



GRACE IN THE WORD

THE WAY: A LIFE SHAPED BY JESUS

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"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

- John 14:6

THE WAY

A LIFE SHAPED BY JESUS

About this Reading Plan

Over the next six weeks, you are invited to take part in a journey called The Way - A Life Shaped by Jesus. We will learn the core beliefs and practices the gospel presents to Christ-followers. During this study, you will have three weeks of diving into the gospel beliefs: come as you are, you are forgiven, and you can change. Each of these beliefs leads us deeper in our journey of receiving and understanding the grace of Jesus.

In the final three weeks of this study, you are invited to practice the message and core beliefs of the gospel. Specifically, we will focus on three gospel practices for our lives: receiving from God, repenting to God and others, and responding in obedience to Him. The hope is that by taking time daily to invest, read, and reflect through this study, you may find a greater understanding of how these gospel beliefs can influence your life every day, and then put those beliefs into practice each day in order to have a life shaped by Jesus.

Each day's reading includes:

- › Scripture corresponding to the belief and practice that is being studied that week
- › A commentary or reflection thought for you to process the text more intentionally
- › Reflection questions or challenges to allow you to begin to internalize this study's message and apply it to your walk with Jesus

Getting more out of this study

We hope and desire that this study will be a blessing to you. We want our church to get the most that they possibly can out of this reading and study of scripture, so we have additional opportunities and resources available to you as you dive into this study.

Email

You can register for our weekly email with encouragements and recaps of the study from the previous week. If you would like to receive these weekly emails, simply sign up at GraceClarksville.com/GIW

App

If you haven't downloaded our Grace Community Church app, search "Grace Clarksville" in your app store or use your camera and scan this QR code to download the app directly. The app offers this study digitally and has more weekly resources and encouragements.



Group

We offer community groups for those wanting to connect in a short-term group with people at Grace to unpack and walk through this study together. To sign up and learn about our Grace in the Word group availability, go to GraceClarksville.com/GIW and sign up.

Name and Contact Information

PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS

Before You Read God's Word Today, Seek His Help with These 5 Prayers

1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
2. God, let any knowledge I gain serve to help me love You and others more and not puff me up.
3. God, help me see something new about You I've never seen before.
4. God, correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
5. God, direct my steps according to Your Word.

** Prayers from The Bible Recap Reading Plan by Tara-Leigh Cobble **

Tips for Approaching Scripture

- › Pray before you read (use the prayers above)
- › Read the words in proper context, taking into consideration when it was written, to whom it was written, and what was happening when it was written (a good study bible is helpful, we recommend the ESV Study Bible)
- › Look for God's character and faithfulness to His people
- › Look for themes that point to Jesus
- › Look for anything repetitive, unusual, confusing, hopeful, comforting, challenging
- › Once you are finished reading, take a few minutes to meditate on what you have read:
 - » Narrow down what you've read to just one or two main thoughts.
 - » What did I learn about God in these passages?
 - » How can I praise God for what this says about him?
 - » What did I learn about the human heart in these passages?
 - » What behavior/emotions come when I forget these things about God?
 - » What is God revealing to me today that I need to listen to?
 - » What sins do I need to confess in light of what God revealed today?
 - » What is one next step I can take in light of what I have read today?

WEEKLY CHECKLIST

PART ONE: GOSPEL BELIEFS

Week One: Come As You Are

- Day 1 - Matthew 11:28-30, Hebrews 4:1-11
- Day 2 - Luke 5:27-32, Romans 3:23, Mark 2:16-17
- Day 3 - John 3:1-21, John 14:1-14, Luke 1:31-38
- Day 4 - Matthew 11:28-30, Psalm 34:18, James 4:8, Jeremiah 31:7-13
- Day 5 - Matthew 18:1-6, Mark 10:14-15, Luke 18:15-17, Hebrews 4:14-16, Matthew 11:25-27
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Matthew 11:28-30
- Day 7 - Rest Day

Week Two: You Are Forgiven

- Day 1 - Romans 6:15-23, Galatians 5:16-17
- Day 2 - Isaiah 1:18-20, John 15:1-5, Hebrews 10:19-25, 1 John 1:7-9, Psalm 51
- Day 3 - Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 1:7-8, Psalm 103:8-13
- Day 4 - Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 Peter 1:18-25, Romans 6:1-10
- Day 5 - 1 John 1:8-9, Psalm 32:1-3
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Romans 6:15-23
- Day 7 - Rest Day

Week Three: There's Real Hope for Change

- Day 1 - Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 10:3-6, Philippians 4:6-9, Ephesians 4:17-24
- Day 2 - Exodus 14:10-14, Romans 5:3-8, Romans 6:7-18, 1 Corinthians 10:12-15
- Day 3 - 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Lamentations 3:22-24, Colossians 3:5-10
- Day 4 - Galatians 2:20-21, Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-21
- Day 5 - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Ephesians 2:8-10, Romans 8:26-28
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Romans 12:1-2
- Day 7 - Rest Day

WEEKLY CHECKLIST

PART TWO: GOSPEL PRACTICES

Week Four: Receiving from God

- Day 1 - John 13:1-11
- Day 2 - 1 John 4:16-19, Romans 8:31-39, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- Day 3 - John 15:1-11, James 1:2-3, Romans 15:13
- Day 4 - Acts 1:6-8, Hebrews 4:14-16, 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, 2 Corinthians 4:7-9, Hebrews 13:6-8
- Day 5 - 1 Peter 5:6-11, Matthew 18:1-6, 2 Chronicles 7:14-15
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- John 13:1-11
- Day 7 - Rest Day

Week Five: Repenting to God and Others

- Day 1 - Luke 15:11-32, 1 John 1:8-10, Psalm 32:5, Proverbs 28:13
- Day 2 - Luke 15:1-7, Luke 15:11-20, Hebrews 4:16, John 1:16
- Day 3 - Luke 15:20-24, Acts 3:19-20, 2 Peter 3:8-14
- Day 4 - Luke 15:11-32, Micah 6:8, Ephesians 4:31-32
- Day 5 - Luke 15:11-32, Luke 15:25-32, Ephesians 4:30-32, Colossians 3:12-15, Luke 6:27-28
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Luke 15:11-20
- Day 7 - Rest Day

Week Six: Responding in Obedience

- Day 1 - Matthew 7:24-29, Luke 6:46-49
- Day 2 - Nehemiah 9, Hebrews 12:1-15, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 2:1-18
- Day 3 - Luke 9:18-27, Titus 2:11-15
- Day 4 - Romans 2:12-13, James 1:19-25, Ephesians 2:1-10
- Day 5 - John 14:15-26
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Matthew 7:24-29
- Day 7 - Rest Day



GOSPEL BELIEFS

PART 1





COME AS YOU ARE

WEEK 1





"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

-Matthew 11:28-30

DAY 1 - MONDAY

MATTHEW 11:28-30, HEBREWS 4:1-11

Reflection:

Do you wrestle with this promise of rest that Jesus offers in Matthew 11? Why or why not?

Today slowly read through each phrase of Matthew 11:28-30 and ask God to reveal ways you can trust and live more fully into this offer of true soul rest.

Are You Tired and Weary?

There are seasons, likely long seasons, where we come to Jesus weary, tired, and carrying heavy burdens. Jesus says in Matthew 11,

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.

This sounds beautiful, but the reality is that we struggle to believe Jesus' words here are true and possible for us. Most of the time, we don't slow down long enough for Him to give us true soul rest, or we don't realize that taking him up on this offer of rest is much easier than striving in our own strength. Jesus' invitation to come to Him weary and burdened is not just for physical rest but for a deeper soul rest which is what we all really need the most. And yet, his offer of an "easy yoke" doesn't always make sense to us... because a yoke is historically a tool for work, used to harness oxen together to plow a field. How is a yoke "easy and light" if it requires work? Another meaning of this word, "yoke," in Jesus' day, was a common term used for a rabbi's teachings. What Jesus is offering is to let Him help us carry the load, and He is saying that His teachings show us the way to a life of freedom. He offers us a new way of life, but we often miss it.

In his commentary on Matthew, Frederick Dale Bruner says, "Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life, a fresh way to bear responsibilities.... instead of offering escape, Jesus offers equipment. Jesus means that obedience to his Sermon on the Mount [his yoke] will develop in us a balance and a "way" of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living."

Eugene Peterson in The Message paraphrases Matthew 11:28-30 like this,

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

This is an invitation—for all the tired, weary, stressed out, burned out, never enough time in the day ones of us out here. Jesus' invitation is to take up his yoke—to travel through life with Him by our side, walking with Him every step of the way, learning from him how to shoulder the weight of life, knowing that we are not carrying it alone. He can carry it for us! This takes some intentionality on our part though; we have to lay down the hurried pressures of the world's demands and seek the slower intentional pace of Jesus. It will not happen by accident; we have to be ruthless in our attempt to fight for the pace of Jesus. It will require us to resist the urge to strive in our strength and slow down to let Him fill us with His soul rest. As Dallas Willard says, "Hurry is the enemy of spiritual life in our day...you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

If you want a deeper dive into this topic, check out *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

LUKE 5:27-32, ROMANS 3:23, MARK 2:16-17

Reflection:

Why do you think it is essential to understand that we are sinners?

What does it mean to you that Jesus cares for us, sinners, to come as we are?

How do you think you can begin to invite Jesus into the hidden parts of your life?

Friend of Sinners

There are so many things to be afraid of in this life. Dying, heights, snakes, flying, enclosed spaces, or, worst of all: speaking in public. Personally, I fear spiders more than just about anything else in this life. Whatever we might think of personally when we think of scary things, there's one thing we all share deep down. We all share a fear so great we don't like to think about it and certainly won't talk about it in everyday conversation. That fear, of course, is the fear of being seen.

We all fear being truly seen. With no filters, no well-crafted polite version of ourselves, no hidden parts or thoughts. We fear being seen for who we are: frauds, judgmental, conceited, proud, selfish, self-serving, deceptive, broken. We work our entire lives to bury, hide, and deny that version of ourselves, but the truth is: that is who we are, but it's not who we have to be, and it's not who Christ sees us as.

In Luke 5 and Mark 2, we see Jesus eating with Matthew (Levi), a tax collector and sinner. We read that He ate with him and other sinners. Jesus was taking time to share a table with people that were seen, and exposed, for who they were more than most. Jesus took time to eat with them because He saw more in them than their sin. He saw His children. He saw His work being done through them because they were willing to invite Him in and come as they truly are to Him.

The Pharisees saw Jesus eating with this kind of crowd and scoffed at Him, and with venom in their words, gave Jesus the title of "Friend of Sinners." This insult is one of the most beautiful and grace-filled characteristics of Jesus. It's a reminder that He cares about us. He cares about who we are because He sees us for who we are more than anyone else possibly can. Jesus sees us through the lens of who we are now and who we can be through a relationship with Him. Jesus sees us, wants to be with us, and offers to make us more than who we try so hard not to let anyone else see. Jesus sees our mess but chooses us. The fact that Jesus is a friend to sinners should encourage us to go to Him like we never have before. We have nothing to hide or fear by coming to Him as we are because He sees us for who we are and still loves us.

"Jesus calls us friends, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of who He is. He is the friend of all people, and he invites us into friendship with him." -Rich Wilkerson Jr. Friend of Sinners

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

JOHN 3:1-21, JOHN 14:1-14, LUKE 1:31-38

Reflection:

Have you been taught not to question God? Why?

Is there a difference between doubt and curiosity? What do you think the difference might be?

Sit with these stories you read today and process how Jesus responds to those who come to Him with their questions.

Come to Him with Curiosity

In today's reading in John 3, we meet Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader of the day known as a Pharisee. He believes that God has sent Jesus to teach them, but he comes to Jesus with questions. This Pharisee had heard God's Word but did not recognize the person of Jesus standing before him. Nicodemus must have walked away confused and conflicted. Yet, after Nicodemus personally met with Jesus, something in him changed. He is curious about Jesus, and that curiosity leads him to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and why He came. Often in our faith journey, we come to Jesus with our questions, and if we seek Him for answers, He can lead us into a deeper relationship with Him. We see this same posture in John 14 as Philip and Thomas come to Jesus with their questions. As they lean into their questions, Jesus reveals more answers to them.

Sometimes we are afraid to question things of faith, but we can come to Him with our curiosity. Author Lore Ferguson Wilbert says in her book, *A Curious Faith*, "When we pretend to have all the answers, we're not telling the truth." The truth is we are often confused and we definitely don't have all the answers, no matter how hard we try to figure things out on our own. Even with the help of the internet and well-meaning friends, we often come up short. Seeking answers from God's Word and asking for the help of the Spirit are key elements in growing our faith in Him. He wants us to come to him with all our questions. My honesty before him was all he wanted all along. He didn't want my blind trust or my white-knuckled attempts to clean myself up for him. He wanted me, all of me, all my history, all my brokenness, all my fears and anxieties and angers."

We can bring all our doubts, fears, and brokenness to Him because He will welcome us with open arms and take us deeper into a relationship with Him where we can find the answers we seek. Sometimes, we still won't fully understand what God is up to, but we can trust that His ways are better than ours. We can lean into our questions, like Mary when she asks the angel in Luke 1, "But how can this be?" Even after the questions, God's plan might still be a mystery to us, but may we come away with the assurance that Mary had when she said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

"Curiosity will free you to live in the mystery of God's love." - Seth Haines

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

MATTHEW 11:28-30, PSALM 34:18, JAMES 4:8, JEREMIAH 31:7-13

Reflection:

How can seeing Jesus as gentle and lowly change how you see Him in your times of suffering?

Why is isolation such a dangerous response to suffering?

How can you begin to come to Jesus and share with Him in your suffering in broken-hearted seasons?

Never Alone

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls is easily one of the saddest books I've ever read. It has all the makings of a tragedy. A young boy who raises two hound dog pups named Old Dan and Little Ann during the Great Depression in the Ozark Mountains. The dogs are this boy's life. He raises them, loves them, cares for them, and they love each other. To make a tragic story short, Old Dan dies defending the boy from a mountain lion. Then not long after, Little Ann dies alone on Old Dan's grave. She dies of a broken heart.

Truly this is the epitome of sad stories. It's a story I'll never read again, and it's one I certainly don't like to think about. It's one that many of us have lived through, not necessarily the loss of a good dog friend, but the pain and deep emotional hurt of a broken heart. One thing is certain in this life; there will be suffering. There are times, days, weeks, months, even long seasons when we suffer, where things don't go our way. There are difficult seasons where we experience hurt, betrayal, emotional turmoil, and loss of a relationship or loved one. In times of suffering and brokenheartedness, we tend to pull away and dwell in our pain. We often isolate ourselves and feel alone when we experience suffering because every person's pain is unique and uniquely felt.

The glorious truth of the gospel and God's Word is that we are never alone. Jesus reminds us that He is gentle and lowly, meaning He is with us. In our deepest hurts and sorrows, He is there, and although we may uniquely feel our suffering and sorrow, Jesus is uniquely present with us in the middle of it. We may feel alone, but we never have to because Jesus is always with us. Dane Ortlund points this out in his book *Gentle & Lowly* when he writes, "In our pain, Jesus is pained; in our suffering, he feels the suffering as his own even though it isn't-not that his invincible divinity is threatened, but in the sense that his heart is feelingly drawn into our distress...His is a love that cannot be held back when he sees his people in pain."

We are never alone. In our broken-hearted, isolated, suffering seasons, Jesus is as present as in our high-spirit, full-of-joy, easy-going days. Jesus is a relationship so near to us that He reigns in our very souls. His dwelling in our souls is why we can come to Him just as we are in our broken-hearted suffering seasons. He is gentle and lowly with us, sympathizing with our suffering and leading us to hope and peace that only He can deliver.

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

MATTHEW 18:1-6, MARK 10:14-15, LUKE 18:15-17,
HEBREWS 4:14-16, MATTHEW 11:25-27

Reflection:

What would it look like for you to approach God with boldness & expectancy, courageous joy, innocent curiosity, humility, and an eagerness to grow?

Come Like A Child

You may have heard the phrase “faith like a child” or “childlike faith,” but the Bible never uses these exact phrases. What Jesus actually says in Matthew 18:2 is that we must “become as little children” in order to enter the kingdom of God. The context surrounding Jesus’ statement is the disciples’ question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”. In response, Jesus said, “whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” In these passages, Jesus isn’t talking about faith. In fact, He doesn’t mention faith at all. So, as the disciples focus on who is the greatest in God’s Kingdom, Jesus offers a new perspective: those who willingly take the lowest position are the greatest in the kingdom of God.

There is something essential about having a childlike perspective if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven. As adults, the world’s brokenness can tend to make us jaded and bitter. We are likely to think we can meet our needs independently. We are prone to believe that we have all the answers. As adults, we hold grudges, harbor fears, refuse to forgive, lose hope, & resist change. So what does it mean to enter the kingdom like a child?

1. **Come Bold & Expectant** - unafraid to ask for help. Think about how a child comes to their parents in a time of need; they come boldly and expectant with the hope that the parents will meet their needs. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and find grace to help us when we need it most.”
2. **Come with Courageous Joy** - undistracted by the fears & cares of the world. Children dare to take risks without fear, and experience delight and joy in the smallest details of life. A child often responds to a gift with authentic gratitude and joy.
3. **Innocent Curiosity** - untainted by the ways of the world. Children come with a pure, innocent curiosity about things. Being “child-like” doesn’t mean we are to be immature or uneducated about our faith, nor does it mean that we have to trust blindly. In fact, it is quite the opposite; it requires us to ask questions to help build & strengthen our trust in Him as we grow.
4. **Humbly** - aware of our weaknesses and need for direction. Children are aware of where they need help and aren’t afraid to request those needs be met by their parents. We become like children when we submit to the direction and authority of the Lord.
5. **Eager to Grow** - aware they don’t have all the answers. God wants us to come to Him and His Word so that we might learn, grow, and mature in our faith. Matthew 11:25, Jesus says, “thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.”

In Mark 10, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” How can you become more like a child as you approach the Lord?

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

MATTHEW 18:28-30

Reflection Notes and Questions:

This week we took time to study and understand the vital gospel belief that we are invited to come to God as we are. The beautiful truth and message of the gospel is that we can come to God as broken, sinful, confused, and lost people. He draws near to us in our brokenness. His love is for us and the belief and soul-impacting power of that love change us to walk in His love and forgiveness daily. Dane Ortlund points to this truth: *"He wants us to draw strength from his love, but the only ones qualified to do that are sinners in need of undeserved love. And he doesn't just want us to be forgiven. He wants us."*

As we wrap up week 1 of this study, reflect on what it means to come to Jesus as you are, and follow these reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › What did you learn this week that you want to apply to your walk with Christ?
- › How can you continue to come to God as you are daily?

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.



YOU ARE FORGIVEN

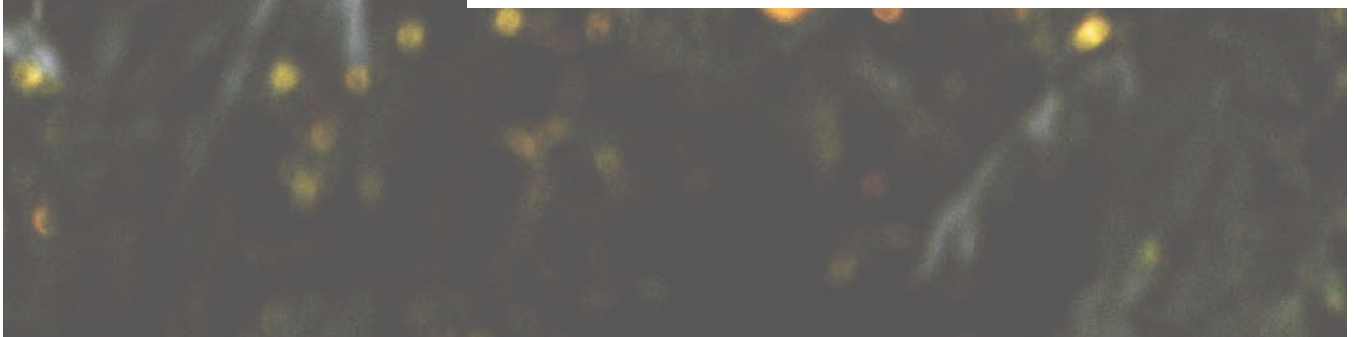
WEEK 2





"But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

-Romans 6:22-23



DAY 1 - MONDAY

ROMANS 6:15-23, GALATIANS 5:16-17

Reflection:

Why do you think forgiveness is so crucial for the Christian life?

How do you think believing and regularly practicing forgiveness can change the way you live?

Changing our Nature

David writes in Psalm 51:5, “For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.” David points to a theological truth that we don’t have to be experts in the Bible to understand. We are sinful. We are drawn and prone to do the things we are not supposed to. Something in our inner workings, our fiber, our being, is corrupt. We are led to corrupt living countless times in our day.

Our corrupt nature leads us to think things we know we shouldn’t, to say things we don’t want to, and to do things we know are bad for us. Every person on earth is aware of their shortcomings, but what’s unique to the Christian is the invitation towards receiving forgiveness and adopting the new nature, or life, that we can cling to. Those who have genuinely accepted Jesus as their Savior receive a greater awareness of the deep soul-resting connection that the Holy Spirit has within us. This Holy Spirit connection and awareness wake us up to see our sinful nature as something that can and will be forgiven if we invite the Holy Spirit into it.

The Holy Spirit wakes us up toward the power that only He possesses to forgive our sins, cleanse our spirits, and develop a new nature within us. The Holy Spirit leads us through the regular practice of forgiveness toward the life found in embracing our new nature of holiness. When we are aware of and regularly receive the forgiveness of our Savior, we can begin to embrace a nature that is, as Paul says in Romans, a slave to righteous living. We no longer will seek to live well or righteous by our own strength, for our own glory. We no longer will ignorantly embrace our sinful nature but instead feel the tension of fighting the sinful nature in our souls to embrace the forgiven, righteously embedded nature of our new soul in Christ. This changing nature is only possible through embracing the process of confession, repentance and forgiveness available through Jesus.

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

ISAIAH 1:18-20, JOHN 15:1-5, HEBREWS 10:19-25,
1 JOHN 1:7-9, PSALM 51

Reflection:

Reflect on Psalm 51. Take the time to reflect on all that He has already forgiven you for. Ask God to show you where you might need to confess and ask for forgiveness. Offer up a prayer of gratitude that Jesus wipes our slate clean.

A Clean Heart

We were made clean when Jesus shed His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. You see, in essence, He did wipe the slate clean on the cross. We are guilty of the sins we commit, yet His cleansing blood renders us NOT guilty before God. But as we read passages like John 15, we see that Jesus intends for the cleansing to continue as we walk closely with Him. John teaches that, as believers, we walk in the light. But that doesn't mean we'll never sin. In fact, we definitely will sin. Yes, we've been saved from the power of sin, but no, we're not perfect yet. So what should we do when we sin?

Those who walk in the light don't simply admit their sin to God; we grieve over it and turn away from it, hating our sin as He does. When we do so, God is "faithful and just" and forgives us—because Christ has already paid the price. There is power in the cleansing blood of Jesus. The cleansing occurs the first moment we confess that we are sinful and need a Savior and ask Jesus to be the Lord of our life. We then receive forgiveness for all the sins we have committed. But the cleansing doesn't stop there; it continues as we walk with Him and acknowledge, confess, and repent from our sins. When God forgives, He not only chooses to forget the sin but also purifies and cleanses us as part of His ongoing work of sanctification in our lives. 1 John 1:9 says, "if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." The forgiveness we first received when we came to Christ is the same forgiveness available to us today, when we sin. Repent, and God will renew a right spirit and a clean heart within you. He will wash you whiter than snow. God breathes life into our sin-gripped hearts, freeing us from sin's bondage with His forgiveness that transforms us from the inside out.

"And if the bad news is that we are all unclean, the good news is that there is one gospel to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - Lore Ferguson Wilbert

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

EPHESIANS 2:8, EPHESIANS 1:7-8, PSALM 103:8-13

Reflection:

What does it mean to open ourselves to receive Christ?

Why is this hard for us to do?

How can you begin to open yourself to receive the gift of God's grace today?

The Free Gift

In life, we are used to doing things in order to receive things. We work to receive a paycheck. We use that paycheck to receive food, clothes, a home, a car, toys for our kids, etc. We take care of these things to keep and enjoy them. Life is work. What's exciting and unique about forgiveness and grace, though, is that it's a gift. There's nothing we can give in order to receive the love of Christ; it's already there, given to us for free. There's nothing we can do to be forgiven by God except ask and receive it; it's offered to us.

God's grace is a gift we receive, not work for or towards. To live in the belief that you are forgiven, you have to open your heart to receive it. The act of opening and receiving works within us to create the beginnings of a fertile soul to receive more of God's grace, love, compassion, forgiveness, goodness, instruction, mercy, etc. In short, simply opening and receiving the free gift of grace and forgiveness creates within us a heart ready to receive more and more of Him and live more and more for Him.

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

EPHESIANS 2:1-10, 1 PETER 1:18-25, ROMANS 6:1-10

Reflection:

List how you have seen Jesus bring you from death to life.

How can we help others move from death to life?

From Death to Life

The central message of the gospel is that we cannot save ourselves. We need a Savior to forgive our sins. Salvation is a gift of grace and mercy to sinners from the selfless sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His work on our behalf is our only hope. It is done. He has done it all. We are saved by grace and by grace alone.

We were dead in our sins. Not sick and just in need of a band-aid or some medicine. We were spiritually buried in the ground, unable to do anything but continue in the deadness of our sin. **"But God"**—these are perhaps the greatest words in the Bible.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us,
made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses.*

You are saved by grace!

- Ephesians 2:4-5

We were dead, but God...We were slaves to sin, but God...We had no hope, but God, in His love for us, saw our sad helpless state and brought us back to life by sending His Son to die. God saved us by His grace.

We were buried, therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- Romans 6:4

Our sins were placed onto Jesus at the cross, and He paid for them in full. This is a free gift of God, no strings attached. His resurrection means that we, too, have been given new life. Why would God offer this free gift to us if it meant the sacrifice of His one and only Son? Paul points it out to us in Ephesians 2:7: "So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus." We are displays of his grace and his kindness. Now we get to be messengers that bring others from death to life. We get to share what He has done for us with others. We are living proof that He lives.

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 JOHN 1:8-9, PSALM 32:1-3

Reflection:

Why are we prone to trying to take care of ourselves?

What does it mean to you that Jesus is faithful to forgive us?

Faithful to Forgive

"Just walk it off" is the most basic medical advice we, the uneducated in the medical field, know how to give. When our child scrapes their leg, we hug them and tell them to walk it off. When a spouse stubs their toe on the corner of the bed, we sympathize with them and tell them to walk it off. We're used to giving this advice for healing, but this doesn't always work. We've seen it in sports. An athlete gets tackled or gets hit. They go down or try to walk off the hurt, but it doesn't go away. In these moments, they are incapable of fixing themselves. They need something more.

Jesus points us towards the reminder throughout scripture that our brokenness is not something we can simply walk off. We can't fix our problem of sin. We can't just wipe clean the slate of our wrongs from our life or from the lives of others. That is a work that only He can begin to do. It's the work of forgiveness that only He can perform. We have to seek forgiveness from Him. The problem with the "walk it off" treatment plan is that it doesn't always (rarely does actually) fix the problem. The same is true of our sin problem. We cannot forgive our sins; He is the only one who can. He is the giver of grace and mercy.

As scary as it may be to admit you have a problem you can't fix on your own may be, there's joy in knowing that He is faithful to forgive. Throughout the week, we've studied and come to grips with the truth that He is our only means of forgiveness, and we can have joy and freedom in that because He is faithful to forgive us. When we seek His forgiveness, He always answers with grace, mercy, and love. He wipes the slate clean of our sinful lives. He heals us in ways we can never heal on our own. He is always present, always able, and always faithful to forgive.

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

ROMANS 6:15-23

Reflection Notes and Questions:

To be forgiven is to be made new. The Lord offers us no greater gift than open, welcoming arms back to Him when we fall. Understanding the gospel belief that He forgives and is never short of pouring out His forgiveness on us, is pivotal. This week you spent time looking at this belief and seeking to understand the depths and power of His forgiveness. We're invited to study and experience this belief for the rest of our lives.

As we wrap up week 2 of this study, reflect on what it means that you are forgiven, and follow these reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › Why do you think the gospel belief that you are forgiven is essential for us to understand and internalize?
- › Take time right now to thank God for His forgiveness and seek to start a rhythm of forgiveness in your life today.

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

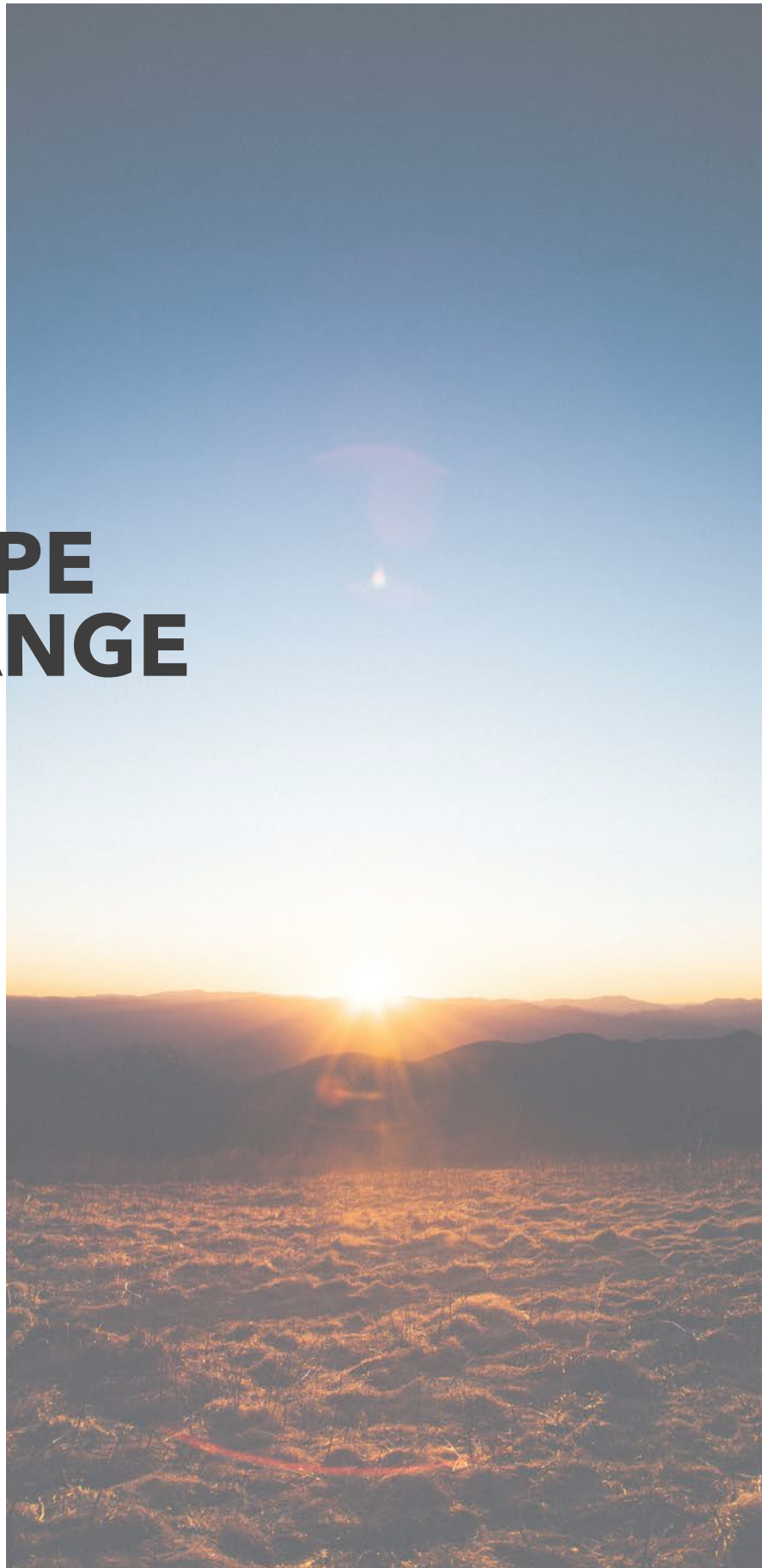
REST DAY


Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.



REAL HOPE FOR CHANGE

WEEK 3





"...let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

-Romans 12:2

DAY 1 - MONDAY

ROMANS 12:1-2, 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18, 10:3-6,
PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9, EPHESIANS 4:17-24

Reflection:

How often do you spend time evaluating your thoughts?

What influences your thoughts?

Spend some time today with your thoughts, actively processing how to take them captive and teach them to be obedient to Christ.

Renew Your Mind

Our behavior begins in our minds. Our human minds are incredibly powerful, and the Bible has much to say about how we handle our thoughts. Our thoughts control not only how we think but also how we feel and act. If we want to have hope for real change, that change starts with renewing our minds. But what is a renewed mind exactly? And how do we go about renewing our minds?

2 Corinthians 10 reminds us that it will be a fight to take our thoughts captive and teach them to obey Christ. Why is it a fight? Because the enemy of our souls enjoys using our thoughts as his playground. First, we must acknowledge that this will take some work and likely be something we will have to do over and over daily—sitting with our thoughts long enough to teach and train them to be in line with scripture and be obedient to Christ. Paul said in Romans 12:2 that we are transformed by the renewing of the mind. Where our thoughts go, our lives will follow. We are training our minds to no longer be enslaved to thoughts from the enemy and instead operate as a child of the living God. We don't have to live like a slave when we are heirs to the throne, sons and daughters of the King. As His children, we have access to Him and the power of the Holy Spirit. This gives us a real chance to fight against the schemes of darkness. The problem is we often forget that we have access to the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit in us, so we continue to live like slaves instead of soldiers equipped for battle.

We can't blame outside circumstances for our negative thoughts. We need to take hold of the power we have been given through Christ to renew our minds by meditating on His Word. We need to stop believing that we can't control our thoughts. The Bible tells us in Philippians 4 that we can fix our thoughts on "what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable." We have been given the power to control our thoughts. It's impossible to fix our thoughts on these things in Philippians 4 if we continue to fill our minds daily with the things of the world more than the truth of God's Word. The only way to change our default thinking is to fill our minds with God's truth so that truth will flow out of our mouths and into our actions. We see this when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the enemy. The enemy attempted to fill Jesus' mind with lies, but Jesus fought those lies by speaking scripture.

We cannot always stop negative thoughts from coming in and taking up residence in our minds, but we can stop them from moving in permanently. They can be temporary residents on their way out! Ask for the Father's help; if you are struggling with your thoughts, ask God for clarity and wisdom to know if you need additional help from a trusted counselor or pastor. Lean into the power of the Spirit that reminds us that we have been given a sound mind. Start with a simple prayer: *Jesus, by your Holy Spirit, keep my mind firmly set where you want it to be focused today. Help me to take my thoughts captive and teach them to be obedient to you.*

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

EXODUS 14:10-14, ROMANS 5:3-8, ROMANS 6:7-18,
1 CORINTHIANS 10:12-15

Reflection:

Do you find yourself caught in the same cycles of temptations?

What is your typical reaction to temptations and trials? Do you lean towards cynicism and apathy or optimism and hope?

A Way of Escape

We encounter temptations and trials daily. They can lead us down a path of despair if we let them. Temptations and trials often come from the enemy, whose motivations are to lead us into sinful patterns that seem inescapable. God can also use these times of temptations and trials to grow us in endurance, perseverance, character, strength, and intimacy with Him. The difference between the two is their motivation. Satan's goal is for us to fail and fall deeper into despair. God's goal is for us to grow stronger and more resilient, and unlike the enemy, God is right there to lift us up and give us grace when we fail; He provides a way out!

In Exodus 14, we see the Israelites have just been freed from slavery in Egypt, and they seem to come up against temptations and trials at every turn in the wilderness. The Red Sea seemed impossible to cross; they were surrounded by trouble on every side and even wanted to return to slavery. Moses says this to the people in Exodus 14, *"Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."*

God was about to provide a way to escape, a path right through the Red Sea. They couldn't see a way out of their struggles. Even though God had shown Himself to be all-powerful, this difficulty caused them to doubt God's ability and character. Moses was asking them to stop complaining and trust the Lord, to take their focus off themselves and place it back on their deliverer. Their Deliverer did more than just show up; He provided an unexplainable supernatural way of escape for them. Even after seeing this way of escape, they still struggled to trust Him in their time in the wilderness, so God was faithful to be patient with them and continue to remind them of His power.

We have a powerful God who makes a way of escape for us when we are tempted. We have a powerful God who tests us to build our strength, so we can better face temptations when they come. Sometimes all we can do is trust Him and lean into His power as our way of escape. The more we do this, the more natural it becomes and the more change we see in our lives. We don't have to return to slavery when trials and temptations come our way... "Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living." There is real hope that He provides a way out for us when we trust Him, cry out to Him, and follow Him. His way is always better than our way.

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21, LAMENTATIONS 3:22-24,
COLOSSIANS 3:5-10

Reflection:

When would you say you gave your life to Christ? What do you think is holding you back if you haven't yet?

How does God's grace changing and transforming us daily bring a more splendid view of His salvation to your mind?

End this time reflecting on how you can regularly open your life to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to help you open your life up daily to the prompting of the Spirit to be made new.

A New Creation

"...it is specifically God the Holy Spirit who works within us to change us and sanctify us, giving us greater holiness of life. Peter speaks of the "sanctification of the Spirit" and Paul speaks of "sanctification by the Spirit" It is the Holy Spirit who produces in us the "fruit of the Spirit" those character traits that are part of greater and greater sanctification. If we grow in sanctification we "walk by the Spirit" and are "led by the Spirit" that is, we are more and more responsive to the desires and promptings of the Holy Spirit in our life and character. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of holiness, and he produces holiness within us." -Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology

Growing up, I believed that salvation, God's grace, was something I received on one special shining breakthrough day, and then I just followed God every day naturally after that. As I have grown older, I have learned that is not how my holiness or sanctification (the process of living and looking more and more like Jesus) works. The truth is more beautiful than that. Salvation is a gift. I can receive it with my whole heart at a given point in my life. The time of salvation may be at church on a Sunday, at camp as a child or teenager, or in your bedroom on your knees. No matter when salvation comes into the life of someone, the process of continually receiving that salvific gift of grace, the process of being transformed by His salvation is daily, hourly, minute-by-minute, second after second work.

In his second letter, Paul wrote to the Corinthians about being a new creation, which he makes clear is not a one-and-done experience but something that happens to us daily. We are a new creation, made new, and saved; each day, each moment, we choose to pursue Jesus, live more like Him, and embrace holy living. The book of Lamentations was written hundreds of years before Jesus' sacrifice, and it, too, points to this being in the very character of God's love, mercy, and being. God makes us new each day when we turn our eyes, hearts, and lives to Him. The encouragement is knowing that we have real hope for change in the grace-filled gift of Jesus' salvation for our lives. We can be made new every time we make our way His way by opening our lives to the work of His Holy Spirit that lives in us and moves through us.

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

GALATIANS 2:20-21, EPHESIANS 1:15-23, EPHESIANS 3:14-21

Reflection:

Do you feel like you have the power to face your weaknesses and enact true change in your life? Why or why not?

Sit before the Lord today with that question in mind. Ask Him to reveal to you ways that you can lean into His power within you and make real progress toward change.

Crucified with Christ

If we have any hope of real change, we must wrestle with the reality of Galatians 2:20, *"I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."*

What does that mean? It means that our lives are no longer our own; Christ lives in and works through us. This means that if we have submitted our lives to His authority, then we are no longer in charge. We must bring all our desires under His rule and ask Him to birth in us new desires that honor and bring glory to Him.

J. A Medders says it this way,

"You were crucified, too, right along with Him. You are a crucified man. As Jesus struggled to breathe, your sins and your past life were struggling to breathe too. And when Christ walked out of that borrowed burial site, you walked out, too—into new life. Right now, your life is animated by the Lord Jesus. Christ lives in you, and you live by faith. Faith in Christ is now the driving force in your life, if only you'll let Him lead."

This means we now have Jesus' power within us through the Holy Spirit. His resurrection ushered in our resurrection to a new way of living. One where we have the power of the Spirit living in us to daily put to death our sinful desires and walk in a new abundant life with Him. This abundance looks different than the abundance the world offers. It might not look like wealth, possessions, and happiness, but it will be a life filled with unconditional love, unexplainable peace, deep joy, and eternal hope. This is the life fueled by the power of Jesus, one that can only come if we surrender fully to His ways above our own. This life is fueled by the reminder that He loves us and gave Himself up for us on the cross. This becomes our motivation and heart's desire as we surrender to the Lord daily. As N.T. Wright says, "Jesus was faithful to God in being crucified, and my faithfulness answers the faithfulness of Jesus."

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10, EPHESIANS 2:8-10, ROMANS 8:26-28

Reflection:

List all the areas where you feel like you're weak. Now take time to journal or process where God can work through your weakness to show Himself in your life and the lives of others.

His Power Made Perfect in Weakness

"This sufficiency is declared without any limiting words, and therefore I understand the passage to mean that the grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient to uphold thee, sufficient to strengthen thee, sufficient to comfort thee, sufficient to make thy trouble useful to thee, sufficient to enable thee to triumph over it, sufficient to bring thee out of it, sufficient to bring thee out of ten thousand like it, sufficient to bring thee home to heaven... O child of God, I wish it were possible to put into words this all-sufficiency, but it is not. Let me retract my speech: I am glad that it cannot be put into words, for if so it would be finite, but since we never can express it, glory be to God it is inexhaustible, and our demands upon it can never be too great. Here let me press upon you the pleasing duty of taking home the promise personally at this moment, for no believer here need be under any fear, since for him also, at this very instant, the grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient." -Charles Spurgeon

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

ROMANS 12:1-2

Reflection Notes and Questions:

We are invited to come to God as we are but thank God we don't have to stay that way. The final gospel belief we looked at in this study is that we have real hope for change. The hope for a change in our lives comes not through our common pursuits like self-help or a seminar. Real hope for change comes by drawing near to God and allowing His Holy Spirit to change us. The process of being changed by God is what we studied this week; now, take time to reflect on what you learned this week and seek to apply it.

As we wrap up week 3 of this study, reflect on what it means that we have a real hope for change in a relationship with Jesus, and follow these reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › Why do you think there is real hope for change when we pursue a lifetime relationship with Jesus?
- › What do you feel Jesus may be changing in you right now?

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.

30



GOSPEL PRACTICES

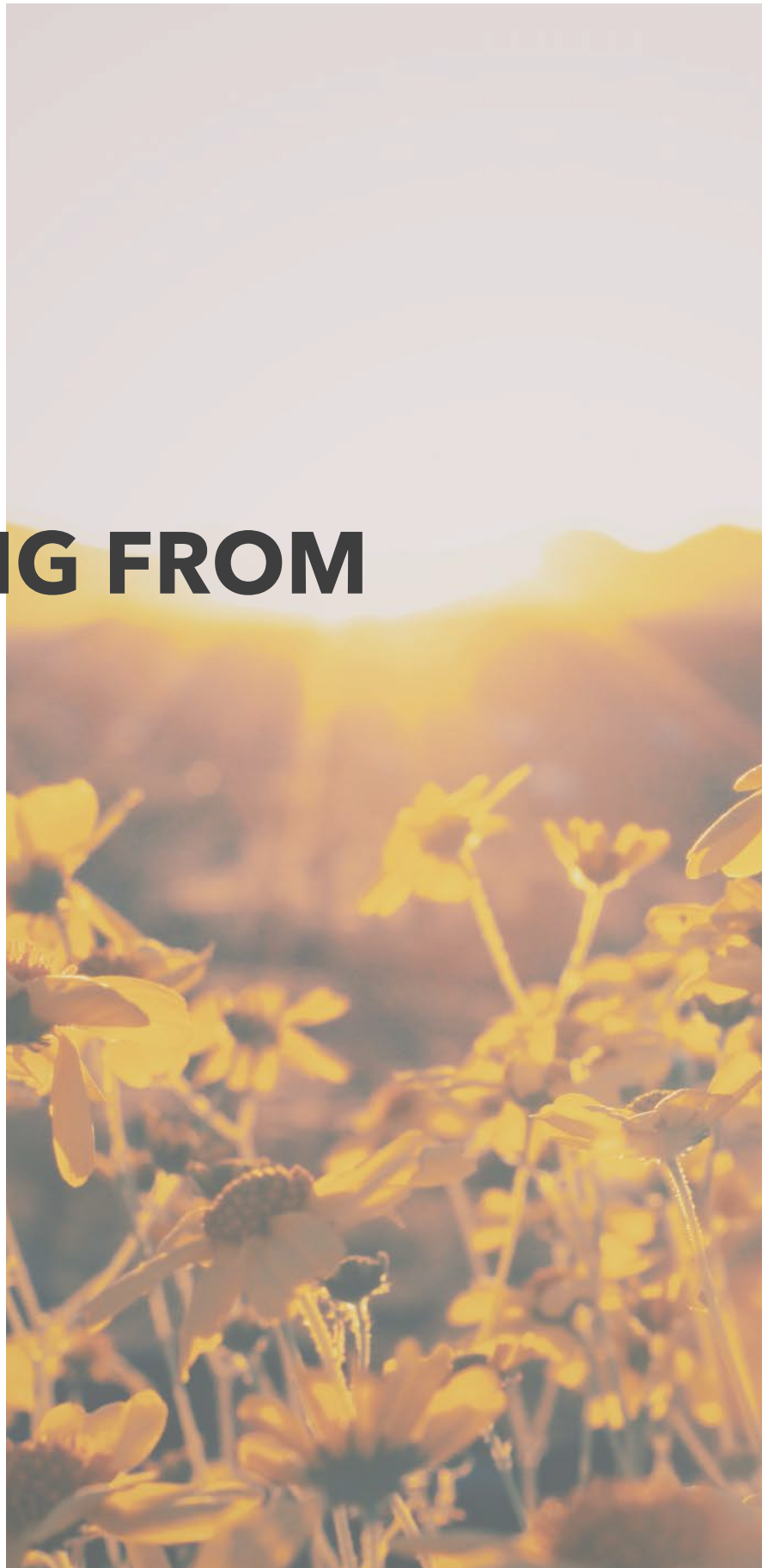
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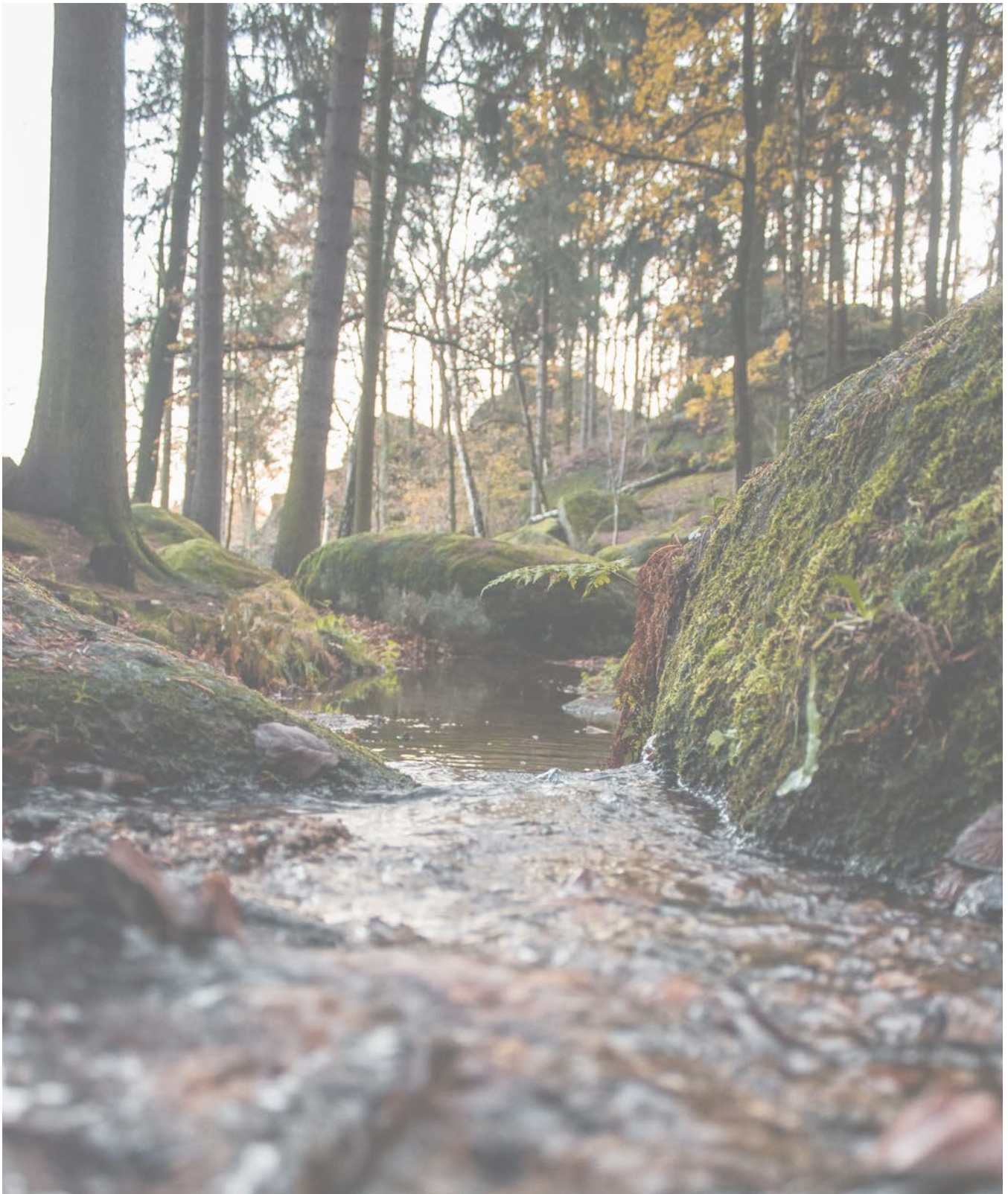




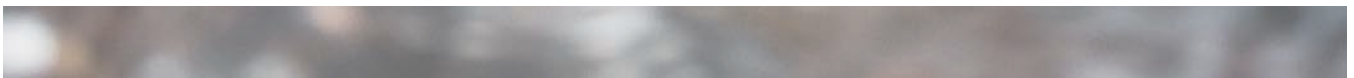
RECEIVING FROM GOD

WEEK 4





"Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." -John 13:8



DAY 1 - MONDAY

JOHN 13:1-11

Reflection:

Take time to get away and be alone with God today. Make sure this time alone with Him is extended from your regular time with Him. That extended time could be 5, 15, 45, or 60 minutes. Whatever length of time you choose, spend that time intentionally seeking to open your life more fully to God. Think through the places where you don't want God to be in your life and begin to ask Him into those places. This takes time. Don't rush it. Be willing to return to it throughout the day and over the coming weeks, months, and years. Today, begin to foster the practice of inviting God into your whole life. Be willing and open to receive Him.

Open to Receive

Peter is a disciple I can relate to. He's a disciple we can all relate to. He is passionate, confident, and stubborn. He is like us in our everyday lives but reflects us most in his interactions with Jesus. He comes to the literal feet of Jesus (as we see in John 13) with such faith and confidence in His pursuit of Jesus and His desire to serve Him, but he misses a pivotal piece of the Christian life.

Peter, like us, missed the point Jesus was making to the disciples, the point He makes to all of us. Jesus was specifically teaching in John 13 that, like Peter, to be His disciples, we must be open and willing to receive Him. To experience a real life with Jesus means being open to receiving Him in every part of our lives. Jesus comes to us in our places of humility and vulnerability. Jesus works and moves in the heart that is open and willing, and ready to receive Him.

Jesus demonstrates through the washing of feet that He is in our dirtiest, lowest, most hidden, and most vulnerable places. Jesus sees the worst in us, sees the broken parts of us, sees the neediness in us, and meets us there. He wants to serve, save, and sanctify us, but we must be willing to receive Him. That means we must be humble enough and willing enough to open our lives to receive Him, every part of Him into every part of our being. The question we have to ask ourselves is: are we open to receiving Him?

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

1 JOHN 4:16-19, ROMANS 8:31-39, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

Reflection:

Sit with each attribute of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13 and ask God to help you trust and rest in this attribute of His love.

Receiving His Love

What does it look like for us to receive God's love? God is love, so He can't be anything but loving to us. This is often hard for us to grasp, especially when circumstances are hard, or we feel unlovable. When we put our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are told we can "rest in His love." The struggle comes in accepting and receiving God's love in the everyday moments of our lives. God wants to lavish His love upon us, and He wants that love to radiate into every part of our lives. In difficult times, we have to place our total trust in God's love for us. It is easy to lose faith when we rely on earthly things to carry us through; those things are forever changing. When we rest in God, we rest on a firm, unshakable foundation. When we rest in God's love, we get to have faith that God is with us through it all. Not only is God with us, but He cares for us. He is there to give us peace as we go through it.

Signs that you are resting in God's love:

- You run to Him for refuge and strength instead of hiding or running from Him.
- You welcome His discipline and instruction instead of fearing His judgment.
- You view Him as a Father who knows what's best for you instead of viewing Him as a taskmaster or cruel dictator.
- You long to spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word instead of dreading your time with Him.
- You care more about what God's Word says about you than worrying over the opinions of others.
- You are confident in who God made you to be, looking to His Word for your direction instead of beating yourself up when you don't live up to other people's expectations.
- You move at the pace of Jesus in order to gain deeper connection and peace instead of moving at the pace of the world.
- You lead with love in your relationships with others instead of rushing to judgment or condemnation.

If Romans 8:39 is true that *"nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* We need to start living as children who trust in the Father's love, rest in His love, and seek ways to give His love away to the world.

"I want to be gentle with myself and with others and to remember that our life with Christ is measured not with boundary lines, right practice, or perfectly made decisions but only by the love that is experienced in the Trinity and handed out to us in abundance." -Emily P. Freeman

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

JOHN 15:1-11, JAMES 1:2-3, ROMANS 15:13

Reflection:

When you became a Christ-follower, what did you think it would be like? Has it been what you expected? Why or why not?

How do you know there is a greater joy we receive from living for Jesus?

Joy

The thing we often think when we become Christ-followers is, "now everything is going to be easy." It makes sense when you think about it. In life, we're being marketed to constantly to buy this product, start this program, join this organization, and your life will be better. This thing will make you happy; this commodity will make your life easier. Sadly the Christian faith has been marketed in much the same way. Churches and Christian organizations are "selling" or marketing the gospel and the Christian life as the "fix" to our worldly problems. For many, salvation is a gift that saves us from an unhappy, unfulfilled life and an assurance for a cozy eternity.

The motive behind "selling" the Christian faith this way comes with good intentions, but far too often creates confused and disappointed believers because if you spend more than a few months in the Christian life, you learn that life isn't suddenly easy by following Jesus. The opposite is true. The Christian life is a life of self-denial, trials, conviction, and work. Jesus Himself described the Christian life as carrying a cross or great burden (Matthew 16:24). So, what's the point?

Well, the good news that we too often miss is this: the Christian walk weeds out the pointless things we think will bring us joy (this is the work, self-denial, trial, and conviction of the Christian life) and puts its roots in what brings true joy to our lives. All of humanity has in common a desire to be happy and experience real joy. The good news for the Christ-follower is that true joy is found, multiplies, and abounds as a relationship with Jesus grows. A life with Jesus points us to what really matters; it redirects our lives to authentic relationships, and it shapes our hearts to go after what's important and to let go of the things and pursuits that aren't.

This is why Jesus speaks of the fruit of the vine that comes with pursuing a life in Him. Joy is found when we are rooted in the vine of His love and goodness. Fruit is born from the life that follows Jesus, and that fruit brings greater joy. We can rest assured that the Christian life still feels hurt, experiences struggle, and walks through trials, but despite it all, we can experience these things and the unending joy of an eternity of fellowship with Him.

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

ACTS 1:6-8, HEBREWS 4:14-16, 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-6,
2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-9, HEBREWS 13:6-8

Reflection:

Would you consider yourself a confident person? Why or why not?

Do you feel confident in your ability to share the gospel? Why or why not?

He is our Confidence

In Acts 1, Jesus is about to leave His disciples, and they ask Him if He will restore the Kingdom. This is the moment when Jesus reminds them that He is leaving power with them as He goes. Jesus is leaving them with the task of spreading the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth, the same task that is in front of us. Like us, the disciples likely felt ill equipped to do His work. Jesus is assuring them (and us) that they will not be alone in this mission. His power will live on inside of them through the Holy Spirit. This should infuse them (and us) with confidence, but it likely leaves more questions than answers.

We know our own weaknesses and that we are incapable of bringing peace and hope to the world on our own. But we often forget that we have the privilege of a personal relationship with God through Jesus. Hebrews 4 tells us that Jesus understands our weaknesses, and because of that, we should be able to boldly come to Him and ask for His help in our times of need.

The ESV Study Bible reminds us that Hebrews 4:16 means *"that Christians may come before God and speak plainly and honestly (yet still with appropriate reverence), without fear that they will incur shame or punishment by doing so. God the Father, with Jesus at his right hand, graciously dispenses help from heaven to those who need forgiveness and strength in temptation."*

We are equipped for our journey only because of what Jesus does in and through us; this is where our confidence lies. But often, we rely on our strength and gain confidence in our abilities rather than leaning on the Lord to give us confidence and strength. 1 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us that "our great power is from God, not from ourselves."

We all are battling something: insecurity, anxiety, temptations, lies, worry, just to name a few. God is offering His power and strength to us on a daily basis, but it will require us to lean into our relationship with Him and receive it. Are you tired of going it alone? Remind yourself of Hebrews 13:6, *"So we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?'"*

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 PETER 5:6-11, MATTHEW 18:1-6, 2 CHRONICLES 7:14-15

Reflection:

Reflect on where you feel prideful in your life. Does your pride come from looking down on someone in your life? Does pride come from your ability to do things? Does pride come from believing you live the Christian life better than those around you? Wherever it is, seek it out and reflect on it.

Next, take that area of pride and offer it to God in humble confession. Ask Him specifically to remove that area of pride from your life. Ask Him to humble you. Spend time reflecting on His humble sacrifice for you. Remember the humble way in which Jesus walked this earth. Ask Him to help you walk in the same way. Receive humility from God today.

Humility

So if...you have been convicted of pride in any form, of failing to humble yourself or failing to glorify God, take time now to flee to the cross. Flee immediately to the cross and receive forgiveness for this sin of pride that God hates.

Confess specifically to the One you have offended. And receive forgiveness from the Father who loves you.

Thank Him that He's given us means and ways to weaken pride and cultivate humility including confessing our sins and speaking truth to ourselves rather than listening to ourselves.

Tell Him you want to declare war on pride in your life-that you want to declare war on this active, daily tendency toward self-sufficiency, this desire to live independently of Him when in truth we're totally dependent on Him for every breath. Gladly announce and declare your dependence! Make this confession humbly and repeatedly for the rest of your life: "I'm dependent on You. I'm not self-sufficient! And I'm confident in the work of Your Son for me, and in the work of Your Spirit within me."

"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). The Lord has begun a work in our lives to weaken pride and to strengthen humility! And we want to apply all the means of grace to accelerate this sanctifying process in our hearts and lives so that we might be the ones to whom He looks, so that we might please Him.

Ultimately, there can be no effective expansion of your life's mission and ministry, no fulfillment of the specific purpose He's called you to, apart from the cultivation of humility in your heart and the weakening of pride in your life.

- Written by C.J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

JOHN 13:1-11

Reflection Notes and Questions:

This week we began to look at our first gospel practice of this study. The gospel points to beliefs we need to receive in our lives and practices we need to begin to adopt in our lives. If we believe the things we studied in part 1 of this study, we are invited to begin to put the practice of receiving from God into our lives. The things we are invited to receive from God are numerous, and this week we just scratched the surface by looking at a few of those practical things.

As we wrap up week 4 of this study, reflect on what we looked at this week that we can receive from God, think through what some of the other things are that we can receive from Him, and follow these reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › What is something we looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- › How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

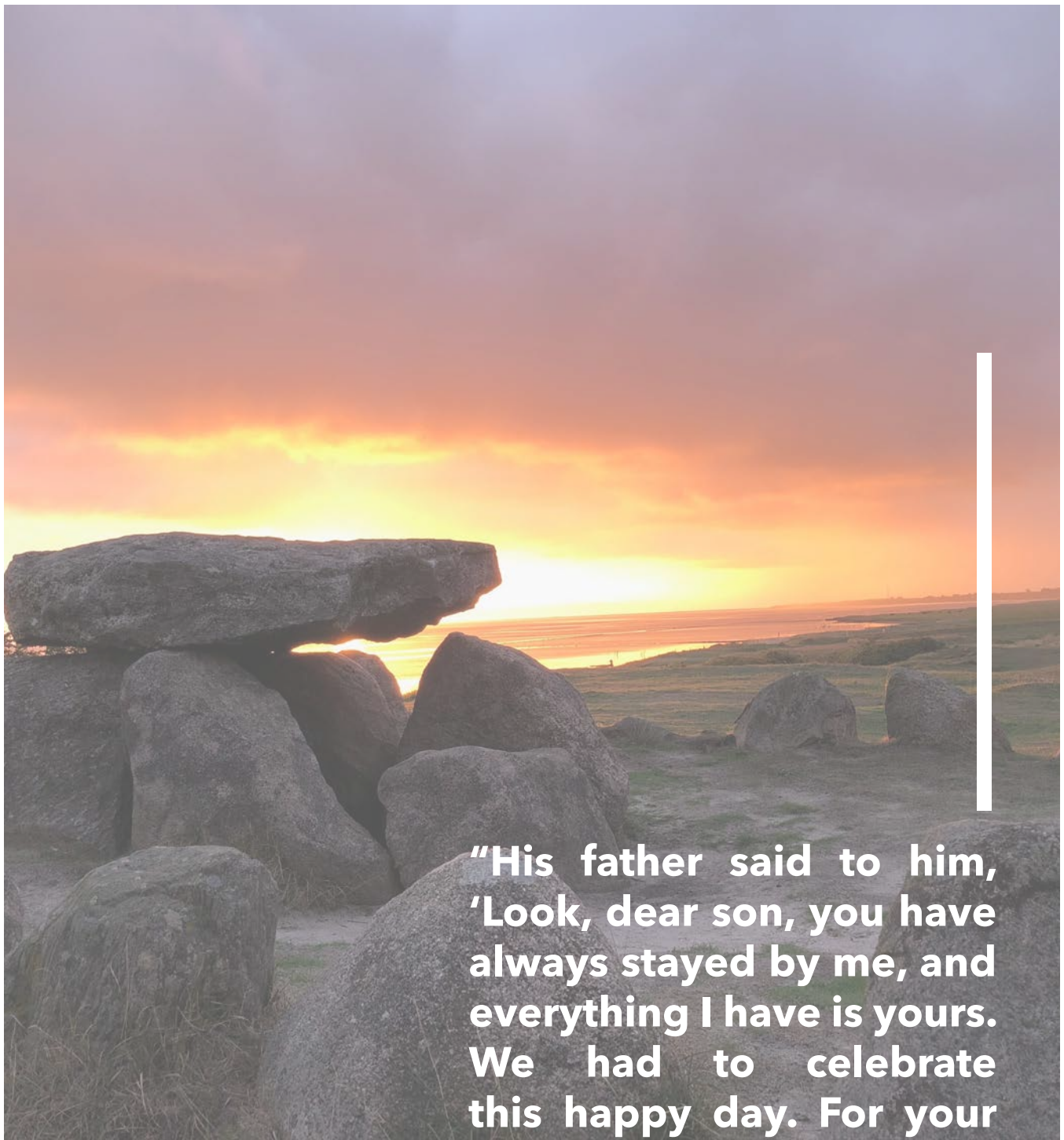
Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.



REPENTING TO GOD AND OTHERS

WEEK 5





"His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

-Luke 15:31-32

DAY 1 - MONDAY

LUKE 15:11-32, 1 JOHN 1:8-10, PSALM 32:5, PROVERBS 28:13

This week, we will focus on repentance through the lens of the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, so we will read pieces of that story each day along with other passages that go with each day's theme.

Reflection:

Pray a prayer of confession: Ask God to help you come to him honestly with a heart willing to be changed. Ask God to give you eyes to see the places where you need to confess, the places where you have missed the mark. Take some time to grieve your sin, ask for His forgiveness and ask for His power to free you from falling back into that sin.

Parable of the Lost Sons

In Luke 15, Jesus told a parable about two sons. The younger son asked for his half of the father's estate. The younger son does not want to wait for his father's death to receive his inheritance. The father granted this request and allowed the son to go off in his own way to follow his desires. Scripture says the younger son left to squander his wealth "in wild living." He thought he would find abundance in the world, but ended up hungry and poor, realizing that he missed the abundance of what he had living in His Father's house. In verses 17-18, the son realizes that in his arrogance to go his own way, he had sinned not only against his earthly father but also against his heavenly Father, God. This realization leads him to a moment of confession with the Lord, and he prepares to go back and confess his wrongs to his earthly father as well. We also see that the younger son is planning not only to confess to his father but to pay back the debt he owes. The prodigal returns home and begins his confession, but the father cuts him short before he finishes, showing that he has already forgiven him.

We see the obvious need for confession and repentance from the younger son, but there is another son in this story that is in need of confessing his sin and repenting. We often miss out on the fact that two sons in this story have lost their way. They both have barriers keeping them from the father. We often overlook the bitterness, anger, and resentment in the older brother's heart. He is fooling himself into thinking he has no sin, but 1 John 1:8 reminds us, "If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth." The older brother's pride is keeping him from confession and repentance.

Tim Keller says in his book, *The Prodigal God*:

The hearts of the two brothers were the same. Both sons resented their father's authority and sought ways to get out from under it. Each one rebelled—but one did so by being very bad and the other by being extremely good. Both were alienated from the father's heart; both were lost sons.

Keller says that one son leaned into slavishness and emptiness while the other leaned into anger and superiority, both leading them to sin and alienation from the father. Whether you relate more to the sins of the younger brother or the ones of the older brother, your first step in restoring your relationship with God is to confess and repent before Him. Don't wait; the Father is waiting with open arms.

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

LUKE 15:1-7, LUKE 15:11-20, HEBREWS 4:16, JOHN 1:16

Reflection:

What do you think it means for you to come home to Jesus?

After reading the parable of The Prodigal Son, how do you think Jesus responds when we turn to him?

Coming Home

"He came and experienced the exile that we deserved. He was expelled from the presence of the Father, he was thrust into the darkness, the uttermost despair of spiritual alienation- in our place. He took upon himself the full curse of human rebellion, cosmic homelessness, so that we could be welcomed into our true home." -Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God*

Homecomings are big celebrations. They're events centered around the return of someone. Maybe it's a group of alumni returning to an alma mater. Maybe it is the return of a family member, now a hero, from military duty. Perhaps it is a loved one who returns from a long trip. Homecomings often bring to mind feelings of joy and celebration, but a homecoming can be a hard place to get to. It can be an act plagued with guilt and shame, as seen in the prodigal son.

Coming home to the arms of Jesus can be an intimidating idea. What if we are too far gone? What if the things we have done wrong are too great for His forgiveness and mercy? What if we have sinned and sought forgiveness one too many times, and He is done with us? These are the anxious questions of one considering repentance. These questions can keep many of us from turning back and looking at the face of God.

The beautifully good news that we see in His Word is that we are never too far away from His loving grace that we can't turn back around to receive it again. John describes Jesus' never-ending mercy as "grace upon grace." He never grows tired of giving His grace and mercy to us. He never closes His arms to us. He never turns away from us (even when we consistently do so to Him). Better yet, when we turn back to Him, He draws nearer to us. The step we must make is the about-face that humbly turns from the wrong, selfish, worthless ways we have walked and return to Him. He is our home; we must be willing to turn to Him and receive our homecoming.

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

LUKE 15:20-24, ACTS 3:19-20, 2 PETER 3:8-14

Reflection:

What is the difference between confession and repentance?

Sit with the Lord today and process the forgiveness that He offers. Ask Him to reveal anything you need to confess and repent to Him.

Repenting leads to Refreshing

Seeking forgiveness from God and others begins when we admit we have missed the mark. This act of confession turns to repentance when we begin to feel genuine regret and remorse, understanding that our sin has consequences. At times, this requires us to admit that our sin has caused pain and suffering for ourselves and possibly others. Forgiveness comes when we are pardoned from that offense. This doesn't make the offense insignificant or take the consequences away; forgiveness just shows mercy to the offender.

In the Prodigal Son parable, the younger son left home with his share of the inheritance and wasted it. When he lost everything, he went home to ask his father for forgiveness. Before he reached home, his father ran out to meet him and hosted a large celebration. The father in this parable paints the picture of how much God loves us and how when we sin and ask for His forgiveness, He is quick to give it to us. He is ready to receive us and lavishly celebrates our return. This should be a marker of how we, too, are to offer forgiveness to others because it is so lavishly extended to us. Peter says in Acts 3:20..."repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away," and it goes on to say that, "times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord." When we confess and repent, God is faithful to forgive sin; He remembers it no more; it is forgotten. The fruit of the forgiveness of our sins is that "times of refreshing shall come." He offers refreshing freedom for us as He wipes away our sins. This is not a pass to continue our sinful patterns, but rather a pardon from our sin that hopefully leads us to pursue a different path—ideally, a path growing in righteousness and holiness rather than a path of continuing in sinful patterns. As 2 Peter 3 reminds us, the goal is to "make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight," but even when we fail, the Lord is patient with us.

In addition to seeking forgiveness from the Lord, there may be times that we have to go beyond just asking the Lord for forgiveness and ask others in our life for forgiveness as well. We must first confess our sins and repent to the Lord, but if we have hurt others, it is often beneficial for us to repent and ask others for forgiveness. The prayer is that others will be able to offer forgiveness as well.

"We repent in proportion to our belief in the forgiving love of Christ. We rejoice in the fullness of Jesus' absolution in proportion to our repentance of sin and our hatred of evil. You will never value pardon unless you feel repentance. You will never taste the deepest portion of repentance until you know you are pardoned. The bitterness of repentance and the sweetness of pardon blend in the flavor of every gracious life and make up an incomparable happiness. Repentance is the clearing away the rubbish of the past temple of sin; holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated." - Charles H. Spurgeon

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

LUKE 15:11-32, MICAH 6:8, EPHESIANS 4:31-32

Reflection:

Today is going to be a challenge. Today in your reflection time, think about what forgiveness means. Ask God to help you see what forgiveness truly looks like. Ask Him to help you know what it could do for your life. Tell Him why you have struggled for so long to forgive, remember His consistent presence and willingness to forgive you, and ask Him to move your heart towards reflecting Him by forgiving those around you.

Now, open your hands and heart for God to show you whom you need to forgive today. Be willing to receive that name and face and let go of that wrong. Pray for forgiveness for that person and freedom from their hurt or wrong towards you by forgiving them for what they did. Be willing to follow up with a pastor, friend, or mentor to seek greater help and guidance in doing this merciful act.

Forgiving the Wrong

Being forgiven by God is beautiful. The first half of this story of the prodigal son focuses on the beauty of seeking and receiving forgiveness. The second part of this story, though, looks at forgiving and the two different responses we can make. We look first today at the father's forgiving response and then tomorrow at the older brother's unforgiving response.

Forgiving one who has wronged you is one of the most challenging acts you will ever do, but it's one we are all called to and called to daily. We are called to be people of mercy. We are called to be people who reflect the very consistent nature of God Himself, who forgives freely. Now, we may think, "of course, but that is God; I am me. I am hurting, and forgiveness is not easy." To that, I would say you are right. Ten-fold, but part of receiving God and living for Him means that we carry the heart of mercy, graciousness, and forgiveness that He carried.

We're all carrying hurts and burdens. We're all harboring pasts filled with the wrongs of others. These past hurts, and burdens add up, weigh us down, and can inevitably lead us away from seeing God's forgiving and merciful face if we allow it. Unforgiveness can cloud our hearts so fully that we can get to the place of not receiving His grace and mercy for ourselves anymore (even though He is sitting ready to give it). As we see with the father who forgives in this story, there is freedom in forgiveness. There is a celebration in mercy. There is life in the letting go.

"When we come back to forgiveness, God is always involved there in many ways. Unforgiveness is always ultimately unforgiveness against God. When we don't forgive, we really are saying, 'God, you let me down. You handed me this situation here and just left me with it.' Also, if we forgive, it will only be because God has enabled us to do it. It will be throwing ourselves upon God. It's the only way we can forgive..." -Dallas Willard From Forgiveness to Blessing

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

LUKE 15:11-32, LUKE 15:25-32, EPHESIANS 4:30-32,
COLOSSIANS 3:12-15, LUKE 6:27-28

Reflection:

Pray the prayer at the bottom of the page as you continue to ask the Lord to reveal people that you need to show grace and forgiveness to.

When Offering Grace & Forgiveness is Hard

In the story of the Prodigal Son, we see a heart of unforgiveness in the older brother. Forgiving someone who has hurt or wronged us can be incredibly hard, especially if the person who hurt us doesn't admit wrongdoing or seems unrepentant. In those situations, it's good to remember that when we forgive, it is in order for God to free us from the prison of bitterness, resentment, and anger. Forgiving is, of course, easier said than done. Forgiveness of someone doesn't mean condoning or justifying an event or their behavior.

Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting. It also doesn't always mean opening ourselves back up to have the offender in our lives. Forgiveness is choosing to let go of the bitterness, anger, and resentment or the need for revenge—to eliminate the suffering, not the wrongdoing. The offender might not deserve our pardon, but we deserve to be at peace. We can't change the past. We can do nothing to remove the harm others might have caused. However, not forgiving damages us—we see our lives through a lens of vengeance, hostility, resentment, anger, and sadness. Forgiveness is hard and can often be a courageous choice, especially when it feels like you or someone you care for has been mistreated. But the truth is, it's good (and biblical) for us to extend forgiveness. And when we release the offense into the hands of God, we can begin to make room for healing in our hearts.

Here are three essential ideas about our words when we are struggling to forgive:

- › Speak with honor in the midst of being dishonored.
- › Speak with peace in the midst of being threatened.
- › Speak of good things amid a bad situation.

We have an enemy, but it's not each other. Truth proclaimed and lived out is a fiercely accurate weapon against evil. Lift your hurt and honest feelings to the Lord through written or verbal prayer. Here's one to get you started:

Lord, I don't know all the details entangled in this issue. But You know all. Therefore, You are the only one who can handle all. There are a lot of things my flesh is tempted to seek – fairness, my right to be right, proof of their wrongdoing, to make them see things from my vantage point – but at this point, the only thing healthy for me to seek is You. You alone. I'm going to be obedient to You and let You handle everything else. In Your Name, Amen.

Adapted from *UnInvited* by Lysa Terkeurst

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

LUKE 15:11-32

Reflection Notes and Questions:

Repentance is the act of turning around. When we repent, we turn back to God. That means we turn back to face the problems, the sin, and the mistakes we have made. Repentance is one of the hardest things for a Christian to do, but it's a gospel practice that allows us to return our eyes to our Savior, seek His forgiveness, help, and mercy, and it's a practice that begins to welcome in real change to our lives.

As we wrap up week 5 of this study, reflect on what it looks like to repent to God and others. Spend some additional time walking through what it looks like to be forgiven by God and what it needs to look like for us to forgive those around us. Follow the reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › Why is repentance such a difficult practice for us? How can you begin to foster this practice in your life?
- › One of the most challenging practices you were invited to this week was the practice of forgiving those who have wronged you. This isn't a quick practice, but it's also one we can't kick down the road and ignore. Repentance turns to face the wrongs we have experienced and done ourselves. Take time to turn to God today and seek a plan of forgiveness with Him for those who have wronged you.

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

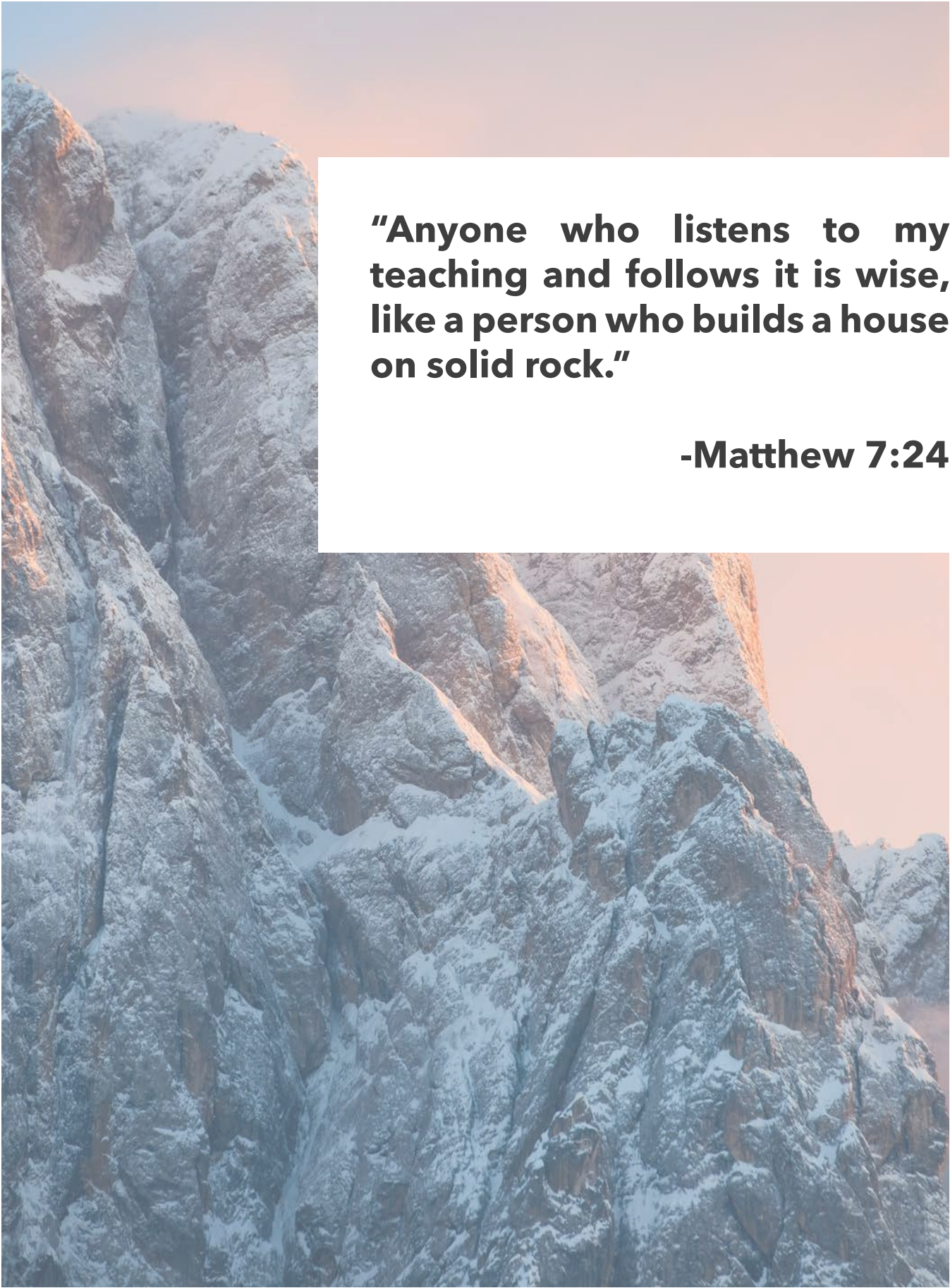
Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.



RESPONDING IN OBEDIENCE

WEEK 6





"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock."

-Matthew 7:24

DAY 1 - MONDAY

MATTHEW 7:24-29, LUKE 6:46-49

Reflection:

What do you think needs to change for you to begin walking in obedience to God?

Why do you think God cares about our obedience?

End your time today by sitting silently and reflecting on what you think your foundation in life is built on. (Is it your dreams being achieved, your family being happy and healthy, your success at work or school, your relationships and legacy?) Ask God to expose the foundation your life is being built on, and ask Him to help you to begin to replace it, piece by piece, day by day, with a foundation in Him and obedience to Him.

Foundation of Our Lives

"These two builders seem to have been equally well skilled in architecture. The one could build a house without receiving any more instruction than the other. I do not find that there was halt or pause on the part of either because he could not turn an arch, or fix a truss. Evidently they were both skilled workmen, well acquainted with their art. So is it with many here. They know as far as the theory goes what the plan of salvation is, as well as I do. Yet, where the knowledge is the same, the ultimate result may vary; two men may be equally well instructed in the Scriptures, yet one of them may be wise and the other foolish. To know what faith is, what repentance is, what a good hope in Christ is, may all be yours, and yet it may but increase your misery for ever. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. It is not the hearer, but the doer of the word, that is blessed. Knowledge puffeth up; love alone buildeth up. My dear friends, I am most earnest that those of you who are desiring to find everlasting life in Christ Jesus, may not be content with anything short of a true, deep, and real work of grace in your hearts; for no clearness of head knowledge, no natural earnestness of purpose or eagerness of desire can save you; without an interest in Christ Jesus you are lost to all eternity. "Ye must be born again;" ye must be brought into vital union with the living Saviour, or your hopefulness will end in overwhelming destruction." -Charles Spurgeon *The Two Builders and Their Houses*

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

NEHEMIAH 9, HEBREWS 12:1-15, 2 CORINTHIANS 7:1,
PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18

Reflection:

In what areas of your life do you have the most difficulty obeying God?

What steps can you take today toward obedience?

Obedient Lives

Over and over in scripture, the Israelites violated their covenant with God and the many ways He remained faithful in return. We see the people of Israel, having repented of their sins, renew their specific obligations under the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, they vow to get it right this time around. Their repentance leads to renewed obedience. Isn't that the way it should be? Is repentance without renewed obedience really repentance at all? We want some easy-to-remember formula that enables us to obey every single time. But the truth is, the gospel is not about formulas; it is simply about putting our trust in Jesus. It is about turning to Him again and again. And again.

The people of Israel are renewing their covenant with the Lord. They are doing so publicly and as a community. They are putting it in writing; they are signing on the dotted line. They are making specific, practical promises to God and his Church. Even though their history is full of disobedience and disappointment, they dare to name their offenses aloud before the Lord and pledge new obedience to Him. God's law asks more than our human brokenness can give. It did then, and it does now. And so there is Christ. There is the One who fulfills the law on our behalf. Let us renew our covenant with Him today and believe He will meet us. As a community, let us pray earnestly and with new fervor with the Psalmist:

*Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within us.
Cast us not away from your presence
and take not your Holy Spirit from us.
Restore to us the joy of your salvation,
and uphold us with a willing spirit. Amen.
(adapted from Psalm 51:10-12, ESV)*

Written by Amanda Williams, *She Reads Truth*

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

LUKE 9:18-27, TITUS 2:11-15

Reflection:

If someone were to ask you to answer the question, "who do you think you are?" What would you say? What are the things that make you who you are? What are the things that influence your life and decisions?

What do you think it means for you to begin to deny yourself, respond in obedience to God, and start looking more like Jesus?

Denial of Self

In a society that prizes individualism as much as ours does, perhaps one fear looms largest when we hear "deny yourself": the fear that we will lose ourselves. We will be deprived of everything that makes me me. Our dreams will be trashed, our desires blunted, our personality erased. We will become one more drop in a sea of endless gray.

The fear is understandable. "Deny yourself" requires, after all, self-denial. We must lay the axe to the root of every tree that bears bad fruit in us. Every sin must be slain, every part of me that does not reflect him must be renounced – and not just once, but "daily" (Luke 9:23). "See," the serpent says, "lose yourself."

To which Jesus responds, "No, find yourself – your true self." He says, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35). The kingdom of heaven holds secrets of which the devil knows nothing. Where Jesus reigns, the way up is down, the first are last, and the only way to save your life is to lose it for his sake.

The life we find on the other side of self-denial may look far different from the life we've always known. But it will not – it cannot – be worse. It is a life where we gain a hundredfold more than we ever give up (Mark 10:30). It is a life where we are no longer a broken note in the symphony of the universe, but are rather sounding the part God created us for. It is a life with Jesus: maker of all beauty, redeemer of all brokenness, fountain of all joy.

When you deny yourself, you will not lose yourself – not ultimately. You will find yourself.

- Written by Scott Hubbard, *Denying Yourself is Loving Yourself*

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

ROMANS 2:12-13, JAMES 1:19-25, EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Reflection:

How does God's Word impact your daily life?

Do you struggle to take your knowledge of Scripture and apply it to your life?

Doer of the Word

We receive salvation solely by God's grace through faith. But our faith is demonstrated by our actions. When we genuinely believe something, we act on that truth. If we believe a chair will hold us, we sit in it. The same is true with God's Word. If we believe it, we act on it. To be a doer of the Word is to put our knowledge of God and His ways into action. Being a doer of the Word is not about achieving salvation through our works. It is about abiding in Christ and fully allowing His Word to affect our lives. When we are doers of the Word and not just hearers, we experience more of the abundant life we have been given in Christ. We reflect God's glory in more profound ways to the hurting world. We better understand and appreciate God's ways and His character. Being a doer of the Word means putting into action the truths God has given us. But we cannot be doers of the Word if we don't know His Word. So we must both intentionally learn the truths of God and be faithful to apply them to our lives. We do this out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us. We shine our good deeds to proclaim the Lord's glory, not to gain His favor. We prove by how we live that we have repented of our sins and turned to God.

Taking action and being a doer of the Word can make people take notice because we are living differently; we are radiating Christ's love to the world in a noticeably different way. As we internalize God's truth, we are compelled to live those truths out and teach them to others. We should let that light shine to illuminate the way for others. Lord, let us soak in your Word, internalize Your Truth and let that influence our thoughts, words, and actions in a way that honors you. May we be faithful students of Your Word and meditate on it day and night so that it seeps into everything we do!

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

JOHN 14:15-26

Reflection:

What do you think it looks like to love obedience to God?

What would need to change for you to begin to love obedience to God?

Loving Obedience

A snowball-down-the-hill effect happens to us when we begin to practice the beliefs we've looked at in this study. When we first believe in the messages of the gospel (you can come to Christ as you are, you are forgiven, and there's real hope for change), then we begin to want to put these beliefs into practice (receive from God, repent to God and others, and respond to Him in obedience). In other words, the more we believe in Him, the more we want to reflect Him.

When we get to the place where we are so in love with Christ that it affects how we live, we start living obediently, then we will begin loving obedience. To a child, obedience sounds like chores or work that limits or takes away our joy, but to the believer who loves and has faith in the gospel beliefs, they will see obedience for what it truly is, freedom. Over the last six weeks, we have taken time to do a deep dive on gospel beliefs and practices, and what it all comes down to is answering the question: am I willing to believe these truths so profoundly that it changes how I live and respond? Am I willing to obey Him and His call for my life? This is the gospel at work within us if we're willing to lovingly obey the message.

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

MATTHEW 7:24-29

Reflection Notes and Questions:

This week we spent time studying the final gospel practice of this Grace in the Word study. The final practice is all-encompassing towards everything we've looked at in this study. We looked this week at responding to God in obedience. If what we've discussed in this study is true, if we believe it and put it into practice, then we are responding to Him in obedience. The life that fully believes and receives the Lord is one that is changed, that lives obediently to Him.

As we wrap up week 6 of this study, reflect on what responding to Christ in obedience looks like. Seek to understand and live a new life for Him in obedience. Follow the reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › What do you feel that God has been calling you to respond in obedience to Him? What would it look like for you to begin to respond in obedience to Him in that thing?
- › End your time with this study by spending an extended time alone with God. Get away from family, work, and busyness, and sit quietly with the Lord. Seek Him and invite truth into your heart. Ask Christ to help you believe what you've learned in this study so fully that it impacts, influences, and changes how you live. Ask Him to help you put these beliefs you have about Him into practice.

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

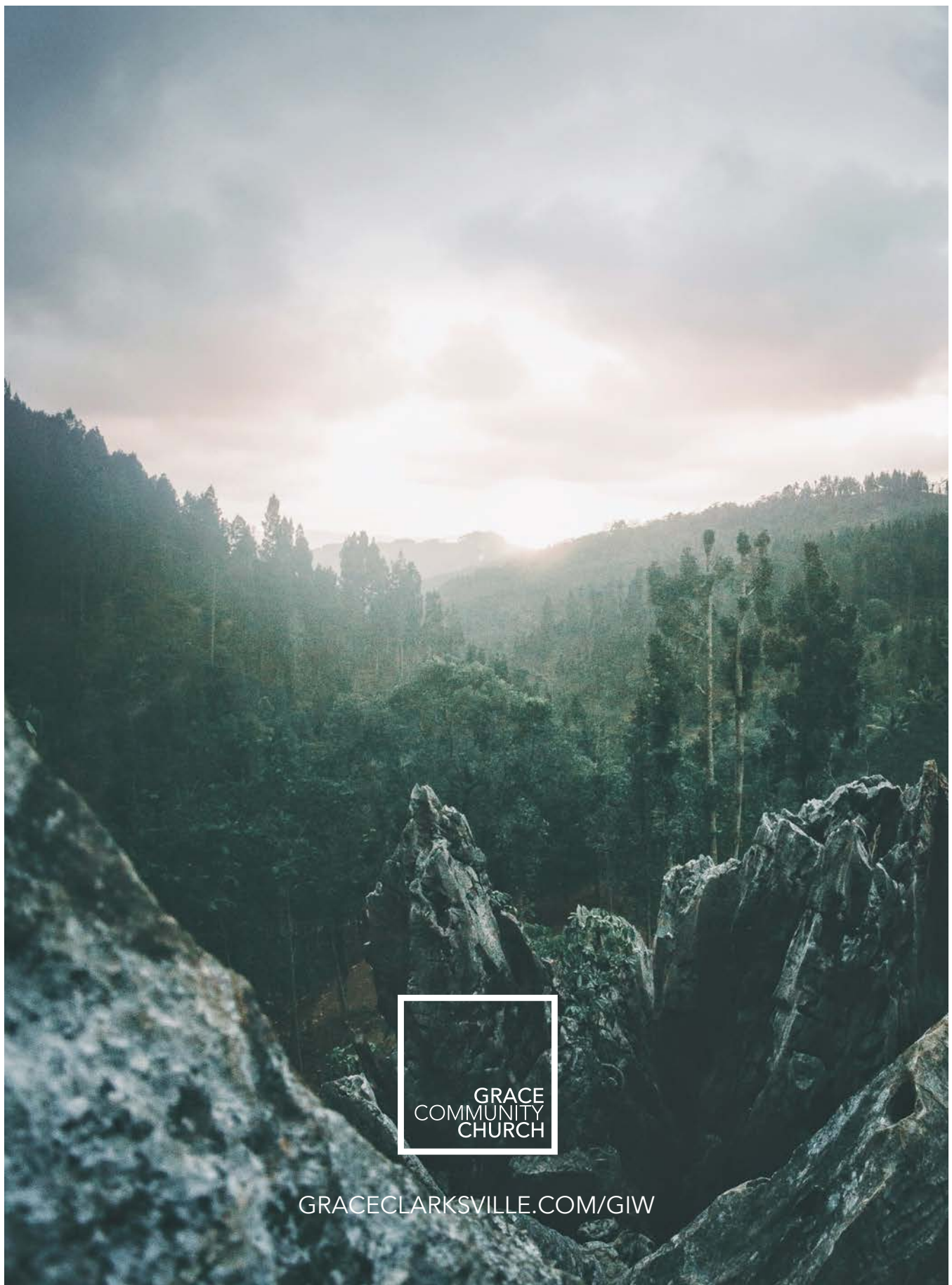
Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOW WHAT?

Friends, we have been on a journey for the last six weeks. Soaking in the Gospel truths that we can "Come As We Are"...tired, weary, sinful, broken-hearted...and He will meet us there. We discovered that we are truly forgiven. We are promised if we put our trust in Jesus that our slate was wiped clean on the cross. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we have real hope for change as He can transform us from the inside out. So how do we move forward knowing these truths? We open our hands to receive from the Lord. We reflect daily on how we miss the mark and diligently confess, repent, and return to following Him. We look to be doers of the Word, not just hearers, to shine a light in a dark world and point others toward Jesus. We hope that this time daily in God's Word has spurred you to continue to study His Word and internalize His Truth. Let's be a church and a people that are practicing the Way of Jesus in order to become more like Him in our homes, in our community and in our world. Praying for you as you seek His face and spread His light to all you meet.

-Christy Crosby



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