5-8.

Once God teaches you something, you are responsible to live it. What you have learned should become so much a part of your life that it changes the way you live. We should "live as if God is who He said He is and will do what He has said He will do." This is called "living by faith."

The Christian life is about much more than being blessed and feeling good. It is about more than snuggling up to God and feeling safe. Sometimes—a lot of times—it's about obeying God even when you don't feel like it. It's about putting yourself out there even when you have doubts or feel a little selfish, drawing on the support, strength, and example of other believers to get you through those tough moments. The more we know God, the more we trust Him; even when we don't feel like trusting Him.

Use the Target Method to study Hebrews 11.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to continue to reveal more of Himself to you.
- Commit to be a responsible steward of His Truth and to live by faith.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Use the Target Method to study Proverbs 3:13-26.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Exodus 5-12 (paying close attention to 5-7 and 11-12)

This is a continuation of the story of Moses. All of Moses' preparation has come to this. It's time to lead God's people out of Egypt. Though Moses is weighed down by insecurity, doubt, and unanswered questions, he obeys God and lives out his faith.

If you haven't started learning your new memory verse yet, this would be the time! Proverbs 3:5-6

WEEK 19

WEEK 19, DAY 1

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer, “two-way communication with God,” is an opportunity and the best way to experience God’s power and to play an important part in God’s will taking place here on earth.

From this point until a new method of Bible study is introduced, please continue using the Target Method when told to “study” a certain passage of scripture.

Study Romans 15:30-33, 2 Corinthians 1:10-11, and Acts 16:25-40.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the opportunity to participate in the bringing about of His will.
- Commit to take every opportunity to witness God’s power through prayer.
- My family Monday..

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

John 17

WEEK 19, DAY 2

“I’ve been praying for a while now for two of my friends who are lost. I’ve been asking God for an opportunity to talk to them. Nothing has really come of it yet, and I feel frustrated by that at times. Still, I know God is there and listening, even in the middle of the delays. I know that he’s got the ending all worked out already.”

Stephanie, high school student

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

“Prayer offered to God on someone else’s behalf” is called intercessory prayer. When we take time to pray for someone else, we are fulfilling a part of God’s call for our life to care for others. For the past month, you have been praying each week for your family, friends, people around you that have needs, etc. That is “intercessory prayer.”

Study James 5:13-18 and Psalm 34:15-18.

God commands us to pray not only for our loved ones, but also for our enemies.

Study Matthew 5:43-48.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the chance to play an important role in someone else's life.
- Ask God to create a clean heart in you so that your prayers will be effective.
- Your church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Timothy 2:1-8 and 1 Samuel 12:20-23

WEEK 19, DAY 3

MAKING SURE THAT YOU PRAY FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

Study James 4:1-3.

The most pure motives (reasons) for prayer are:

- The desire to see Jesus' mission on earth fulfilled.
- The desire to understand God more.
- The desire to get closer to God and interact with Him on a more personal level.

When you are praying about something that you really, really want, it's hard to ignore what you want for what God's wants when the two may not match up. In those moments, you have to make a conscious choice to choose God's will over your own; giving Him complete control of your heart and the situation you are in. You have to ask Him to change the way you look at things so that you start to want the things He wants. We are God's children and He enjoys giving us good gifts. But, God does not exist to give us gifts. We exist because of Him; He does not exist for us. That is tough to keep in perspective.

Study Psalm 37:4 and Jeremiah 29:13, 33:2-3.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to help you to want what He wants so that you can grow.
- Commit to pray that God's will always take priority over yours when the two don't match up.
- Witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Peter 3:10-12

WEEK 19, DAY 4

MAKING PRAYER YOUR LIFE

Once you understand the power of prayer, you want to do it right and more often. Today's passages will lay out some of the when, where, why, and how's of prayer for you.

Study Psalm 5:1-3, Luke 18:1-14, and Philippians 4:6-7.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for talking to you in such a personal way.
- Commit to make prayer a priority, not just a part, of your life.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 8:26-28

WEEK 19, DAY 5

PRAYING IN A GROUP

Individuals can grow through prayer, and so can churches. When church members pray together, they grow spiritually and relationally with one another. The Bible tells all believers to take part in corporate (group) prayer with fellow church members so that we can experience God's power together and become more unified as a group. But, many people are scared to pray out loud with other people; sometimes because they are intimidated by others, sometimes because they are shy and sometimes because they do not understand why it is a big deal to pray with others.

Study Acts 2:36-42, 4:23-31.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ, who share your problems and pray for you.
- Ask God to help you learn to pray with other people.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Ephesians 6:13-20

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Daniel 1, 3 and 6

This is just a scrapbook of some of the major events in Daniel's life. A few weeks ago, you read Daniel 1 over a weekend, but this time when you read his story think about his testimony to the power of prayer. Do you think that you would have the courage to stand up and stand out as Daniel did? Does your life tell others that there is a powerful God who answers the prayers of His children or that praying is as pointless as making a wish on a lucky penny or a shooting star?

Remember to study your verses! Don't let the earlier ones slip away.

WEEK 20

WEEK 20, DAY 1

UNITY IN THE CHURCH BODY

Study Ephesians 4.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Commit to love them in word, deed and attitude.
- My family Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Hebrews 10:24-25

WEEK 20, DAY 2

SERVING AND GIVING TO YOUR CHURCH

Study 1 Peter 4:7-11 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to create in you a generous heart.
- Thank God for those who have poured themselves out for you and commit to follow their example.
- Your church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 2:43-44

WEEK 20, DAY 3

"It's hard sometimes to love everyone else in your church, especially when you don't share the same views that they do or when people stay huddled up in their own little groups."

Ashlynn, high school student

LIVING PEACEFULLY WITH YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

Study Romans 14.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to remind you that spiritual growth is a process every time you are tempted to judge others and stir up controversy over non-eternal issues.
- Commit to making the spiritual growth of your brothers and sisters a priority over the need to be "right."
- Witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 15:1-7

WEEK 20, DAY 4

STRAIGHTENING THINGS OUT

As we learned yesterday, some issues that arise within the body are "disputable matters" and are best left alone to keep the peace. However, when sin and divisiveness creep into your church, something must be done about it. The Bible is very clear about how such things should be handled.

Study Matthew 18:15-17.

Correcting a friend is never fun, but can work for the good of everyone involved if it is done right. If you ever find yourself excited about setting someone straight, you are not the person for the job or you have the wrong attitude for the job. In fact, it probably means that you think more of yourself than you should in that moment. Your correction will probably come off as harsh and judgmental. Only someone with a humble heart should correct a friend. It's important that the person being corrected feels valued and loved by the one confronting them.

Study Galatians 6:1-5.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to help you know when a brother or sister truly needs to be confronted or corrected and the wisdom to know how and when to do it.
- Commit to stand up for unity in the church over your own pride or ego.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Mark 12:28-34

WEEK 20, DAY 5

WHEN YOU NEED TO BE CORRECTED

Any father, who loves his child, disciplines his child. We are deeply loved by our Heavenly Father. Knowing that we make mistakes, we should expect to be corrected from time to time. Sometimes, God corrects us through His Holy Spirit, sometimes He uses the Bible and sometimes He uses other people.

Study Hebrews 12:7-11 and Proverbs 3:11-12.

Some people find it hard to take correction from others. When a brother or sister in Christ rebukes (corrects) you in love, resist the temptation to argue or to justify your actions. Recognize that the person may be God's messenger and try to thank them for caring about you enough to risk an uncomfortable situation. When a brother or sister in Christ corrects you in the wrong way, do your best to look past their wrong attitude and listen to see whether what they have to say is true. Then let God deal with the pride in their heart as you deal with your issue.

Study Proverbs 9:8, 12:1, 15:31.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for loving you enough to bring you back in line with His will when you pull away.
- Commit to receive correction with a humble heart and teachable spirit.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Titus 3:9-11

THE WEEKEND

SUGGESTED READING: THE BOOK OF RUTH

The story of Ruth has a lot to teach us about commitment and how to serve others even when we aren't obligated to do so. As you read, check your own heart and let God challenge you to stay committed to and serve your brothers and sisters in Christ.

What was that last memory verse again? If you've got it down and want another to work on, choose one for yourself from the passages that you have studied lately. What verse stood out to you? What verse or passage would you like the Holy Spirit to whisper to you in the middle of your current life experience? Choose one and work on it just like the others.

WEEK 21

WEEK 21, DAY 1

STAYING COMMITTED

Study Romans 12:3-21 and Philippians 1:21-26.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the love and patience that your church body has shown you.
- Commit to return the favor by loving others out of a pure love for Christ.
- My family Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Colossians 3:12-17

WEEK 21, DAY 2

DIFFERENT GIFTS, BUT THE SAME GOAL

Study 1 Corinthians 12.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to show you clearly what role He wants you to play in the life of your local church body.
- Commit to work with others toward your common goal of pleasing God.
- Your church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Philippians 2:14-18

WEEK 21, DAY 3

"Sometimes, I get so distracted by the stress in my life that it interferes with my worship. I feel stress from school, work and from my peers. Sometimes it's just from being around people in general. It's hard to stay focused."
Jessica, high school student

WHY WORSHIP?

Study Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Peter 2:4-10.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and the difference it has made in your life.
- Ask God to forgive you for the times that you have become lazy in your worship and commit to make worship the priority of your life.
- Witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Psalm 22:22-24

WEEK 21, DAY 4

GIVING IT ALL YOU'VE GOT

Study Exodus 20:1-6 and 2 Kings 17:34-41.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to show you where you may have given something or someone else priority over Him and confess that sin.
- Commit to take worshipping the Father as seriously as He takes it.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Psalm 29

WEEK 21, DAY 5

WHAT GOES ON IN HEAVEN

As you study today, don't get too hung up on details that you don't understand. This passage simply describes the worship that takes place at God's throne. As you study, try to put yourself in this picture. Think about the attitude of the worshippers, the intensity of emotion, and what the atmosphere surrounding God's throne must be like. If this is the response of the elders and angels around God, imagine what it must be like to see God. How does the worship scene described in these verses compare with what takes place in your heart on a daily basis?

Study Revelation 4.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God why you worship Him and explain to Him what you wish were different about the way that you worship Him.
- Commit to worship God in submission and obedience.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Psalm 95:1-7

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Isaiah 6 and Judges 6-8

The first passage is the story of the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah, and the second is about Gideon, the warrior. Both describe the response of a man to the presence and instruction of God. As you read, think about your worship. Are you giving God His worth by responding appropriately to Him?

Isaiah worshipped God his entire life. Gideon worshipped God for a season, then later he turned away from God and he led others to turn away from God. Which kind of worshipper are you?

Review your memory verses! We'll take on a new one next week.

WEEK 22

WEEK 22, DAY 1

WHY IS PURITY SUCH A BIG DEAL?

Most religions encourage people to live morally pure lives. So, what sets Christians apart from the rest? One thing that sets us apart is motive, or what we hope to get out of choosing to live morally pure lives. As followers of Christ, we DO NOT choose to live in a God-pleasing way to:

1. earn forgiveness or heaven (It cannot be earned)
2. outweigh the good things with the bad choices that we may have made (every sin is forgiven when you accept Christ as your Savior)
3. outshine others (compete with other people to look more "holy")
4. help God out (He doesn't need our help)
5. or bring attention to ourselves (worship of self).

Study Matthew 5:13-16 to discover one reason why true followers of Christ choose to live morally pure lives.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to purify your motives for living a morally pure life.
- Ask God to draw others to Himself through His work in your life.
- My family Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

CHALLENGE

Good news, it's time to add another verse to your memory. 1 Corinthians 10:31 is a reminder that every single decision you make, large or small, is important and has the potential to impact eternity. As followers of Christ, we've got to stay focused and keep our goal of bringing glory to God in sight at all times! You'll want to get this verse under your belt as quickly as possible, so go ahead and get started right now.

WEEK 22, DAY 2

WHAT DRIVES YOU?

Followers of Christ are different from other people that attempt to live morally pure lives because Christians get their desire, strength, and power to live pure from God so they are able to do what those who try to go it alone could never do. What drives you to follow Christ and live pure?

Study 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and Romans 8:12-17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for blessing you with the opportunity to live a life that pleases Him and clear reasons to stay on course.
- Thank God for making you His heir and ask Him to begin to show you all that is yours because of Jesus.
- Your church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 4:23-31 and 2 Corinthians 4:7

WEEK 22, DAY 3

GIVING JESUS CONTROL

Study Romans 6.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for setting you free from sin.
- Commit to honor and obey Christ just as a slave obeys his/her master. Ask God to help you serve Him out of gratitude for what Jesus has done for you.
- Witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 8:1-11

WEEK 22, DAY 4

THE STRUGGLE WE ALL FACE

Study Romans 7:14-25.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God about your struggle to overcome self. Be as specific as possible.
- Ask God for the strength to admit your own faults and rely on God's power and wisdom.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

James 3:13-18 and 2 Timothy 1:7

WEEK 22, DAY 5

"I don't really think that American Christians have to sacrifice like the people in the Bible did. Even when we think we have it tough, we probably have it better than people in most other places in the world, and no one really does anything to us when we say what we believe. Not really. We're kind of spoiled and then we get mad or feel punished when God says no and doesn't give us what we want. We get lazy about God things then. Sometimes, I think that if we really had to give up stuff to follow Jesus, we would take it more seriously and gripe a whole lot less. Maybe that's what we need. Maybe we need to get the chance to hurt a little for God. I can't even believe I'm saying this, but I think it may be true."

Andy, high school student

PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Study 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you a glimpse of the "bigger picture" so that you can better understand how your sacrifice brings glory to Him.
- Commit to see all that is "yours" as God's so that you won't feel the same sense of loss when called upon to make sacrifices.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80, Matthew 3:1-17, John 3:22-30, and Matthew 11:1-11, 14:1-13, in that order.

This is the story of John the Baptist, a truly humble servant of the Lord Jesus. As you read, think about the personal sacrifice required of him and his family. Think about the power and authority given to him by God and the obvious love and respect that Jesus shows for him in these passages. What did it cost John to live a life of moral purity and strength of character? Was it worth the sacrifice? Is it worth your sacrifice?

WEEK 23

WEEK 23, DAY 1

USING DISCERNMENT

Discernment is the ability to tell the difference between what is good and what is bad. Spiritually speaking, it is “the ability to tell what is of God and what is not.” Discernment is a gift of God, allowing a Christian to hear the leadership of the Holy Spirit, before you make a bad decision.

Study 1 John 4:1-6, Matthew 7:15-20, and 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 6:3-5.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to sharpen your discernment so that you can recognize false teachers for what they are and tune them out.
- Commit to study God’s Word closely so that you will be able to recognize false teaching when you hear it.
- My family Monday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

2 Peter 2

WEEK 23, DAY 2

HOW YOU ACT AT HOME

Study Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:18-21.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the family that you have, asking God to bless and improve all of the relationships in it through you and your witness.
- Commit to be patient with your family members and show them love and respect, whether or not you think they deserve it, as an act of worship to God.
- Your church...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Corinthians 7:10-17

WEEK 23, DAY 3

"I don't think that being a leader for Jesus means that you have to win everything and have everybody know you. I think you got to learn how to 'take it on the chin' without complaining and being nice even to the people who aren't nice to you. Anybody can be nice when everything is good for them. That's just being like everybody else."
Cody, middle school student

BEING A LEADER

Study Matthew 5:1-12 and Romans 2:1-4, 15:1-7.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to mold you into the kind of leader that others can safely follow.
- Commit to be patient with others, remembering that you struggle with the sinful nature on a daily basis, too. Commit to show others the same grace and mercy that God shows you.
- Witness Wednesday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Timothy 5:1-2 and 2 Timothy 4:1-5

WEEK 23, DAY 4

SHOWING COMPASSION

Study Matthew 9:35-38, 8:1-4, 14:12-14.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the compassion that He has shown you through others.
- Ask God to help you see what others need more quickly than you see their faults.
- Thirsty Thursday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

2 Timothy 2:24-26

WEEK 23, DAY 5

TRULY LOVING OTHERS

Study 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 5:43-48.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to give you the strength to love your enemies.
- Ask God to teach you how to love others with your words and in your actions, even when you don't feel like it.
- Friends Friday...

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Luke 23:33-38

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Samuel 8-11

This is the beginning of the story of King Saul. As you read, think about what you have learned about moral character. Is Saul a leader to be followed? Are you? If you know the rest of the story about Saul, you know that he walked away from God and did not live a moral life after he became the leader of Israel. If you are a leader, have you changed and become more focused on God or more focused on yourself?

Do you know your new verse yet? Stay after it.

WEEK 24

WEEK 24, DAY 1

DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

Great job so far! Congratulations on becoming a pro at two methods of personal Bible study. Now it's time to add the third and last Bible study method to be included in this nine-month journey. Because this method of Bible study is more involved than the others, you will need to "cut" a little more time out of your daily schedule to master it. How much really depends on you and what you hope to gain from your personal Bible study time.

THE CUT METHOD

The "CUT Method" of personal Bible study is the knife in the set of study tools that you have acquired. If you follow it closely, you will gain a broader, better, and more detailed understanding of any scripture that you read and how it fits within the Bible as a whole.

The CUT Method is so named because it requires you to look at a passage of scripture three times before leaving it; once for Context, once for Understanding, and once for the application of Truth.

CONTEXT

When reading for Context, ask yourself this question: "What's going on here and how does it fit with what I already know to be true?"

If you are jumping into the middle of a book, make sure to read over the content just Before and After the passage that you are reading to make sure that you aren't missing any background or additional thoughts that would make what you are studying more clear. By skipping this step, you can misinterpret a passage of scripture in a big way! To understand what a passage really means, you cannot just read one verse. You need to get the "context."

If you are using a study Bible, you will find most of the following information in the book introduction. If you aren't using a study Bible, borrow or buy a Bible commentary or go online to www.biblegateway.com, an excellent resource for anyone looking to study God's Word. Many times, too, you will find that the information is given in the text itself, if you read closely.

Make sure to write down what you discover so that you can refer back to it later and build on what you know rather than starting all over again each time you revisit a book or passage!

Discover the Author, Audience, and Purpose. Who wrote it? To whom? Why did they write this? Figure out Time, Place, and Setting. When was it written? Where was it written? Under what circumstances was it written (consider both the events taking place in the author's life and historical events affecting the social climate)? Just do your best to get a "feel" for what was going on when it was written.

Today, let's practice reading for Context while revisiting some basic Bible doctrine.

Find Colossians 1:15-13.

For the sake of comparison, read through this passage just as you normally would. Do a quick study of the passage using either the God Follower or Target Method.

Now, read through the passage again. This time, read for Context. Read the material before and after the passage you just read (basically all of Colossians 1). Look for author, audience, and purpose (this is in the introduction to Colossians if you are using a study Bible). Determine the time, place, and setting. How does this knowledge enhance (deepen the significance or meaning of) what you learned using the God Follower or Target Method just a few moments ago?

Tomorrow, we'll practice reading for Understanding.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for His Word and for those who wrote down the things that He wants you to know so long ago.
- Ask God to give you boldness as you learn His Word so that you can share what you know with others.
- My family Monday...

WEEK 24, DAY 2

UNDERSTANDING

After reading a passage and looking for the "context," step two of the CUT method is reading for Understanding. After determining the context, ask yourself this question: "What does it mean?" To discover this, you need to find the parts that you do understand and the parts you do not understand.

Try one or both of the following ways to begin:

In your Bible, highlight or underline any phrases or words that stand out or "speak" to you and circle any words or phrases that you don't understand or seem unclear in some other way.

In your journal, paraphrase (put into your own words) the passage. If you can re-write it in your own words, then you probably have a basic understanding of the passage. If you get stuck re-writing, you will know where to start researching more.

Now, begin digging deeper by doing any or all of the following (whatever you chose to make time for): See if your passage has a footnote in your Bible (consult the front of your Bible to learn how to use your Bible's footnoting system). Read any commentary that you find there and/or look up any relevant verses listed in the margin of your Bible next to that verse's reference.

Look up unclear words or phrases in the concordance or topical index of your Bible. Again, read the commentary or look up relevant verses.

Consult additional Bible study aids: commentaries, Bible dictionaries, etc. You can also visit www.biblegateway.com to search for the answers to your questions in the online free commentaries.

If you remember reading or studying similar passages of scripture before, read them again. This is where it really helps to have kept notes in your journal to look back on. A basic principle to remember about studying the Bible is that many times a difficult passage is explained by a more simple-to-understand passage somewhere else. Allow the Bible to explain the Bible.

Keep following all leads until your curiosity is satisfied.

Don't be discouraged if you are unable to find the answers to all of your questions immediately. You can't learn everything in one day. Keep track of your questions. Over time, God will reveal to you what you need to know and when you need to know it. The important thing is that you make a sincere effort to seek answers and know the Truth.

Down the road, when you are studying the Bible independently of any guide, including this one, you may choose to spend days or even weeks studying one passage of scripture. For right now, follow the plan that we lay out for you and do what you can in the amount of time that you have.

Review your context notes over Colossians 1 from yesterday. Read Colossians 1 again, but this time read for Understanding. Experiment with each of the suggestions listed above. Be sure to give yourself time to explore as many leads as you can. Take notes as you explore.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Tell God what you learned today and thank Him for guiding your thoughts and blessing you with the desire and ability to learn.
- Thank God for taking away any excuses that you may have used before for not reading/studying your Bible.
- The church I belong to Tuesday...

WEEK 24, DAY 3

APPLYING TRUTH

Step three of the CUT method is applying truth. When deciding how to apply truth, ask yourself this question: "Where do I go from here?"

Take all of the insight that you have gained over your first two readings of a particular passage and give yourself some time to think about it. Allow the Holy Spirit to show you what the knowledge that you have just gained has to do with you personally. Let Him show you where your choices fail to line up with God's will for your life. Chances are the Holy Spirit has already started calling your attention to specific ideas as you did your best to understand what you were reading.

It is especially critical to write down your thoughts during this stage of Bible study. This is where you keep track of what God is doing in your life and the direction, He seems to be taking you. This is where you record your thoughts while they are fresh before human reason and the troubles of the day rob your memory and dull your sensitivity. Reviewing these notes later will keep you accountable to yourself and to God. If you don't know what to write in your journal, follow these guidelines until you get the hang of it:

ENCOURAGEMENT

Were you reminded of any truths? Which of your thoughts were confirmed (proven right) by what you studied today? In what areas of your life were you encouraged to “keep on keeping on?”

CHALLENGE

What changes did God ask you to make in your life as a result of your study? Be as specific as possible on this one. How will your life be different today, tomorrow, and next week as a result of what you learned?

QUESTIONS

Finally, what questions do you still have? With which ideas do you continue to struggle?

Now, spend some time in prayer thanking God for encouraging you, challenging you, and drawing you to dig even deeper into His Word. Spend time confessing any sin He has revealed to you and make any commitments He leads you to make.

Go back to Colossians 1 and practice applying the Truth that you pulled from this passage over the past couple of days.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for the encouragement that you get from studying His word. List some specific ways that you were encouraged by Colossians 1.
- Ask God for the courage to take responsibility for the things that you learn in your personal Bible study, even though no one else but Him would know if you tried to ignore His voice.
- Witness Wednesday...

WEEK 24, DAY 4

"It really doesn't do any good to study your Bible if you aren't going to use it. I know plenty of Christians who are stuck on themselves because they think they know so much. No one wants to be around someone like that. They want to be around people who practice what they preach and love them for real... They want to see Jesus even more than they want to hear about him. Proud Christians are a real turn-off."

Susan, youth parent

Are you ready? It's time to put it all together. Remember, do what you can in the amount of time that you have. Give your best effort. Concentrate. The goal is to learn and be challenged so that you can get to know your Father better, not to impress.

Use the CUT Method (all three steps at once) to study Colossians 2.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Thank God for giving you the tools to study His word on your own.
- Thank God for the opportunity to communicate with Him on such an intimate level.
- Thirsty Thursday...

WEEK 24, DAY 5

So, how does it feel to know that you can study your Bible on your own? You now have three effective Bible study methods under your belt, ready to be used at any given moment.

Over time, you will probably develop your own style of Bible study by combining components of all three methods. You may have already done so. However, it is important that you continue to use the CUT Method for the next week or two just to make sure that you are as familiar with it as you are with the other two methods you have learned. It would be a shame to forget something that could help you grow spiritually. CUT takes more time and effort, but you will also have the opportunity to learn more insight as you study.

Use the CUT Method to study Colossians 3:1-17.

Include the following in your personal prayer time:

- Ask God to use His word to clean your heart and shape you into the image of Christ.
- Commit to live what you learn as you continue to study the Bible on your own.
- Friends Friday...

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Samuel 12-15

This is a continuation of the story of Saul. In many ways, Saul is just like us, convinced that partial obedience is okay and that God will understand if he bends the rules just a bit, as long as he has a good reason. In fact, almost Saul's entire story reads like a tragic "what not to do" story.

Keep working on those memory verses! If you feel confident that you've got them down, why not add one of your own?

Read back through Colossians 1-3 and pick a verse that stands out to you.

WEEK 25

WEEK 25, DAY 1

You know what to do. Let's get started...

USE THE CUT METHOD TO STUDY COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:18.

Congratulations! You just completed what is known as a "book study," which simply means that you studied a book of the Bible from start to finish without interruption (or help!). Why is that such a big deal? It is perfectly acceptable to study a verse or a passage of scripture independent of its book as a whole, as long as you make sure that you are reading in context. However, when you study a book of the Bible from start to finish, it helps you get a better grasp on "the big picture," of that book. Book studies deepen your understanding of words, phrases and references within the scripture that might otherwise seem random or confusing. It also increases the likelihood that you will take away from your Bible study what you were intended to take away from it.

There are 66 books in the Bible. Each of those books can be categorized into one of seven genres, or styles of writing. A book's genre tells you how to study it and what to keep in mind as you read. There is a list of the genres found in the Bible in the paragraphs below. Next to each, you will find a brief description of the genre, tips for studying that particular genre, and a list of books that fall into that category. When you read a book, it is important to understand the genre so you will know how to read it. Just like the newspaper reads different than a math or poetry book; books of law read different than history, poetry or letters.

GENRES OF THE BIBLE

LAW— The first five books of the Bible are commonly called "the Law" or the books of Moses. It does not mean that they are just a list of laws (though many of the Hebrew laws are written here); they are historical books that tell the stories of Creation, the fall of man and the beginning of the nation of Israel. They reveal man's sinful nature, the need for God-given laws and how God loves and interacts with His children. They focus on God's design for people to live pure / holy lives. As you read the books of the law, you will see how impossible it was for people to keep every command of God. As they worked to follow the law, people learned how much they needed God and His forgiveness. The books of the law should be read like historical reference books to gain Biblical background while digging out principles that apply to your life.

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

HISTORY— These books describe events that took place within a given period of time, revealing the hand of God at work in those events. They are descriptive narratives, not instructional, and should be read as diaries preserved to illustrate God's love and faithfulness, not step-by-step blueprints for our lives. They are more than just a simple telling of historical events though; they tell how God is involved in His creation.

OLD TESTAMENT

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

NEW TESTAMENT

- Acts

PROPHECY— These books deal with both the foretelling and forth-telling of God’s truth. Foretelling is what most people think of when they hear the word prophecy. To fore-tell is to tell people something they wouldn’t otherwise have known or could have known as a warning or a promise about the future. Sometimes the prophets, led by God, made amazing statements about future events.

However, most of the writings of the prophets deal with forth-telling. They call attention to and explain how God’s truth, love and justice relate to current or past events. They challenge the people of God to live for God in their families, work and faith. Many of the prophets are very bold in their statements about how the people of their time have walked away from God or they are pleading with people to trust God in the good times and in the difficult.

The book of Revelation is unique. It is Jesus’ revelation to John about the end times. It is a certain type of prophecy called “Apocalyptic.” It is not literal, but highly symbolic. Jesus’ return and victory over evil is very literal, but the images and stories of Revelation are not intended to be exact descriptions of future events, they are symbolic descriptions of future events.

OLD TESTAMENT MAJOR PROPHETS

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

MINOR PROPHETS

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

- Revelation

**Note: The words “major” and “minor” have nothing to do with importance, but length. The major prophets are longer than the minor prophets.*

WISDOM— These books are full of thoughts on God, life, and wisdom. However, each should be read and studied a little differently.

Job is the story of a man undergoing suffering and trying to figure out what he has done to deserve it and whether God has truly abandoned him. Ecclesiastes is the reflection of a wealthy King who has searched for the meaning of life by experiencing all that can be experienced, both good and bad. Both Job and Ecclesiastes must be studied as whole books in order for you to come away with the intended message. In both of these cases, context is everything. Many verses in Job and Ecclesiastes seem to direct people away from God, but they are actually statements of a person away from God. Once you get to the end of the book(s), the entire book makes more sense.

Proverbs is a collection of truth in the form of practical advice and quotable quotes passed down from a father to his son. Most verses stand-alone, and almost every topic is covered in some way. Proverbs does not read like a story; it is a list of sayings of “the wise.”

- Job
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes

POETRY— Like any poetry, these books deal with the most intimate of subjects on a very emotional level, expressing the hopes, fears, doubts, wants, etc. of the authors in raw form. Poetry is symbolic and beautiful. It is not intended to be history or prophecy; it is intended to be poetic. But, in that time, they did not use rhyme like English poetry, the Hebrews wrote poetry by re-stating or repeating phrases. In Biblical poetry, you will see a phrase stated once, then stated again in a more beautiful or symbolic way.

The book of Psalms is a collection of song lyrics. Song of Solomon is the love story of a particular man and woman that follows their courtship, marriage, honeymoon, and first fight. Lamentations was written by a prophet mourning the destruction of Jerusalem. Because each of these books is a declaration of truth through the fragile medium of human emotion, you must pay careful attention to context as you read. Keep in mind the fact that you, too, have good days and bad days and experience a wide range of emotions. If you have ever written poetry yourself, you know that not everything you say is right, sometimes it was just how you felt at the moment.

- Psalms
- Song of Solomon
- Lamentations

GOSPEL — These biographical books contain the “good news” (Gospel) of Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection and the eternal life available to all who believe in Him. The four gospel accounts tell the same story from different perspectives. Just like four cameras at a football game see the same event, but with different detail; the four gospel writers tell the story with unique detail of the same event.

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

THE LETTERS (THE FANCY WORD IS "EPISTLES")— Read these books like you would read someone else's mail, because they were written as a letter to a specific group of people at a specific time to deal with specific issues. They have different authors and are written to different individuals. Some were addressed to one person, while others were addressed to a group of people. Some were private, and some were circular (which means that they were written to be passed around to several people). They contain theological and doctrinal truth, address problems, encourage, and give practical advice on living out your faith in Christ. As much as possible, study these books as if they were addressed to you, knowing that they were actually written to someone else. Usually, the letters are the easiest books to read because the genre is so familiar to us. It is easy to read a straightforward letter; it is harder to study poetry or history.

- Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 & 2 Peter
- 1, 2, & 3 John
- Jude

It's time to spend some time in prayer. We strongly recommend that you continue your weekly family/church/witness/lost/friends prayer rotation. But look back over your notes and pray as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray... and don't forget to listen!

WEEK 25, DAY 2

Next, you will study the book of Acts. Before you begin, take a look at the list of genres in yesterday's guide. What type of book is Acts? What do you need to keep in mind as you read it? What is the right way to study this book?

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 1.

Spend some time in prayer.

WEEK 25, DAY 3

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 2.

Prayer

WEEK 25, DAY 4

*"When I look at pictures of myself from years ago, back when I didn't know Jesus, I don't really recognize myself. I think I look scared in those pictures. I know I was lonely...but now I have the Holy Spirit in my heart. Even when I'm alone, I'm not really alone."
Brittany, college student*

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 3.

Prayer

WEEK 25, DAY 5

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 4:1-22.

Prayer

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Samuel 16-17

This is the beginning of the end of Saul and our first introduction to the famous (and sometimes infamous) David. Notice what an unlikely candidate for King young David is, just like the apostles, just like Matthias. God uses ordinary people to do incredible things!

New memory verse on Monday!

WEEK 26

WEEK 26, DAY 1

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 4:23-31.

PRAYER

New Memory Verse: Philippians 2:3-4

WEEK 26, DAY 2

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 4:32-5:11.

PRAYER

WEEK 26, DAY 3

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 5:12-42.

PRAYER

WEEK 26, DAY 4

"Sometimes, the worst thing that you can imagine happening really happens, and then you realize that God really is all you hoped He would be..." Dallas, high school student

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 6.

PRAYER

WEEK 26, DAY 5

Use the CUT Method to study Acts 7-8:3.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 1 Samuel 18-20

The friendship of David and Jonathan, King Saul's son, is one worth studying and imitating. As you read, pay close attention to the foundation of their relationship, the sacrifice required to maintain their relationship, and the commitment and trust displayed in both young men.

How are those memory verses coming?

WEEK 27

WEEK 27, DAY 1

Once you feel confident in your ability to use the CUT Method of Bible study, feel free to study each passage using any of the three Bible study methods that you have learned or a personalized combination of all three, whatever works best for you.

Study Acts 8:4-25.

PRAYER

WEEK 27, DAY 2

Study Acts 8:26-40.

PRAYER

WEEK 27, DAY 3

"It's hard to wait and wait for someone that you care about to accept Jesus. And when it happens, it's never the way you thought it would happen...it's way better."

Jamie, high school student

Study Acts 9:1-19.

PRAYER

WEEK 27, DAY 4

Study Acts 9:20-31.

PRAYER

WEEK 27, DAY 5

Study Acts 9:32-43.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 2 Samuel 1, 5:1-4, 9

David becomes King. Note how he honors both his former enemy and his dear friend. What does that say about the kind of leader that he was? What kind of leader are you?

Ready to add another verse of your own yet?

WEEK 28

WEEK 28, DAY 1

Study Acts 10:1-23.

PRAYER

WEEK 28, DAY 2

"It's so hard to say the things that God wants you to say when you are surrounded by people who say that they believe what you believe but stay quiet about it. Sometimes, the only thing that pushes me to go ahead and obey God is that I don't want to be like them and miss a chance to feel God being proud of me."
Ervin, middle school student

Study Acts 10:24-48.

PRAYER

WEEK 28, DAY 3

Study Acts 11:1-18.

PRAYER

WEEK 28, DAY 4

Study Acts 11:19-30.

PRAYER

WEEK 28, DAY 5

Study Acts 12:1-19.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: 2 Samuel 11-12

We are all vulnerable to temptation when we choose to disobey God and so leave the umbrella of His protection. This is the story of King David's terrible mistake, the consequences that he suffered for his disobedience, and his restoration.

This weekend, take some time to look over all of your old memory verses.

WEEK 29

WEEK 29, DAY 1

"You can't always take the things that people do to you personally, especially if you are a believer. As soon as you call yourself a Christian, people are going to test you to see if you are the real deal, just like people used to bite coins to see if they were real gold or not. That's why it's so important to be patient and forgive. If you can keep your focus on eternity, yours and theirs, persecution is so much easier to endure."

Angela, youth pastor's wife

Study Acts 12:20-25.

PRAYER

WEEK 29, DAY 2

Study Acts 13:1-12.

PRAYER

WEEK 29, DAY 3

Study Acts 13:13-52.

PRAYER

WEEK 29, DAY 4

Study Acts 14.

PRAYER

WEEK 29, DAY 5

Study Acts 15:1-35.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 1-4:16

This passage covers the Creation, the Fall of Man, and the murder of Abel. As you continue to grow spiritually and enjoy an increasingly intimate relationship with your Heavenly Father, it's important to keep in mind where you came from, what you would be without Him, and why you need Him so very much. In a few days, you will read in Acts how Paul talks about God as our creator and how important it is to understand that God is the one who made everyone.

New memory verse on Monday!

WEEK 30

WEEK 30, DAY 1

Study Acts 15:36-16:10.

PRAYER

New Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:11

WEEK 30, DAY 2

"It's easy to get caught up in what other people are worked up about...and you can make a problem worse just by letting a bitter person think you're interested in what they have to say... If everyone would just mind their own business and give others the benefit of the doubt, we wouldn't have so much hurt in the Body."

Paul, senior adult

Study Acts 16:11-40.

PRAYER

WEEK 30, DAY 3

Study Acts 17.

PRAYER

WEEK 30, DAY 4

Study Acts 18:1-17.

PRAYER

WEEK 30, DAY 5

Study Acts 18:18-28.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 6-9:16

This is the story of Noah and the flood. As you read, consider what Noah had in common with the apostles and the early church (in Acts). How seemingly impossible were their assigned tasks? What encouragement do you find in these stories as you do your best to be obedient to God?

Have you learned Hebrews 12:11 yet?

WEEK 31

WEEK 31, DAY 1

"It's good to go to church on Sunday morning and join the Sunday school, but that is not Christianity... To follow Christ is to live in constant communion with Him, listening to His voice, doing what He says to do, and enjoying the intimacy that comes from doing so. Anything short of this genuine love relationship with your Savior, even if it scores you points with other believers and makes you look like a big shot, is really just hangin' around the church."

Ted, pastor

Study Acts 19:1-20.

PRAYER

WEEK 31, DAY 2

Study Acts 19:21-41.

PRAYER

WEEK 31, DAY 3

Study Acts 20.

PRAYER

WEEK 31, DAY 4

Study Acts 21:1-14.

PRAYER

WEEK 31, DAY 5

Study Acts 21:15-39.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 15-18:15, 21

This is the story of Abraham and Sarah. As you read, consider the importance of accomplishing God's tasks God's way. How faithful is the Father? How far-reaching are the consequences of our disobedience? How important was it for the early church to accomplish God's tasks His way? What happened to those who chose to do things on their own?

Work on your memory verses!

WEEK 32

WEEK 32, DAY 1

Study Acts 21:40-22.

PRAYER

WEEK 32, DAY 2

*"It's pretty stupid for any Christian to think they should get out of going through anything Jesus had to go through, you know?"
Joey, high school student*

Study Acts 23:1-10.

PRAYER

WEEK 32, DAY 3

Study Acts 23:11-35.

PRAYER

WEEK 32, DAY 4

Study Acts 24.

PRAYER

WEEK 32, DAY 5

Study Acts 25.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 24-27

In this passage, you will find the story of Isaac and Rebekah and the story of Jacob and Esau.

Remember to work on your memory verses.

WEEK 33

WEEK 33, DAY 1

Study Acts 26.

PRAYER

WEEK 33, DAY 2

Study Acts 27.

PRAYER

WEEK 33, DAY 3

*"Seems like my life is one big detour. Nothing ever goes the way I plan... but it all makes sense looking backwards."
Elizabeth, youth parent*

Study Acts 28:1-16.

PRAYER

WEEK 33, DAY 4

Study Acts 28:17-31.

Congratulations! You just finished your second book study! How does it feel?

PRAYER

WEEK 33, DAY 5

Rockin' right along... let's begin 1 Timothy. Look back at the genres listed in week twenty-five. What kind of book is 1 Timothy? What do you need to keep in mind as you read it? What is the right way to study this book? Is there a wrong way?

Study 1 Timothy 1.

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Genesis 28-33

This is the story of Jacob and Rachel and her sister Leah.

New memory verse on Monday!

WEEK 34

WEEK 34, DAY 1

Study 1 Timothy 2.

PRAYER

New Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 4:18

WEEK 34, DAY 2

Study 1 Timothy 3.

PRAYER

WEEK 34, DAY 3

Study 1 Timothy 4.

PRAYER

WEEK 34, DAY 4

"Some of my Christian friends volunteer to pray and raise their hands in the music time but talk bad about their parents and teachers behind their backs. I don't think you can do both."

Chad , middle school student

Study 1 Timothy 5.

PRAYER

WEEK 34, DAY 5

Study 1 Timothy 6.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Job 1-3, 29-30, 38-42

As you read the story of Job, think about the suffering that God has allowed to enter your life. How does God want you to deal with the suffering that He has entrusted to you? What does He want to accomplish through you as a result of that suffering? Do you hear a warning in these verses? What encouragement do you get from Job's story?

Have you learned 2 Corinthians 4:18 yet?

WEEK 35

WEEK 35, DAY 1

"You don't have to be perfect to be a leader. If you wait until you have all your issues worked out before you take a stand, you'll miss most of what God wanted to do with you. I think you've just got to decide that you're done waiting for that feeling and start doing what you already know to do. God uses weak people all the time, and it's more impressive than when He uses people that you think might be able to do it on their own anyway."

Casey, high school student

Study 2 Timothy 1.

PRAYER

WEEK 35, DAY 2

Study 2 Timothy 2:1-13.

PRAYER

WEEK 35, DAY 3

Study 2 Timothy 2:14-26.

PRAYER

WEEK 35, DAY 4

Study 2 Timothy 3.

PRAYER

WEEK 35, DAY 5

Study 2 Timothy 4.

PRAYER

THE WEEKEND

Suggested Reading: Nehemiah

As you read the story of this great leader, ask God to help you meet the future with determination to remain completely obedient and submissive to His will for your life.

Make a list of ten memory verses that you want to learn in the coming months and get started!

Congratulations! You've just completed a very significant task and followed through on a monumental commitment (that will take most people way more than 36 weeks to complete). Now, you're on your own. In truth, you've been on your own for a while now. From here, we recommend that you begin with the Gospel of Matthew and study your way through the New Testament. On the weekends, dig into Psalms and Proverbs. Find someone to hold you accountable and press on. May God continue to bless you as you soak in His word!

 **OKLAHOMA[®]**
BAPTISTS

 **COOPERATIVE
PROGRAM**