

# ***DIRECTION***<sup>®</sup>

**THE BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR ADULTS**



***Confident***  
**HOPE**



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# **DIRECTION**<sup>®</sup>

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## Quarter At-A-Glance

### June 2021

# Confident Hope

The study this quarter looks at God's gift of faith as the source of hope. Sessions from the Gospels illuminate hope and faith in teachings and miracles of Jesus. Sessions from the Epistles show how the early church understood God's gift of salvation through faith in Christ as the source of hope.

#### **UNIT 1 • Jesus Teaches about Faith**

This unit has five sessions. They reveal the hope and faith that come through Jesus' teachings and miracles. The sessions from Matthew demonstrate that faith in God is the primary source of hope and confidence. The miracles in Mark and Luke illustrate the power of faith.

#### **UNIT 2 • Faith and Salvation**

This unit has four sessions. They explore in Paul's Letter to the Romans his understanding of the hope of salvation through faith. The letter teaches that God's righteousness is revealed in those who live by faith. Paul illustrates faith through the example of Abraham. He unpacks the teaching about being reconciled to God by justification through faith and teaches that salvation is for all.

#### **UNIT 3 • Faith Gives Us Hope**

This unit has four sessions. They focus on faith as essential for the hope of eternal life. Hebrews defines faith in Christ as a basis for hope and tells how faith in Christ gives hope that helps people persevere in all circumstances. 1 John promises that faith conquers the world. 2 Corinthians teaches about hope in God's gift of eternal life.



# Why Do You Worry?

**Bible Background • MATTHEW 6:19–34**

**Printed Text • MATTHEW 6:25–34 | Devotional Reading • EZEKIEL 34:11–16**

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## Aim for Change

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By the end of this lesson, we will CONTRAST Jesus' teachings about worry with our own anxieties, APPRECIATE God's care for everything in nature, and EMBRACE the opportunity to trust God in everyday life.

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## In Focus

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Pastor Ricky closed out his sermon about worry. "Job worries, financial problems, health concerns, family issues ... each one of these problems is out of our control to some degree. The only thing that is under our control is our response to these difficult issues when they come into our lives."

Then, he passed out blank envelopes and sheets of paper to his congregation. Each person in the church that morning was instructed to list all the things that were troubling them, no matter how big or small. They were then instructed to place the list in the envelopes and to address the envelopes to themselves.

"During the final song, I encourage each one of you to bring those worries you just wrote down to the altar and lay them down. We'll let Jesus take care of them for a while and then we'll see how we feel about those same issues."

One month later, the pastor mailed the envelopes out to his congregation. With few exceptions, most of the congregation saw their month-old concerns in a whole new light. Though some troubles were ongoing in the people's lives, the majority of the worries that seemed so enormous at the time had diminished drastically in urgency and intensity. Bills had gotten paid, arguments had been resolved, problems at work had changed, and health problems had been healed. This simple experiment taught the congregation a lesson about the nature of worry that none of them would soon forget.

*What has helped you keep God's eternal perspective on worry in mind?*

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## Keep in Mind

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"(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:32-33, KJV).



## Focal Verses

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**KJV** **Matthew 6:25** Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

**26** Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

**27** Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

**28** And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

**29** And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

**30** Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

**31** Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

**32** (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

**33** But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

**34** Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

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### The People, Places, and Times

**Grass.** During biblical times, fuel was scarce. Withered plants of all kinds were used for fuel. The term in verse 30 that is translated “grass” actually includes all sorts of vegetation not classified as trees, including the beautiful lilies mentioned in verses 28-29. Even the magnificent plants that displayed God’s care in creation ended up as fuel to be used by the people that He valued and loved.

**Wealth.** Wealth is a blessing from God. Deuteronomy is full of promises of the Promised Land bringing with it fields, vineyards, cattle, and good harvests that meant economic prosperity to the Israelites. Paul speaks of monetary donations from the Corinthian church to the poor in Jerusalem as a “grace” or “mercy” (Gk. *charis*, 2 Corinthians 8-9). However, the Bible also recognizes that material wealth brings with it great dangers. For example, there is the danger of failing to acknowledge that God is the source of the

blessing (Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Hosea 2:8). Another spiritual danger associated with riches is materialism; that is, envying and greedily hoarding the things money can buy.

### Background

Jesus always used illustrations in His sermon that His listeners could understand. For instance, those who heard this message knew of the wealth of Solomon and could probably visualize how beautifully he was clothed in the richest cloth with elaborate ornamentation. Jesus also used objects that were right in front of Him. As He sat upon the mountain, He spoke of the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:29) and the birds that flew overhead (v. 26) and told the people that they were much more important to God than these creatures. Therefore, to fully understand God’s Word, we have to dig a little to discover the setting and ideas of the people of the time in which the Scripture was written. We can also look for contemporary



illustrations to help listeners understand what God is saying today.

*How does the setting of today's passage on a hillside in Galilee affect our understanding of the text? What would be a similar setting in modern-day?*

## At-A-Glance

1. Earthly Examples (Matthew 6:25-30)
2. Anxiety's Antidote (vv. 31-34)

## In Depth

### 1. Earthly Examples (Matthew 6:25-30)

Don't worry about the necessities of food and clothes, Jesus counsels because your heavenly Father knows you have these needs. To have excessive concern reflects a lack of trust in an all-wise and loving heavenly Father. What can you change by worrying, Jesus asks. If you cannot add a single hour to your life span, something only God controls, why worry about food and clothes? He will supply these needs just as He supplies life itself.

Jesus provides several reasons and illustrations to support His counsel. First, we must trust God because we cannot do these things ourselves (v. 27). Going into specifics, Jesus secondly reminds us of God's past and present performances. If you doubt God's ability to take care of His creatures, you need only look at what He has done, is doing, and promises to continue doing (v. 26). Third, Jesus reminds us that God can provide better than we can. The flowers do not work or weave their own garments, yet they are more beautifully gowned than the wealthiest king that Israel had ever known (v. 29). Finally, we are reminded that we are worth a lot to God (v. 26, 30). We need only turn to Calvary and see the expression of His love and concern there (Romans 8:32). Christ

assures His audience that God cares for all His children. Our faith in Him is well-placed, giving us confidence in our future.

*Why do we worry so often about things we cannot alter?*

### 2. Anxiety's Antidote (vv. 31-34)

The phrase "Take no thought" (vv. 31, 34) does not mean that believers are to wait passively on God's provision. It also does not mean that we should not carefully and prayerfully plan for our futures. It means that all of our efforts and planning should be made in confidence. Believers should be assured that God knows exactly what we need and that He will provide for those needs.

In verse 31, Jesus delivers the punch line: If God takes such good care of His simplest creations, then He can be trusted to take care of our needs. Anxiety robs us of our ability to trust God's care for us. Worry leaves us hopeless and fearful. Confidence in God to meet our day-to-day needs, however, frees us to concentrate on those things which are pleasing to Him: God's kingdom and righteousness. The idea is a constant mental preeminence of God's kingdom. We are to always be putting God's kingdom first and other things in proper perspective. When we do this, we have the assurance that the things necessary for survival and comfort will be given to us.

He promises that if we give the Kingdom first place, all our other needs will be met. Our problem is that we do not believe that. Our lack of confident trust in our heavenly Father causes us to hesitate. Only when we begin to take Christ's promise seriously will we begin to experience the joy that comes from confident trust in Him.

*What is one area of your life that you worry about? How would seeking God's Kingdom first help alleviate that worry?*



## Search the Scriptures

1. What do we learn from nature about the goodness of God? (Matthew 6:26-29)
2. In what way should we not be like unbelievers? (v. 32)
3. What is Jesus' instruction about tomorrow? (v. 34)

## Discuss the Meaning

1. What makes you more valuable than the flowers or the birds?
2. Should someone trust Christ just so their physical needs will be met?
3. What does it mean and look like, in practical terms, to seek God first? (v. 33)

## Liberating Lesson

We live in a very materialistic culture. It is very easy to get locked into the lie that who you are equals the pile of stuff you can accumulate. Those who do not have the ability to contribute financially (the elderly, the ill, the disabled, the unwanted unborn) are assigned a lesser value than those who have big earning power. God, on the other hand, values every person and is not at all impressed by our material possessions.

By learning to seek His kingdom first, you declare to the world around you that you serve a radically different King. Desiring Him above all else will help set everything else in proper, eternal perspective. It has the added bonus of subduing worry, which can also be a powerful statement to the world around you that your King is completely trustworthy.

## Application for Activation

In this passage, Christ does not condemn material possessions. He simply warns us of the peril we face when our search for things gets ahead of Him (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17). He reminds us that His Father is available to provide all our needs when we learn to trust Him. May each of

us take a hard look at ourselves and our lifestyle. Are we really placing the interests of Christ and His kingdom first? Are we developing that confident trust in our Father that was so characteristic of Christ? There's no better time to start than now!

You might want to try the experiment discussed in the In Focus section, either as individuals or as a group. Make a list of everything that is worrying you today, date it, and place it in an envelope not to be opened for a month. While you are listing your concerns, pray about each one. When you open your envelope a month from now, you will have a fresh perspective (and answered prayer) about today's problems. You can trust God—You are of great value to Him!

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2002. 1755.

Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger and William White Jr. *Vine's Expository Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996. 562-63.

## Say It Correctly

Rhetorical. Ruh-TOR-ih-cul.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Worried? Seek God's Counsel  
(1 Samuel 9:5-10)

### TUESDAY

God Cares for His People  
(Ezekiel 34:11-16)

### WEDNESDAY

Rich? Set Your Hope on God  
(1 Timothy 6:17-19)

### THURSDAY

Enlarge Your Faith Practices  
(Matthew 17:14-20)

### FRIDAY

Overcome Worry through Faith  
(Luke 12:22-34)

### SATURDAY

Serve God with Your Whole Heart  
(Matthew 6:19-24)

### SUNDAY

Live Worry-Free Every Day  
(Matthew 6:25-34)

## Notes

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# Why Are You Afraid?

**Bible Background • MATTHEW 8:23–27; MARK 4:35–41; LUKE 8:22–25**  
**Printed Text • MATTHEW 8:23–27 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 107:23–32**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will CONSIDER the feelings of the disciples when a storm overtook their boat while Jesus was asleep, IDENTIFY the crises that cause adults to worry about themselves and their families, and RESPOND to the promised presence of Jesus in bad times as well as good times.

## In Focus

Shala had gone through a lot in her life: she had lived through a dysfunctional family, mental and physical abuse, and depression. Yet, she found God at an early age and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She and her husband Bill tried to obey God in every way. Shala had known pain and suffering throughout her life, but it was nothing compared to the pain and suffering she experienced when her daughter Joan rebelled against God.

Joan had grown up in church, been taught about Jesus and His principles, and watched her parents live out those principles daily in their own lives. She said she had given her heart to God as well. However, when Shala was diagnosed with breast cancer soon after her daughter's fourteenth birthday, Joan turned her back on God and her rebellion lasted for over ten years.

Shala could not understand why these things happened. She felt that she and her husband had trained their daughter in the nurture and admonition of God. However, the child still rebelled! Shala and Bill were rocked almost as much as Joan, but through it all, Shala and her husband learned to trust in God. They dug their spiritual roots deep into God through prayer, praise, and reading His Holy Word.

*What has been your greatest fear in life? How have you brought the issue to God? How has God helped you in it?*

## Keep in Mind

“And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (Matthew 8:26, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Matthew 8:23** And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

**24** And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

**25** And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

**26** And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

**27** But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

### The People, Places, and Times

**Chaotic Seas.** In the Jewish mind, the sea represents chaos and mystery and therefore offers many opportunities to showcase the awesome power of God. He does what He wants with the raging sea, showing that He is sovereign over all creation. This can be seen from the very first lines of Scripture (Genesis 1:2). One of the greatest miracles recorded in the Bible is Israel's crossing of the Red Sea. Jesus displays His divine power over the chaotic seas multiple times, when He calms the storm, and when He walks on the water. The one who divided the waters and the seas from the dry land can also stop them from overwhelming us when they threaten our lives. The water is not sovereign; God is.

**Matthew.** Matthew, originally named Levi, was a Jewish tax collector who became one of Jesus' Twelve disciples. Matthew responded to Jesus' call and followed Him (Mark 2:14). When Jesus went to Matthew's home, Matthew held a banquet and invited other tax collectors and people who needed to meet and follow Jesus. Using his skills at record-keeping and attention to detail, Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience about the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy which validated Jesus as the Messiah, the everlasting King. The themes in the Gospel of Matthew include: Jesus Christ, the King; the fulfilled prophecy of the Messiah; the kingdom of God; and Jesus' teachings.

### Background

To show His power and authority over everything that He has created, the Lord will sometimes personally intervene and override the laws of nature. These miracles most often occur as a result of prayer when God's people call out for help or deliverance. Scripture provides many examples of these kinds of miracles. One such miracle is God personally feeding the Israelites bread from heaven during their extended journey in the wilderness (Exodus 16:4). Another is when God slowed the rotation of the earth, allowing Joshua more time to completely defeat his enemies (Joshua 10:12-14). When calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus personally overrode nature at the request of His disciples.

### At-A-Glance

1. The Peaceful Savior  
(Matthew 8:23-24)
2. The Panicked Sailors (vv. 25-27)

### In Depth

#### 1. The Peaceful Savior (Matthew 8:23-24)

The Sea of Galilee is really a small freshwater lake about 600 feet below sea level, about



six miles wide and eight miles long. High mountains surround the lake on three sides. The Jordan River flows from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea (about 1300 feet below sea level). The mountains around the lake and the downward flow of the Jordan create a natural funnel. When winds blow down from the mountains through this funnel, they often produce sudden, violent storms. It was in just such a storm that Jesus first demonstrated His power over the elements.

Jesus had been healing many people in the area of Capernaum: the centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, and many others with demons and sicknesses. Jesus wished to leave the crowds behind for a while. After warning some early followers about the cost of being His disciple, the small fishing boat set sail for the opposite shore carrying Jesus and faithful disciples. The eastern shore was much less populated, so Jesus and His disciples would be able to rest and refresh themselves.

As the boat made its way across the lake, Jesus gave in to His weariness. He made His way to the back of the boat, stretched out on a cushion on the steersman's seat, and dropped off into a deep, peaceful slumber. Our Lord's fatigue reminds us that He had the same physical needs and limitations as we have.

*How is Jesus able to sleep, even while a storm is raging?*

## 2. The Panicked Sailors (vv. 25–27)

Several men in the boat with Jesus that day were seasoned fishermen. They had probably experienced these storms firsthand and knew what to do when the sea turned ugly. But this storm was something they could not face.

A violent wind swept down toward the lake. Huge waves swamped the boat and the men know their lives were in danger (Luke 8:23). They cannot save themselves. In desperation they turn to Jesus: "Lord, save us! We're going

to drown!" (Matthew 8:25, NLT). The second they called on Jesus, He immediately stopped the wind. He taught them a lesson in faith and called them to examine themselves.

Jesus awakes from His slumber and scolds the fearful disciples. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (v. 26). Even early in His ministry, the disciples are beginning to suspect who Jesus truly, fully is. The disciples personally witnessed Jesus perform many miracles, but when the going got tough, they panicked. Jesus rose from the place and spoke to the storm. Immediately, tranquility reigned over the water.

Many are the storms of life that burden our souls; some of them, like the storm, may threaten to overwhelm us. But when problems and trials seem to overwhelm us, we should know that we are not alone. When the storms of life are raging, we can take heart in the fact that Jesus is with us in our situation.

*Why do we wait until we run out of options before we call on the Lord?*

## Search the Scriptures

1. What was Jesus doing while the disciples were fighting to keep the boat afloat in the windstorm? (Matthew 8:24)
2. What did the disciples do when faced with a situation beyond their control? (v. 25)
3. What question did the disciples ask about Jesus after He had rebuked the storm? (v. 27)

## Discuss the Meaning

Most believers have experienced God working in their lives during past trials and times of anxiety. Yet, usually when we meet with new difficulty, we tend to give in to fear and often try to handle the situation ourselves. Do you think that Jesus would rebuke us as He did the frightened disciples? When is the last time you were rebuked by the Holy Spirit?

### Liberating Lesson

Most people have to experience the fear of thinking they have no way out of a problem. Perhaps you have even become discouraged, feeling overwhelmed by a storm of life. Bad experiences may cause us to believe that no one cares about our problems. We seek assurance when facing these battles. While believers are not exempted from experiencing life's storms, we can trust in God's timing, recognizing His sovereign power over our lives and our world. Even though God might not answer at the immediate sign of trouble in our lives, we can find assurance in knowing that God cares about the issues causing us anxiety and will respond to our earnest pleas for help. When He does move, just watch how God's power is swift to restore order and calm to our lives!

### Application for Activation

Make a list of the things in your life that cause you to worry. Then make a second list of things you need the Lord to provide for you. Be careful to list only your needs, not your desires. For the next month, set aside one day each week to pray and fast for these things. At the end of the month check off the prayers the Lord has answered. Be prepared to share your testimony with the class.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Chaotic. kay-**OH**-tick.

Capernaum. cay-**PUR**-nay-um.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Do Not Fear the Storm

(Mark 4:35-41)

### TUESDAY

Do Not Fear Persecution

(Matthew 24:9-14)

### WEDNESDAY

No Separation from God's Love

(Romans 8:31-39)

### THURSDAY

I Have Overcome the World

(John 16:25-33)

### FRIDAY

Choose to Follow Me Now!

(Matthew 8:18-22)

### SATURDAY

Jesus Delivers the Demon-Possessed

(Matthew 8:28-34)

### SUNDAY

Jesus Stills the Stormy Seas

(Matthew 8:23-27)

## Notes

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# Healed by Faith

**Bible Background • MATTHEW 9:18–26; MARK 5:21–43; LUKE 8:40–56**  
**Printed Text • MATTHEW 9:18–26 | Devotional Reading • PROVERBS 3:1–8**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXAMINE the nature of the faith involved in the healings of the woman and the girl in this passage, SENSE the power of God to bring life and healing to our loved ones, and REJOICE in the healing power of God as manifested in our own lives.

## In Focus

Even after Pastor James retired from the pulpit, he felt called to minister to people in need. He volunteered for the prayer line at a local TV station. While answering the phones, he received a call from a young woman by the name of Sandra who was contemplating suicide. Sandra told the pastor about her past abusive relationships and how she consistently failed at everything she attempted. She didn't see any reason to keep going in this world.

Pastor James listened and was overwhelmed with compassion for Sandra and wept for her as he began to pray. He decided to personally follow up on Sandra by phoning her. He received no answer and grew concerned. He prayed much harder.

On his fourth try, Sandra answered. She told the pastor she was very depressed and wanted to commit suicide. She also mentioned she had told God, "If you are real, have someone call and pray for me."

"That's just what God laid on my heart to do," Pastor James said. Because of his compassion, Pastor James was able to bring Sandra to a decision for Christ.

*Jesus always responds to those who are desperate, who confess their hopelessness and helplessness. How do you communicate your hopelessness? How do you respond when people share their hopelessness with you?*

## Keep in Mind

"But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour"  
 (Matthew 9:22, KJV).



## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Matthew 9:18** While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

**19** And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

**20** And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

**21** For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

**22** But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort;

thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

**23** And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

**24** He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

**25** But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

**26** And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

### The People, Places, and Times

**Jairus.** Coming to Jesus on behalf of his beloved daughter, Jairus oversaw the administration of the synagogue at Capernaum. This was an elected position and a powerful one. Jairus was a devout Jew and leader. He was the father of a 12-year-old daughter whom he loved deeply. Jairus showed strong courage by going to Jesus, who was hated by the religious elders. However, because of his deep love for his daughter and his belief in Jesus, he approached Christ with humility, worship, and faith.

### Background

Matthew writes a cluster of miracle narratives, one healing narrative inside the framework of another. First, there is the desperate cry of a synagogue ruler for the life of his daughter. Next, there is the hopelessness of a woman with a 12-year bleeding disorder. Both stories tell of desperation, and each one can stand independent from the others. These narratives demonstrate the authority, power, and compassion of Jesus. His fame had spread throughout the region, and thousands of people were following Him because everywhere He

went He cured every disease and sickness (Matthew 9:35).

Today there are many reasons people follow Jesus. Maybe it is what their friends are doing, or maybe they simply want to receive a blessing. The scribes and Pharisees (religious rulers), however, followed Jesus to test the validity of His being the Son of David, the Messiah. Jesus was their king but they would not acknowledge Him. They were trying to discredit Him and find a reason to put Him to death. The Pharisees went so far as to say He casts demons out of people by the power of the ruler of demons (v. 34). But the people were saying, "It was never so seen in Israel" (v. 33). Jesus is moved to deep compassion by what He sees people confused, leaderless, scattered, and dying in their sins!

## At-A-Glance

1. Compassion for the Hopeless (Matthew 9:18–19)
2. Compassion for the Helpless (vv. 20–22)
3. Compassion for Healing (vv. 23–26)

## In Depth

### 1. Compassion for the Hopeless (Matthew 9:18–19)

Jairus, a leader from the synagogue, interrupts Jesus as He speaks to John the Baptist's disciples. Jairus falls down before Jesus and makes a desperate request for Him to raise his 12-year-old daughter from the dead. The father says, "But if you will come and lay your hands upon her, she shall live" (vv. 18–19). This is also the only reference in the book of Matthew regarding the laying on of hands. We see Jesus and His disciples immediately got up to follow Jairus (v. 19). God immediately responds to genuine faith because He desires that we should trust and depend on Him. Being interrupted and delayed by the ailing woman could have easily discouraged Jairus. Although the worst had happened, the Son of God has authority over death and the power to restore life. Jesus is touched by the faith Jairus displays.

Jesus knows what is best for us, and we must trust Him to touch our needs. Jairus is an example of how our leaders should approach Christ: in humility, worship, and faith. Most of us have experienced loved ones dying, so we can understand the desperation Jairus felt.

*In times of hopelessness, do we ask Jesus for His touch?*

### 2. Compassion for the Helpless (vv. 20–22)

A woman with a chronic bleeding problem touches Jesus' clothing and is healed by her faith in Him (vv. 20–22). Matthew uses the phrase "And, behold," to interrupt the story about the dead girl to introduce the hemorrhaging woman. She was considered to be unclean, contaminated, and unworthy. According to the Mosaic law, she was to be cut off from the Jewish community and ostracized. The woman was desperate and unable to help herself. But she purposed in her heart that if she could just touch the hem, the fringe, the tassel of Jesus'

garment, He would never know and she would be healed.

Desperation and faith stir Jesus to compassion, for He who knows all can help all! This poor woman had been cut off from society and family according to Jewish tradition. Jesus turned and saw her, for her faith had touched Him (Mark 5:32). Faith will never go unnoticed or ignored by Christ. Pointedly, Jesus commends this woman's faith and calls her "daughter," even as He makes His way to heal Jairus' daughter. To God, we are each His daughter or His son, each dearly loved, and always welcome in His presence with any of our many needs.

*What do we need for Jesus to touch for us? Cancer? Depression?*

### 3. Compassion for Healing (vv. 23–26)

By the time Jesus arrives at Jairus' house, the girl's funeral has begun. The musicians (v. 29) were a Gentile custom. They would play melancholy tunes to stir up the grief and mourning of those in attendance. Jesus sends away all the noisemakers, keeping only those who have faith that Christ can perform this miracle. Despite the hopelessness of the crowds, Jairus' faith called Jesus to his daughter's deathbed, and that simple, yet bold, the request is enough to change the outcome. As Jairus asked, Jesus lays hands on his daughter, and she lives!

Jesus' acts of healing and resurrection were not just personal but restored the woman and the girl to the whole community. Indeed, word of the girl's resurrection goes out to the entire region. When we act on faith and receive God's blessing, it builds the faith of everyone in our community who witnesses our blessing.

*How has an act of faith in your community made surprisingly wide ripple effects?*

## Search the Scriptures

1. What did the Jewish leader ask of Jesus? (Matthew 9:18)



2. The mourners reacted to Jesus with scorn. How did Jesus respond? (v. 25)

### Discuss the Meaning

1. Jesus' compassion is seen in His response to the Jewish leader and the hemorrhaging woman. How should we respond to Jesus and His commands knowing He is full of compassion?

2. What should the role of faith be in today's medical practice?

### Liberating Lesson

Many people in our society are hopeless, helpless, and desperate. Some are drug addicts, prostitutes, alcoholics, and some are just homeless. Many believers avoid these people and have a difficult time ministering to them, because of fear and lack of willingness to be compassionate. How do you think Jesus feels about this avoidance? Where would we be if God had not shown us His mercy? How could you, your Bible study group, or your church show radical compassion like Jesus did?

### Application for Activation

Almost every family is directly or indirectly touched by some form of substance abuse. Many organizations, such as hospitals, halfway houses, and soup kitchens, need volunteers. Right in our neighborhoods and communities, we can make a difference. This week make a special effort to show your faith that God can heal these people. Observe and study people and allow God to demonstrate His mercy through you for their physical and/or spiritual needs.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Jairus. **JEYE**-russ.  
Melancholy. **MELL**-an-**KOLL**-ee.  
Hemorrhage. **HIM**-ridge.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Fringe, Aid to Remember  
God's Commandments  
(Numbers 15:37-41)

### TUESDAY

Disciples and Family Witness  
Girl's Healing  
(Luke 8:40-42, 49-56)

### WEDNESDAY

Woman Testifies to Jesus' Healing Touch  
(Luke 8:42-48)

### THURSDAY

Jesus Opens Eyes of the Blind Man  
(Matthew 9:27-31)

### FRIDAY

Jesus Restores Speech to Mute Man  
(Matthew 9:32-34)

### SATURDAY

Join the Lord's Harvest Today  
(Matthew 9:35-10:1)

### SUNDAY

Faith in God Heals Many Ills  
(Matthew 9:18-26)

## Notes

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# Why Do You Doubt?

**Bible Background • MATTHEW 14:22–33**

**Printed Text • MATTHEW 14:22–33 | Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 38:16–20**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will RECALL the amazing story of the storm at sea followed by Jesus' appearance walking on the water, REPENT of failing to trust in God when caught up in a crisis, and DEVELOP habits of trust that enable us to overcome our doubt about God's care.

## In Focus

Two years had passed and Warren was finally able to find a full-time job that fit his training. He took a job that called for a considerable pay cut. So his family could simply stay afloat, he and his wife Angela had to downsize their lifestyle, which included significant cuts in giving. Warren became more and more frustrated and even angry with God.

A visiting preacher at their church brought a powerful word that encouraged them to trust God for their provision. Warren cried out to the Lord and asked for God's intervention. He knew that this current job was not paying the bills, but he decided to work as hard as he could, expecting God to provide for his family's needs.

In the following weeks, Warren and Angela began to receive several unexpected blessings. One night, they were both too weary to make dinner, but then a neighbor came over to offer them the overflow from a casserole. A friend got back in touch with Angela and returned a loan she had given. But then the biggest blessing came.

While at work, Warren gave excellent service to a frazzled customer. It turned out that the customer was the head of human resources at a company that was expanding. He loved Warren's personality and pursuit of excellence, and he gave Warren his card. Within two weeks, Warren had a job that paid more than his previous job. As he walked into his new workplace, he heard in his spirit, "Why did you doubt My ability to bless you?"

*How many times do we doubt the Lord's ability to do the impossible in our lives?*

## Keep in Mind

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Matthew 14:22** And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

**23** And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

**24** But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

**25** And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

**26** And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

**27** But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

**28** And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

**29** And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

**30** But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

**31** And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

**32** And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

**33** Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Sea of Galilee.** Although not explicit in Matthew's account, it is more clear in Mark's Gospel (6:45–53) that Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee, located north of Jerusalem. Scholars estimate that Jesus did many of His most notable miracles, at least eighteen, in and around the communities bordering this body of water.

**The Apostle Peter.** Peter and his brother Andrew were the first disciples Jesus called (Mark 1:16–17). He was known for his impulsive nature and forceful personality, as well as his special relationship with Jesus. Jesus Himself changed his name from Simon to Peter (or Cephas), which means “rock” (Matthew 16:18). Although Peter denied Jesus three times before Jesus' crucifixion, after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter was the first to preach to the crowds. He ultimately became one of the Gospel's most passionate and tireless ambassadors, suffering

persecution, beatings, and imprisonment until he was martyred around AD 67.

*What traits of Peter's faith during his time learning from Jesus are admirable? Which needed further growth?*

## Background

In the preceding verses, Jesus dealt with the devastating news of the imprisonment and execution of His cousin John the Baptist at the hands of Herod the tetrarch (Matthew 14:1–13). He sought to get away from the crowd and retreated by Himself to a remote place to rest. However, crowds of people from surrounding towns began to seek after Jesus. As the evening set in, the disciples sought to send the people on their way to fend for themselves for dinner, but Jesus objected.

He ordered His disciples to give the people something to eat. The disciples were perplexed at Jesus' command, but it was all a setup for a display of His unquestionable power



and convincing proof of His ability to defy natural law. With five loaves and two fishes, Jesus blessed His Father and turned little into overflow, feeding five thousand men, not including women and children (Matthew 14:13–21). After this, Jesus sent the disciples away by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee while He recharged in prayer.

## At-A-Glance

1. Jesus Replenishes His Power  
(Matthew 14:22–23)
2. Jesus Defies the Laws of Nature  
(vv. 24–27)
3. Jesus Calls Peter to Step Out  
(vv. 28–29)
4. Jesus' Power Declared (vv. 30–33)

## In Depth

### 1. Jesus Replenishes His Power (Matthew 14:22–23)

Jesus, after His exhausting time of ministry and meeting the spiritual and natural needs of the people, again seeks to commune alone with His Father in prayer. Jesus sends the disciples ahead of Him by boat while dismissing the crowds that gathered to see Him.

He sought to be alone with His Father to recharge and regroup. In this scene, we see the humanity of Jesus and the dependency that He had on the Father and the Holy Spirit in His daily life and ministry. Through Jesus, we have a model for how we should carve out time away from the busyness of life to steal away with the Father. In His presence we are refreshed, renewed, and empowered to continue on with His purpose. It sets the perfect stage for the next scene, in which we see the perfect exhibition of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

### 2. Jesus Defies the Laws of Nature (vv. 24–27)

Matthew shifts the scene. While on the boat, the disciples encounter torrential winds and waves in their travel, which is very unsettling even for the trade fishermen to navigate. In this brewing storm, between 3 and 6 o'clock in the morning, the disciples see a figure walking toward them and become terrified. Out of fear, their imaginations take them to the worst possible scenario, and they conclude that it was a threatening figure. They begin to scream out with terror, "It's a ghost!" not realizing that it was Jesus (v. 26, NLT). Upon their reaction, Jesus immediately calls on His disciples to calm down and "take courage" (v. 27, NLT) because He has arrived on the scene among the waves and wind. Jesus' appearance on the water is not an everyday occurrence, and it is not something that has been repeated. He defies all natural laws by walking on the water.

Scholars are still trying to rationalize how this could have happened, and if it really occurred as recorded. However, as Christians, we accept it as truth because the One who created the seas has the power to walk on them and is sovereign over all the earth.

*What should the Christian response be when skeptics try to rationalize away the miraculous works Jesus performed?*

### 3. Jesus Calls Peter to Step Out (vv. 28–29)

Peter, often being the spokesman of the group and bold enough to ask the tough questions, puts Jesus to the test after hearing His voice. Peter responds, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water" (v. 28, NLT). It was Peter's personality to take Jesus at His word and take risks of faith which would prove to be invaluable for his future role in the church. No one since has successfully walked on water, but in the Spirit, as we receive a word from the Lord to do something, we have the

ability to defy the odds through the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. Jesus' Power Declared (vv. 30–33)

As Peter leaves the boat, he notices within his natural senses what is happening around him and becomes afraid. The wind gets stronger, and as it presses his body, he gets nervous, which causes him to take his eyes off Jesus. As Peter becomes frightened, he sinks and cries out to Jesus to save him because he thinks he was going to drown. Matthew notes that Jesus immediately reacts and stretches out His hand to pull Peter from the water and get him to safety. Jesus then asks him, “Why did you doubt me?” (v. 31, NLT). Once Jesus and Peter get into the boat, the winds and waves cease and everything is still and peaceful. All of the disciples worship Jesus, acknowledging He “thou art the Son of God” (v. 33).

*How often do we take our eyes off Jesus when things don't look like what we expect, even though we have been given a word from the Lord to go forward in faith?*

#### Search the Scriptures

1. What was Peter's response to the sight of Jesus walking on water (Matthew 14:28)?
2. How did Jesus react to the disciples and Peter's trouble on the water (vv. 27, 31)?

#### Discuss the Meaning

1. How can we apply this Scripture to our lives today? Drawing on the example of Scripture, what things can we do corporately and individually to step out on faith?
2. Jesus' response to Peter's cry for help was immediate. What does that mean for when you cry out for help? What keeps us in fear?

#### Liberating Lesson

God is still performing signs and wonders today as we call on the name of His Son Jesus.

We should seek the Lord's Will for our lives to receive vision and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to get in alignment to make the miraculous happen in our age. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives within us. Just as the apostles turned the world upside down at the Word of the Lord to establish the church, we live on as His fruit on the earth.

#### Application for Activation

We are encouraged to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the sake of the joy set before Him endured the Cross and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). If we truly believe that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us, we must trust that we are safe in His arms and follow His lead.

#### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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#### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Gennesaret. juh-NES-uh-ret.  
Galilee. GAH-luh-lee.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Let's Sing of the Lord's Faithfulness  
(Isaiah 38:16-20)

### TUESDAY

The Baptist Dies for the Faith  
(Matthew 14:1-12)

### WEDNESDAY

The Crowd's Hunger Satisfied  
(Matthew 14:13-21)

### THURSDAY

Believe the One Sent to You  
(John 6:22-29)

### FRIDAY

The Sick Are Healed  
(Matthew 14:34-36)

### SATURDAY

Speak Confidently to Civil Authorities  
(Mark 13:9-12)

### SUNDAY

Savior of the Fearful, Doubter, Needy  
(Matthew 14:22-33)

# An Attitude of Gratitude

**Bible Background • LEVITICUS 13-14; LUKE 5:12-16; 17:11-19**

**Printed Text • LEVITICUS 13:45-46; LUKE 17:11-19 | Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 56:1-8**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE reasons only one of ten healed lepers turned back to Jesus in thanksgiving, SENSE the need in our lives for increased expressions of gratitude to God, and DEVELOP a plan for showing thanksgiving to God and others on a daily basis.

## In Focus

Diane listened to the soloist at her church sing “My Tribute” by Andraé Crouch, and began to weep. Her 30th birthday was Monday and she reviewed all the major events of her life. Diane grew up taking care of her mother until cancer finally took her life. Diane, at the tender age of 15, held her mother’s body until she breathed her last breath.

Diane married out of high school and got pregnant right away. Soon, she watched her 3-day-old infant die in her arms, from a rare disease attacking the child’s heart. Her young husband, George, struggled with the baby’s death and ended up on medication for depression. Several times Diane spent long days sitting with him in the mental health facility after he had threatened suicide. Eventually, he got his medication regulated and slowly recovered, but it had been a long, hard road. Diane delivered two more children, but at the end of her last pregnancy, her doctor discovered a tumor in her breast. She had gone through the surgery and chemotherapy, now considering herself a cancer survivor in remission for almost five years. “To God be the glory ...” The song spoke to her heart. She had been through so many difficult challenges in life and she was thankful that God carried her through.

*God has done so much for us and gratitude is the best response. What are you thankful for right now?*

## Keep in Mind

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God” (Luke 17:15, KJV).



## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Leviticus 13:45** And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

**46** All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

**Luke 17:11** And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

**12** And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

**13** And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

**14** And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

**15** And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

**16** And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

**17** And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

**18** There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

**19** And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Priest.** Descendants from the tribe of Levi, a priest's duties included representing the people before God, caring for the Temple, teaching God's laws, and administering the Jewish sacrifices and services outlined in the Mosaic Law. Only they could declare a diseased person clean (Leviticus 13–14).

**Leper.** Someone who contracted the disease of leprosy was called a leper. "Leprosy" in the Bible could refer to any number of contagious skin diseases. The diseased person was quarantined and cut off from the rest of society. The leper was considered unclean according to Jewish law (Leviticus 13:44–46). Whenever they approached a person, the leper was required to yell, "Unclean! Unclean!" As a result, they were isolated socially and spiritually and treated as outcasts.

*What is the psychological toll of being a social outcast?*

## Background

The lepers in this Scripture are not the same as in Jesus' previous encounter with a leper (Luke 5:12–15). In Luke 5, the leper is in the city amidst many other people, indicating that he was not treated in the same way as most lepers, though Luke does not tell us why he's treated differently. Jesus not only talks to the leper but touches and heals him.

This healing was different than Jesus' previous healing of lepers; it did not require His touch. He only commanded them to show themselves to the priests. This type of healing can be classified as a word of command and is very common in the Gospel narratives. When Jesus touched the previous leper, His compassion was more of the focus or theme. Here as He speaks this word of command, absent physical touch, His power is on display, though only one leper recognizes and acknowledges it.

*Why is it important for Luke to present not only Jesus' power but also His compassion?*

## At-A-Glance

1. Living as a Leper (Leviticus 13:45-46)
2. Ten Lepers Ask for Healing (Luke 17:11-13)
3. Jesus Heals the Ten Lepers (v. 14)
4. One Leper Returns to Thank Jesus (vv. 15-19)

## In Depth

### 1. Living as a Leper (Leviticus 13:45-46)

Life for a leper in ancient times was extraordinarily unpleasant. First, there was the disease itself to deal with. The leprosy described in the Bible does not always look like the disease that is called leprosy today. In ancient times, “leprosy” covered a broader range of skin diseases. Whether suffering from the modern leprosy of losing the sense of touch or another disease-causing welts, sores, and discoloration on the skin, there was a major physical toll on the body.

Second, there was the isolation. To keep from spreading the physical and ritual uncleanness to others, lepers were to live outside normal settlements until their health improved. Often, however, their health never would improve, exiling them from society for the rest of their lives.

Third, if they ever did need to interact with non-leprous people, they had to take embarrassing precautions. They had to make it obvious to any passerby that they were defiled with leprosy and everyone should keep away from them. Lepers made their clothes, hair, and face evidence of their condition. If that was not enough, they were also to shout out their contaminated state for all to hear.

### 2. Ten Lepers Ask for Healing (Luke 17:11-13)

Jesus encounters ten lepers who observe Him entering a village. They keep their distance because leprosy was known to be contagious. One of the ten lepers, a Samaritan, lived among the group. Ordinary Jews refused to settle in the same area inhabited by Samaritans. However, the lepers, isolated from the general population, bonded with any they could and ignored ethnicity. They cry out to Jesus, addressing Him as “Master” (v. 13). This title indicates He had authority as a thought leader, rabbi, and teacher. They ask Him to have mercy, desiring for Him to extend compassion and alleviate their misery. They acknowledge Jesus as a worker of miracles, one who had a history of healing incurable diseases (Luke 5:15).

### 3. Jesus Heals the Ten Lepers (v. 14)

Jesus instructs the lepers to go to the priest, the only authority able to pronounce them clean and permit them to re-enter their communities (Leviticus 13:13). After being observed by the priest and declared cured, the examiner would perform a ceremonial cleansing called the Law of the Leper (Leviticus 14).

All ten men start toward the Temple to find the priest, demonstrating extreme faith. Previously, Jesus healed a leper immediately by touching him (Luke 5:12-13). These lepers did not receive instant healing but acted exclusively on Jesus’ word. They were told to report to the priest, spots still covered their bodies. As they make their way down the road, they realize their flesh is healthy.

### 4. One Leper Returns to Thank Jesus (vv. 15-19)

One leper sees the recovery of his body, stops, and goes back. After finding Jesus, he loudly proclaims God’s greatness. Prostrated at Jesus’ feet, he expresses gratitude. His posture



testifies that Jesus deserved the same honor as God (Psalm 95:6; Revelation 4:10). Jesus asks the one returning leper, “Where are the nine?” (v. 17). The others, after being declared clean by the priest, went on their way, living their lives, seemingly taking their healing for granted. The Samaritan leper obtains more than physical healing: Jesus also says he was made “whole,” indicating the leper’s salvation (Luke 7:50). For Luke, genuine faith made you not only physically but also spiritually well.

### Search the Scriptures

1. How were lepers distanced from society (Leviticus 13:45-46)?
2. What caused the leper to return (Luke 17:15-16)?
3. What caused Jesus to declare the thankful leper whole (v. 19)?

### Discuss the Meaning

Are you the one leper who returned or one of the nine who did not? Name some ways we are tempted to take God’s blessings for granted. What causes us to not be thankful? It’s never a small thing to be thankful to the Lord. What does it mean to be thankful?

### Liberating Lesson

Perhaps you have been treated as an outcast because of a characteristic others deem undesirable. Many have been discriminated against because of a condition beyond their control. We know Jesus lovingly ministered to people on the outskirts of society. We too should minister to the needs of the outcasts and the discriminated. As a class, seek ways you can minister to people in need, especially those on the fringes of society.

### Application for Activation

We see daily how much easier it is to complain than give thanks. Busy schedules, aggravation, loneliness, anger, and stress all cause us to whine and complain instead of being grateful. The media stirs up an attitude of wanting more and being discontent. The negative attitudes are a result of ignoring God, and not acknowledging Him as the source of all our possessions and well-being.

Read Psalm 100:4-5. Sometime this week make up a prayer, song, poem, praise dance, or something creative based on these verses and the lesson. Share it with a member of your family, friend, or co-worker and ask them to be an accountability person. When you start complaining, tell them to remind you of your creative piece and your desire to be more grateful.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Pericope. peh-RICK-oh-pee.

Eucharist. YOU-kar-ist.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

God Welcomes Foreigners  
(Isaiah 56:1-8)

### TUESDAY

Naomi's Sorrow Turns to Joy  
(Ruth 4:3-6,13-15)

### WEDNESDAY

Symptoms and Treatment of Leprosy  
(Leviticus 13:1-8)

### THURSDAY

Lepers Share Their Good News  
(2 Kings 7:3-11)

### FRIDAY

Many Samaritans Believe in the Savior  
(John 4:39-42)

### SATURDAY

Doing What Needs to Be Done  
(Luke 17:1-10)

### SUNDAY

Cultivate Gratefulness for  
Acts of Healing  
(Leviticus 13:45-56; Luke 17:11-19)

## Notes

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# The Power of the Gospel

**Bible Background • ROMANS 1**

**Printed Text • ROMANS 1:8–17 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 71:1–6, 17–24**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will DISCERN the power of God as illustrated in Paul's faith, AFFIRM the power of God's salvation in family and friends, and PRAY for the salvation of the world, believing it is possible.

## In Focus

Cheryl was struggling with a sense that God wanted her to make herself available for greater forms of service. Her period of intense prayer and fasting had revealed to her that God had more in store for her. As she looked at the more traditional areas of formal church ministry, she did not see herself in any of those roles. She realized that preparation for her ministry would probably involve enrolling in Bible college or seminary for training.

As Cheryl considered the possibilities for her life, she began to grow concerned about having to give up her current job and standard of living. "I worked so hard to achieve everything," she thought. She also began to fear that her fiancé, Dwayne, might not understand. "Maybe he'll call off the wedding!" she feared.

"Am I willing to give up my career and the man I love to do the Lord's will?" she asked herself over and over. Cheryl grew embarrassed and ashamed. How she wished she could readily respond, "yes!" But she knew she had not yet reached that point in her faith journey.

As she pondered the matter over and over, she could reach no simple solution. Finally, she realized that the dilemma was not hers to solve. She knew that the God she served would show her the right steps to take. "For now," she resolved, "I'll just take the first step. Whatever happens later, I have to trust that the Lord will work it all out."

*What aspects of life hinder us from unabashedly following God's will for our lives and personal ministries? How do we push back against those hindrances?*

## Keep in Mind

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV Romans 1:8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

**9** For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

**10** Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

**11** For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

**12** That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

**13** Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

**14** I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

**15** So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

**16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

**17** For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Epistles.** Following the letter-writing customs of the day, epistles were written on sheets of papyrus with ink and a reed pen, then rolled or folded, and often sealed for privacy and authentication. The Christian community employed the members of their churches as carriers of the letters. Thus four people were usually involved in any New Testament letter: the writer, the secretary, the carrier, and the readers. In the case of Romans, we have the names of all these people. Writer: Paul (1:1), secretary: Tertius (16:22); carrier: likely Phoebe (16:1-2); and audience: the Roman church (1:7).

**Paul.** Even before his conversion, Paul was instrumental in causing the church to spread from its Jerusalem roots. His participation in the death of Stephen, the deacon, and frenzied persecution of believers after the Resurrection caused them to flee Jerusalem and take the Gospel to other parts of the world.

After his conversion (Acts 9:1-19), Paul embarked on three missionary journeys

spreading the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Not only did the apostle personally establish countless churches throughout the world, he also wrote at least 13 epistles that make up a significant part of the New Testament.

*How have you changed from who you used to be or stepped out of your comfort zone to share the Gospel or minister to others?*

## Background

The Apostle Paul had never visited the church in Rome, but he greatly desired to do so. The Roman church was strategically located for world evangelism. In his letter to the Romans, Paul does not address any particular need, problem, or doctrinal error. However, in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul presents a deeply theological discussion of major Christian doctrine. The church was renown for its faith and spiritual maturity (Romans 1:8). The apostle's purpose was to establish the young church in the faith as deeply as possible.



The members of the church were primarily Gentile, with a Jewish minority. This may account for Paul's reminder regarding Christianity's Jewish roots and God's unchanging plan for them (Romans 9-11). The letter to the Roman church plainly sets forth God's plan for both the nation of Israel and the Gentiles.

## At-A-Glance

1. Paul's Prayer and Request (Romans 1:8-13)
2. Paul's Theme (vv. 14-17)

## In Depth

### 1. Paul's Prayer and Request (Romans 1:8-13)

When Paul prayed for the Christians in Rome he prayed with two things on his mind. One was thanksgiving and the other was a request. And each one had something to do with the Gospel of God. As always the apostle begins by thanking God. He is particularly thankful for the church's faith. In all but one of Paul's letters to the churches, he expresses his gratefulness to God for his fellow Christians.

Because of the city's connections, believers throughout the Roman empire knew of the faith of the believers in Rome. Paul had never visited the church, but he, too, was aware of their great faith. The Roman believers demonstrated their faith by their passion for Christ and their love and devotion to one another. In the heart of an immoral, unjust, and pagan society, the Roman Christians boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Christ and lived virtuous lives.

Devout Israelites might spend several hours each day in prayer and would pray at different periods of the day. Paul mentioned the Roman believers "I always pray for is the opportunity" (v. 10, NLT). There were times when the apostle

was incarcerated or incapacitated and could not evangelize. However, there was never a time when He could not pray. Constant faithful prayer is the greatest service anyone can give the kingdom of God.

Paul's request of God was simple: he desired to visit the Church in Rome (v. 10). He had never been to the city. He had made plans to come to Rome, but time and again his plans fell through (v. 13). In his prayers, Paul expressed his longing to visit the city to "impart some spiritual gift to you." Paul desired that the Holy Spirit would use his gifts to bless the believers in Rome, and Paul expresses his belief that the Roman believers would also be a blessing to him (v. 12). Whenever Christians come together there should be mutual blessings. Everyone should give and receive. All believers regardless of ethnicity share a common hope, purpose, and mission.

*How does prayer impact your personal Christian walk?*

### 2. Paul's Theme (vv. 14-17)

Paul was aware of his Christian obligation to people regardless of ethnicity or beliefs. The same Jesus who died for him died for all. That is why he was so eager to preach the Gospel in Rome. Those in Rome need not think that Paul did not have much confidence in the Gospel which he had been preaching. Rather, the Gospel was the cause of Paul's glory and he was honored to be able to proclaim it. Paul did proclaim the Gospel, and did so with full confidence in the ability (power) of this God-given message to bring salvation to all who would but believe (v. 16).

Paul simply states, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (v. 16). Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel for two reasons: "for it is the power of God unto salvation" (v. 16). Whenever believers share the Gospel message with an unbeliever, they tap into the unlimited power of God.

The God of salvation sent the Good News of Christ so that people would believe and receive salvation.

Paul is also not ashamed of the Gospel because through it “is the righteousness of God revealed” (v. 17). The righteousness that comes from God restores believers to a right relationship with God. Perfect righteousness is not the result of good deeds. Rather, it is a righteousness “that is by faith.” Faith is both a single act and a continuing attitude. As we continue in our Christian walk, our loyalty and obedience matures to trust and devotion. And faith becomes the driving force in our lives, “as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (v. 17).

*What practical steps do you take to live by faith?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. What aspect of the Roman Christian’s relationship with God was Paul especially thankful for? (v. 8)
2. Why was the Apostle Paul so anxious to visit the church in Rome? (v. 11)
3. How did Paul describe the Gospel and who benefited from it? (v. 16)
4. What reasons did Paul give to prove he was “ready” to preach the Gospel? (see Romans 1:14-17)

### Discuss the Meaning

Paul declared that the Gospel reveals the power of God for salvation to all regardless of ethnicity. Do African Americans have a responsibility to share the Good News with people of other races? What about in other nations? How can we accomplish this international evangelism?

### Liberating Lesson

Today’s lesson on how Paul viewed his evangelistic mission raises questions about

modern evangelism. Some say we need a new message in modern inner cities because the Christian Gospel is a White folk’s Gospel. They claim that the Gospel is ineffective in dealing with the stress and turmoil of today’s urban centers. Based on Paul’s view of the Gospel, how would you respond to these critics?

### Application for Activation

Paul insists that the Gospel is for all people, reminding Christians of the Great Commission’s understanding that we will go into all the world (Matthew 28:19-20). This week, write down a prayer seeking God’s will for how you are to participate in the salvation of the world. Pray that prayer each day this week and listen for God’s answer.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Tertius. TER-she-us.  
Phoebe. FEE-bee.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Apollos and Paul, Builders  
(1 Corinthians 3:1-11)

### TUESDAY

Entrusted to Take Gospel to Gentiles  
(Galatians 2:1-10)

### WEDNESDAY

Grace and Peace to All  
(Romans 1:1-7)

### THURSDAY

God's Righteous Wrath  
(Romans 1:18-23)

### FRIDAY

God's Actions Are Fair and Just  
(Romans 1:24-32)

### SATURDAY

God's Righteous Actions  
for Saints, Sinners  
(2 Peter 2:4-9)

### SUNDAY

The Gospel Changes Jews and Gentiles  
(Romans 1:8-17)

## Notes

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# The Faith of Abraham

**Bible Background • ROMANS 4**

**Printed Text • ROMANS 4:1-12 | Devotional Reading • GENESIS 15:1-6**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will STUDY the difference between faith and works as manifested in the life of Abraham, REFLECT on the knowledge and wisdom of Paul as seen in his understanding of the Old Testament, and IDENTIFY ways in which we rely on our faith for a relationship with God.

### In Focus

“Hi, Daddy,” said Zona Jackson Moore as her father entered the arid room where families met with inmates. Nelson Jackson could barely recognize his little girl in the face of the woman who stood before him. He had last seen her when she had to move across the country for college years ago. Nelson had only spoken to the man she married in letters. Now Zona had made a special trip back home so everyone could meet her new baby.

“Daddy, this is my husband, Roy, and our baby girl, Faith,” introduced Zona.

“Faith, yes, the perfect name,” said Nelson. “How I need faith these days. Can I hold her?”

Roy placed the baby in his arms and said, “Mr. Jackson, we have never believed the awful things they said you did. We have faith and we’re praying that one day you will be vindicated and released.”

It would be another ten years before new DNA tests would prove Nelson’s innocence. Waiting at the prison gates the morning of his release were Zona, Roy, and Faith. Though well into his 70s, Nelson ran to hug them and picked up Faith.

“Faith, how precious you are,” said Nelson. “And, now that I’m free, I will continue to share my faith with everyone. While I was imprisoned, I never stopped preaching about faith in God, and many men, both inmates and guards, gave their lives to Jesus. God said I’d be cleared, and He kept His promise. Faith in the goodness of God is the hope of the world.”

*Salvation is a gift to all who will receive it. In today’s lesson, we will examine the case that the Apostle Paul makes to show that rules, traditions, and actions that bar people from the gift of God’s love and grace have no place in the body of Christ.*

## Keep in Mind

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3, KJV).



## Focal Verses

**KJV Romans 4:1** What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Abraham.** Abraham was originally from Ur, which was Chaldean territory in modern-day Iraq. He was the son of Terah, who was a descendant of Shem, one of Noah's sons. Noah had declared the Lord God's blessing over Shem who, with his brother, covered Noah when he was naked (Genesis 9:18–26). Later, God would declare an even greater blessing over Abraham: he would have fertile land, blessings, and descendants as numerous of the stars and the sand.

**Circumcision.** In ancient Israel, this act (removing the foreskin of the male sex organ) was performed as a ritual on all male children on the eighth day after birth. In the Jewish faith, it was an external symbol of one's total and complete allegiance and devotion to Yahweh. Controversy arose in the early church over the

circumcision of Gentile converts (Acts 15:13–18). During the first century AD, Jews frowned upon non-circumcision among Christians. Apostle Paul played a crucial role in settling the dispute. He determined that physical circumcision was not essential to Christian faith and fellowship. Circumcision of the heart through repentance and faith were the only requirements of the faith.

## Background

This letter to Christian believers in Rome was written by the Apostle Paul between AD 56 and AD 58 when he was living in Corinth, a Grecian port city. It is thought that the emerging Christian belief had made its way to Rome from Jewish believers who had heard about Jesus Christ during visits to Jerusalem and on returning to Rome, shared the good

news with both Jews and Gentiles. In AD 49, Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews. After he died around AD 54, Jewish Christians returned to Rome and found Gentile believers leading a growing number of Christ-followers. Well entrenched in the rules and regulations of the Jewish tradition, these Jewish Christians believed that Gentile believers needed to adhere to the practice of circumcision which had been established by the patriarch of their faith, Abraham. The letter to the Romans offers a well-developed explanation of God's interaction with humanity since creation and the fall, the preeminent role of belief in Jesus Christ for humanity's redemption, and the faithful response of believers when they rightly understand that salvation is a gift that had been made available to Jews and Gentiles alike—not through human works—but by belief in the sacrificial life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## At-A-Glance

1. Faith Builds Relationship (Romans 4:1-3)
2. Faith Becomes Righteousness (vv. 4-8)
3. Faith Begets Works (vv. 9-12)

## In Depth

### 1. Faith Builds Relationship (Romans 4:1-3)

The Jewish people have always recognized Abraham as a progenitor for their national lineage and monotheistic faith. Abraham was the person who had dared to leave the plurality of gods that his ancestors worshiped to accept an invitation to follow the God who they saw as the One True and Living God. This God blessed Abraham with great riches and gave him an incredible promise—he and his wife Sarah would

have a son. As years passed and they were well beyond child-bearing age, their faith in God's promise was tested. Abraham and Sarah would have to continually prevail in faith, trusting in the God who had made the promise, not their ability to get things done through human effort. For Abraham's descendants, Abraham was the model of faithfully walking with God. Humanly speaking, that was a legacy to be proud of. Yet, in the presence of a holy and righteous God, no one, not even Abraham, could brag about accomplishments, natural or spiritual.

*Name some of the ways Abraham's and Sarah's faith was tested as they waited for God to fulfill His promise.*

### 2. Faith Becomes Righteousness (vv. 4-8)

Human effort earns human rewards, like large salaries, or trophies, and accolades. Faith in God, however, gives something much more significant—a relationship that puts a person in good standing with God. Abraham was given such right standing, not because he had done any specific work, but because God attached right standing to his faith. Only God could perform the work necessary to bridge the divide that had been created by sin (Genesis 3). To be declared right with God is a gift from God that can only be received, never earned. The appropriate human response to God's merciful initiative is acceptance, obedience, and thankfulness.

*Why would the Apostle Paul choose Abraham and David to make his argument that people are saved by faith, not their works?*

### 3. Faith Begets Works (vv. 9-12)

The Apostle Paul points out that Abraham was given right standing with God and received the incredible promise of a son before he was circumcised. This crediting of right standing had been declared roughly two decades before Abraham was circumcised. Circumcision then



was a response from Abraham that he had accepted God's pronouncement, and he was thankful for the amazing gift of relationship with God. For uncircumcised Gentiles who had placed their faith in the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, this message from Paul showed that God's forgiveness and acceptance had been given to someone who was uncircumcised.

Abraham, as presented in Paul's discourse, was to be seen as the father of all who faithfully followed the God of their forefather and the promised Son through whom all the world would be blessed. Abraham was more than the father of those who were circumcised, he also was the father of anyone who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

*What role, if any, does works of righteousness have in the life of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. In your own words, what is the meaning of "imputed" (Romans 4:6)?
2. Explain why righteousness has to be recognized as a gift and not a reward for right living. (Romans 4:4-8)

### Discuss the Meaning

When an African American billionaire announced that he would pay off the college loans of nearly 400 young men at a historically black college, the news went viral. Without such a gift, many of those graduates would have lived under the burden of debt for decades. Two millennia before, another man paid off a significant debt. Jesus Christ wiped out humanity's debt to sin and declared that through faith, anyone can have access to a relationship with Him.

1. Have you ever benefited from the generosity of others? What was your response?
2. What are some ways to make the news of Jesus' gift of salvation go viral?

### Liberating Lesson

A woman entered the church wearing a black niqab. *That isn't our look for Sunday worship*, thought a woman whose father was a founder of her denomination. "You can't dress like that here or in heaven," she admonished the visitor. "Find out our traditions and come back next week." The pastor, seeing the visitor heading for the door, left the pulpit and ran to stop her. "Please sit over here," he assured. "The doors of God's church are open to anyone who has the faith and courage to enter."

*What do you know about the cultural and religious practices of other religious traditions? What might be the first step toward greater understanding?*

### Application for Activation

Debates over circumcision rarely arise today, but conflicts over other religious rituals, practices, and norms continue to keep the body of Christ divided about who is in right standing with God. Think about a religious difference you have recently noticed. Take the position of the side you are opposed to and defend it as vigorously as you would defend your position. Identify ways the opposing position extends the redemptive grace of God to more people. What are some ways that you can invite people who hold your point of view to look at the conflict from another's perspective?

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Chaldean. kall-DEE-an.  
Terah. TARE-ah.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

God's Covenant with Abraham  
(Genesis 15:1-8)

### TUESDAY

All World's Families Blessed  
Through Abraham  
(Genesis 12:1-9)

### WEDNESDAY

Promise Realized by Faith Not Law  
(Romans 4:13-15)

### THURSDAY

For All Who Share Abraham's Faith  
(Romans 4:16-18)

### FRIDAY

Abraham Believed  
Despite Impossible Odds  
(Romans 4:19-21)

### SATURDAY

In Christ, Believers Share Abraham's Faith  
(Romans 4:22-25)

### SUNDAY

Abraham, Father of the Faithful  
(Romans 4:1-12)

## Notes

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# Justification through Faith

**Bible Background • ROMANS 5:1–11**

**Printed Text • ROMANS 5:1–11 | Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 53:1–12**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will IDENTIFY the relationship between faith in Christ and justification in the sight of God, REPENT of personal failures to obtain the peace that God gives, and CELEBRATE our justification through faith in Christ.

### In Focus

Jawanda prayed for guidance about the meeting after church with her pastor. A member of her church since she learned to read, her devotion left her refreshed. But this morning Jawanda felt she was on the wrong side of God's love.

When she reached the pastor's office, a thin veil of anger clouded her thoughts. The pastor had asked her to step down as chairperson of the Community Day Committee and serve as co-chair under Sadie, who had been a member for only six months. Her eyes were moist as she relayed her anxiety. "I have tithed and served faithfully in our church my entire adult life. Never have I been asked to step down from a leadership role. Why now?"

The pastor's lips turned down as he began to speak. "Jawanda, this is not about you. This is about Sadie and her Christian walk."

Jawanda spoke in a muffled voice. "Please, Pastor, don't ask me to serve under this young girl. Less than a year ago by her own testimony, she was using heavy drugs and living wildly. How do you expect me to respect her decisions?"

"Listen to me," the pastor said. "This is not a demotion; it is a promotion. If you stand as co-chair, your humility and support will be an instrument of deliverance for God's salvation plan for this young woman. Remember, Jawanda, all Christians have been delivered from sin." It was the pastor's last words that released her anger as she recalled the redeeming grace Christ had given her.

*In today's lesson, the apostle Paul explains the blessing that comes from God to all those who have been justified by faith. What happens when we forget about those blessings?*

## Keep in Mind

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"  
(Romans 5:1, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV Romans 5:1** Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Reconciliation.** Reconciliation is at the heart of Pauline theology. The word reconciliation was not used in a religious sense by the other religions of Paul's time. Reconciliation is roughly the same as justification, but is broader and includes the aspect of forgiveness. The same God who judges also reconciles, so through reconciliation the sinner's guilt is removed. Reconciliation comes from God's initiative. Christians are brand-new people (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). The Holy Spirit gives us new life, and we are not the same anymore. We are recreated and live in union with Christ (Colossians 2:6). God brings us back to Himself by blotting out our sins and declaring us righteous. Because we have been reconciled to God, we have the privilege of leading others to do the same. This is our ministry of reconciliation.

**Apostle Paul.** Apostles were literally "the sent out ones." God called them, equipped them, and then sent them to establish His Word among His people. The Apostle Paul was, as he said, an apostle "born out of due time"

(1 Corinthians 15:8) meaning he was late to be called one of the apostles. He was, in fact, an enemy to the early church until God plucked him out from among his Pharisaical brothers. However, Paul showed the same zeal in serving Christ that he had shown in persecuting Him and His people. He was radically changed, completely taken with his Master. His loyalty to Jesus was unimpeachable, and he was driven to get others to follow with the same zeal. He was completely convinced of salvation by grace. In these verses, he shows that this salvation gives a new perspective, one that carries us through even the toughest times.

## Background

Before Jesus came, no one could ever be intimate with God. In presenting his case, Paul has proved that all humanity stands guilty before God. He has clearly shown that no one can ever be saved through deeds such as circumcision or obedience to the law. He has used Abraham as an example of how anyone can achieve right standing with God through



faith. If Paul's readers stopped reading at this point, they would know that they needed salvation and it was available to them.

In chapter 4, the apostle Paul established that Abraham is the father of the family of faith, not just of the Hebrews. All who believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and receive Him as Lord and Savior are Abraham's spiritual seed. In verse 25, Paul makes a transitional statement concerning Christ being raised for our justification. Paul is now finished with his discussion of Abraham. Justification is the first blessing of the Christian life and carries with it many other blessings. When believers are justified, they receive everything God has to give. In chapter 5, Paul explains the blessing of our salvation: justification brings us peace with God and access to Him by faith, and Christ is the basis of our justification. Paul almost sings with the joy of his confidence in God. Accepting God at His Word has accomplished what human effort could not; it has given believers peace with God.

## At-A-Glance

1. The Blessings of Justification (Romans 5:1-5)
2. The Beauty of Justification (vv. 6-8)
3. The Reconciliation of God Leads to Our Joy (vv. 9-11)

## In Depth

### 1. The Blessings of Justification (Romans 5:1-5)

We have peace with God because we are justified. Trusting faith has given us what working to keep the law could never give us—peace with God. Christ paid the price for our rebellion and brought about the end of hostilities between the creature and the Creator. Everyone

who rejects God's offer of reconciliation through Christ chooses to remain God's enemy.

Because we are justified, we have "access by faith" (Romans 5:2). In the Jewish tabernacle was an inner room called the Holy of Holies, which symbolized the presence of God. The High Priest was the only person ever allowed into the Most Holy Place, and he could only enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. When Christ died on Calvary, the curtain separating the Most Holy Place from the rest of the Temple was split, signifying the acceptance by God of all God's faithful to the throne of grace.

Because we are justified, we have a new standing with God (v. 2). No one could stand the scrutiny of God if and when He begins to pick out the iniquities of the sinful. Thank God that our justification gives us a right standing before Him. The only way this is ever accomplished is through union with Christ. Being in Christ means that we are identified with His death, burial, and Resurrection (Romans 6:1-8). Because of our identification with Christ, we now stand in the place of highest privilege. Not only has God declared us not guilty, but He has also drawn us nearer to Himself.

*What enables believers to rejoice in good times or bad? How can one really be happy when facing difficult trials or tragedies? Does our rejoicing mean that we never feel sad or lonely?*

### 2. The Beauty of Justification (vv. 6-8)

After discussing the blessing that results from justification, Paul moves on to discuss the depths of God's love. The apostle highlights the absolute inability of humans to deliver themselves from the grip of sin. We needed a rescuer, and our God sent one from heaven. "Ungodly" refers to those who live impious, wicked, and sinful lives—people with little regard for God in their minds and hearts. Christ offered Himself up as a sacrifice on the Cross to do for weak, sinful people what they could



never do for themselves. What a thought: the godly dying for the ungodly!

Now Paul pens one of the most beloved sentences ever written: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Christ’s death is a clear demonstration of divine love in action. This is what Christ means when He commands us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Humanity was in flat-out rebellion against God. We were servants of the evil one and demonstrated our contempt for God by our lifestyles. Yet God loved us so much that He sent His Son from the glories of heaven to the filth of earth. God clothed holiness in sinful flesh and sent Christ to the Cross on our behalf. No greater expression of love has ever, or will ever, be made.

*How can we harmonize God’s love and His wrath (vv. 8–9)?*

### 3. The Reconciliation of God Leads to Our Joy (vv. 9–11)

In these final verses of our text, Paul continues to expound on the benefits of our justification. We are justified and therefore saved from wrath. We have atonement with God which gives us joy. We have been reconciled to God and therefore saved by the life of Christ. In verse 9, Paul uses the phrase “much more,” and again in verse 10. Then in verse 11 he adds, “And not only so.” He piles one benefit upon another. He is overcome with the positive nature of our standing in Christ. Our justification through Jesus’ blood has moved us from helplessness to being reconciled, no longer under His wrath but now sharing His life, which leads to our joy.

Here Paul makes an extraordinary statement: God’s love reconciled us through Christ. This contrasts with false theologies stating that only Jesus is loving while the Father is vengeful. Instead, Paul explains the truth: God’s love brought about our salvation through His Son.

*How can we clearly see those who need hope and then share His hope with them?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. What result does our justification have on our relationship with God (Romans 5:1)?
2. Since we have peace with God, what should our emotional response be in times of difficulty and sorrow (vv. 2-3)?
3. How did God demonstrate His love for us beyond any doubt (v. 8)?
4. Because of sin we were separated from God and considered His enemies. How are we reconciled back to the Father (v. 10)?

### Discuss the Meaning

1. Why does Paul emphasize humanity’s weakness and our inability to change ourselves? Do you believe that all unsaved people are God’s enemies? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. The world can suck up our hope, but it has always been this way. As followers of Christ, we will need to understand how to allow His hope into our lives. How can we connect our redemption to a daily hopeful outlook?

### Liberating Lesson

It is interesting that the Scripture never presents living in faith and being hopeful as requests but as commands. We should keep in mind that the Lord is aware of our weaknesses even more than we are. He also knows our enemies and challenges but still requires our victorious outlook. When we are fearful and unsettled, then it shows we are not focused on His assurances.

Our believing brothers and sisters need to see our hope in the Lord. Our hopeless world needs to see our hope as well. When we correct our relationship with Christ—when our daily walk is firm—we will grow in the ability to share this hope.



### Application for Activation

Share the eternal truths of today's lesson with at least two people this week. Explain how Christ's death not only reconciles us to God but also empowers us to live godly lives. Record the reactions of the people you share this Good News with and be prepared to share your experiences with the class next week.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.

Thayer, Joseph Henry. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: American Book Company, 1889.

### Say It Correctly

Commendeth. kuh-MEN-dith.  
Peradventure. pur-ad-VIN-ture.

### Daily Bible Readings

#### MONDAY

Blessed Are Persecuted Believers  
(Matthew 5:9-12)

#### TUESDAY

Jesus, Not Suffering, Matters  
(Philippians 1:12-20)

#### WEDNESDAY

Suffering for Christ and the Church  
(2 Corinthians 11:21-30)

#### THURSDAY

In Hope Our Salvation Is Secure  
(Romans 8:18-25)

#### FRIDAY

Free Gift of Jesus Brings Justification  
(Romans 5:12-17)

#### SATURDAY

Grace Leads to Eternal Life  
(Romans 5:18-21)

#### SUNDAY

Justified through Faith in Jesus Christ  
(Romans 5:1-11)

# Salvation for All Who Believe

**Bible Background • ROMANS 10:5-17**

**Printed Text • ROMANS 10:5-17 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 19:1-14**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLAIN Paul's confidence in the salvation offered in Christ, FEEL justified through our faith in Christ, and EMBRACE with joy the possibility for all.

## In Focus

For three months, Cathy had been looking for work. She prayed that the Lord would give her a job where she would have the opportunity to share the Gospel with her fellow workers. Cathy was a trained and certified accountant but no doors were opening for her.

One morning, Cathy received a call from a local rehabilitation center that had gotten her name from a former employee. The center was hiring, but not in the accounting department. The personnel director was so impressed by Cathy's work ethic and resume, he asked Cathy if she would be interested in training men and women who had just been released from prison so that they might successfully return to society and work. She asked for a week to consider.

Cathy continued looking for employment in her field, but nothing materialized. After several sleepless nights, Cathy wondered if this assignment was an answer to her prayer. She decided to step out on faith and take the position.

Within the first month, God gave Cathy favor with her supervisor so that she could start a weekly Bible study. More than 75% of the patients attended and Cathy was able to lead many of them to Christ. Nearly everyone Cathy trained was successful in finding good-paying jobs and becoming witnesses for Christ where they worked.

*How has God shown you unexpected ways to make a path to share the Gospel with those around you?*

## Keep in Mind

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"  
(Romans 10:13, KJV).



## Focal Verses

**KJV Romans 10:5** For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Word of Faith.** The apostle's letter reaffirms the basic doctrine of salvation by faith—not works—available to Jews and Gentiles alike. He also affirms that preaching as a form of word-of-mouth promotion continues to be a primary way to spread the Gospel and to build a foundation of faith necessary to desire and receive salvation.

**Israel in God's Plan of Salvation.** In Romans, the Apostle Paul addresses Israel's past election, present rejection of the Gospel, and their future salvation. How could God's promise to Abraham and the nation of Israel remain valid while the nation of Israel as a whole seems to have no part in the spread of the Gospel? Paul maintains that God's promise to Israel has not failed because the promise was meant only for "true Israel"—meaning, those who were faithful

to the promise (see Genesis 12:1-3; 17:19). Paul contends that Israel's failure to respond to Christ is not due to an unconditional decree of God but to their unbelief and disobedience (see Romans 10:3).

The apostle also affirms that Israel's rejection is only partial and temporary. The nation will eventually accept God's salvation in Christ. God has turned Israel's transgression into an opportunity to proclaim salvation to all the world. Belief in Jesus Christ by a portion of national Israel will take place in the future. The Scriptures are full of promises of the eventual restoration of Israel to God through their acceptance of the Messiah. (See Isaiah 11:10-16.)

*What role does the modern nation of Israel have in God's salvation plan for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's descendants?*

## Background

Born a Jew, Paul was highly educated in the Jewish faith and understood the doctrine, teaching, and workings of the Law. His education, training, and love for the Law contributed to his zealous opposition of Christians and their teachings. As a former persecutor of Christians, therefore, he understood how zeal for a cause could turn a person into a murderous opponent.

After his dramatic conversion while traveling to Damascus to detain and imprison Christians (Acts 9), Paul became a defender of the faith he had, up to then, despised. More so, he became the apostle to the Gentiles and the one directly called to reach his former enemies.

In addressing the believers at the church of Rome, Paul confesses his fervent prayer that his Jewish brothers would be saved. He relates that he can “bear record” of their zeal without knowledge, referring to his former anti-Christian activities.

Finally, he makes it clear that the church of Rome should not become cocky in their position in Christ, because God plans to restore a remnant of Israel. Rather, Paul admonishes Gentile believers not to get conceited about their faith in light of Israel’s present disobedience.

## At-A-Glance

1. We Cannot be Saved by the Law (Romans 10:5)
2. We are Saved Through Jesus Christ, the Only Way (vv. 6-7)
3. We Must Become Christians, but How? (vv. 8-13)
4. We Must Take the Good News to Others (vv. 14-17)

## In Depth

### 1. We Cannot be Saved by the Law (Romans 10:5)

Paul enlightens these Gentile and Jewish believers about the futility of trying to be saved by the Law. He shows them and us today that no one can meet such high standards set by the Law and be saved. After all, we are all sinners. He wants us to appreciate that to be saved by the Law, a person would have to live a perfect life and no one but Jesus Christ Himself could do that. Sinning even one time would mean that we would be lost.

Paul explains further that God gave the Law, not to save us, but to show us how guilty we are before a Holy God; to show us our lostness, our dilemma. The sacrificial system of the Law educated people of their need for a lamb without blemish. That lamb is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:1-4).

*Why did God give Moses the Law if it could not save?*

### 2. We are Saved Through Jesus Christ, the Only Way (vv. 6-7)

Jesus is the end of the Law. With His death, burial, and Resurrection, He fulfilled the purpose and goal of the Law (Matthew 5:17). Unlike Jesus Christ, however, the Law cannot save anyone. Nothing can bridge the gap between a holy God and sinful man. Receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the only way. The salvation that God offers is a gift and we need to respond and receive it, or be lost forever. God’s salvation is right in front of us. Paul emphasizes the closeness of salvation, and how simple God has made it to be restored to Him. Faith in Christ is not too high above us, up in heaven where we cannot reach. It is not down in the depths of the earth, in realms of darkness and death.



### 3. We Must Become Christians, but How? (vv. 8-13)

Sin has cut us off from God, but Paul explains how to get back to God and be saved. It is not a complicated process, but based on a simple faith in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross. God said that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our heart that God, Himself, raised Jesus from the dead; then we are saved (v. 9). This profession can be made by both Jews and Gentiles alike (v. 12) because with God there is no favoritism when it comes to salvation (Romans 2:11). Paul wanted both Jews and Gentiles to know in this letter that our sins point out our need for a Savior. We need to be cleansed and made whole—and only Jesus can do that.

### 4. We Must Take the Good News to Others (vv. 14-17)

God is calling us to bring the Good News of salvation to others. Through our Christian living, loving, teaching, and preaching; they will know that we follow Christ. If God's Spirit is indeed in us, we will obey this command. If this is not true of us, then we need to examine ourselves seriously before the Word.

As Paul explains the process of calling, believing, hearing, telling, and sending, we understand the large network within the Church that evangelism requires to reach souls for the Gospel. Often we think of evangelism as a task for others with that specific spiritual gift, but everyone in the Church should be using their gifts, time, and talents to further the ultimate goal of evangelism everywhere.

*Are all Christians responsible for preaching the Gospel to non-Christians? What does that look like?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. What must a person believe about God and Jesus to receive salvation (Romans 10:9)?

2. How does God use the preacher (v. 14)? Can just anyone be a preacher (v. 15)?

### Discuss the Meaning

1. What kind of preaching do we need in order to build faith?

2. Why does God seem to have a special place in His heart for Israel if He shows no favoritism?

### Liberating Lesson

God surely has a sense of humor. Religious, racial, and economic barriers separate people and fuel hatred and discord. But, just when we think we know it all and are better than everyone else, God provides a Damascus Road experience to shed light on our own unrighteousness and neediness. Our perceived enemies today may be our mission fields tomorrow. Jesus died and was resurrected because of God's love for all persons. How does knowing this make it easier to share your faith with nonbelievers?

### Application for Activation

There are people all around you who need to hear the Good News of salvation. Determine in your heart and carry out the plan of witnessing to someone in your family, on your job, or in your community. Pray first and ask God to show you someone who needs a Savior and then, help you to find the right time, place, and words to obey His command.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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*The Full Life Study Bible*. Donald C. Stamps, gen. ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1992. 1748-1749.  
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## Say It Correctly

Esaias. eh-SIGH-us.  
Midrash. MIDD-rash.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Obey God with Heart and Voice  
(Deuteronomy 30:6-14)

### TUESDAY

God's Salvation Announced  
(Isaiah 52:1-10)

### WEDNESDAY

Call on the Name of the Lord  
(Joel 2:28-32)

### THURSDAY

Gentiles Believe by Faith  
(Galatians 3:6-14)

### FRIDAY

For the Salvation of the Gentiles  
(Romans 10:1-4)

### SATURDAY

Regret for Not Hearing Christ's Word  
(Romans 10:18-21)

### SUNDAY

Salvation Is for All People  
(Romans 10:5-17)

## Notes

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# Meaning of Faith

**Bible Background • HEBREWS 11; 13:1-19**

**Printed Text • HEBREWS 11:1-8, 13-16 | Devotional Reading • HEBREWS 11:32-40**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will IDENTIFY the faith contributions of the heroes in Hebrews 11, VALUE the people in our lives who act heroically through faith, and GROW in our potential to become faith heroes.

## In Focus

The telephone rang early in the morning. Frances reached out with her one good arm, picked up the phone, and answered it by saying, "Praise the Lord!"

"How are you today, Frances?" her prayer partner asked.

"I'm blessed," Frances replied. "I can answer to my name this morning, and my health is good." Frances then began to pray, thanking God for His mercy and goodness.

Frances always quoted the Scriptures back to God when she prayed. She was always careful to mention the names of the unsaved loved ones of the saints. Her list was extensive. Her prayer partner often wondered how Frances could remember so many people at her age. But Frances was committed to pray for each one.

Frances had lost the use of one arm and had been using a wheelchair for many years, but she could still pray. She was absolutely sure that God would save all of those for whom she prayed. Her mission was to stand in the gap for the unsaved until they found their way to the Way.

Frances lived to be 103 years old. At the time of her death, many of the people she prayed for had turned to Christ, but many more had not. Frances did not live to see her prayers fully answered, but she never doubted that God would answer them all.

*In what part of your life do you need to have more faith in God's power to do His will? How do we live a life with complete faith in God?*

## Keep in Mind

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"  
(Hebrews 11:1, KJV).

## Focal Verses

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**KJV** **Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

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### The People, Places, and Times

**Enoch.** Even though Enoch only appears in three verses in the Genesis record, much more is written of him in Jewish tradition. Ancient rabbis wrote about him in the books of 1 and 2 Enoch, wherein he prophesies about the end times. Enoch is listed in Hebrews 11 as the second hero of faith. The account in Genesis is concise: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). Enoch never tasted death; he went directly into the Lord's presence. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Enoch pleased God.

**The Book of Hebrews.** The authorship of Hebrews is unknown. Early church leaders believed that Paul wrote Hebrews, but almost

all modern theologians and scholars reject this assertion. Some scholars have postulated that the author is Barnabas, which would explain certain theological similarities to Paul's letters.

The first audience of the book of Hebrews knew Jewish Scripture and professed faith in Christ. Centuries of Hebrew tradition were replaced with spiritual freedom based upon faith in Christ. As a result, the believers experienced the wrath of the Jewish religious establishment. The writer wanted to prevent believers from rejecting Christianity and returning to Judaism, and so emphasized the superiority of faith in Christ above even the Jewish faith.



## Background

To encourage his audience in the faith, the writer of Hebrews explained the superiority of faith by examples of people who demonstrated greater faith. Through examples in biblical history, faith is revealed through assurance in God's future promises with the implications that inspire believers to persevere. Through the summary of Jewish history, the heroes of faith challenge believers to grow in faith and live in obedience to God.

In chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews uses a literary technique called anaphora, whereby he begins each account with the same Greek phrase translated, "By faith." Hebrews 11 is a literary masterpiece and a historical retrospective. The chapter should be studied for the eternal principles it teaches and read simply for the beauty of the writing.

## At-A-Glance

1. Faith is Confidence and Certainty (Hebrews 11:1-3)
2. Faith Rewarded (vv. 4-5, 7-8)
3. Faith Is Necessary (v. 6)
4. Unfulfilled Hopes in Things Unseen (vv. 13-16)

## In Depth

### 1. Faith is Confidence and Certainty (Hebrews 11:1-3)

Faith is vital for God's people. Having faith means taking God at His word and accepting what He says as true. The reality of faith is what is "hoped for" in the hearts and minds of believers. As the "evidence of things not seen," faith is the means of enduring against all opposition and the fiercest persecution. We cannot see the future nor do we know what will happen tomorrow, but our

confidence is based upon the certainty of God's trustworthiness.

To encourage struggling believers to hold to the superiority of their faith in Christ, the writer refers the believers to the elders of the Old Testament, the patriarchs and heroes of Israel (v. 2). The "elders" received a "good report," which was their evidence that they would participate in God's Kingdom when it arrives in its fullness. Their actions revealed a genuine faith that brings them honor.

By faith, we believe God spoke and created the entire universe. Our faith is based upon who God is; our response should be confident and certain hope in God because He is ever present.

*Do you have certain and confident faith in God's promises? What promises of God do you hold most dear?*

### 2. Faith Rewarded (vv. 4-5, 7-8)

Abel and Enoch are the first heroes of faith. We do not hear much about them in the Genesis account. However, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that Abel was demonstrating his faith in God with his sacrifice. Enoch's faith pleased God. At this point, the writer interjects a comment on the necessity of faith, which is discussed further below.

The third hero was Noah. Taking God at His word concerning things not yet seen, with no sign of a flood approaching, Noah built the enormous craft. If not even a single person had believed God's warning, then God might have shown mercy. However, Noah's belief shows that faith in God was not impossible even in that wicked generation. The rest of the world, therefore, were condemned by their unbelief (Hebrews 11:7).

The fourth hero was Abraham. Abraham is known as the "father of the faithful." At God's command, he left his homeland and all his relatives to journey to a new home (Genesis 12:1-4). In obedience to God, without the

slightest idea of where he was going, Abraham left all that he knew. When he finally arrived at his destination, he didn't build a house. He lived in tents like a visitor in the land (Genesis 13:3-4; Hebrews 11:9).

### 3. Faith Is Necessary (v. 6)

Most believers desire to please God, and many attempt to please Him by their works and deeds. When our works are not done in faith, God rejects them, because without faith it is impossible to please Him. Faith is necessary to have an active relationship with God; it reveals the reality of God. Faith is necessary if you wish to walk with God.

The heroes of faith believed and obeyed regardless of the consequences. In the same way, we can believe with a willing trust and please God. Our steadfast confidence is based upon who God is—the Creator of the universe. God will recognize and reward our faith because we “diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). By faith, we realize our own insufficiency and depend on God to work within us and through us. By faith we have confident trust in the continual promises of God.

*Faith is the beginning of our relationship with God. What qualities of faith are necessary to continue to grow and strengthen our relationship with God?*

### 4. Unfulfilled Hopes in Things Unseen (vv. 13-16)

A lack of faith hinders many Christians in their walk with God. The stories of these individuals should encourage us to persevere in faith, regardless of the obstacles. The faithful people of the Old Testament did not receive all that God had promised them, but they never lost hope. The focus of the heroes was never the realization of earthly promises. Instead, they looked forward to becoming heirs of righteousness (v. 7).

*What gave our faithful ancestors hope even though they were “strangers and pilgrims” (v. 13)?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. Why is faith necessary to “understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3)?
2. Who are the people commended by God because of their faith? (v. 2)
3. Why is it impossible to please God without faith? (v. 6)

### Discuss the Meaning

1. Does true faith mean that God will give us whatever we ask for if we truly believe in Him? Explain your answer.
2. Tragedies and crises happen to everyone. How does faith help heal lives that have been broken by tragedy?

### Liberating Lesson

Today, many are homeless or unemployed. Natural disasters destroy homes and lives. War and destruction are continually reported by the news. While positive change seems nonexistent, we must not lose hope. God is ever-present. We can rely on God for positive change as we realize our faith will be tested. Many people in our society have given up all hope of a better life for themselves. How can faith in God help to restore their hope? What part do you play in helping them acquire this faith?

### Application for Activation

Although Abraham, Sarah, and the other heroes of faith were the true heirs of God's justice and promises, they lived as foreigners and strangers in the earth seeking a homeland. The Greek word for “strangers” is *xenoi* (ZEE-noy) and it is a part of the composite term “xenophobia” that describes a fear of strangers or people who are different. Having hope in a hopeless world and seeing opportunities where



others see only defeat can make one feel like a stranger. This takes on even more materiality as we consider immigrants and refugees who attempt to live by faith and pursue a hope for a better life, but they instead are often met by lies and prejudices that attempt to limit their lives and portray them as delinquents. What can your Bible study group or church do to help immigrants and refugees in your area?

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Enoch. E-nock.

Xenophobia. zee-no-FO-bee-ah.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Love of Money, Root of Evil  
(1 Timothy 6:6-10)

### TUESDAY

Control Your Own Body  
(1 Thessalonians 4:1-7)

### WEDNESDAY

Abraham, Father of the Faithful  
(Acts 7:2-7)

### THURSDAY

Worthy Examples of the Faithful  
(Hebrews 11:4-7, 17-27)

### FRIDAY

Actions of Faith in Daily Life  
(Hebrews 13:1-9, 17-19)

### SATURDAY

Like Jesus, Offer Sacrifices to God  
(Hebrews 13:10-16)

### SUNDAY

The Living Actions of Faith  
(Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16)

# A Persevering Faith

**Bible Background • HEBREWS 10:19–39**

**Printed Text • HEBREWS 10:23–36 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 40:1–13**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE the stories of early believers who suffered for the sake of their faith, LONG for the courage to endure suffering as a result of our faithful witness, and SHARE in the suffering of Christians around the world.

## In Focus

Anthony and Sharita had dated for one year and been friends for eight. They had had their ups and downs in their relationship. Some bad decisions from Sharita's past kept coming back to bite her, it seemed. But with prayer and heartfelt changes, they would work through the troubles as they came.

One Saturday, Anthony met with Mr. Williams, Sharita's father. Anthony said to him, "May I have your permission to ask Sharita to marry me? I love and respect your daughter and want to make her my partner for life. She is my blessing from God!"

Mr. Williams thought for a moment and smiled. "You have my permission, Anthony," he said. "Let's pray for you and Sharita's life together."

One evening as Anthony and Sharita walked through the park, Anthony knelt on one knee and proposed. Sharita was speechless. As tears ran down her cheeks, she said, "I have made too many mistakes in my life. You can't truly love me, because I have not forgiven myself. I don't deserve a life with you. I love you, but I can't marry you!"

As Sharita started to leave, Anthony said, "We all make mistakes, but God forgives us when we sincerely come to Him. I know you have a sincere heart. Otherwise, we wouldn't have made it this far. We can't let another little struggle stop us from the beautiful relationship we've been working toward."

*Through faith in Christ, our sins are forgiven and we have a new life. In today's lesson, we can develop a personal relationship with Jesus by faith and enter into the presence of God.*

## Keep in Mind

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;  
(for he is faithful that promised;)" (Hebrews 10:23, KJV).



## Focal Verses

**KJV Hebrews 10:23** Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

**24** And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

**25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

**26** For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

**27** But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

**28** He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

**29** Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

**30** For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

**31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**32** But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

**33** Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

**34** For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

**35** Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

**36** For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Holy of Holies.** It was located in the innermost sanctuary of the Temple. Separated from the other parts of the Temple by a thick curtain, the Holy of Holies was especially associated with the presence of Yahweh. In the early years of the existence of the Temple, the Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant, which represented God's presence with the people of Israel. When Jesus died on the Cross, however, the curtain separating God's presence from the world tore.

**High Priest.** All Temple worship was ultimately governed by the high priest. This most sacred of positions was hereditary through

the line of Aaron, Moses' brother. Normally, the high priest served for life.

## Background

Sacrifices were practiced from the earliest of times in the Old Testament. Animals were imperfect sacrifices that could not completely purify or atone for people's sins. The writer of Hebrews expresses the importance and superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies one day a year when he would make reconciling sacrifices for the sins of the entire nation. This was the only way the Jews knew to approach God.

The writer of Hebrews explained a new covenant promise was placed into effect when Christ died (Hebrews 9:11-12, 24-28). The new covenant frees believers from the bondage of the first covenant. God took away the Levitical sacrificial system, which was the first arrangement when He established the perfect sacrifice—Jesus Christ.

The hope of enjoying the presence of God, of approaching Him freely in an intimate relationship is the hope referred to in our first verse today. The new covenant is the promise we can trust God to keep.

## At-A-Glance

1. Our Profession of Faith (Hebrews 10:23-25)
2. Knowledge of the Truth (vv. 26-27)
3. How God Will Judge His People (vv. 28-31)
4. Looking Forward Through Suffering (vv. 32-36)

## In Depth

### 1. Our Profession of Faith (Hebrews 10:23-25)

The writer encourages believers to “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Hebrews 10:23). God reveals His promises and truths through His Word; thus, we must embrace God’s Word and resist temptation and opposition. He wants to reassure the believers by calling them to remember, “[God] is faithful that promised” God will do what He has promised (Hebrews 10:23).

The writer also instructs the believers to “consider” each other (v. 24). Believers must provoke or stir up the qualities of love and good works toward each other (v. 24). The writer knew believers could have an impact on one another by loving and doing good deeds for each other.

Because of the fear of persecution, some of the believers had stopped attending worship services; therefore, the writer encourages the believers to pull together to stir up loving and active faith. The fellowship of believers is a source of encouragement; it is an opportunity to share faith and grow stronger.

*Think of a fellow believer close to you. How can you encourage that person?*

### 2. Knowledge of the Truth (vv. 26-27)

The writer of Hebrews reminds the believers that if they “sin wilfully,” they deliberately reject Christ (v. 26). It is a conscious rejection of God after receiving the truth and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than an occasional act of sin. Believers should not willfully rebel against God’s provisions after receiving and fully understanding the “knowledge of the truth,” which is Christ’s offer of salvation (Hebrews 10:26).

The consequences of rejecting God are “judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,” and there is no hope of forgiveness (Hebrews 10:27). Thus, those who reject Christ and disobey God are His adversaries. There is one certain judgment, death, and destruction, for obstinate apostates. The apostates will experience the wrath of God because there is no other help for sinners who reject their only remedy—salvation through accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

*How would you explain verse 26 to a Christian still new in the faith?*

### 3. How God Will Judge His People (vv. 28-31)

The Old Testament refers to the sin of idolatry that requires “two witnesses, or three witnesses ... [to] be put to death” (Deuteronomy 17:6). The judgment for idolatry was death by stoning, but there is a worse punishment for someone who rejects the word



of Christ. If someone considers the “blood of the covenant ... an unholy thing,” the person grieves the “Spirit of grace,” which is the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:29). The person that rejects the Spirit of God will receive a punishment greater than physical death.

Judgment belongs to God for “the LORD shall judge his people” (Deuteronomy 32:36). There is no other sacrifice for sin except Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. Whoever rejects God’s mercy will receive God’s judgment. The apostate will experience an eternal punishment from God’s own hands. However, believers, who have received the mercy of God through Christ, are saved, and there is nothing to fear.

*Can a person lose their salvation? In light of your answer, how do you understand apostasy?*

#### 4. Looking Forward Through Suffering (vv. 32-36)

The writer then changes tone, back to the encouraging words he used in vv. 23-25. He no longer needs to scare them into compliance with God’s law in the face of persecution. He already knows they can persevere, because they have been doing so already. They have undergone some of the same suffering the apostles have. They were able to do this because they were looking forward to God’s reward. While it is a fearful thing to stand before God’s judgment if you do not obey Him, it is a blessed thing if you do obey Him. Judgment Day for God’s faithful followers, who suffer with patient endurance, will see the receipt of all God has promised.

#### Search the Scriptures

1. What three exhortations does the author make (Hebrews 10:23-24)?
2. What is the significance of the Old Testament quotations in verse 30?

#### Discuss the Meaning

1. How can we draw near and remain in the presence of God each day? How can we truly experience God’s presence?
2. What is the Church’s relationship with persecution today? Are Western churches really persecuted? What does this status mean for persevering in the faith?

#### Liberating Lesson

Faith is effective when we depend on God and rest in what Christ has done on the Cross. The writer of Hebrews urged believers to recognize the superiority of our faith and live in obedience to God each day. Through Christ, we have an eternal reward and significant privileges that we can experience through our new life in Christ.

Through Christ, we can experience God’s presence and develop a relationship with Him. We can grow in faith and experience a deeper relationship with God when we trust and believe without doubts and concerns that the world presents. The world is temporary, but our life with God is eternal. Each day we must trust God and hold onto our faith and then share our faith with others. When we share our love for God, we can encourage others and introduce them to a new life through Christ.

#### Application for Activation

The world focuses on tangible rewards, promotions, and recognition with financial bonuses. The world encourages the pursuit of tangible endeavors and earthly wealth with retirement plans focused on life in the world. As believers, we have a purpose that is not focused on earthly rewards. Because we have accepted Christ by faith, we are friends of Christ with a purpose to share our love for Christ through faith. Consider local ministries that allow you to share your faith in God. Volunteer your time to share your love for God with people who do not know Him, or share your faith

and encourage believers who are homebound or sick. Help others to remain faithful and experience the presence of God each day. Make a daily affirmation to share your faith. Finally, ask God for boldness to share your faith with others. God will give you the opportunity and bless your desire to be faithful.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Eschatological. es-kuh-tuh-**LOJ**-ih-kuhl

Recompense. rec-om-pense

Septuagint. **SEP**-too-uh-jint

Apostasy. Ah-**PAH**-stah-see.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Save Your Life by Losing It  
(Mark 8:31-37)

### TUESDAY

Respond to Abusers with Blessings  
(1 Peter 3:9-19)

### WEDNESDAY

Be Faithful Until Death  
(Revelation 2:8-11)

### THURSDAY

Sanctified by Christ's Sacrifice  
(Hebrews 10:1-10)

### FRIDAY

The Inner Life of New Believers  
(Hebrews 10:11-18)

### SATURDAY

Approach God with a Pure Heart  
(Hebrews 10:19-22)

### SUNDAY

Act in Ways That Preserve the Faith  
(Hebrews 10:23-36)



# A Conquering Faith

**Bible Background • 1 JOHN 4-5**

**Printed Text • 1 JOHN 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5 | Devotional Reading • JOHN 14:15-24**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will REMEMBER the love of God described by the writer of 1 John, REFLECT on the various expressions of God's love in our lives, and RESPOND to the challenge to love others with Christ-like love.

## In Focus

When Deidra got to church Sunday morning, Ricky was right in her face. He was clingy and hardly gave her space to talk to anyone else. Deidra tolerated Ricky because he was a member of her Sunday School and a fellow brother in Christ. Though Deidra appeared to be kind, inside she was fuming with anger at Ricky's inability to take what she was sure were obvious clues that she was not comfortable with his attentiveness.

Deidra began to feel guilty about being nice to Ricky and then mocking him behind his back. Deidra understood her behavior did not reflect the teachings of Christ, which meant loving our fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God. This meant she had to be honest and forthright with Ricky and stop her cruel remarks about him to others.

Deidra tried to think of how God saw Ricky. God knew that Ricky was only trying to be kind, but didn't understand social situations the way most people did. Maybe instead of shutting him down, Deidra could help Ricky learn how to read the room better.

The following Sunday, Deidra talked to Ricky and related her discomfort. She felt the resentment leave, replaced by a greater appreciation for Ricky, who graciously received her message.

*How do we interact with others to show that we "dwell in love" with God? Should these interactions differ between Christians and non-Christians?*

## Keep in Mind

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV** 1 John 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

## The People, Places, and Times

**John.** The writer of 1 John is thought to be John the apostle and Gospel-writer. John, like his brother James, was a fisherman until he was called by Jesus to join the other eleven disciples. For three years, he followed and learned from Christ. John, along with Peter and James, was a part of Jesus' inner circle. In his own Gospel account, he refers to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). After Pentecost, John was said to have led the church in Ephesus and eventually was exiled during the reign of Domitian to the island of Patmos.

**Day of Judgment.** This judgment refers to the final and ultimate judgment of God. It involves the final appearance of Christ when He judges the actions of all humankind. This phrase finds its roots in the Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord. The Hebrews believed this would be the day when God would judge the nations and vindicate His people. In the New Testament, it loses its nationalistic tone and refers to God's solemn condemnation of all evil. On that day, Christians will inherit

eternal life and unbelievers the ill-fated choice of eternal damnation (hell).

## Background

The letters of John are three brief epistles. This does not mean our study of them should be brief, though, for they deal with insightful and significant questions about the fundamental nature of Christian spiritual experience. The Johannine letters also provide fascinating insight into the condition of the church at the end of the first century. Heresy played a critical and deceptive role in the church. The genuine nature of a committed and obedient relationship to God through Christ is strongly and affectionately depicted and commanded.

Throughout his Gospel and epistles, John uses very simple language to relate complex theological ideas. The unity of the Trinity, the inward and outward lives of the Christian, the presence of the Antichrist and the coming of the end times are all couched in simple, repeated terms: love, light, truth, liar. In this week's passage, John describes how love is evidence of



our relationship to God (1 John 4:14–21). The present assurance is so obvious that even the fear of Judgment Day is eliminated (vv. 17–18), knowing that we have already overcome the world (5:4).

## At-A-Glance

1. Confident Confessions (1 John 4:2-3, 13-14)
2. Confident Judgment (vv. 15-17)
3. Confident Victory (5:4-5)

## In Depth

### 1. Confident Confessions (1 John 4:2–3, 13–14)

Both John's audience and we today have experienced trusting someone who betrayed or deceived them. We overcome deception with faith, that is, the right belief in Jesus, who gives the victory. John gave precautionary advice about avoiding false teachers, as many were claiming to be sent by God (vv. 1-3). Only those who were truly inspired by the Spirit of God would openly confess the crucified, resurrected Christ. John and the other apostles had witnessed and could verify that Jesus Christ was the incarnate Word (v. 14), the Messiah sent from heaven and sacrificing his life through death on the Cross. This doctrine is of the Spirit of God.

All Christians receive the Holy Spirit as living proof of God's presence in our lives. The Holy Spirit gives us power to love and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and assures that we are truly connected to our Heavenly Father and not being deceived.

*Describe a time you heard of someone being misled by a false teacher. How did the experience impact those the teacher misled?*

### 2. Confident Judgment (vv. 15–17)

Perfect love does not mean we love perfectly; rather, perfect love is the goal we always keep before us in the person of Jesus. Jesus loves flawlessly because He accepts us with all our imperfections and mistakes, and regardless of our gender, sex, race, marital, educational, economic status, physical, mental, or emotional qualities, age, or cultural background. He loves us!

Knowing we are loved by God diminishes our apprehension of Judgment Day, increases our need to see others saved and supplied us freedom to love indiscriminately and do the work God called us to do. The confidence we receive in acknowledging God's love is not arrogance. Arrogance is when we depend and boast in our own abilities. The confidence that the Bible describes is a declaration of our relationship with Jesus and evidence of the abiding Holy Spirit within us.

*How do we ensure our confidence does not become arrogance that turns away rather than attracts others to Christ?*

### 3. Confident Victory (5:4–5)

In the letter's final chapter, John turns to the interrelationship of love and righteousness. Those who are born of God do not find His commandments to be troublesome (5:3). The faith of the children of God gives them power to discover victory over the world that would obstruct the execution of commands (v. 4). That faith rests in Jesus as the Son of God (v. 5). When we believe Jesus is the Son of God, we become one with Him. This gives us the victory because He has said, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). This is a past tense verb, indicating the victory has already occurred.

*How do we "battle against" and "overcome" the world while showing the love of God?*

## Search the Scriptures

1. How do we know God lives in us (1 John 4:13)?
2. What gives proof that we love God (vv. 16–17)?

## Discuss the Meaning

1. Why is it important that we love one another?
2. Why do we fear judgment or punishment from God?
3. How is God's love made perfect?

## Liberating Lesson

Society teaches us to love conditionally. Some people live in fear of rejection from those who claim to love them. This is not real love. One of the most remarkable attributes of God is His ability to love unconditionally and completely. No matter what we face in life, God's love is everlasting and nothing can separate us from His love! Not only do we have God's promise of love but also the promise of eternal life. With this kind of reassurance, what keeps us from loving others?

## Application for Activation

The Lord has high regards for the community of believers and we should too. All we can do is learn to love and obey God's command. Pray and ask God to reveal where you can extend love to someone in the family of God. After God shows you, act! Write in a journal about how the incident impacted your life and share your experience with the class.

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Johannine. joe-**HAH**-nine  
Antichrist. **AN**-tie-cry-st

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Testing Our Love for God  
(Deuteronomy 13:1-4)

### TUESDAY

Love God by Keeping  
His Commandments  
(John 14:15-24)

### WEDNESDAY

Discerning the Spirit of Truth and Error  
(1 John 4:1, 4-6)

### THURSDAY

Knowing God, We Can Love Others  
(1 John 4:7-12)

### FRIDAY

Faith Is the Victory  
(1 John 5:1-3)

### SATURDAY

Believers in Jesus Have Life  
(1 John 5:6-12)

### SUNDAY

Faith That Loves Overcomes Obstacles  
(1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5)

## Notes

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# Hope Eternal

**Bible Background • 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–5:10**

**Printed Text • 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–5:10 | Devotional Reading • ROMANS 7:14–26**

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will **ACKNOWLEDGE** the hope Paul, faced with death, manifested in God's eternal promise, **EXPERIENCE** awe in the faith of family and friends who are facing their mortality, and **DEVELOP** a growing trust in God's promise of eternal life through faith.

### In Focus

Sharon knew that if she didn't hurry, she would be late for the funeral at the church this morning. As the lead usher, it was her responsibility to make sure the other ushers were in place, hand out funeral programs, and seat guests. Her hands were shaking as she combed out her hair. Fred, the 24-year-old son of one of the church's long-time members, had been killed in a car wreck on Saturday night. The two passengers in Fred's car were still hospitalized, both in critical condition. Fred had been thrown from the car and died at the scene. Fred came from a large family and had been a popular young man in high school and at the local community college. Although Fred's parents were faithful members, she had only seen Fred in church on Mother's Day. She had run into him several times outside of the church and had even invited him to come and visit more often. He had always laughed and teased that he was too young for that "church stuff."

Sharon had ushered at enough funerals to know that there would be a lot of crying; that part she didn't mind. It was the screaming and having to restrain guests from throwing themselves into the casket that bothered her. While Sharon understood that grief was natural, the funerals of young people were always chaotic. She wondered what Pastor would say during the eulogy; he couldn't possibly have known Fred that well. How, she wondered, would he comfort Fred's family and friends?

*How do you offer comfort in the face of death? How does knowing Christ change how we understand death?*

## Keep in Mind

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"  
(2 Corinthians 5:1, KJV)



## Focal Verses

**KJV** 2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Heavenly Bodies.** Today, we spend so much time and money on our physical bodies while trying to ignore the fact that the aging process is an inevitable part of life. That is not to say that we shouldn't take care of our bodies by developing healthy eating habits and getting proper rest and exercise. But we must realize that the bodies we now possess are not going to function forever. Still, Christians can rejoice that one day we will receive a heavenly body that is specifically designed for heaven. Our earthly bodies are contrasted with that which is spiritual, which can exist in the heavenly realm. There is a realm for physical (natural) existence and there is another for spiritual existence. Each realm has a distinct body fashioned for it, just like each season has its own clothing.

**Judgment Seat.** The judgment seat was found in a palace or tent where court proceedings were held. The emperor or general would sit in this highly elevated throne-like chair to conduct trials and make pronouncements of extreme importance. Pontius Pilate and King Herod conducted business from such a seat. In the great halls, all eyes could easily find this focal point as the chair's importance was obvious.

## Background

Paul founded the church at Corinth and reminded the young assembly of believers that, because he was their organizer, he had a right to speak regarding their management. The big issue rampant in the church was whether Paul was a genuine apostle. Paul asserted that he was and sent Titus to deliver that message. Titus was well received and Paul rejoiced at

the happy news when he met his messenger in Macedonia.

In addition to this issue of apostolic authority, the Corinthians are wondering about how they are to deal with persecution and death. Shouldn't God protect them from these harsh realities since they are faithfully following Him? Paul turns the question on its side, saying that these harsh realities are nothing compared to the glory that awaits the Christian in heaven after death. Chapter 5 begins with Paul comparing the earthly body with the heavenly body as the difference between a tent and a building. The tent is a temporary dwelling while the building is solid. Paul hoped to be transformed into his heavenly body rather than go through the nakedness of death. The Platonists, Pythagoreans, and Gnostics during the time of Paul's writings saw the body as a prison for the soul and yearned to be rid of it. Paul saw the new body as a desirable garment which would cover the soul.

## At-A-Glance

1. Light Suffering (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
2. New Clothing (5:1-5)
3. Confident Living (vv. 6-10)

## In Depth

### 1. Light Suffering (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Part of the means used by God in this transforming, renewing process is suffering (cf. 1 Peter 4:1, 13-14). Paul compared the sufferings he had experienced, severe as they were, to light and momentary troubles, pressures, and hardships. They were nothing in view of the eternal glory that would be his when he would be in Jesus' presence and would be like Him (1 Corinthians 15:49). Paul is here weighing his sufferings on God's scales. He discovers that

his sufferings are light when compared to the weight of glory God has stored up for him. These verses bring wonderful assurance to the believer in times of suffering. How important it is for us to live with eternity's values in view. Life takes on new meaning when we see things through God's eyes.

Paul introduces a paradox to the unbeliever, but a precious truth to the Christian. We live by faith, not by sight; this faith enables the Christian to see things that cannot be seen (Hebrew 11:1-3). The world thinks we are crazy because we dare to believe God's Word and live according to His will. We pass up the things that people covet because our hearts are set on higher values.

*How are Christians supposed to "look" at "things which are not seen"?*

### 2. New Clothing (5:1-5)

The human body is the vehicle of expression for the soul, the inner man. It is referred to as an earthly tabernacle, a temporary tent. In this body, we "groan," indicating both physical and mental expressions. The body, wonderful though it is, has a built-in mortality factor, and will be torn down and dissolved. When it is dismantled we call it death.

In stark contrast to the temporal scene, is Paul's emphasis upon the future—our heavenly, eternal abode. In heaven, we will be at home with the Lord. Paul voiced his strong desire for this state of permanence (Philippians 1:21-23). Our heavenly or eternal body is compared to fresh, new clothing. In Paul's thought, clothes really did "make the man." The life that now is will be engulfed by the life that is real—life eternal.

*How does the Spirit act as a guarantee of our new life in heaven?*

### 3. Confident Living (vv. 6-10)

The Apostle Paul affirms that the tug toward heaven continues while we serve on earth. The



brave continue to live as a testimony to the Lord. Even death is a testimony as we express confidence in what lies ahead. Death is not the worst thing that can happen to a Christian. He who created us has risen from the grave, and He will keep His promise to raise us also!

Paul also tells his readers, “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (v. 8). We cannot live in both our temporary and our eternal, glorified bodies at the same time. Our temporary bodies are temples of the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19) but more is yet to come. Our incompleteness urges us to desire the permanent house Jesus is preparing for us.

Paul ties it all back together. They should not fear painful trials on this earth because it’s all going to be worth it when we get our heavenly bodies and God judges our perseverance. One day believers will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged for what they have done. When God inspects us, He expects to find the fruit in our lives. In making choices, we should first ask whether God will be pleased with our choices.

*Can others see Jesus Christ in you? Do you live to make a positive difference in the world?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. What do the afflictions that we face today actually do for us? (v. 17)
2. What are the things seen and the things which are not seen according to Paul? (v. 18)
3. What should be the aim of a believer? (5:9)
4. What will happen to a believing Christian at the judgment seat of Christ? (v. 10)

### Discuss the Meaning

1. Paul says that our temporary earthly dwelling is a tent, while our permanent heavenly dwelling is a house. Where else do we see this imagery in Scripture? What implications does that have for understanding Paul here?

2. Discuss the following phrase: We are not free to live until we aren’t afraid to die. How would such an idea affect our living? How can this idea be blended with an attitude of safety and caution?

### Liberating Lesson

Adversities can serve a definite purpose in our lives. C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Problem with Pain*, says, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

Think of our society today. Most of the world’s achievements have come through hardship and pain, including most professions, inventions, personal accomplishments, relationships, parenting, great leaders, and church ministries. Take time and talk about how pain has been a driving force even in your life. There is truth to the saying: “No pain no gain.”

### Application for Activation

While we still do not like pain in our lives, we must see the value that it plays. Think of someone who is going through tough times. Using the lesson today, think of ways you could encourage them. Spend time this week praying that God would give you the right words to uplift and motivate others.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Paradox. **PAIR**-uh-docks.  
Platonist. **PLAY**-ton-ist.  
Pythagoreans. Puh-**THAH**-gore-**EE**-ans.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

From Death to Life in Christ  
(1 Corinthians 15:16-23)

### TUESDAY

Strengthening the Inner Being  
(Ephesians 3:14-21)

### WEDNESDAY

Every Deed, Good or Evil, Judges  
(Ecclesiastes 12:9-14)

### THURSDAY

God's Judgment of Human  
Behavior Impartial  
(Romans 2:4-11)

### FRIDAY

Paul, Confident in the Ministry  
(2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

### SATURDAY

Entering the Presence of Jesus  
(2 Corinthians 4:7-15)

### SUNDAY

Live the Faith with Confidence  
(2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10)





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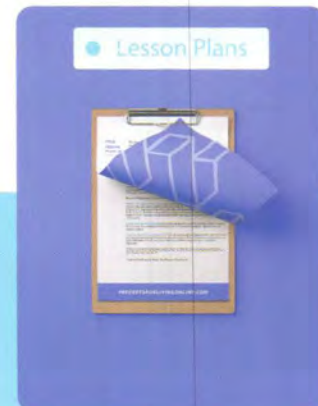
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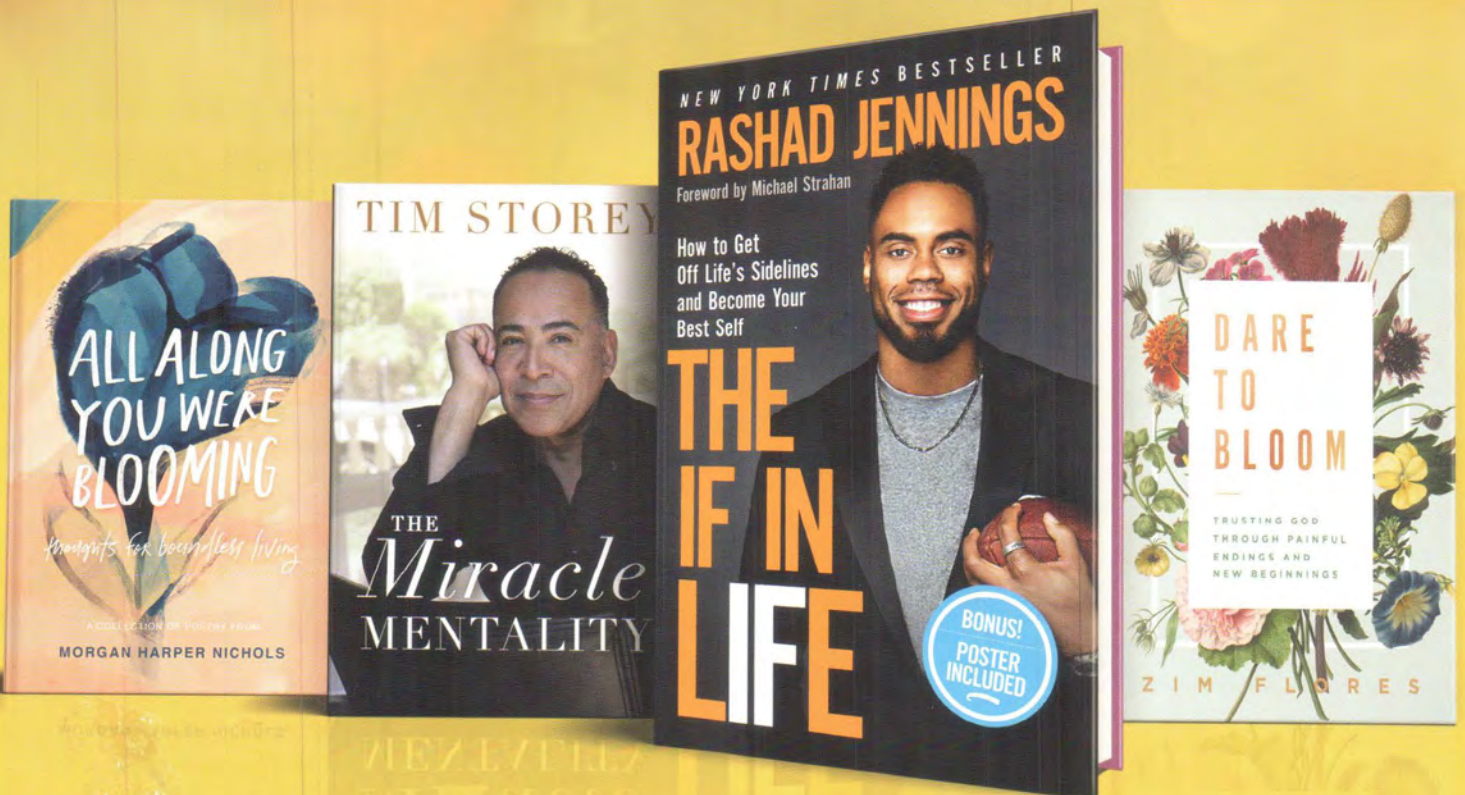
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