

BREAKTHROUGH: ***A Study on the Book of Acts***

WITH COMPANION BOOK: TRANSFORMATION 1:8

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Introduction: Why Study Acts?

The book of Acts explores the growth and expansion of the early church following Jesus' resurrection and ascension. It chronicles the powerful movement of the Holy Spirit—God's presence at work through the apostles—as they spread the good news of Jesus Christ to the known world.

Although many Bibles title this book Acts of the Apostles, a more fitting name might be Acts of the Holy Spirit or Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus.

Interestingly, while Jesus is not a central tangible figure in Acts, His presence and influence permeate every moment.

As we embark on this journey through the historical account of the early church, consider how the movement of the Spirit is leading you today. How is God calling you to be a witness and follower of the Risen Christ in our world and our time?

Let's begin by examining our mission through the lens of Acts 17.

Our Mission: Making the Unknown Known (Acts 17:16-28)

We all find ourselves in these places—the places of endless debate. You know, the ones where nothing truly significant gets accomplished, yet people act as if they have everything figured out.

That is precisely where we find ourselves in this passage: the Areopagus, a gathering place akin to a city council. By the time Paul arrived, it had become a meeting ground for philosophers—thinkers who spent their days discussing and debating ideas.

Among them were two main groups:

The Epicureans—They believed everything happened by chance, death was the end of all things, and the gods were distant, uninvolved, and indifferent. Their highest aim was pleasure.

The Stoics—They believed that everything was divine, that all events were governed by fate, and that history endlessly repeated itself in cycles of destruction and renewal.

These were the intellectual elite, the place to hear the most exciting ideas about the world and how to live in it. They prided themselves on their wisdom—yet they had no way of making “the other side” agree with them.

The Problem with False Religion

This situation reveals something crucial: intellect alone has never eliminated false religion. These people were worshipping what they liked, building altars to their desires and fears alike.

The truth is, we do the same today. We worship—meaning we give excessive time, attention, and resources—to the things and people that bring us pleasure. At the same time, we also worship what we fear, doing anything to keep uncertainty and hardship at bay.

Then, Paul enters the scene, and the Holy Spirit begins to move.

Paul's Calling and Mission

Remember Paul's calling in Acts 9:

“But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’”

Paul was handpicked by God to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles and their rulers. Despite beatings, imprisonments, and slander, Paul remained steadfast in his mission.

As he walked through Athens, he was deeply distressed by what he saw—altars everywhere, each one dedicated to a different god. The people were desperate to cover all their bases, ensuring their lives remained easy and their gods appeased.

The Altar to the Unknown God

As Paul searched the city, even entering the Temple of Athena, one altar caught his eye—an altar to an unknown god. This intrigued him. The Athenians thought they had accounted for every deity, but just in case they had missed one, they erected this altar as a safeguard.

It may seem strange, but is it really so different from what we do today?

Modern Idolatry

Walking through a Walmart, I see idols and gods everywhere—things tempting and enticing people to pour their money, time, and devotion into them.

- The god of Tylenol—offering relief at any cost.
- The god of Coca-Cola—promising comfort in a bottle.
- The god of Blue Bell—demanding indulgence.
- The god of entertainment and fashion—shaping identities.
- The god of food—consuming rather than nourishing.

And in the midst of all this, I see images of the God—yet no one is paying attention.

The same is true at football stadiums:

- The god of the end zone.
- The god of children's success.
- The god of "Football is life."

People pour their money, energy, and passion into these things, while the Spirit grieves that so few acknowledge the true God.

But most troubling of all, I see this in the church:

- The god of music.
- The god of carpet color.
- The god of furniture placement.
- The god of status symbols.
- The god of the preacher's sermon.

Worship becomes centered on personal preferences rather than surrendering to the living God.

Why Do We Worship These Things?

Because they are controllable. We like gods that we can manipulate, place where we want them, and make them serve our desires. We crave control, even in our faith.

Even as Christians, we fall into this trap. We say we trust God, yet we cling to control, forcing things to happen in our own way and timing. If things don't go as planned, we blame others, circumstances, or even God Himself.

What Causes You Distress?

The Holy Spirit is constantly at work, opening our eyes to what should distress us. But often, our frustrations are misplaced:

- The plane didn't arrive on time.
- The restaurant got our order wrong.
- Someone took our parking spot.
- Our team lost the game.

We pour our emotions into these trivial matters, yet when it comes to worship and serving Christ, we are emotionally drained. We have conditioned ourselves to watch worship rather than participate in it.

Think about the way we speak:

- “My football team.”
- “My baseball team.”
- But when it comes to church? “The preacher’s sermon,” “The music that day.”

We subtly shift our focus away from worshiping God to making worship about us.

The Athenians and the Unknown God

The Athenians weren’t opposed to adding new gods, but they had rules:

- The sponsor must claim to represent a deity.
- The sponsor must provide evidence that the deity is willing to reside in Athens.
- The deity’s presence must benefit Athenian life.

Paul met these conditions:

Verses 22-23 – He established himself as a proper herald of Jesus.

Verses 24-29 – He declared that the living God is not confined to temples or religious rituals.

Verses 30-31 – He proclaimed that Jesus seeks the lost, calls for repentance, and has been resurrected—offering hope rather than fear.

As Paul spoke, many Athenians were intrigued and began to follow him, eager to learn more about Jesus Christ.

Our Call Today

We find ourselves in the same position as Paul. We walk through:

- Walmart.
- Grocery stores.
- Movie theaters.
- Sports fields.
- Churches.

And everywhere, we see people worshipping lesser gods. They may not realize it, but they carry symbols of the God—the cross, a representation of Christ—without truly knowing Him.

Even as believers, we sometimes miss the opportunity to know God personally. But the Holy Spirit offers us a fresh wind and fire. We are called to proclaim with boldness, joy, and courage that Jesus Christ is Risen!

This is not just a remembrance of what He did. It is a call to live in the reality that He lives.

Will We Be Bold?

Are we strong enough in Christ to do what He asks? Not everyone will receive the message of Jesus, but we remain steadfast, partnering with the Holy Spirit as we go into the world.

People came to faith because Paul was obedient to the Spirit's call.

May we be just as bold in our faith—proclaiming Christ, encountering Him, and inviting the world to truly know the unknown God.

BEGINNING QUESTIONS:

What are your thoughts about this scripture/sermon?

What are you looking forward to as we begin this journey through Acts?

What might the Spirit be speaking to you as you begin this journey through the book of Acts?

How to Use this Guide

Each week begins with a sermon or reflection on the week's scripture, written by Ryan, to help guide your thoughts and deepen your understanding. These sermons serve as starting points for discussion and reflection on the passage.

You are also encouraged to explore the discussion questions that follow each sermon. While the questions remain the same each week, your answers and conversations will evolve as you engage with the scripture in new ways.

Additionally, there is a companion resource titled *Transformation 1:8*, located in the appendix. This discipleship challenge book is designed to help you explore what it means to live as a disciple of Christ in today's world. I encourage you to take the time to engage with this resource and discover how it can transform both your personal faith and your communal walk with Christ.

Week 1: Timing (Acts 1)

Everything starts small. It takes something seemingly insignificant to spark a movement that can change the world.

Have you ever seen the headwaters of the Mississippi River? At first glance, it's unimpressive—a small, quiet stream. But over time, through movement and force, it grows into one of the most powerful rivers in the world.

The Book of Acts paints a similar picture of the early Church. It begins with a small group gathering together, but through the unstoppable power of the Holy Spirit, a movement is unleashed that changes the world.

The Action-Packed Story of Acts

Acts has just about everything—except dinosaurs! Think about it: earthquakes, shipwrecks, avenging angels, daring escapes, riots, murder plots, political intrigue, and courtroom drama. Who needs soap operas or court shows when Acts has it all?

Today, we begin a series on the movement of the Holy Spirit in the early Church by exploring the narrative of Acts.

Written between 70 and 80 AD, Acts tells the story of the Church's explosive growth. The book's outline is found in Acts 1:8:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8, NIV)

The story unfolds just as Jesus said:

The message starts in Jerusalem,
Spreads to Judea and Samaria,

And ultimately reaches the ends of the known world (Rome).

This happens through the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, Acts could be more accurately titled *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* or even *The Acts of the Risen and Ascended Lord*.

When reading Acts, remember it is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, showing how believers began faithfully living out their discipleship in everyday life.

Throughout this series, we will explore:

- How Christians can live in a world with differing theological views.
- The purpose of the Church.
- The meaning of salvation.
- How we are called to care for others.
- And more.

Acts 1: The Theme of Timing

Acts 1 sets the stage by introducing key themes:

- The promise of the Holy Spirit.
- Waiting for God's timing.
- The mission of Jesus.
- His ascension.
- The selection of a new apostle to replace Judas.

There is so much to unpack in this one chapter, but today, we will focus on a single, overarching theme: timing.

Have you ever heard this joke?

What's the hardest part of telling a joke? Timing.

One of our greatest struggles is wanting to know what's coming next—what to do, when to act, and how things will turn out. Let's be honest: how many of us enjoy waiting? We want things immediately—yesterday, even. We live in a constant state of impatience.

I know this is something I struggle with. My son, Solomon, loves to remind me of a joke I tell—how I get impatient at McDonald's while waiting for my own drink...and I'm the one pouring it!

The Faith to Wait

Here's the truth:

The life of faith is forged in the fires of patience.

Faith grows when we wrestle with ideas and new ways of living. It becomes deeply rooted in us when we take the time to let it sink into our daily lives.

This past summer, I participated in a Bible reading challenge, which I loved. After finishing a 40-day devotional (available on Facebook and soon to be published), I felt called to approach my devotional time differently.

I have always been someone who likes to start and finish projects quickly. But now, I am doing something that will take years to complete—and I need to be okay with that.

What have I started?

I've begun handwriting the Bible. Each day, I spend 15-30 minutes copying Scripture (from the NIV), moving at a much slower pace than I'm used to. Yet, I've noticed words, phrases, and repetitions I had never seen before. It has been an incredible experience, and I pray I will see this project through.

Why do I share this?

To brag? No.

I share this because Jesus always calls His disciples to wait.

He calls us to seek His will in everything. Our plans only succeed when we take time to discern what Jesus is saying—what we should do and how we should do it.

Learning to Wait on God

Notice how Jesus rebuked the disciples in Acts 1:6-7. They were focused on when things would happen, but Jesus essentially told them, You're not ready yet. When the time comes, you will be.

Can you imagine that? After hearing all these exciting things about what Jesus was leading them to do, He says...wait.

Put this in today's context—how many of us would be willing to do what Jesus asks if the first step is waiting?

Instead of rushing ahead, we are called to:

Spend time in prayer.

Discern the right timing and action together.

Trust that Jesus will reveal what we need when we need it.

Even though we might want to take action immediately, faith requires us to stay—to meditate on what has been revealed so far, trusting that God will provide direction in His perfect time.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The disciples didn't move forward alone. The Holy Spirit—often the most neglected person of the Trinity—was sent to empower them.

The Holy Spirit is the one who:

Sanctifies us—making us whole and holy.

Convicts us of truth.

Comforts us in trials.

Guides us in God's ways through Scripture.

But for us to experience this, we must take time to seek the Spirit's presence and power.

Our Mission

What is our mission as followers of Christ?

Paul lays it out in 1 Timothy 2:1-4:

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Jesus commands it in Matthew 28:19-20:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

And we follow Jesus' own mission in Luke 19:10:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

At times, this mission may seem impossible. And for us, it is. But through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, what God plans for, God provides for.

An Invitation to Trust God's Timing

This week, I invite you to be present to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Identify areas where you struggle with impatience.

Ask God to help you trust His timing.

Wrestle with what it means to wait on Him.

Prayer and waiting may seem small, but when we seek God's will, we will see Him move in mighty ways.

How are you at waiting?

Are you truly trusting God's timing?

Or are you trying to force things to happen on your own terms?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

- What stands out to you in this scripture? In other words, what is the Holy Spirit impressing on you to notice?
- What did the early church/apostles do in this scripture? How do you see Jesus working in this picture? How can you translate this for today?
- How is our church mission and culture the same from the early church mission and culture? How is it different?
- What challenges you in this scripture? Why? How might the Spirit be leading you?
- Take time to pray about what the Spirit is leading you to do. Are you being led to do something within or through this church because of the Spirit's word in this scripture? What would that look like? How could you begin?
- What can you do, today, to be more in tune with the Spirit's leading in this passage?

**HOMEWORK: READ THE NEXT SCRIPTURE AND BEGIN
TO WORK IN THE “TRANSFORMATION 1:8” BOOK
CHALLENGE**

Week 2: United with Christ (Acts 2)

As we continue our journey through the Book of Acts, remember this: a small beginning—a small group of believers—eventually transformed the entire world. Think of the Mississippi River. It starts as a modest stream but grows into a mighty, unstoppable force.

When we look back at the early Church in biblical times, it's easy to feel envious. Miracles were happening everywhere. Thousands of people joined the movement of Christ at once. Evangelism might have seemed effortless.

But was it really?

What We Often Miss

There's something crucial about the early Church that we can easily overlook—something we often miss today as well.

What is it? Complete devotion to Jesus and His teachings. A faith that was not compromised to fit the culture. They didn't just speak about truth—they lived it out.

And what was the result?

Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, brought unity and growth.

The Obsession with Growth

Today, we often become so obsessed with growth that we try to force things to happen on our own. When things don't go the way we expect, we get discouraged. So, we turn to programs, events, and entertainment to draw people in.

These methods may attract a crowd, but true transformation doesn't come from entertainment—it comes from unwavering faithfulness to the truth.

Faithfulness Brings Power

Here's something we all need to hear:

When we remain faithful to the truth—without compromise—we will witness incredible signs and wonders. When the Church (both individually and collectively) refuses to water down the gospel to “fit” the world’s expectations, Jesus Christ will reveal His power and bring the results.

What is the result?

"The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."
(Acts 2:47)

The growth of the Church is Christ’s work, not ours. We are not responsible for producing results—we are called to be faithful and obedient. As we walk in obedience, we will see the Holy Spirit move.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Look at this passage—what does the Holy Spirit bring to the believers?

Unity.

But let’s clarify something: unity is not the same as uniformity.

We don’t have to do everything the same way. One of the most beautiful aspects of the Spirit’s work is that He does not create “cookie-cutter” believers.

Scripture repeatedly tells us that the Holy Spirit gives unique gifts to different people (Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12). This means that while not everyone will act or serve in the same way, we are united in mission and in Gospel truth.

Our unity in mission—not uniformity in method—is essential.

A Picture of True Unity

When we stay focused on Jesus, unexpected things happen.

We see a diverse group of people working together to make the hope of God’s kingdom a reality.

The Church is called to be a living example of what it means to dwell in God's presence.

How?

Through our lives, we demonstrate complete devotion to Jesus Christ.

The Church is both physical and spiritual:

It is physical because we proclaim the Gospel, celebrate communion, and worship together.

It is spiritual because we remain in constant communication with God through prayer and unity with Christ and His people.

What This Means for Us Today

So what does this have to do with us?

We are invited to examine our faith and ask God to show us where we are out of alignment with Him.

We must ask:

How has the Holy Spirit gifted us?

How has the Spirit called us to be faithful in our specific community?

Instead of trying to replicate what other churches are doing, we must remain faithful to our unique calling in our community.

And here's a crucial truth:

We don't need to try to attract people.

Jesus is beautiful and attractive enough.

Our job is to pay attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. When we do, we will see true transformation and genuine growth—not manufactured results.

The Power of Faithful Witness

The early Church was not focused on performance. Their worship was not about putting on a show. They were patient, allowing the Gospel to shape their lives. They applied its truth in their relationships, workplaces, and everyday encounters.

And what happened?

Outsiders noticed the transformation.

People began to wonder, What do they have that I don't?

Rumors spread about their gatherings, and misunderstandings arose. Yet, despite gossip and opposition, believers remained united in the Gospel, trusting the Spirit to bring transformation.

A Church Set Apart

When we remain focused on the Gospel and unified in Christ, something powerful happens:

The world sees that the Church is different.

We show the world what it looks like when God brings people together—how He breaks barriers, heals divisions, and reveals His presence through the Holy Spirit.

A Question to Consider

If we are not witnessing the Spirit's movement like we hope, we must ask ourselves:

Are we truly seeking the Holy Spirit?

Or are we looking for something else to entertain us?

Have we made church about human desires instead of God's presence?

The Point of It All

The Spirit of God is at work—bringing people to the truth of the Gospel, convicting hearts, leading people to repentance, and drawing them into His kingdom.

If we remain faithful to the truth, we will witness Jesus Christ revealing Himself through unity and growth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

- What stands out to you in this scripture? In other words, what is the Holy Spirit impressing on you to notice?
- What did the early church/apostles do in this scripture? How do you see Jesus working in this picture? How can you translate this for today?
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- Take time to pray about what the Spirit is leading you to do. Are you being led to do something within or through this church because of the Spirit's word in this scripture? What would that look like? How could you begin?
- What can you do, today, to be more in tune with the Spirit's leading in this passage?

**HOMEWORK: READ THE NEXT SCRIPTURE AND
CONTINUE TO WORK THROUGH THE
“TRANSFORMATION 1:8” BOOK CHALLENGE**

Week 3: Conversion (Acts 9)

This week, we turn to a well-known passage: the conversion of Saul (whom we know as Paul).

What should we do when we come across familiar scriptures? We should step back and attempt to read or listen to them from a fresh perspective—as if encountering them for the first time.

Why? Because every time we engage with Scripture, it should transform us.

That brings us to our word of the day: Conversion.

One scholar writes,

“Conversion is the beginning of the Christian journey, not its final destination... Conversion is not for the smug individual possession of the convert, but rather for the ongoing thrust of the gospel... God is the chief actor in all Lukan accounts of conversion.”

Conversion is God’s work in our lives—constantly transforming us into His likeness through Jesus Christ. But let’s be clear: conversion does not mean everything will suddenly become easy.

Take Saul (Paul), for example. He spent years proving that Jesus was at work in his life. His transformation had a profound impact on those around him.

Today, let’s look at this story through a different lens—the perspective of one of Saul’s traveling companions as they journeyed toward Damascus.

Through the Eyes of One of Saul’s Companions

"We had just received the letters from the high priest. Saul was still burning with rage against these people who followed Jesus. But something about him had changed since Stephen's stoning."

We knew exactly what we were looking for—those who belonged to the Way. We knew exactly where to find them. How dare these people claim Judaism was wrong? How dare they say that a dead man was alive? They had to be stopped before they convinced everyone.

I will admit, though—something about these Jesus-followers was different. Their lives were transformed. But how could someone who wasn't even here anymore have that kind of influence? Couldn't they see the chaos they were causing by speaking about Jesus? Our cities were being turned upside down!

Order had to be restored. That was our mission.

We had heard about synagogues and houses in Damascus where people were worshipping Jesus. We knew exactly where to go. And with the high priest's letters in hand, we had the authority to carry out our mission. That gave me confidence—we weren't acting alone. We had the law on our side.

The road to Damascus stretched before us. We had been walking for some time, discussing what we would do once we found these people. We were ready.

Then, out of nowhere—a blinding light!

There was something different about this light. Saul dropped to the ground. We froze. None of us knew what was happening.

We tried to move closer, but something held us back. We tried to speak to Saul, but he wasn't listening to us. Instead, we heard him cry out, "Who are you, Lord?"

This was strange. We saw nothing in the light, but there were sounds—words spoken—but we couldn't make out what was being said.

And then, just as quickly as it came, the light was gone.

Saul was still on the ground. He was panicked—he kept saying he was blind.

We helped him up, and he was grateful we were still there. But something about him had changed. He was different. We couldn't explain it, but we felt it.

He insisted that we continue to Damascus. We were still on a mission, after all. But something else had shifted—Saul kept talking about someone named Ananias. We knew him—he was one of the followers of the Way. We were ready to arrest him.

But then Saul said something we never expected.

"I must go to Ananias," he told us. "He will pray for me, and I will receive my sight again."

What?

We were confused. But Saul was still our leader, so we followed his orders.

When we arrived in Damascus, we waited outside as Saul entered Ananias' house. We watched as Ananias cautiously checked his surroundings, making sure no one saw Saul enter. And then, we waited.

After some time, Saul emerged.

His sight had returned.

But it wasn't just his eyes that had changed—he had changed.

"Jesus is the true Messiah," Saul told us. "He is the one I encountered in that great light. He is alive."

Our leader—Saul, the devoted Pharisee—was now proclaiming Jesus.

How Do We Know When Someone Has Been Converted?

Have you ever considered what Saul's companions experienced? They witnessed something life-altering, even if they didn't fully understand it.

So how do we recognize when someone has had a true conversion experience?

Some say conversion happens the moment we believe in Jesus. While belief is part of it, conversion is a process, not a single moment.

Look at the text:

Saul encountered Jesus on the road.

From that moment, he believed Jesus was the Messiah.

But his transformation continued in Damascus—through Ananias, through prayer, through baptism.

What experience led you to believe that Jesus is the rightful King?

But Saul wasn't the only one who needed conversion.

Ananias had to be converted—from fear and prejudice to obedience and trust.

Saul's companions were confronted with something beyond their understanding.

Saul himself had to move from being a Pharisee and persecutor to becoming a follower and missionary of Jesus.

Conversion isn't just about a moment—it's about what happens next.

Encountering the Presence of Christ

Friends, this is what happens when we truly experience Jesus.

His Holy Spirit breathes new life into us.

We become part of His family.

We become part of His mission.

The Spirit convicts. The Spirit transforms. The Spirit calls us to something greater.

So here's the question:

How will you respond when the Holy Spirit convicts you?

Will you say, "Yes, Lord, my King, I will follow You completely!"
Or will you respond with indifference, thinking you already know enough?

This is one of the reasons I love going to the mountains. There is a majesty in that setting that I cannot escape—a presence that pulls me into an experience with God. Every time, I walk away different. There have been moments when I have been stopped in my tracks, confronted by the Spirit, and challenged to grow in faith.

So what about you?

What if, as you walk out these doors today, the Holy Spirit stops you in your tracks?

What if He is speaking to you, calling you to something deeper?

Are you ready to experience the presence and power of the Spirit?
Are you ready to be changed?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

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Week 4: Vision for Mission (Acts 10:9-23)

I love the Book of Acts! It has everything—miracles, dramatic conversions, intense persecution, and the unstoppable power of God. Just look at what has already happened in the first nine chapters:

- Over 8,000 people have come to faith in Jesus Christ and been baptized.
- Miraculous healings have taken place.
- Prayer meetings have literally shaken buildings.
- Prison breaks orchestrated by angels.
- The early believers are united in mission.
- More healings.
- People drop dead for lying to the Holy Spirit.
- The first deacons are appointed.
- Stephen is stoned for his faith.
- An Ethiopian eunuch is converted and baptized.
- Saul (Paul), once a fierce persecutor, is personally converted by Jesus and called as an apostle to the Gentiles.
- And that's just the first nine chapters!

Acts is the incredible story of how Christianity, which started with a small, seemingly insignificant group of people, became a movement that changed the world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, these believers did extraordinary things that continue to shape history today.

The Power of Small Beginnings

Small movements, when fueled by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, lead to huge transformations.

Think about the Mississippi River. It begins as a small trickle, seemingly unimportant. But as it flows, it gathers strength, growing into a mighty force that empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit is responsible for the transformational work in people's lives—both then and now.

So far in Acts, we've seen the Holy Spirit:

- Teach patience
- Demonstrate convicting power
- Heal the sick
- Guide and anoint people for ministry
- All for the glory of God.

That's why Acts is more than just "The Acts of the Apostles." It's really the Acts of the Holy Spirit—or the Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus working through His people.

Peter and Cornelius: A Divine Encounter

Our story today brings us to Peter as he encounters a Gentile named Cornelius.

Cornelius was a centurion in the Italian regiment—meaning he commanded 100 soldiers in a unit of 600 men. He was an important figure. More significantly, he was not Jewish.

Acts 10 describes Cornelius as "God-fearing." This suggests that he had turned away from Roman gods and was seeking the one true God—perhaps because he had witnessed God's work among the Jewish people and the early followers of Jesus.

Whenever people seek God, they seek truth. And in seeking truth, they are searching for meaning.

Cornelius found that meaning in the God of Israel—the God who came to us in Jesus Christ.

Luke's Message: Breaking Barriers

Luke, the author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, repeatedly calls attention to people society would normally overlook or exclude.

But it's not just the poor, the sick, or the outcasts Luke wants us to notice. He also highlights those whose lives need transformation through the Holy Spirit's grace—including people of status and power.

This means that as followers of Jesus, we are called to pay attention to all people, including those we might naturally dislike or disregard.

A perfect example of this is found in the angel's conversation with Cornelius:

"One day at about three in the afternoon, he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, 'Cornelius!' Cornelius stared at him in fear. 'What is it, Lord?' he asked. The angel answered, 'Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.'"
(Acts 10:3-6, NIV)

Here, the Holy Spirit is preparing the way for the Gospel to expand beyond the Jewish community. But to do this, He must first transform another person—Peter.

Peter's Transformation: Overcoming Prejudice

Peter was a pillar of the early Church. A strong leader. A man others looked up to.

But Peter still had internal prejudices to overcome.

He needed his eyes opened to see the world—and people—the way God sees them.

So the Spirit gave Peter a vision...

While waiting for a meal, Peter went up to the flat rooftop of the house to pray.

Here, he had a vision:

A sheet came down from heaven, filled with all kinds of animals. A voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

Peter, being a devout Jew, refused. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

But the voice responded: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

This vision happened three times—reinforcing that God was changing the way Peter saw the world.

As Peter tried to process what it all meant, there was a knock at the door.

Cornelius' men had arrived.

And because of that vision, Peter did something no self-respecting Jew would normally do—he invited the Gentile men into the house as his guests.

How God Speaks to Us

Has God ever given you a vision or an experience that changed your life?

God speaks to us in ways we will understand.

Peter needed a vision to prepare him for what was coming next: taking the message of Jesus to the Gentiles.

This moment in Acts 10 is a turning point.

The Gospel is now reaching the ends of the earth—just as Jesus said in Acts 1:8.

This is only possible because Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, breaks down barriers that divide us.

The Power of the Gospel to Unite

A missionary once told the story of officiating a communion service in Africa.

Seated beside him was an old Ngoni chief who could still remember the days when his warriors left behind a trail of burned villages, their spears red with blood, their enemies' women taken as captives.

Who were the tribes they had once ravaged?

The Senga and Tumbuka people.

And yet, at this communion service, Ngoni, Senga, and Tumbuka all sat side by side, their past conflicts erased in the love of Jesus Christ.

Christianity has always had the power to break barriers.

And it still does—if we let it.

What Barriers Need to Be Broken?

What barriers does God need to tear down in your life so that His mission can continue through you?

What vision is God giving you to move forward in faith?

Just think—God is using you to be an influencer for His kingdom's glory!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

- What stands out to you in this scripture? In other words, what is the Holy Spirit impressing on you to notice?
- What did the early church/apostles do in this scripture? How do you see Jesus working in this picture? How can you translate this for today?
- How is our church mission and culture the same from the early church mission and culture? How is it different?
- What challenges you in this scripture? Why? How might the Spirit be leading you?
- Take time to pray about what the Spirit is leading you to do. Are you being led to do something within or through this church because of the Spirit's word in this scripture? What would that look like? How could you begin?
- What can you do, today, to be more in tune with the Spirit's leading in this passage?

**HOMEWORK: READ THE NEXT SCRIPTURE AND
CONTINUE TO WORK THROUGH THE
“TRANSFORMATION 1:8” BOOK CHALLENGE**

Week 5: Sent out With Power (Acts 13:1-12)

One Thursday, I was picking up my littles from school. Everything was going well! We were all set to watch Sage perform her cheers, our expedition was packed, and everyone was in. I put the key in the ignition...

Click. Click. Click.

Nothing but rapid clicks. It turns out my youngest had left the hazard lights on.

No problem—I pulled out our battery charger and waited. Still nothing.

Friday morning, I tried again. Nothing. I left the battery charger on for a few hours. Still nothing. So, I walked to the auto store, bought a new battery, and carried it back a few blocks (those things get heavy after a while).

It took some time to change the battery, but when I turned the key, the engine roared to life! I was excited—until I realized something was still wrong. The power steering wasn't working, and electrical errors started popping up.

So... it turns out the alternator is a pretty crucial part of the charging system. Without it, the battery eventually dies, and the engine has no power. In other words, the vehicle can't function the way it was designed to without a connection to its power source.

The Early Church: Powered by the Spirit

This is a picture of how Christ orders His Church. In the early Church, different people were called to different roles, each playing a vital part in carrying out God's mission in the world.

Ephesians 4 outlines these roles:

- Apostles

- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Shepherds (pastors)
- Teachers

This fivefold ministry (often called APEST) is like a fist—five fingers working together to deliver a powerful impact.

Without these roles functioning as God intended, the Church loses power. The Holy Spirit works through all of these roles collectively to keep the Church running as it should.

The Church in Antioch was no different.

Antioch was a diverse community and the central hub for Christianity. In fact, it was here that believers were first called “Christians”—a nickname given by outsiders, mocking them for being “little Christs.”

But instead of keeping everything in-house, the believers knew they had to send people out to spread the Gospel.

Paul & Barnabas: Sent Out in Power

Paul and Barnabas were prayed over and commissioned to reach the Gentiles—non-Jewish people considered outsiders to the faith.

This was the only way God’s mission would advance—by the Spirit leading, guiding, and empowering His people.

Paul followed a pattern in his ministry:

Go to the synagogues first to preach to the Jews.

Then go to the Gentiles—taking the message to those outside the Jewish community.

As Paul (formerly Saul) began using his Greek name, he became more relatable to the people he was trying to reach. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, his words carried authority, leading to transformed hearts and changed lives.

But Paul also knew this truth: If he tried to minister in his own power, he would fail.

He had to be recharged daily by the Spirit. He also understood the importance of partnership—bringing others along in the mission, equipping them to use their God-given gifts.

Opposition from the Enemy

Of course, as with Jesus (Mark 1), Paul's ministry faced spiritual opposition right from the start.

One of his first major encounters was with Bar-Jesus, a false prophet and sorcerer, as well as Elymas, a sorcerer who led people away from God's truth.

A false prophet is anyone who redirects people's focus away from Jesus—whether to another god, another ideology, or even themselves.

Paul had enough of Elymas.

“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10, NIV)

Harsh words? Maybe. But Paul was simply calling out the truth—Elymas had been listening to the wrong source.

Then Paul took it a step further:

“Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.” (Acts 13:11, NIV)
This was one of three times in Acts where God Himself caused an illness or affliction.

Why blindness?

Because Elymas was already spiritually blind. Now, his physical blindness would serve as a sign to everyone around him.

And it worked.

The governor, who had been listening to Elymas, witnessed this and immediately became a believer in Jesus.

What's the Point?
So, what does this all mean for us today?

What is your power source?
The “right” answer is Jesus, but what actually guides your decisions?
What gets most of your time, energy, and focus?
Who are you walking with?
Paul didn't do ministry alone. He trained and empowered others.
Who are the people around you? How are you serving together?
Are you listening to the Holy Spirit?
The Spirit speaks—but are you paying attention?
Are you open to being led, even when it challenges your plans?
Stay Connected to the Power of the Spirit
Like a car needs power to function, the Church only moves forward
when believers are filled with the Spirit and sent out in His power.

And that's still happening today.

The Church moves forward because men and women are being
equipped, empowered, and sent out—proclaiming God's message and
demonstrating His power in both word and deed.

So, let's ask ourselves:

Are we staying connected to the Spirit?
Or are we trying to run on an empty battery?

Because when we stay plugged into God's power, the results are
unstoppable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

- What stands out to you in this scripture? In other words, what is the Holy Spirit impressing on you to notice?
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Week 6: Bringing Them In (Acts 15:6-21)

October 31 is Reformation Day. While much of the world focuses on candy and things that go bump in the night, Protestants have something far more significant to celebrate—the greatest movement of God's Spirit since the days of the Apostles.

But what is the significance of Reformation Day, and how should we reflect on the events it commemorates?

Few in 1517 would have imagined that the sound of a hammer striking a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, would soon be heard around the world. Yet Martin Luther's nailing of his Ninety-Five Theses on October 31 sparked a debate that would lead to the greatest transformation of Western society since the Apostles first preached the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

At its core, the Reformation was about breaking barriers. Because of it, more people gained:

Access to the Scriptures in their own language.

The ability to worship freely in their native tongue.

The joy of congregational singing in worship.

But beyond these practical changes, the Church underwent a theological and missional shift that would impact generations to come.

There are moments in history when God uses events to realign His Church with His Word, His Son, and His Spirit.

Our passage this week marks one of the first times such a “reformation of thinking” had to take place—specifically regarding how “outsiders” were welcomed into the family of God.

The Council at Jerusalem: A Debate Over Inclusion
What was the issue that brought this council together?

Acts 15:1-2 tells us:

“Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: ‘Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.’ This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.”

To us, this debate may seem unnecessary—we know that God welcomes all who place their faith in Jesus. But at the time, circumcision was the defining mark of belonging to the Jewish people. To suggest that it wasn’t necessary for salvation was a radical shift.

Paul later writes in Romans 2:11:
"For God does not show favoritism."

Yet, the early Church wrestled with this concept. Could people truly belong to God without adhering to the Jewish Law?

Conflict is Inevitable—But Division is a Choice

From the very beginning, there has been conflict among Christ’s followers.

Why? Because we’re human.

As long as we live in the tension of sin vs. Spirit, conflict is unavoidable.

But here’s the good news: while conflict is inevitable, division is a choice.

The apostles had a decision to make. They had to think logically, theologically, and culturally about what it truly meant to belong to the family of God.

Would they stick to tradition, or would they embrace the Spirit’s leading and open the doors for the Gentiles?

The Debate and the Decision

Paul and Barnabas passionately defended the work of the Spirit among the Gentiles.

They shared stories of:

How the gospel was being proclaimed.
How the Holy Spirit was moving among non-Jewish believers.
How lives were being transformed.
But some of the apostles hesitated. They had gone through so much to follow Jesus—shouldn't the new converts have to go through the same things?

This debate was not just about rituals—it was about identity.

Would Gentile believers need to “look” Jewish to truly belong to Jesus?

Again, conflict is inevitable, but division is a choice.

Peter's Key Realization: It's About Grace, Not Burdens
Peter finally stood up and addressed the council:

"Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10, NIV)

In other words: Even we couldn't keep the Law—why place that burden on new believers?

Peter reminded them of the core truth of the gospel:

“We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” (Acts 15:11, NIV)

This was a turning point.

James, Jesus' brother, agreed. He said:

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.” (Acts 15:19, NIV)

Instead of requiring circumcision, they sent a simple letter encouraging Gentile believers to:

Avoid sexual immorality.
Refrain from eating food sacrificed to idols.

With that decision, the Church took a major step forward—welcoming all people into the family of God by grace alone.

What This Means for Us Today

The Spirit was at work then, and the Spirit is at work now.

But we must ask ourselves:

Are we creating unnecessary barriers for those coming to Christ?
Are we focused on welcoming people in—or keeping them out?
Do we make people feel like they must “earn” their place among us?
Too often, we want people to know what we went through to get where we are. We want to make sure they understand the sacrifices we made.
But if we’re not careful, those expectations become barriers.

As the Spirit moves, more people will come to faith.
More people will hear the gospel and respond.
More people will want to be part of the Body of Christ.

How we respond will show whether or not we are in step with the Spirit.

Breaking Barriers for the Gospel

Throughout history, people have built barriers to keep others out.

Society has:

Created divisions between classes.
Built walls to keep people separated.
Made rules to ensure some remain excluded.
But Jesus changes everything.

Jesus seeks out the least, the last, and the lost—bringing them into His kingdom.

Christianity was never about exclusion—it’s about invitation.

When people encounter the Spirit of Jesus, they are changed, transformed, and aligned with His mission.

How is the Spirit Speaking to You?
Who is the Spirit seeking through you?

How will you welcome those whom the Spirit sends?

What barriers do you need to break down?

Let's look again at these hopeful words, quoting the prophet Amos:

"After this, I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things—things known from long ago." (Acts 15:16-18, NIV)

God, through His Spirit, is doing amazing things.

Are you ready to be part of it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

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Week 7: Gospel Keeps Moving Forward (Acts 28:17-31)

Wow. That's the word that comes to mind when I think about the Book of Acts.

We've talked about it a lot. But what have been your thoughts on this incredible book?

Throughout our study, we've explored many characters, but we must remember that the main character—the driving force—of Acts is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit keeps the journey alive and propels the mission of God forward.

Looking Back at the Journey

As we close out this Bible study, let's reflect on where we began.

In Acts 1, a small band of believers gathered to pray, wait, fast, and seek God's guidance after Jesus ascended.

During that time of waiting, God was at work in them and through them, preparing them to proclaim the gospel boldly throughout the world.

It's like the headwaters of the Mississippi River—small, seemingly insignificant, yet destined to become a powerful force that impacts the world.

Through Acts, we've seen:

- People healed.
- Lives transformed.
- The Spirit changing hearts, minds, and entire directions.
- Paul boldly proclaiming Jesus as the Savior of the world.
- And through it all, the Spirit enabled people like Peter and Paul to keep moving forward, even when things became difficult.

They endured:

- Hardships
- Imprisonment
- Beatings
- Slander
- Shipwrecks
- Snake bites

Yet, they kept their eyes on Jesus. They trusted in Him completely and without reservation.

A Truth We All Need to Hear

Sometimes, life is harder than we expect or think we can handle. But here's the good news: God's presence is with you. He walks with you, guides you, and gives you the strength to keep moving forward.

If you look back on your life, you can probably recall moments where you wondered how you made it through. That's the Spirit at work.

The Spirit Will Lead You Where You Never Expected

Following Jesus means going places we never imagined. We will meet people we wouldn't normally choose to interact with. But if we are obedient, our lives will be transformed—and so will theirs.

Yes, the Holy Spirit is the central figure of Acts, but Paul is the primary human character in the latter half of the book.

Paul was sent to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles and their rulers. He was given divine authority and power to navigate the challenges, circumstances, and people he encountered.

Paul's Mission is Complete—Or Is It?

Paul's journey brought him to Rome. How did he get there?

At one of his trials, he appealed to Caesar, meaning the Roman guards had to ensure he safely reached Rome to stand before the emperor. Paul was still moving forward, with the same relentless determination that had defined his ministry since his conversion.

Now in Rome, waiting for trial, Paul continued to proclaim the gospel to everyone he could. He welcomed visitors into his rented home—even as a captive—and shared the message of Jesus without hesitation.

The Unfinished Story

Acts ends rather abruptly. It's as if the book is incomplete. It reminds me of the ending of *Back to the Future Part III*.

At the end of the movie, Marty McFly shows Doc Brown a paper from the future, only to see the words vanish before his eyes. Confused, he asks why the words disappeared.

Doc listens, then replies:

"Of course it's vanished! Your future hasn't been written yet—no one's has! The best thing you can do is make your future the best it can be." That line sticks with me.

But as followers of Christ, our future isn't about making things the best for ourselves—it's about joining God in His work to make the future what He intends it to be.

What Kind of Future Are You Looking For?

We all have moments of setbacks, struggles, and hardships. We all have different experiences that strengthen our faith and prepare us for what's ahead.

This is likely why Paul wrote these powerful words in Romans 5:

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (Romans 5:1-5, NIV)

The Work of God is Not Finished

Acts may have ended, but God's work continues. Luke, the author of Acts, may have simply run out of room to write more.

But perhaps he left the story open-ended on purpose.

Because God is not done yet.

The unfinished nature of Acts reminds us that God's mission of transformation continues today. And that means we are part of the story.

How Will You Move Forward?

Ask yourself:

What kind of future are you looking for?

How is God preparing you for what's next?

Everything Paul endured—every hardship, every struggle—only strengthened the gospel message.

Through it all, he gained resilience and perseverance. Through it all, God supplied the power, ability, and guidance through the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit does the same for us today.

You Can Move Forward in Hope

Right now, you may be wondering:

How will this situation work out?

When will this difficult season end?

How will I stay above water with everything going on?

But here's the truth:

We are people of hope.

And because of that, we move forward.

Your Life is Part of the Gospel Story

As we live out our faith with joy, our lives become a testimony of transformation, hope, and forgiveness.

You might be the example someone else needs to encounter God's goodness.

So, after studying these twelve passages in Acts...

After praying and discovering more about God's faithfulness...

Are you ready to move forward with Christ?

The Movement of the Spirit Continues

Acts is about the movement of the Holy Spirit, keeping the gospel moving forward. But it's also about how the Spirit invites people to be the vessels through which the mission continues.

Following Jesus won't always be easy or comfortable. But it will always be worth it.

And through it all, God will be with you—guiding you, strengthening you, and using you to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ.

And one day, when you look back on your life, I pray you'll hear the words:

"Well done, my good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:23, NIV)

Are You Ready to Keep Moving Forward?

Let's pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer together:

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you, Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and holy God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,

you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, Let it also be made in heaven. Amen

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (You can also ask your own questions or begin a discussion starter)

- What stands out to you in this scripture? In other words, what is the Holy Spirit impressing on you to notice?
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**I ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTINUE TO WORK THROUGH
THE “TRANSFORMATION 1:8” BOOK CHALLENGE TO
CONTINUE TO GROW IN YOUR DISCIPLESHIP**

If you need an extra copy, please let Ryan know.

APPENDIX: Transformation 1:8

Transformation 1:8

“Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

The resources used in this short book have been pulled together from various sources to help with a wholistic view of discipleship and spiritual growth.

Pastor Ryan's Blog: www.revryanstratton.com

My prayer is that we all seek to imitate Jesus Christ in our everyday lives and live out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

INTRODUCTION

We are committed, all-in, followers of Jesus Christ. We are not just *fans* of Jesus Christ. This means we have an opportunity to show the world how our lives are different because of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit working in and through us.

Yes, our world is marred and marked by sin and turmoil. But there is always hope. Why? Because of the presence of Jesus Christ, still alive and working, in the world. We have been invited on *his* mission in the world. So, if it ever seems as if we stress the importance of mission, you're right! We get to live out the mission of God in this life.

Remember, we have been given the presence of the Holy Spirit living and working in and through us. The same command Jesus gave his disciples is the same one he gives today: to be his “witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” For us this means we get to be his witnesses in our context: our city, the state and nation, and to the ends of the earth. The impact we make here will have a ripple effect around the world and the kingdom of God will be known and shown.

THE PURPOSE

Plain and simple. The purpose is to show the world how a *community* of faith can love the community and the world by doing simple, random acts of kindness, generosity, and love—all in the name of Jesus Christ. In other words, this is a *discipleship* book to help us live out our faith in intentional ways in our homes and in the community.

THE CHALLENGE

We have discipleship goals for this church. (See page 7) The challenge will be to live out the goals and use this book as a journal for you to write down your thoughts and anything God may be speaking to you through this journey.

This is a self-paced journey as a disciple (apprentice/follower) of Jesus Christ, so be sure to be intentional. As you seek to “check-off” the “tasks” be sure to spend time beforehand seriously thinking about how much God loves you. Afterwards spend time thinking and writing about

what you are sensing and feeling within your spirit. Be sure to thank God for the opportunity to live out your faith in this way.

This will not be a new way of life for many people. The difference will be that *when* a person begins to thank you for what you have done, you say something to the effect of, ***“You are welcome. Because God loves you, (Church Name) wants you to know how much we love you.”***

I am honored to be with you on this journey and I challenge you to live out your faith, in this particular manner. I am praying for you daily and am trusting that God will continue to reveal himself to you and demonstrate his incredible love through you.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Ryan

DISCIPLESHIP GOALS

- Pray 5 times a day and worship weekly
- Read, at least, 5 verses of the Bible daily, and form a small group community (more on this later in the book on page 22)
- Practice 5 acts of intentional kindness a week and find a way to serve in the community
- Extend 5 acts of generosity toward others each month
- Give generously to God through the church
- Be part of a community service mission as part of the church
- Let others know you are a Christian and invite 5 people to church each year

*Note: These discipleship goals were adapted from the book “The Walk” by Adam Hamilton.

PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

This may seem like an easy exercise, but I invite you to take your time between each phrase and see what God may be speaking to you. Also, write down anything God is asking you to pray for.

One of the ways to pray the Lord's prayer is by dividing it into six sections and pausing to contemplate upon that theme. An example of how to do this follows:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name

Thank God for who He is and His abundant faithfulness. Contemplate God's many attributes and praise Him.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be
done on earth as it is in heaven

Pray for God's rule and reign to become a reality in our lives, city, nation, and world. Ask for God to bring miracles and salvation.

Give us this day our daily bread

Pray for God's daily provision in your life. Take some time to verbally bring your requests before the Lord.

Forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who have
trespassed against us

Engage in a few moments of silence to allow the Holy Spirit to convict you of sin. Confess those sins to the Lord. Also, be still and allow the Holy Spirit to bring to mind those that have sinned against you so that you can forgive others and not allow a seed of bitterness to grow in your heart.

Lead us not into temptation

Ask for God to guide you in "paths of righteousness for His name sake". Pray that He may give you the discernment and knowledge of His will in the decisions you make today.

Deliver us from evil

Pray for God's protection against any of the strategies of Satan. The Devil wants to kill, steal, and destroy. Ask God to be your strong tower and mighty deliverer.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAY 5 TIMES A DAY

What are some things you should pray for? Let the Spirit guide your time.

As we pray, at least once a day, find a quiet space and place. Ask God to open your mind, heart, and spirit to his Spirit.

I highly recommend beginning by thanking and praising God for who he is before going in to any requests.

(Remember 3 meals a day counts as 3 of your prayers 😊. We thank God for what he has prepared for us.)

Some considerations for prayer focuses:

Self: confession of sin, ask God for healing (physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, spiritually)

Concerns about others: (use this space to write down your requests and hopefully when/how God answered your prayer)

Church: be a faithful witness in the community, unity, spiritually alive, numerical growth due to spiritual growth, etc.. How is God calling us to reach out?

Ask God to reveal how you can be part of life transformations. Ask God to send people to be baptized.

The nation: our leaders, healing in relationships, mourn for any loss, value human life, seek the common good, etc.

The world: peace, healing, redemption, etc.

Your family: healing, reconciliation, love to be shown powerfully, etc.

BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER

God of love and power,
We know that you are with us
And you are for us.
Breakthrough into our lives
And into your church.

Fill us with the grace, mercy, and power of Jesus.
Help us to discern where your Spirit is leading.
Open doors that lead us into a new season
Of faithfulness and fruitfulness
For your Kingdom.

Give us faith and courage to step through
The doors that you open. Amen.

Scripture examples:

Ephesians 3:20

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or
imagine by his power at work within us;

Revelation 3:7-8

7 "Write this to the angel of the church in Philadelphia:

These are the words of the one who is holy and true, who has the key of
David. Whatever he opens, no one will shut; and whatever he shuts, no
one opens. 8 I know your works. Look! I have set in front of you an
open door that no one can shut. You have so little power, and yet you
have kept my word and haven't denied my name.

INTENTIONAL KINDNESS

Use this space to write down *how* you would like to be kind to another person (both in and out of the church). Then, record what and when you accomplished this act of kindness.

For example: phone call, letter, buy meal, send flowers, send card, text, buy/send Bible, open door, etc.

INTENTIONAL GENEROSITY

How can you be generous (cheerfully)? What are some things you can do? Use this space to write down how the Holy Spirit is leading you to be generous to others.

Maybe it's extending forgiveness, maybe it's offering hope, maybe it's...

GIVE GENEROUSLY TO GOD THROUGH THE CHURCH

We have been given a mission and ministry for this community of faith. It takes all of us to come together to fund the ministry God has set for us. Jesus told his disciples they must give up everything to follow him. If we try to hold on to what we think we own, and give Jesus stipulations, we miss out on being fully shaped into his character and image.

Questions to consider:

If I'm not giving 10% of income, to God's mission, what's holding me back?

Is there anything I need to ask God for his grace to help me trust him more?

What do I value?

All of these issues and concerns are addressed in scripture.

COMMUNITY MISSION

It is vital, as a community of faith, to serve Christ together. Matthew 25 is a perfect example of how we can serve our community.

Take time to pray about and ask the Spirit what he is leading you to be part of and to help this church be part of *with* you and God to serve the community.

For example: serve a food pantry, build wheelchair ramps, read to children at a school or library. Just see what the Spirit is placing on your heart!

WHO WILL YOU INVITE TO WORSHIP?

(Keep in mind, to think outside the normal Christian people you know. Who is God asking you to invite to be part of this community of faith?)

Name:

Date invited:

Result (circle one): showed up no show

If attended, what did they think?

Are they a Christian?

Do they have a Bible?

Have they been baptized?

How is God asking me to be part of their faith journey?

Name:

Date invited:

Result (circle one): showed up no show

If attended, what did they think?

Are they a Christian?

Do they have a Bible?

Have they been baptized?

How is God asking me to be part of their faith journey?

Name:

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Do they have a Bible?

Have they been baptized?

How is God asking me to be part of their faith journey?

NEXT STEPS

This very short book is *not* the end all to how a Christian lives out his/her faith. It is also not meant to be a checklist with things to “check off” as if we can earn God’s grace.

The point of this short book is to help us evaluate where we are in our discipleship with Jesus Christ, personally. Hopefully we grow in joy, grace, love, and generosity every time we serve and do things to show our lives align with what we believe.

Some things we can do to help us further our faith growth (individually *and* as a community) are:

Wesleyan Class Meetings (Small Groups for accountability and faith growth)

Bible Studies

Bible Reading Challenges

And more!

These are all called Means of Graces.

The Wesleyan Means of Grace

(taken from <https://www.umc.org/en/content/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace>)

Courageous and forward-leaning mission congregations practice spiritual disciplines. Our vital work is a spiritual adventure based in John Wesley's means of grace. John Wesley taught that God's grace is unearned and that we were not to be idle waiting to experience grace but we are to engage in the means of grace. The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening; and confirming faith so that God's grace pervades in and through disciples. As we look at the means of grace today, they can be divided into works of piety and the works of mercy.

Works of Piety

Individual Practices – reading, meditating and studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting, regularly attending worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others

Communal Practices – regularly share in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study

Works of Mercy

Individual Practices - doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs of others

Communal Practices – seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery), and addressing the needs of the poor

Making disciples, growing vital congregations and transforming the world is part of a spiritual adventure that is empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit as churches engage in the means of grace. Spiritual goals are accomplished by connecting the means of grace with proven vital church practices such as planning, strategic direction, prioritization, clear focus and alignment.

Wesleyan Class Meetings

Small groups have *always* been a key component to the Methodist Movement.

How's your spiritual life? The Class Meeting for today

(taken from <https://www.umc.org/en/content/how-s-your-spiritual-life-the-class-meeting-for-today>)

Into their already jam-packed schedules, many United Methodists are setting aside time to connect with other Christians, to receive encouragement to grow in their discipleship, and to spiritually mentor one another.

The typical Sunday morning interactions that occur in the church narthex after worship are unsatisfying for some. We talk about the weather or sports, but when asked how we are doing, many of us automatically reply, “Fine. How are you?” no matter how rough the week may have been.

The Rev. Michael Zdorow, Pastor of Connecting and Leadership Ministries at Christ Church, a United Methodist congregation in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, says, “I’ve observed that there is this veneer over our souls. We have the Christian answer or the automatic Christian response to some things.”

To grow, we need to go deeper.

In the 1990s, Christ Church invited members to come together in what they call Wesley Fellowship Groups. Each Wesley Fellowship Group is “a covenant relationship group where the goal is sanctification. According to Zdorow, “It is more, ‘How is it with your soul?’ And then holding each other accountable in our daily walk with God and being in ministry with the church.”

The Class Meeting

This is not the latest innovation in church growth, but an adaptation of what John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was doing in 1700s England.

Methodism began with a small group. Then, as the movement spread, a specific type of gathering called the Class Meeting became central to what it meant to be a Methodist.

Historically, Class Meetings “made sure that every Methodist was connected to other Methodists, so no one was left out, ignored, or overlooked,” notes the Rev. Kevin Watson, a United Methodist elder and Assistant Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology. “They relentlessly focused every Methodist on the current state of their relationship with God. And they connected people to others who were at different stages of the Christian life.”

Both Wesley in England and Asbury in America considered Class Meeting attendance mandatory. Admittance to the larger Society Meeting required a ticket from a Class Leader, validating one’s faithful participation in a Class Meeting.



Admittance to a Society Meeting required a ticket from a Class Meeting. Around the edges of this ticket from 1814 are several reminders of acts of piety. Photo courtesy of the General Commission on Archives and History.

“Class Meetings were required, because they were believed to be particularly helpful in people’s growth in the Christian life, at any stage,” explains Watson.

This commitment to growing people into disciples of Jesus Christ helped the movement spread on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean then, and in other parts of the world today.

The mission statement of The United Methodist Church—*To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs*—continues to call us to this work today.

As it was in the days of Wesley and Asbury, Class Meeting-style groups, like Christ Church's Wesley Fellowship Groups, still make and shape disciples by connecting people to one another, helping them grow in their discipleship, and encouraging them to mentor each other spiritually.

Going deeper

All of this happens through a very simple structure. A group of about a dozen people gathers weekly to take turns answering a single question. In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?" or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say, "How's your spiritual life?"

The conversations that follow are powerful.

"I have never been in a Class Meeting where people ran out of things to talk about," Watson says. "On the contrary, I have often heard people express the challenge of not letting the groups run over too much."

It doesn't happen overnight, but through answering that question together Class Meeting members grow closer to one another and closer to Christ. They begin to "watch over one another in love."

Zdorow shared the example of a participant who came to a meeting frustrated with something in his life. The group members listened, but kept asking soul questions.

"People in the group gave this person space to vent and talk about this," Zdorow recalls, "but then we got past that superficial stuff and next thing you know, we're starting to really get to matters of the heart."

Living your faith

When we enter into these types of conversations regularly, lives are changed. Zdorow sees the evidence.

Wesley Fellowship Group members are “very active in the life of the church,” he emphasizes. “They have the whole components of serving together [and] growing together. They really do care for one another.”

For example, when Christ Church needed hospitality at a second campus, a Wesley Fellowship Group recognized an opportunity for mission. “They were never part of that campus,” Zdorow reports, “but they saw the need and started stepping up to help out with the hospitality and make that a welcoming place.”

Connecting, growing, and journeying together forms disciples as they reflect on and share their answers to a single question.

To start a similar group, simply invite some friends together and ask the question, “How’s your spiritual life?” Then see where the Holy Spirit leads.

A great resource to learn about what Wesley’s Class Meetings looked like then and could look today, is Kevin Watson’s *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*. The book includes a study guide that helps groups begin the transition from being information-driven to transformation-driven and watching over one another in love.

Bible Studies

Maybe God is asking you to lead a Bible Study, at the church, in your home, somewhere in public?

In addition to in-person Bible Studies, Pastor Ryan will also periodically offer online Bible Studies. Look on Facebook: *Online Bible Study with Pastor Ryan*

Join the group and you can be part of this online Bible Study which you can facilitate in your home with people who are seeking to learn more about what the Christian faith is and how we can live it out.

BIBLE CHALLENGE

You are invited to read through these specific Biblical books over the next few months:

Genesis

Exodus

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Jonah

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippans

Colossians

1 John

2 John

3 John

As you read, ask yourself these questions as you read:

1. Ask God to open your heart, eyes, mind, and spirit to his voice.
2. What is this teaching you about who God is?
3. What is this teaching you about who God says you are?
4. How is God asking me to live out my faith and encourage others?
5. Can I sense the incredible love God has for me?

DAILY OFFICE

A good way to read through the Bible is to read as much as you can absorb. Hopefully this will be, at least, 5 verses per day. But read as much as the Spirit is leading.

To help with reading, thinking, and praying through the scripture this *daily office* exercise is something that can be useful to help in your quiet time.

DAILY OFFICE Morning Prayer

Opening Verses:

Sunday: (Psalm 122:1)

Monday: (Psalm 19:14)

Tuesday: (Psalm 43:3)

Wednesday: (Habakkuk 2:20)

Thursday: (John 4:23)

Friday: (Isaiah 57:15)

Saturday: (Psalm 105:1)

Confession of Sin

Take a few moments to pray to confess your sins and acknowledge your need for God's grace and forgiveness

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

End by acknowledging God's mercy and realizing that He has forgiven your sins in Christ Jesus.

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and strengthen us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, all our days. Amen.

The Invitatory

Move to a time of praise by praying the Invitatory and then the Gloria.

Lord, open our lips and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in
the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Psalm

You are invited to read a Psalm. Begin with Psalm 1 and work your way through.

The Reading

At this time, you may read one or more additional readings from the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Gospels.

The Apostles' Creed

Read and Apostles' Creed. As you recite these words you are acknowledging the universal truths of the Christian faith.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;*
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Pray the Lord's Prayer, taking your time and meditating on each line as you pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Intercession

Use the following intercessory prayer to help you focus your specific concerns.

Show us your mercy, O Lord; And grant us your salvation. Clothe your ministers with righteousness; Let your people sing with joy. Give peace, O Lord, in all the world; For only in you can we live in safety. Lord, keep this nation under your care; And guide us in the way of justice and truth. Let your way be known upon earth; Your saving health among all nations. Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten; Nor the hope of the poor be taken away. Create in us clean hearts, O God; And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Take some time to pray for yourself and others. Let the Spirit lead you and guide you as you pray.

- The Church Universal, it's members, and it's mission
- The Nation and all in authority
- The welfare of the world
- The concerns of the local community
- Those who suffer and those in any trouble

Benediction

Conclude with the following benediction.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

(2 Corinthians 13:14)

DAILY OFFICE: Mid-Day Prayer

The Invitatory

Move to a time of praise by praying the Invitatory and then the Gloria.

O God make speed to save us. O Lord make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Psalm

You are invited to read a Psalm. Begin with Psalm 1 and work your way through.

The Prayers

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Lord, hear our prayer;

And let our cry come to you.

The Collect

Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your tender mercies' sake. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

DAILY OFFICE Evening Prayer

Opening Verses:

Sunday: (Psalm 141:2)

Monday: (Philippians 1:2)

Tuesday: (Psalm 96:9)

Wednesday: (Psalm 74:16-17)

Thursday: (Psalm 16:7-8)

Friday: (Amos 5:8)

Saturday: (Psalm 139:11-12)

Confession of Sin

Take a few moments to pray to confess your sins and acknowledge your need for God's grace and forgiveness

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against your holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare those who confess their faults, restore those who are repentant, according to your promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may here after live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

End by acknowledging God's mercy and realizing that He has forgiven your sins in Christ Jesus.

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and strengthen us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, all our days. Amen.

The Invitatory

Move to a time of praise by praying the Invitatory and then the Gloria.

O God make speed to save us. O Lord make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Psalm

You are invited to read a Psalm. Begin with Psalm 1 and work your way through.

Evening Prayer

O gracious light, pure brightness of the ever-living Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed! Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our eyes behold the vesper light, we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of Life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.

The Reading

At this time, you may read one or more additional readings from the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Gospels.

The Apostles' Creed

Read and Apostles' Creed. As you recite these words you are acknowledging the universal truths of the Christian faith.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;*
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
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the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Intercession

Use the following intercessory prayer to help you focus your specific concerns.

Show us your mercy, O Lord; And grant us your salvation. Clothe your ministers with righteousness; Let your people sing with joy. Give peace, O Lord, in all the world; For only in you can we live in safety. Lord, keep this nation under your care; And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth; Your saving health among all nations. Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten; Nor the hope of the poor be taken away. Create in us clean hearts, O God; And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Take some time to pray for yourself and others. Let the Spirit lead you and guide you as you pray.

- The Church Universal, it's members, and it's mission
- The Nation and all in authority
- The welfare of the world
- The concerns of the local community
- Those who suffer and those in any trouble

Benediction (Conclude with the following benediction.)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Amen.

(Romans 15:13)

21 DAILY QUESTIONS

Here is a list John Wesley encouraged his people to ask, each day. I challenge you to ask yourself these questions, daily, and see how the Holy Spirit is working in you. Especially find time to ask these questions in your small group (Class Meeting) and also be prepared to answer.

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts & words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass onto another what was told me in confidence?
4. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
5. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
6. Did the Bible live in me today?
7. Do I give it time to speak to me everyday?
8. Am I enjoying prayer?
9. When did I last speak to someone about my faith?
10. Do I pray about the money I spend?
11. Do I get to bed on time & get up on time?
12. Do I disobey God in anything?
13. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
14. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
15. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
16. How do I spend my spare time?

17. Am I proud?
18. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the tax collector?
19. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward, or disregard? If so, what am I going to do about it?
20. Do I grumble & complain constantly?
21. Is Christ real to me?

METHODIST CATECHISM

(Questions, Answers, and Scripture References about the Christian Faith)

This comes from *John Wesley's revision of Martin Luther's Shorter Catechism*. A catechism is a system of questions and answers to teach the Christian faith.

This catechism would be something good to go through, question by question to teach a person, new to the Christian faith, what Christianity (and of course JESUS!) is all about.

This catechism is also a good resource for those who already profess the Christian faith to gain a deeper understanding of what it is we believe as followers of Jesus Christ.

NOTE: When going through the questions, be sure to have a Bible (or Bible app) ready to look up the scripture references. Also, it is okay to take your time when going through each question. Be sure not to rush. Allow time for the Spirit of God to work through the time of going through the questions.

Question 1. What is the purpose of humanity?

Answer. The purpose of humanity is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

(1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36; Psalm 73:25–28)

Q. 2. What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

(2 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 2:20; 1 John 1:3–4)

Q. 3. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

A. The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. *(2 Timothy 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:16)*

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

(John 4:24; Job 11:7–9; Psalm 90:2; James 1:17; Exodus 3:14; Psalm 147:5; Revelation 4:8; Revelation 15:4; Exodus 34:6–7)

Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10)

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

(1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19)

Q. 9. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is God's making all things out of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

(Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3)

Q. 10. How did God create man?

A. God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness with dominion over the creatures.
(*Genesis 1:26–28; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24*)

Q. 11. What are God's works of providence?

A. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.
(*Psalm 145:17; Psalm 104:24; Isaiah 28:29; Hebrews 1:3; Psalm 103:19; Matthew 10:29–31*)

Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate in which he was created?

A. When God created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.
(*Galatians 3:12; Genesis 2:17*)

Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the estate in which they were created?

A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate in which they were created, by sinning against God.
(*Genesis 3:6–8, 13; Ecclesiastes 7:29*)

Q. 14. What is sin?

A. Sin is a transgression of the law of God.
(*1 John 3:4*)

Q. 15. What was the sin by which our first parents fell from the estate in which they were created?

A. The sin by which our first parents fell from the estate in which they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.
(*Genesis 3:6, 12*)

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but also for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.
(*Genesis 2:16–17; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22*)

Q. 17. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.
(*Romans 5:12*)

Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate into which man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate into which man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

(Romans 5:12,19, Romans 5:10–20; Ephesians 2:1–3; James 1:14–15; Matthew 15:19)

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate into which man fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

(Genesis 3:8, 10, 24; Ephesians 2:2–3; Galatians 3:10; Lamentations 3:39; Romans 6:23; Matthew 25:41, 46)

Q. 21. Who is the Redeemer of mankind?

A. The only Redeemer of mankind is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and mankind so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

(1 Timothy 2:5–6; John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; Romans 9:5; Luke 1:35; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 7:24–25)

Q. 22. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

(Hebrews 2:14, 16; Hebrews 10:5; Matthew 26:38; Luke 1:27, 31, 35, 42; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26)

Q. 23. What offices does Christ execute as our Redeemer?

A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.

(Acts 3:21–22; Hebrews 12:25, compared with 2 Corinthians 13:3; Hebrews 5:5–7; Hebrews 7:25; Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 9:6–7; Matthew 21:5; Psalm 2:8–11)

Q. 24. How does Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executes the office of a prophet in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

(John 1:18; 1 Peter 1:10–12; John 15:15; John 20:31)

Q. 25. How does Christ execute the office of a priest?

A. Christ executes the office of a priest in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

(Hebrews 9:14, 28; Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 7:24–25)

Q. 26. How does Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

(Acts 15:14–16; Isaiah 33:22; Isaiah 32:1–2; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Psalm 110)

Q. 27. In what did Christ's humiliation consist?

A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition; made under the law; undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

(Luke 2:7; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 12:2–3; Isaiah 53:2–3; Luke 22:44; Matthew 27:46; Philippians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Acts 2:24–27, 31)

Q. 28. In what consists Christ's exaltation?

A. Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

(1 Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20; Acts 1:11; Acts 17:31)

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

(John 1:11–12; Titus 3:56)

Q. 30. How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

(Ephesians 1:13–14; John 6:37, 39; Ephesians 2:8; Ephesians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 1:9)

Q. 32. What benefits do those who truly believe partake of in this life?

A. Those who truly do in this life partake of justification, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

(Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:26, 30)

Q. 33. What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace in which he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

(Romans 3:24–25; Romans 4:6–8; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; Romans 5:17–19; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9)

Q. 34. What is adoption?

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace by which we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

Q. 35. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

(2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 4:23–24; Romans 6:4, 6)

Q. 36. What are the benefits that in this life do accompany or flow from justification adoption, and sanctification?

A. The benefits that in this life do accompany or flow from justification adoption, and sanctification are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

(Romans 5:1–2, 5; Romans 14:17; Proverbs 4:18; 1 John 5:13; 1 Peter 1:5)

Q. 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A. The souls of believers at their death pass into glory; and their bodies rest in their graves till the resurrection.

(Hebrews 12:23; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8; Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:43; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Isaiah 57:2; Job 19:26–27)

Q. 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

(1 Corinthians 15:43; Matthew 25:23; Matthew 10:32; John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:17–18)

Q. 39. What is the duty that God requires of man?

A. The duty that God requires of man is obedience to his revealed will.

(Micah 6:8; 1 Samuel 15:22)

Q. 40. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience was the moral law.

(Romans 2:14–15; Romans 10:5)

Q. 41. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

(Deuteronomy 10:4; Matthew 19:17)

Q. 42. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

(Matthew 22:37–40)

Q. 43. What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments is in these words, “I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

(Exodus 20:2)

Q. 44. What does the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments teaches us that because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments.

(Luke 1:74–75; 1 Peter 1:15–19)

Q. 45. Which is the first commandment?

A. The first commandment is, “You shall have no other gods before me.”

(Exodus 20:3)

Q. 46. What is required in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly.

(1 Chronicles 28:9; Deuteronomy 26:17; Matthew 6:10; Psalm 29:2)

Q. 47. What is forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment forbids the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying, the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to him alone. *(Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:21; Psalm 81:10–11; Romans 1:25–26)*

Q. 48. What are we specially taught by these words [before me] in the first commandment?

A. These words [before me] in the first commandment teach us that God, who sees all things, takes notice of, and is much displeased with the sin of having any other God.

(Ezekiel 8:5–18; Psalm 44:20–21)

Q. 49. Which is the second commandment?

A. The second commandment is, “You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down your- self to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the

children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

(Exodus 20:4–6)

Q. 50. What is required in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his Word.

(Deuteronomy 32:46; Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:42)

Q. 51. What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his Word.

(Deuteronomy 4:15–19; Exodus 32:5, 8; Deuteronomy 12:31–32)

Q. 52. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment are God’s sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he has to his own worship.

(Psalm 95:2–3, 6; Psalm 45:11; Exodus 34:13–14)

Q. 53. Which is the third commandment?

A. The third commandment is, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” *(Exodus 20:7)*

Q. 54. What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God’s names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works.

(Matthew 6:9; Deuteronomy 28:58; Psalm 68:4; Revelation 15:3–4; Malachi 1:11, 14; Psalm 138:1–2; Job 36:24)

Q. 55. What is forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything by which God makes himself known.

(Malachi 1:6–7, 12; Malachi 2:2; Malachi 3:14)

Q. 56. What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment. (*1 Samuel 2:12, 17, 22, 29; 1 Samuel 3:13; Deuteronomy 28:58–59*)

Q. 57. Which is the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment is, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, in it you shall not do any work—you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

(*Exodus 20:8–11 Answer 58. Deuteronomy 5:12–14*)

Q. 58. What is required in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his Word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to himself.

Q. 59. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

A. Till the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.

(*Genesis 2:2–3; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2; Acts 20:7*)

Q. 60. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God’s worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

(*Exodus 20:8, 10; Exodus 16:25–28; Nehemiah 13:15–19, 21–22; Luke 4:16; Acts 20:7; Psalm 92; Isaiah 66:23; Matthew 12:1–31*)

Q. 61. What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment forbids the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

(*Ezekiel 22:26; Amos 8:5; Malachi 1:13; Acts 20:7, 9; Ezekiel 23:38; Jeremiah 17:24–26; Isaiah 58:13*)

Q. 62. What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the Sabbath day.

(*Exodus 20:9, 11*)

Q. 63. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, "Honor your father and your mother; that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you."

(*Exodus 20:12*)

Q. 64. What is required in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment requires preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.

(*Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:17; Romans 12:10*)

Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty that belongs to everyone in their several places and relations.

(*Matthew 15:4–6; Ezekiel 34:2–4; Romans 13:8*)

Q. 66. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all who keep this commandment.

(*Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2–3*)

Q. 67. Which is the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment is, “You shall not kill.”
(*Exodus 20:13*)

Q. 68. What is required in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.
(*Ephesians 5:28–29; 1 Kings 18:4*)

Q. 69. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tends unto it.
(*Acts 16:28; Genesis 9:6*)

Q. 70. Which is the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment is, “You shall not commit adultery.”
(*Exodus 20:14*)

Q. 71. What is required in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor’s chastity, in thought, speech, and behavior.
(*1 Corinthians 7:2–3, 5, 34, 36; Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:2*)

Q. 72. What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.
(*Matthew 15:19; Matthew 5:28; Ephesians 5:3–4*)

Q. 73. Which is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, “You shall not steal.”
(*Exodus 20:15*)

Q. 74. What is required in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.
(*Genesis 30:30; 1 Timothy 5:8; Leviticus 25:35; Deuteronomy 22:1–5; Exodus 23:4–5; Genesis 47:14, 20*)

Q. 75. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment forbids whatsoever does or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor’s wealth or outward estate.
(*Proverbs 21:17; Proverbs 23:20–21; Proverbs 28:19; Ephesians 4:28*)

Q. 76. Which is the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment is, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

(Exodus 2:16)

Q. 77. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor’s good name, especially in witness-bearing.

(Zechariah 8:16; 3 John 12; Proverbs 14:5, 25)

Q. 78. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment forbids whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbor’s good name.

(1 Samuel 17:28; Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 15:3)

Q. 79. Which is the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment is, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

(Exodus 20:17)

Q. 80. What is required in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment requires full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.

(Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:6; Job 31:29; Romans 12:15; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7)

Q. 81. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

(1 Kings 21:4; Esther 5:13; 1 Corinthians 10:10; Galatians 5:26; James 3:14, 16; Romans 7:7–8; Romans 13:9; Deuteronomy 5:21)

Q. 83. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

A. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

(Ezekiel 8:6, 13, 15; 1 John 5:16; Psalm 78:17, 32, 56)

Q. 84. What does every sin deserve?

A. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

(Ephesians 5:6; Galatians 3:10; Lamentations 3:39; Matthew 25:41)

Q. 85. What does God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?

A. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

(Acts 20:21; Proverbs 2:1–5; Proverbs 8:33–36; Isaiah 55:3)

Q. 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, by which we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

(Hebrews 10:39; John 1:12; Isaiah 26:3–4; Philippians 3:9; Galatians 2:16)

Q. 87. What is repentance unto life?

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, by which a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

(Acts 11:18; Acts 2:37–38; Joel 2:12; Jeremiah 3:22; Jeremiah 31:18–19; Ezekiel 36:31; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Isaiah 1:16–17)

Q. 88. What are the outward means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

A. The outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer.

(Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:42, 46–47)

Q. 89. How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

A. The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching, of the Word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

(Nebemiah 8:8; 1 Corinthians 14:24–25; Acts 26:18; Psalm 19:8; Acts 20:32; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Romans 10:13–17; Romans 1:16)

Q. 90. How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

A. That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend to it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love; lay it up in our hearts; and practice it in our lives.

(Proverbs 8:34; 1 Peter 2:1–2; Psalm 119:18; Hebrews 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; Psalm 119:11; Luke 8:15; James 1:25)

Q. 91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him who does administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them who by faith receive them.

(1 Peter 3:21; Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 3:6–7; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in which, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

(Genesis 17:7, 10; Exodus 12; 1 Corinthians 11:23, 26)

Q. 93. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

(Matthew 28:19; Matthew 26:26–28)

Q. 94. What is baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament in which the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, does signify and seal our grafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

(Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27)

Q. 95. To whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.

(Acts 8:36–37; Acts 2:38–39; Genesis 17:10, compared with Colossians 2:11–12; 1 Corinthians 7:14)

Q. 96. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament in which, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

(1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 1 Corinthians 10:16)

Q. 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

(1 Corinthians 11:28–29; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 11:31; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8; 1 Corinthians 11:28–29)

Q. 98. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

(Psalm 62:8; 1 John 5:14; John 16:23; Psalm 32:5–6; Daniel 9:4; Philippians 4:6)

Q. 99. What rule has God given for our direction in prayer?

A. The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer that Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

(1 John 5:14; Matthew 6:9–13, compared with Luke 11:2–4)

Q. 100. What does the preface of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

A. The preface of the Lord's Prayer (which is, "Our Father in heaven") teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others.

(Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:15; Luke 11:13; Acts 12:5; 1 Timothy 2:1–2)

Q. 101. What do we pray for in the first petition?

A. In the first petition (which is, "Hallowed be your name"), we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all by which he makes himself known; and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.

(Matthew 6:9; Psalm 67:2–3; Psalm 83)

Q. 102. What do we pray for in the second petition?

A. In the second petition (which is, "Your kingdom come"), we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

(Matthew 6:10; Psalm 68:1, 18; Revelation 12:10–11; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Romans 10:1; John 17:9, 20; Revelation 22:20)

Q. 103. What do we pray for in the third petition?

A. In the third petition (which is, "Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"), we pray, that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

(Matthew 6:10; Psalm 67; Psalm 119:36; Matthew 26:39; 2 Samuel 15:25; Job 1:21; Psalm 103:20–21)

Q. 104. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

A. In the fourth petition (which is, "Give us this day our daily bread"), we pray that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

(Matthew 6:11; Proverbs 30:8–9; Genesis 28:20; 1 Timothy 4:4–5)

Q. 105. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

A. In the fifth petition (which is, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”), we pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

(Matthew 6:12; Psalm 51:1–2, 7, 9; Daniel 9:17–19; Luke 11:4; Matthew 18:35)

Q. 106. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. In the sixth petition (which is, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”) we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.

(Matthew 6:13; Matthew 26:41; 2 Corinthians 12:7–8)

Q. 107. What does the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?

A. The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer (which is, “For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.”) teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him. And, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.

(Matthew 6:13; Daniel 9:4, 7–9, 16–19; 1 Chronicles 29:10–13; 1 Corinthians 14:16; Revelation 22:20–21)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Use this space to record how this journey, through this book, has helped your own discipleship and faith life. What was challenging? What was the Holy Spirit working in you? How will you continue to grow closer in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit?

Concluding Reflections continued...

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Amen. (NUMBERS 6:24–26)

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen.

About the Author



Ryan Stratton is an ordained elder in the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

With over twenty-five years of experience in teaching children, teenagers, and adults, Ryan has a deep passion for guiding others in their faith journey. His background includes a significant period of involvement in TaeKwonDo, where he practiced and taught for fifteen years, developing discipline, leadership, and a commitment to personal growth.

Following a call to Christian ministry and leadership, Ryan has dedicated his career to full-time vocational ministry, starting with youth ministry and eventually becoming a pastor. His primary mission is to help individuals discover the purpose God has for their lives and to experience the joy found in Jesus Christ.

Ryan holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration degree from Stephen F. Austin State University and earned his Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary.

His most cherished relationships are with his wife and their four children. When not leading the church, studying Scripture, speaking, writing, or engaging in community missions and outreach, Ryan enjoys spending quality time with his family.

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