STUDENT GROWTH COMM+UNITY

RIVER
STUDENTS

SPRING 2026



WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

PATRICK BICKNELL
ELIJAH EDWARDS
JUSTIN FOROOZAN
ZACH HONNEN
SHAWNA JOHNSON
LORENA NORRIS
JOSH PETERSON
PHILIP PIASECKI
RYAN STORY
KEATON WASHBURN
JEANNIE YATES

Student Growth Community: Spring 2026

Copyright © 2026 by The River Church

Published by The River Church
8393 E. Holly Rd.
Holly, MI 48442

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of The River Church. Inquiries should be sent to the publisher. All rights reserved.

First Edition, January 2026

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language. The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.



THE RIVER CHURCH

REACH | GATHER | GROW

CONTENTS

9 **LESSON ONE**
REACH

17 **LESSON TWO**
GATHER

25 **LESSON THREE**
GROW

33 **LESSON FOUR**
GIVE

41 **LESSON FIVE**
RESPECT AND SUBMISSION

49 **LESSON SIX**
LOVE

57 **LESSON SEVEN**
HONOR

65 **A NOTE FROM PASTOR RYAN**

67 **LESSON EIGHT**
WHY JONAH

73 **LESSON NINE**
I WOULD RATHER

81 **LESSON TEN**
SALVATION AT 30,000 FEET

89 **LESSON ELEVEN**
THE GOSPEL IS ENOUGH

95 **LESSON TWELVE**
PEOPLE OR PLANTS

103 **LESSON THIRTEEN**
THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

111 **LESSON FOURTEEN**
WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

121 **LESSON FIFTEEN**
THE SHEPHERD WHO CARES

129 **LESSON SIXTEEN**
THE LORD IS MY PATH

Preface

If you are reading this, you are most likely in middle school or high school (or the parent of someone who is). Whether you are a Christian or not, being a teenager comes with its challenges. There are low moments where you get left out, fail a big test, or receive bad news. But there are mountain top moments too; moments where you get good news about the team or role you were hoping to make, and the feeling of accomplishment that comes with it! Wherever you are right now, God's Word has something to say about it.

This semester, we will review the vision of The River Church: Reach, Gather, Grow, explore the godly foundations for the family, examine the life of Jonah, and begin our church-wide Sermon Series on the book of Psalms.

Come along on this journey by joining us every week for Student Growth Community at any of The River Church locations!



REACH

PASTOR PATRICK BICKNELL

Have you ever heard your parents say something so often that you tune them out anytime that thing is mentioned? For me, it was one thing, always this one thing: remembering stuff. I am a very forgetful person; my mind thinks of one thing and then I'm almost like a dog where I see a squirrel and lose track of everything that was going on. There was this one time I went to my sister's basketball game and wanted to bring my PSP. (Do any of you know what that is?) My parents said, "Are you sure? Don't lose track of it and forget it because we are not buying you a new one." The second they mentioned this, I tuned them out and thought I wouldn't forget it. Well, eventually, I forgot. I got all the way home, realized it, and started to panic. Thankfully, my dad had seen it, picked it up, and gave it to me when we got home. It was around that time when I realized I should probably listen to them more.

1. Is there something that your parents, teachers, coaches, or leaders always bring up that you tend to tune out?

_____
_____
_____

The reason I bring up that story is because it can be easy to tune out the things that we talk about frequently in the church. We go over our vision for the church twice a year: Reach, Gather, Grow. If you aren't new, you have heard this a million times. That does not mean you tune it out; it is just as important to hear it the hundredth time as it is the first time.

Read Acts 1:8: ***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

These were the last words that Jesus said to His disciples before He went back up to Heaven. This is where we start with our vision of the church: Reach. Jesus is not only giving a charge to His disciples at that time, but He is giving the same charge to us. Go out and be witnesses to the whole world. What does it mean to be a witness?

It doesn't just mean to see something, but to go out and tell people what you have witnessed. Tell people what Jesus has done, why they should follow Him, and how He has changed your life.

2. What situations is someone usually called to be a witness?

_____
_____
_____

3. What needs to happen to you first in order to be a witness?

_____
_____
_____

It is one thing to follow Jesus's call to go and witness to people about Him to the whole world, but what are we supposed to witness about? That is probably the most important thing in regards to reaching the world around us. We need to know what we are witnessing about.

Read Acts 2:22–24: ***"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."***

4. What are the core details about Jesus's story that we need to share with people?

_____
_____
_____

5. Do you believe that these details are true? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

6. How could your experience with Jesus help you to share these details with someone?

_____
_____
_____

The next thing we need to know about being a witness of Jesus to people is where we need to go and tell them. At the end of Acts 1:8, Jesus says to go and tell people ***"in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*** Essentially, what Jesus is telling His disciples is to go and preach the Gospel in your city, in your region, and in the whole world. I think this is a good way to look at where we need to share what Jesus has done. So often we say things like, "Go tell the world about Jesus!" Yet, that is a daunting task because the world is huge! Of course, Jesus wants everyone to hear about the gospel, but by ourselves, we can't tell everyone. We need to start around us. The places we tell people about Jesus could look like this: our family, our school, our community, and our world.

7. Who is someone in these categories (family, school, community, world) that you need to tell about Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

8. Do you believe it is important to tell people about Jesus? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

I hope that you all desire to tell people about Jesus. I hope that His death, burial, and resurrection motivate you to take this news to everyone around you. As followers of Christ, we are commanded to go and tell people this news. Of course, there are times when you will fail at this. I know that I have. However, we cannot let that stop us from telling someone else about Him. Because the truth is, if we don't tell them, then who will? How will they believe in the truth that will save their souls for all of eternity? That is how important our witness is.

Read Romans 10:13–15: ***"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"***

9. Does preaching only happen on Sunday morning from the stage? How can you ***"preach the good news"*** to those around you?

_____
_____
_____

10. In your group, practice sharing the Gospel! Pretend that someone asked you, "Why should I believe in Jesus?" Give them an answer, and then give each other feedback on what to say.

_____
_____
_____

There is no greater task in this world than to share the Gospel with someone. The truth that Jesus lived perfectly on our behalf, died the death we were condemned to die, was buried, and rose again so that whoever would put their faith in Him will be saved is the news

that every person needs. If you have put your faith in Jesus, then you have the best news in the universe to share with anyone you meet. I hope that gives you some encouragement. I want to leave you with this verse.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Romans 1:16

Be unashamed and be bold to share the truth that has saved your life.

NOTES



GATHER

ELIJAH EDWARDS

I am going to admit something here; I am a huge nerd. I love comics, "*Transformers"*, *"Star Wars"*, video games, *"Lord of the Rings"*, and much more. Due to being a nerd, I used to attend different conventions when I was in college. The biggest one I attended was Grand Rapids Comic Con, where a huge group of nerds gathered together and had a fun time meeting their favorite characters, buying different things, and overall having a good time. What is most unique about Comic Con, though, is that every type of nerd is there. There aren't just *"Star Wars"* fans or comic fans; all types of fans are there, and all of them gather together to enjoy the weekend. The whole point that I am trying to make with this is that a group of people, all liking different things, all in different walks of life, gathered together in one place to share in what they loved and be together with a bunch of other nerds. In a much larger sense, that is what we do as the church. We gather together, each person different, each person from a different walk of life. We all come together to hear God's Word, worship Him, and praise Jesus together.

1. At a Sunday morning gathering, you see so many different types of people. What brings them all together?

_____
_____
_____

Let us begin at where it all started. Read Acts 1:4; 2:1.

To understand this passage, we need to first understand what Jesus is asking His disciples to do and why they need to do it. Let's take a look at the title of this chapter. If you have an ESV Bible it should be: ***"The Promise of the Holy Spirit"*** but if you don't, what's most important to know is that in this chapter Jesus is about to ascend into heaven and will promise to send the Holy Spirit.

2. Knowing this now, why would Jesus want all of His disciples to stay in Jerusalem?

_____
_____
_____

Jesus wanted all of His disciples to receive the Holy Spirit at the same time. He wanted all of them to experience this together.

3. When something really cool happens or you get invited to something awesome, would you rather experience it alone or with people you feel closest to? Why?

_____
_____
_____

Jesus wanted His disciples to receive the Holy Spirit together so that they could accomplish the task set before them as a community. Together, as brothers and sisters in Christ, they would work to grow more brothers and sisters in Jesus.

4. What do you think was the significance of the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit together at the same time?

_____
_____
_____

If comics and nerd stuff isn't to your liking, let's try sports. Have you seen how much sports brings people together? The passion of all these different people for a team with one goal in mind: win. Not only fans, but also players, working together to win.

So, if we go the sports route, is it better for one player to hear the play or strategy of the game? No, you want the whole team to be on board. Together, all on the same page. The disciples were all on the same team and received their calling from Jesus all at the same time so that they could effectively proclaim the Gospel to everyone they could.

Spreading out from the disciples, more and more people came to know Christ and the church was building and growing.

Read Acts 2:42-47.

5. When thinking about community and togetherness, what words or verses stand out to you the most? (Leaders share yours as well.)

_____
_____
_____

We see in these five verses a group of people who are devoting themselves to a common cause, breaking bread, sharing, giving, worshiping, and living life together. When we talk about gathering, this is what we talk about. As Christians, we need to be living out what Acts 2:42-47 shows us. If you are saved by Jesus, it is important to be together with those who are also saved and to invite others to join with you. Be in a community that loves, shares, gives, worships, and proclaims the Gospel wherever they go.

6. After reading this, in what ways do you feel you Gather well?

_____
_____
_____

7. In what ways do you need to look at the church gathering differently?

_____
_____
_____

8. Do you feel welcomed to Gather or are you hearing about this for the first time?

_____
_____
_____

Take this time as a group to talk about different ways you Gather together and reflect what the book of Acts is showing you. Brainstorm some ideas of how you as a group can Gather together more effectively.

(Leaders: this is a great opportunity to involve every member of your group.)

"Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." Hebrews 10:25

NOTES



GROW

ZACH HONNEN

1. What does it mean to be devoted? How would you define devotion? (Feel free to look it up.)

_____
_____
_____

Over the course of my life, I've been devoted to many different things. When I was younger, I was completely immersed in certain video games, playing them all day, every day. As I moved into middle school and high school, my devotion shifted to basketball. I poured my time and energy into becoming a successful athlete—practicing, working out, and doing everything I could to improve. After high school, my focus changed again, and traveling became my new devotion. Experiencing new places and new things became a passion I pursued wholeheartedly.

For each of us, devotion can look different. We might be devoted to family, friends, hobbies, or even video games or sports (like me when I was younger).

2. What are the things in your life that you are devoted to?

_____
_____
_____

3. Are the things you're devoted to things that you are proud of?

_____
_____
_____

In our passage today, we're going to look at devotion, what it means to be devoted, and what we should be devoted to. Let's go ahead and read our passage.

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Acts 2:42

4. What do you see in this passage? What stands out to you?

_____
_____
_____

5. What do you think it means to be devoted ***"to the apostles' teaching"***?

_____
_____
_____

In this passage, we see that the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. However, oftentimes in life there is a gap between talk and action when it comes to devotion. When we examine studies, we often see a disconnect between what people claim and how they actually live. Research shows that while many express devotion to health, faith, work, or ethical principles, their actions frequently fall short. For example, seventy-five percent of people say they want to eat healthier, but only twenty percent follow through. Similarly, while sixty-three percent of Americans identify as Christian, only twenty-two percent attend church weekly. In the workplace, ninety percent of employees claim to believe in their company's mission, yet only twenty-three percent feel engaged at work.

It's easy to say one thing and do another. I can say I care about my health and what I eat, but it's just as easy for me to stop and grab a Big Mac on the way home from work. Devotion, dedication, and consistency require discipline and resolve.

For the believers in our passage, they had just given everything to Jesus, fully committing their lives to Him for the first time. There was no turning back. Their faith cost them everything, as they were ostracized by their culture, families, and communities for the name of Christ. Their commitment was undeniable.

6. Would you consider yourself devoted to the Word of God? And if not, how can we become devoted to God's Word?

_____
_____
_____

7. What are you devoted to? Not only based upon your words, but based upon your actions?

_____
_____
_____

8. What are actions that would reflect a devoted Christian life?

_____
_____
_____

Now I think it should be clear that no one is perfect. None of us can be perfectly devoted. None of us can be perfect in our walk as Christians. We all fail every day, but the grace and mercy of God are available to us every day as well.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:8-9

To be devoted to the teaching of Jesus, to be devoted to the Word of God is to commit to seeking the Lord, to continue to pursue, learn and understand who He is, and to try and follow His Word and obey Him. However, when we do fail, we have an Advocate with the Father and He will forgive us our sins.

When I look at my life of devotion to Christ, my prayer is to be better today than yesterday, and better tomorrow than today. This is the mentality of a Christian. We are not Jesus superfans. We are Christ followers. We don't just talk about Jesus, we live our lives for Jesus.

9. When you look at your life, what are some very small steps you can take towards being devoted to Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

10. What are some Bible verses that we should learn in order to be devoted to Jesus? I want to encourage you to find your own. I will provide a few down below.

_____
_____
_____

- Romans 10:9
- Matthew 22:37-40
- Philippians 1:27
- Isaiah 40:31
- Philippians 1:6
- Romans 8:38-39

R.C. Sproul says, “True devotion to Christ is not measured by how much you serve, but by how much you trust in Christ and rest in His finished work.”

Works Cited: American Journal of Public Health, *"Dietary Habits and Health Trends."* Statistic Brain Research Institute, *"Fitness Goal Retention Rates."* Pew Research Center, *"Religious Practices in the United States, 2021."* Gallup Poll, *"Employee Engagement Report, 2023."* University of Massachusetts, *"Lying in Everyday Communication Study."*

NOTES

4

GIVE

PASTOR KEATON WASHBURN

Over the last few weeks, we have been studying what a church should look like based on the original church in the book of Acts through reaching, gathering, and growing. This week, we are continuing that by adding onto it the fourth characteristic we see modeled in Acts: giving.

1. What's the worst gift you've been given? What made it so terrible?

_____
_____
_____

2. Are you more of a gift-giver or a gift-receiver?

_____
_____
_____

A Growing and Going Church

The Apostle Peter has just given an incredible sermon in Acts 2 that explains that Jesus is the promised Messiah, sent by God, crucified by people, and raised from the dead. Peter tells the crowd that what they're witnessing (the Holy Spirit being poured out at Pentecost) was foretold by the prophets. He calls everyone to repent, believe in Jesus, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

After the message, Acts 2:41 tells us, ***"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."*** That day, about three thousand people were saved and the church began!

The early church was growing and going. It was growing in that the Scriptures were preached and people responded, and it was going out and reaching more people!

3. How have you seen The River Church going and reaching people? What role have you played in that?

_____
_____
_____

A Giving Church

Read Acts 2:44–45.

4. What was the early church doing based on Acts 2:44–45?

_____
_____
_____

5. Do Christians today do the same thing or not?

_____
_____
_____

6. Who are some people that you have the most in common with? Do you enjoy being around those people?

_____
_____
_____

The church here had ***"all things in common."*** They sold their excess and gave it to those who were in need. Their priorities clearly weren't physical things. They didn't care much for their possessions.

7. On a scale of one to ten, how much do most people care about physical things and acquiring more and more things? How about you, how much do you care about physical things?

_____
_____
_____

8. How can you tell what someone cares about most in their life? What are some good indicators?

_____
_____
_____

The priority of the church wasn't possessions, but people. So much so that they sold what they had, not to boost their bank account, but to give it to those who had less than them! One of the clearest indicators that someone is growing in their relationship with God is that their love for those around them increases. Their priorities shift from themselves to others because we see Jesus modeling this! A church that is growing is also a church that is giving.

Read Acts 2:46–47.

9. What was the effect of the generosity of the early church? (see verse 47)

_____
_____
_____

Generosity and giving is not normal. It's not normal for someone to sell their possessions and give the proceeds to others.

Read 1 John 3:16–18.

10. What is your reaction to these verses? How does it apply to you?

_____
_____
_____

A Glowing Church

Real generosity stands out because it isn't common. The early Christians attracted others to Christ through their authentically

changed lives. These Christians, physically, looked the same but their lives looked completely different.

Take a magnet for example; some things are attracted to it and drawn in by its power. Why is that? A magnet has two poles, north and south. Magnetic forces are caused by tiny particles in atoms called electrons, which spin and create tiny magnetic fields. In some materials, like iron, nickel, and cobalt, these tiny fields can line up in the same direction, which makes the whole material magnetic or attracted to a magnet.

Attraction happens when opposite poles come near each other—like the north pole of a magnet pulling on the south pole of another, or pulling on materials like iron whose electrons can align with the magnet's field.

If you follow the example of Jesus and the early Christians and the words of John, and choose people over possessions, some will see that and ask, "Why?" This can give you an opportunity to share about Jesus' love. But it doesn't always go that way.

11. Why do you think people are drawn to generosity and kindness?

_____
_____
_____

12. Have you ever seen someone whose life glows for Christ?

_____
_____
_____

With a magnet, repulsion happens when the same poles face each other—like two north poles or two south poles. Their fields push against each other. Similarly, just as Jesus was mocked, so will you be at times if you choose to follow Him.

So tonight, we've seen that the early church wasn't just a group of people who gathered once a week; they were a community that reached people, grew together, and radically gave to meet the needs around them. Their generosity wasn't normal. It stood out. It made people curious. Some were drawn in by it like metal to a magnet, and some pushed away. The same will happen with us.

The truth is what we prioritize shows. You can tell what matters to someone by how they spend their time, money, and attention. The early Christians didn't let stuff be their priority; they cared about people because that's what Jesus did for them.

13. If someone looked at your life this week, what would they see you care about most? Would your life pull people closer to Jesus or would it push them away?

_____
_____
_____

My challenge to you is to be part of a glowing church—not just a church you come to, but a church you help build by reaching, growing, gathering, and giving. Let's be a group of people so generous with our time, attention, love, and resources that people around us can't help but ask why, and we get to tell them about Jesus.

Close in prayer asking God to help us be a church that shines by choosing people over possessions.

NOTES



RESPECT AND SUBMISSION

PASTOR RYAN STORY

Aretha Franklin sang about it. Games ought to have it. For us today, every family should have a foundation in it. The “it” we are discussing is respect. Respect is our opening foundation of a family because it provides a profound insight into how God designed the family. For every believer of Jesus, respect is more than just an action. Respect is the “it” that every family needs because respect is a reflection of love, humility, and submission.

1. Why do you think mutual respect is foundational to the strength of family?

_____
_____
_____

I recently sat down with two young people as they were about to embark on the journey of marriage. Whenever someone asks if I would be willing to officiate, I request a few sit-downs with the soon-to-be-married couple to do premarital counseling. This is meant to serve as an opportunity to speak truth into the life of each of them, and to ultimately point them to God’s design for marriage. One of the more pointed conversations I like to have is discussing roles within the marriage. Far too often, we look to society as our measuring stick for how a marriage and family ought to run. What I have come to learn is that God designed families to have the foundations of respect and submission, and when they are not implemented early in a family, hardship is to come.

In Ephesians chapter five, God’s Word gives a final statement about marriage: ***“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband”*** (Ephesians 5:33). God’s instructions are clear. Husbands are to love their wives as explained earlier in the chapter, and wives are to respect their husbands as explained earlier in the chapter.

2. What do you think is the worst advice a person could receive before they get married?

_____
_____
_____

Many times, whenever we think of respect, we simply run to Ephesians' emphasis on submission.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Ephesians 5:22-24

While there is a great truth that submission is a major aspect of a wife's role, more is found in this chapter than a wife's submission. One cannot omit verses fifteen through twenty-one, with a major focus on verse twenty-one.

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." Ephesians 5:15-21

Respect in our family must first stem from our submission to Christ as Lord. When a person surrenders their lives to Jesus, confesses Jesus as Lord, and believes that Jesus is the only way to be saved from the sin that rules our hearts, a person's heart will be transformed and changed. This change that only Jesus can bring will change how a person treats others. God's Word does not start with

calling for only wives to submit. God's Word first calls all believers to mutually submit to one another. This submission to Christ brings respect, which sets the tone for respect within marriage and family.

3. How does submitting to Christ shape the way we interact with our family members?

_____
_____
_____

4. Should you submit to what you do not respect?

_____
_____
_____

While there is a collective call to believers to submit to one another, there also is a direct call for wives to ***"submit to your own husbands as to the Lord."*** Submission is not meant to be a dirty word, nor is it meant to be used as an authoritarian term used to justify reasons for trying to keep a person in line. Submission must be viewed not just as the duty of wives alone, but as an essential part of a Christian lifestyle. Jesus submitted to His parents, paid taxes, and submitted to the will of the Father. Jesus modeled submission. Submission is not meant to be something that must be earned, it's a call from the Word of God. We cannot pluck Ephesians 5:22-23 out of thin air without knowing the context of Ephesians 5:21, which says, ***"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*** A wife's submission to her husband is ***"as to the Lord"*** and moreover demonstrates a reverence for Christ, rather than a chauvinistic political system. When a man and a woman are joined in marriage they are joined to reflect Christ to each other.

5. How has a worldly view of respect and submission perverted God's truth?

_____
_____
_____

For husbands and wives, God's Word has a final statement. Very often we try to add loopholes into God's Word. These loopholes are used to make light of disobedience and sin. Living a life of righteous perfection has only been done by one person. For everyone else who is not Jesus, living for God is hard. The reality for wives is submission and respect can be hard. Inasmuch, husbands loving their wives, children honoring their parents, and parents building up their child, are all difficult if not impossible without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is why wives are instructed to ***"submit to your own husbands as to the Lord."*** Regardless of how a husband is, submission and respect are due because that act of obedience is given to the Lord.

6. How does loophole living erode the foundations of a family?

_____
_____
_____

Paul (moreover, God's Word) emphasizes the importance of a wife's respect and submission toward their husband. In Roman culture, a wife's role was to be a dignified wife and a good mother. A wife would be a matron who would make her own clothes, bear children (preferably boys), and make sure home and food were both good. God's truth is so revolutionary. A wife would offer worship and obedience to the one true God for how she reflected the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This respect is not a sign of inferiority, but a demonstration of love and honor, a lifestyle of God's design for unity in the family, a glue that helps strengthen the marriage bond, and a reflection of the realness of Jesus.

7. What can you begin doing today to practice respect in your life? In your friendships, relationships, family, or on your team?

_____
_____
_____

8. What's one relationship you can show Christ-like respect to this week?

_____
_____
_____

Aretha Franklin sang about it (R-E-S-P-E-C-T). Games ought to have it. For us today, every family should want respect and submission as a foundation.

NOTES



LOVE

PASTOR PATRICK BICKNELL

As we move through family month and talk about the roles within the family, this can be a very sensitive topic for many people. The idea that the husband is the head of the household and the wife is supposed to submit to the husband's leading can cause an immediate backlash. However, my hope is that as we study the foundations of the family, we see how a husband is supposed to lead. That his leading and headship over the family is not meant to be used to burden his wife or kids, but is meant to reflect the love that Christ has for the church.

1. Describe a time when you had a difficult boss, leader, or teacher.

_____
_____
_____

2. Why do you think it's easy for people to misuse leadership positions? In a family, on a team, or in a friend group? What happens when someone leads with pride instead of love?

_____
_____
_____

Now that we have addressed the elephant in the room, I want us to look at what is the foundation for how the husband is meant to lead his wife and his family. Put very simply, the foundation is love, and more specifically, it is the love of Christ. This is essential for us to understand. If we don't grasp this understanding, then we miss the point completely for how a husband is supposed to lead. There are many ways that husbands are meant to follow the example of Christ's love, but I want to look at just two of them in this lesson.

Let's look at the first way Paul says husbands are supposed to follow the example of Christ's love for the church. ***"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,"*** (Ephesians 5:25). The first example the husband is supposed to follow is how Christ gave Himself up for the church. This is the

first and foremost thing that husbands are meant to follow. Christ stepped down from glory and came to earth so that He can serve rather than be served. He came with the purpose of dying for sinners who don't deserve it precisely because He loved us so much. In the same way, husbands are meant to reflect this love for their wife. This sort of love is self-sacrificial, it counts the other person's needs before our own, and it shows that the husband is meant to use his leadership not for his own gain but rather for the betterment of his wife.

3. What are some ways a husband can show this sort of love to his wife?

_____
_____
_____

4. Why do you think God designed marriage as a picture of Christ and the church? What does that teach us about God's love for us?

_____
_____
_____

5. Does trying to live up to the standard of Christ (perfection) discourage you in any way?

_____
_____
_____

The second way I want to look at comes a few verses later, ***"In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the***

church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Ephesians 5:28-33). The important thing to see here is that in the same way that Christ cares for the church, and we care for our own body, the husband is to care for his wife as well. This is again coming back to the self-sacrificial love that Christ showed for us. Not only that, but when two people enter into the marriage covenant, we see that God says the two shall become one. This is the purpose of marriage. It is meant to give us a glimpse of what our union to Christ is like.

6. What does it mean to love someone selflessly? What would it look like in a friendship or family?

_____
_____
_____

7. What should viewing marriage as a representation of Christ and the church motivate you to do?

_____
_____
_____

Now, I'm sure after reading about how we are to follow the example of Christ in our marriage, it can make us feel terrible about the ways we are currently falling short. That is okay; we are all going to make mistakes and constantly fail. We are not meant to be perfect like Christ because we can't. We are meant to follow His example as best as we can through the power of the Holy Spirit.

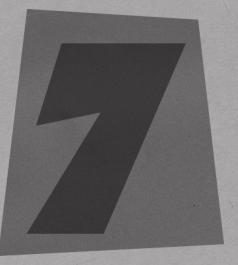
8. How can learning about God's design for marriage now help you avoid some of the problems people face in relationships later in life?

_____
_____
_____

9. What is one way you need to change the way you love your family this week?

_____
_____
_____

NOTES



HONOR

PASTOR PHILIP PIASECKI

Growing up, my family built a house on a lake. The only problem was under the sandy soil, the foundation was not sturdy enough to support a house. So, what you do is install these things called “pilings.” They are huge, twenty-five foot long, wooden telephone pole-looking things that get driven into the ground by this giant machine. The idea is you pound enough of these in for the house to sit on them, and boom! You have a sturdy foundation to build upon. When they were installing the pilings at my childhood home, the crane operator forgot one essential thing: he didn’t put all of the supports for the machine down properly. While trying to give our house a proper foundation, he didn’t give his machine the proper foundation. After a short time, the giant crane tipped over and crushed the garage of my parents’ neighbor. It was definitely not the type of introduction my parents were looking for!

1. Have you ever created or built something that didn’t turn out as planned or failed in some way? What happened?

_____
_____
_____

We know when things aren’t put together right, they tend to fail. It’s obvious to see this in physical structures, but it can be harder to see within a structure like the family. When the family structure doesn’t have the proper foundation, it is going to fail. We’ve talked about how the family should be built on respect and love between husbands and wives, and ultimately between all the family members. Now, we are going to look at how honor, particularly from the child to the parents, contributes to strengthening the family foundations.

I know that someone in middle school all the way to someone whose parents have long since passed away could be studying this lesson. Regardless of your situation, try and see how the relationship between child and parent applies to you currently. It may be something you need to learn to put into practice in your life right now or something you need to learn so you can help disciple someone. Regardless of your situation, let the Word of God speak to you.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.'" Ephesians 6:1-3

2. What does it mean for children to obey their parents ***"in the Lord"***? How does this obedience reflect their relationship with God?

_____
_____
_____

Sometimes the Bible can be confusing; other times, it literally cannot be any more straightforward. The command here is clear, ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."*** Our obedience, respect, and honor toward our parents is an extension of our relationship with Christ. The expectation here is that the children being spoken to, know Jesus as their Savior, and to stay in obedience with the Word of the Lord. They are commanded to obey their parents. We demonstrate our submission to Jesus' order and authority when we obey our parents. Let's be honest, as a child it isn't always easy to obey our parents. There are many excuses we can come up with for why it would be better for us to ignore their commands. However, we show our trust in Jesus that His ways are higher than our own when we obey even when it is not easy.

3. What do you see as the difference between obeying and honoring your father and mother?

_____
_____
_____

The word honor means to "show high regard for." This is an internal feeling, not just an outward response. It's easy just to obey someone and do it all while having a horrible attitude. To honor our parents, we must have an internal, genuine respect for them. This feeling toward them then will reveal itself in the way we interact with them

and how we speak about them to others. I know some of you reading this right now might be thinking, “If you only knew my parents, you wouldn’t expect me to honor them.”

4. How can you do a better job of honoring your father and mother?

_____
_____
_____

5. What do you think the verse means when it says ***“that it may go well with you and you may live long in the land”***?

_____
_____
_____

Very simply and practically, obeying your parents is going to keep you safe. Think of this part of the verse almost as a Proverb. Logically, if my parents tell me to wear a seatbelt and I listen to them, when I get in a car accident, I’m more likely to be safe. A good, Godly parent lays out rules and expectations for a child ultimately for their good. As a child, you are not always going to like what your parents tell you to do, but obedience can lead to well-being and good health as a result. A God-fearing Christian community that builds its foundation on honoring and obeying one another is going to create an environment that helps things ***“go well with you”*** as the Scripture says.

6. Has there ever been a time that you didn’t obey a parent and it almost led you to getting seriously hurt?

_____
_____
_____

I understand that every person’s situation is different. God knew that every child wasn’t going to have the perfect parent, yet He still put this commandment in scripture. So, how do we handle obeying and

honoring parents in bad situations as well as good ones? If you had a bad upbringing, know that your Heavenly Father loves and cares for you. He sent His Son to die for you. Jesus was willing to sacrifice everything for you. That is the true picture of what love is, and it is the witness that we can show our parents through honoring them. If you have parents who are not believers, you as a Christian have an incredible opportunity to show them Jesus. However, as believers, we have to remember that God is our ultimate authority. ***"But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'"*** Acts 5:29

There may be times when, with honor and respect, you have to follow God's commands over the command of a parent. This cannot happen based on your opinion; it would need to be something that is so clearly against the commands of Scripture that you cannot obey.

7. The world believes we are to give honor only to those who have earned it, but Scripture calls us to honor our parents regardless. How can you show honor to a parent that you feel has not earned that honor?

_____
_____
_____

"Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." Ephesians 5:21

8. Ephesians 5:21 calls believers to submit ***"to one another out of reverence for Christ."*** How does this principle of mutual submission apply within the family structure?

_____
_____
_____

When the parent/child relationship has a foundation of honor and respect, we will see our families flourish. This comes flowing out of our relationship with Christ; we will be more willing to submit to

one another when we understand Christ's love for us. My prayer is that families can learn to better understand the structure that God has put in place, and how that can lead to a happy and healthier family life. When children obey and honor their parents, and then parents in turn show honor and respect back to their children, the family begins to reflect Christ. The foundation of the family is built on respect, love, and honor between each person. Children, no matter how young or how old, honor your parents.

9. What practical steps can you take this week to cultivate an atmosphere of honor and respect in the home?

_____
_____
_____

NOTES

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RYAN

Over the years, I have spent time studying and discussing a lot of the significance and oddities about the Easter season. From egg hunts, to bunnies, to the shifting date, to jelly beans, I have spent time studying the history of the most important holiday a person could possibly celebrate. This year, I have added another notch in my belt. I added a giant fish to my Easter study! During the next five weeks at The River Church, we will focus our attention on the amazing events of one of God's prophets, Jonah. ("Ooo, Ooo!" if you are a VeggieTales fan.)

Spending time in God's Word is vital. The book of Jonah is only four chapters, and has under fifty verses. Over the next five weeks, I would like to challenge you to read the entire book of Jonah. Maybe you will read it through it every day, once a week, or maybe you will only get to read it one time in the next month. Regardless of the amount, God's Word is powerful and never returns empty.

"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

Take time this month to focus your attention on God's power, the mercy God has for the repentant, the grace He shows the disobedient, and the fact that God can bring any sinner to a relationship with Him.



WHY JONAH

PASTOR RYAN STORY

There are many Bible events that are very well known: the events of David defeating Goliath, Moses separating the Red Sea, and Daniel being put in a lions' den, just to name a few. However, for the next few weeks, our focus will be on the real life events of Jonah's life—including the fact he was swallowed by a giant fish! All these Bible moments are real.

1. What do you know about Jonah?

_____
_____
_____

One of the most amazing things about the Bible is that every truth, in all sixty-six books, brings itself back to Jesus, even a story about a disobedient prophet and a big fish.

While we will be going more in depth with our Jonah study in the next few weeks, this week, our focus is to explain the significance of Jonah. So, where do we start? We have to go to Matthew chapter twelve. Jesus had just left the synagogue. He had just finished teaching on prayer, the Sabbath, healing a man's hand, and healing a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and teaching about the importance of having a relationship with God that produces good fruit. Each one of those moments would have been a wonder to be present for. That is when the religious elite decided to open their mouths.

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But he answered them…" Matthew 12:38

2. Why do you think the Pharisees and scribes were demanding a sign from Jesus? What kind of sign might they have been expecting?

_____
_____
_____

Whenever Jesus answered, He often used the Old Testament as His source material for His answers to the Pharisees and Scribes, and this time was no different.

"But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.'" Matthew 12:39-41

3. What are the two examples Jesus uses from the events in the book of Jonah as a sign?

_____
_____
_____

a) What was the first example? How was it a sign or a foreshadowing of Jesus? *(Hint: verse 40)*

_____
_____
_____

b) What was the second example? How was it a sign or a foreshadowing of Jesus? *(Hint: verse 41)*

_____
_____
_____

Jesus isn't pointing to a cool Old Testament story; that cool Old Testament story was always pointing to Jesus. The book of Jonah is way more than just a big fish story; one could make the case that Jonah is an Easter story. The sign of Jonah is an amazingly deep message, packed full of meaning for even us today. If Jesus

uses Jonah as a means to announce His death and resurrection, we must always keep Jesus' ultimate sacrifice and victory, as well as the urgency of responding to God's call of telling the world, at the forefront.

NOTES



I WOULD RATHER

PASTOR RYAN STORY

Over the last ten years, I have developed a closer relationship with God. Some might think it is because I have studied my Bible more, prayed more, or even fasted regularly. I wish I was that devout in my relationship with Jesus. The event that added to my relationship with God in such a rich way was becoming a father. I have never loved someone so much, and then asked them to do such a simple task only to be met with a, "No." I have grown closer to God because I see a glimpse of what He must go through with all of us. God is our Heavenly Father, who created us, who created a world that we can live in, who put us in a solar system where we are not being pelted with asteroids, who has loved us to the extent of sending His only Son to die on a cross for our rebellion and sin, who protects us in ways we will never know, only to be met with a "no" when He tells us to do something.

1. When was the last time you told your parents, "No"? What was their response?

_____
_____
_____

Free will is one of the most puzzling gifts God has given to us. God, fully knowing us better than we could ever know ourselves, blessed us with the ability to choose. Before sin had even entered the world, God gave Adam and Eve the gift of choice. Too often we make choices and never really understand the depth of the choices we are making. We may never think it or desire a particular outcome, but the choices we make in life have eternal weight to them.

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before Me.' But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord." Jonah 1:1-3

2. What should a follower of Christ's response be to people who are living in wickedness?

_____
_____
_____

3. Why is it easier to run away from God than be obedient?

_____
_____
_____

4. What choice would you make if you were Jonah?

_____
_____
_____

Tarshish was on the southern coast of Spain. Jonah's goal was to run about two thousand miles from where God wanted him. Being obedient to God is difficult. When God gives us the opportunity to be obedient, we have all tried to run away from Him, but have you ever tried to run two thousand miles from God?

"But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.'" Jonah 1:4-6

5. Are you able to "sleep" when you choose disobedience?

_____
_____
_____

6. Why would God continue to want to use Jonah despite Jonah not wanting to be used?

_____
_____
_____

"And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, 'Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?' And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.'" Jonah 1:7-9

7. Why is it possible to claim to know God and yet not live a life of obedience?

_____
_____
_____

This terrified the men and they asked Jonah what he had done. (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.) ***"Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.'"*** Jonah 1:11-12

8. Is admitting fault the same as repenting? Why is admitting fault a good first step to turning back to God?

"Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood,

for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.' So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." Jonah 1:13-16

The sailors cared more about Jonah than Jonah cared about an entire city that was living in their wickedness. While the sailors did not see the sin that was ruling Jonah's heart, they still looked at him as someone who did not deserve death. The one who knows and has heard from God should have been the one to be the most willing to tell others about Him. Those who know God should always have more compassion than those who do not. The first chapter of Jonah sets an example for everyone. While God wanted to send Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh, I believe God equally wanted to get some wickedness out of Jonah.

9. How is the message of the Gospel of Jesus for saints and sinners alike?

_____
_____
_____

10. Is it easier to choose to follow Christ or choose to run away? What will you choose?

_____
_____
_____

NOTES



SALVATION AT 30,000 FEET

PASTOR RYAN STORY

Back in 2008, I took a philosophy class in college. I loved this class! Each week, we would read about a specific topic, and then you had two choices. You could write a ten-page paper or get in front of the class and present a view on the weekly topic and debate the class. I got an A in this class and never wrote a single paper. I remember when I started this class, I did not truly know Jesus in a salvation sense. I was just trying this "Jesus thing" out. However, by the time the finals of this class came along, I knew I had put my faith in Jesus, and I wanted to tell everyone! So, for my final, I debated a class of primarily atheists and agnostics about the universe's and our personal need for God. It was a blast! One question that a classmate tried to hook me in with was Jonah. He said, "I could never believe in a book that says that a man lived in the belly of a whale." Ironically, as I reminisce back at that moment, his statement is true. The truth we see in Jonah chapter two, can reveal the path to Jesus.

"And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."
Jonah 1:17

1. How did God choose to rescue Jonah?

_____
_____
_____

2. What is the connection to Jesus in Jonah 1:17?

_____
_____
_____

Many times, people will argue the validity of a man living in a great fish. While there are many apologetic arguments to conclude why this phenomenon happened, I have always felt Matthew chapter twelve gives a pretty good answer worthy for us to use when confronted with this question.

"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40

3. Based on Matthew 12:40, how can we know Jonah was in the belly of a great fish?

_____
_____
_____

While typing this, I wish that while I was in my class, I held onto Jesus more than I held onto the need for proof and evidence. If we cling to Jesus, that is all we need. While being swallowed by a great fish is awesome, the truly amazing happened not with what the fish had just eaten, but within the heart of Jonah.

Read all of Jonah chapter two.

"Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, 'I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!' And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land." Jonah 2:1-10

Congratulations, you can say you read the Bible today! I love breaking apart prayers in the Bible to help me learn how to pray better. Too often, I start a prayer and I trail off thinking about something random. Don't act like this has never happened to you! Prayer is not meant to be mechanical, but sometimes learning some methods and talking points can really help you with the conversation. If we break down Jonah's prayer into parts, we see praise, trouble and commitment.

Praise

4. Read Jonah 2:1-2. How is calling out to God considered praise?

_____
_____
_____

One of the sweetest sounds I hear daily is when one of my children calls to me for help, affection, or to just talk. I believe that if that brings me such joy as an earthly father, how much more does it bring our Heavenly Father joy when He hears us call to Him for help, affection, or to just talk.

Trouble

5. Read Jonah 2:3-7. What are all the ways that Jonah is in distress?

_____
_____
_____

6. Why is it important to know even in our running we are never out of God's hands?

_____
_____
_____

Notice Jonah does not blame the sailors for the predicament he is in; Jonah praises God. Whenever we pray, we must never place blame, only look to God as a means out.

Commitment

Read Jonah 2:8-9.

7. How does running from God make a person an isolator?

_____
_____
_____

8. Why does repentance have to come before salvation?

_____
_____
_____

Jonah had such faith in God, that before God vomited Jonah up on the beach, Jonah was assured that God would deliver him. ***"Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God."*** Jonah 2:6

9. Do people who run from God deserve God's mercy and grace?

_____
_____
_____

10. How should Jonah's prayer bring you closer to Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

NOTES



THE GOSPEL IS ENOUGH

PASTOR RYAN STORY

As a pastor, I have had the privilege to preach in many places. One foundation a pastor must easily lay in his life is the understanding that our words are not the power that brings a person to repentance. Praise God for that. I have preached messages where I was prepared, passionate, and genuinely put together a smooth, clear message. The response? Nothing. There have been other times when my week was hectic, my time studying the Word was lacking, my life was out of rhythm for whatever reason, and I would go and preach what God laid on my heart. After I finish, I begin battling the negative voices in my heart, and then someone comes over in tears telling me, “That is exactly what I needed to hear!”

The reality is, when God wants to use someone's attention, He will get it. So often we believe that the perfect word, the perfect phrase, the perfect tone is what brings a person to God. The reality is preaching the cross of Jesus Christ is enough. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says that he is to ***"preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power"*** (1 Corinthians 1:17).

1. Do you believe God can use you to preach the Gospel to someone?

_____
_____
_____

As we pick up on the story of Jonah, he is covered in fish vomit and we read that Jonah is where God intended, in Nineveh.

"Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.'" Jonah 3:1-2

2. Do you believe that God gives us second chances?

_____
_____
_____

"So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth." Jonah 3:3

3. Why did Jonah listen this time?

_____
_____
_____

"Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them." Jonah 3:4-5

4. What was the Word of the Lord Jonah delivered to Nineveh?

_____
_____
_____

I find many moments with the people God chooses to use in the Bible humorous and instructive. This is one of them. First and foremost, Jonah tried to run from God, got thrown off a boat, swallowed by a giant fish, vomited up on shore, had to walk three days only to say, ***"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"***

5. If disobedience always takes more effort than obedience, why do we disobey?

_____
_____
_____

This is one of those sermons that many of us might think, "And that worked?" Too often we think a message is received because of the ***"words of eloquent wisdom."*** The real reason a person turns their life to Christ is because God was doing something long before we are sent by God to talk. From the moment Jonah was sent,

God knew what would happen. Most of the time God just needs an obedient, albeit begrudged, follower to do what He is commanding.

6. How was Jonah's sermon received? Why would eight words be so impactful?

_____
_____
_____

We as a church are getting ready for Easter. While I do not know what 2026 holds, I am going to bet we are getting ready for an egg hunt, a Good Friday Gathering, and Easter Sunday's Gathering. Many of these are amazing opportunities for people to hear and respond to the Gospel. I have read that eighty-two percent of non-believers would come to church if they were invited. As crazy of a statistic as that is, I have read that only two percent of self-professing believers actually take the next step to invite someone. While you may not be the one who gets the opportunity to preach on Easter Sunday, you can be used by God to invite a person who needs to be reached by the Gospel.

The book of Jonah has many comparisons and contrasts. While we can see God save the city of Nineveh, we also see God working in Jonah's heart. In the same way Nineveh repented, turned from their evil, and turned towards God, we see Jonah doing the same thing.

7. What holds us back from wanting to invite people to church?

_____
_____
_____

NOTES



PEOPLE OR PLANTS

PASTOR KEATON WASHBURN

1. What's something small or silly that makes you angrier than it probably should? (slow Wi-Fi, someone chewing loudly, losing at *"Mario Kart"*, etc.)

_____
_____
_____

2. If anger was a color, what color would it be and why?

_____
_____
_____

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions that someone feels. Anger is the driving force behind many actions – both good and bad. It's what you feel when something bad happens to someone that we think of as good. It's felt when you see the results of the test you studied so hard for (or not at all) and got a poor grade on. It's what takes over you when you are wrongly punished for something you didn't do.

We are wrapping up our series on Jonah this week by studying Jonah chapter 4, the last chapter of Jonah and the conclusion of the story.

Read Jonah 3:10-4:4.

After Jonah warns the people of Nineveh of the coming destruction if they don't repent of their sins (Jonah 3:4), they repent! (Jonah 3:6-9). As a result, God was true to His word and ***"relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it"*** (Jonah 3:10). But for Jonah, this wasn't the result that he had hoped for. He sarcastically tells God in Jonah 4:2-3 that he saw this coming before he even left to go to Nineveh! He knew that God would show them mercy if they repented, and Jonah was angry about this. He wanted to see God destroy Nineveh and the people in it!

3. Why do you think Jonah was upset that God did what he "knew" God was going to do?

_____
_____
_____

Jonah was a prophet – someone that spoke to the people on behalf of God and vice versa, spoke to God on behalf of the people. A prophet, traditionally, in the Old Testament acted as a mouthpiece. Many times in the Old Testament we read of prophets begging God not to judge the people for their sins, but Jonah is doing the opposite here.

Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve.

4. Discuss the difference between grace and mercy. Which did God show to the people of Nineveh in not destroying them and their city?

_____
_____
_____

5. When is a time that you received mercy from someone?

_____
_____
_____

Read Jonah 4:3-4.

In his anger, Jonah becomes irrational saying that he doesn't want to live anymore. Maybe he's embarrassed that God isn't going to destroy the people like he said or wanted God to do. Maybe he was exhausted from being in the heat. The Bible doesn't tell us specifically what led Jonah to make this extreme statement. Regardless, it's clear that Jonah's anger led him to think, act, and speak illogically.

6. How have you seen the power of anger lead someone to making a poor decision?

_____
_____
_____

Read Jonah 4:5-8.

7. Summarize the events of this section. Specifically, what is Jonah hoping for, what does God do, and what happens the next day?

_____
_____
_____

The irony of Jonah is that this is the first time in this section that we read of Jonah being glad. The source of his gladness? Shade! He wasn't glad that God chose not to destroy Nineveh, but only when he got something that made him feel better.

Read Jonah 4:9-11.

In abrupt fashion, the book of Jonah ends. God calls Jonah out for pitying the plant instead of the people of Nineveh. In Jonah's selfishness, he cared only about what served him, not about souls of all 120,000 people in the city he was overlooking. While we are quick to judge Jonah, how often do we act similarly? We rejoice when people get what they deserve or upset when they don't get what they deserve. Remember that grace and mercy thing earlier?

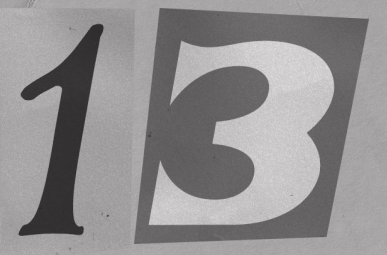
Well after Jonah lived, there was another incredibly unfair, anger-inducing situation that took place. The best person to ever live was killed for what he didn't do. Jesus, though perfect, was crucified for our sins.

8. What emotions do you feel when you think of what Jesus did as being incredibly unfair to him, yet still he chose to go to the cross for our sake?

_____
_____
_____

Thankfully, God cares more about people than plants. Proverbs 15:3 tells us, ***"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."*** God sees all and chooses to show mercy to those whom He chooses. Ultimately, those who humble themselves before the Lord, admit their need to be saved, and accept what Jesus has done for them in His life, death, and resurrection. I am so thankful that Jesus cared more about others than Himself, choosing to give His life for us.

NOTES



THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

JUSTIN FOROOZAN

Believe it or not, I was not always a Christian. Actually, my wife had an encounter with Jesus and was saved about a month before our wedding. I, as an unbeliever, told her I was happy for her, but the truth was, I didn't care for her choice in God. After we got married, my actions showed her how I truly felt. If she brought up the name of Jesus, I would get mad. If she asked me to go to church, I would turn her down. I remember telling her that she had no right to tell me who God was, and that she should stop telling people about her beliefs. I pushed back hard against her conviction and, in hindsight, was very mean to her about it.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers." Psalm 1:1

I know now that at that time in my life, I was the wicked counsel that this psalm talks about. I was sinning against her and scoffing at God, and I really tested her faith.

1. Do you know of a time your faith was tested by sinners and scoffers? If not, do you know how you would react to the same type of criticism?

_____
_____
_____

Psalm 1:1–2 gives us a warning about those who surround themselves with such critics. Luckily, my relationship with my wife is much better today, as God softened my heart to be able to accept Him as Lord of my life.

The psalm says, ***"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked."***

2. Have you ever taken advice from someone who is not following the Lord? If so, when?

_____
_____
_____

It goes on to say, ***"nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers."*** A scoffer is someone who rejects or even ridicules God's Word and wisdom. Scoffers are often arrogant, proud, and unwilling to accept correction. This doesn't just mean hanging around with sinners and those who make fun of God, but it means to sit and share life with them. It means they have influence over your life just as you have influence over theirs.

3. When have you sat with sinners and scoffers? Do you still? Why?

_____
_____
_____

4. Have you ever felt as though you were the wicked counsel or scoffer?

_____
_____
_____

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." Psalm 1:2-3

5. What does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord?

_____
_____
_____

Verses two and three directly reference Joshua 1:8, which says,

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

I know that for most of us, life gets really busy, and it's difficult to think about God day and night. I know for myself, I can get so easily distracted by the things I think I have to do that I forget to keep my focus on God. My priorities become the things of this world rather than the things that God might have for me.

6. What do our lives look like when we are ***"like a tree planted by streams of water"***? Do any verses that come to mind?

_____
_____
_____

If we are truly seeking after God day and night, our lives WILL reflect it.

7. What do you think the word ***"prosper"*** means in Joshua 1:8 and in Psalm 1:3?

_____
_____
_____

"The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." Psalm 1:4-6

This psalm offers us a contrast between the righteous men and women who do not associate with the wicked and the inevitable demise of those whom Scripture refers to as wicked. This is shown in verse four, which begins by saying, ***"the wicked are not so."*** The

word ***"chaff"*** refers to the husks of corn or the outer parts of grain that are separated when processing a harvest. It is unused, thrown away, and worthless.

8. What does it look like for someone to be like ***"chaff that the wind drives away"***?

_____
_____
_____

Verse five uses the words ***"wicked"*** and ***"sinners"*** separately; this is to draw a correlation between the two words. The wicked are sinners, and sinners are wicked.

9. Do you think you are the wicked that this psalm is referring to? Do you think you ever were?

_____
_____
_____

10. What is the judgment that is being referred to in verse five?

_____
_____
_____

This psalm ends by saying, ***"For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."*** In our culture, this is a very hard reality to accept. All throughout Scripture, we are told that the unrighteous will perish. Jesus even warned us about the coming judgment in Matthew 10:28, ***"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."***

It is true that all of us are by nature ***"children of wrath"*** (Ephesians 2:3), and we ***"will all likewise perish"*** (Luke 13:3). However, the point of this psalm is not to make us feel condemned; it is to show us that there is a real difference between those who walk in God's

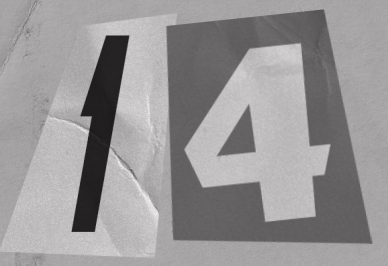
righteousness and those who don't. The beautiful thing about the Bible is that it tells us how Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Because of the debt that Jesus paid on our behalf, we no longer have to perish (John 3:16).

Even while I was sinning and scoffing without remorse, acting as wicked counsel to my wife, God still loved me, and He changed my life forever.

11. Reflecting on this psalm, how should your life look different this week? Give two things you can do to make that happen.

_____
_____
_____

NOTES



WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

ELIJAH EDWARDS

One of my earliest memories of my school days was the first time I got on the Kindergarten bus. I remember watching as my parents waved at me through the window, tears began to pour out of my eyes. I felt they had left me, that I was never going to go home. Why do I have to leave? Do they not love me anymore? Do they not want me anymore? Of course, we look at this now, being older than a kindergartener, and know that none of that is true, but it was a very real reality for me at the time.

1. What do you remember from your first day of school? Did you ever feel abandoned?

_____
_____
_____

The reason I used the idea of feeling abandoned as a young child is because of the difference between what we see versus what our parents or adults see. In the same way, we must look at our situations as we see them versus how God sees them.

Read Psalm 22:1–11: ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 'He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!' Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help."***

These first eleven verses detail that the psalmist, in this case King

David, is deeply suffering.

2. What key verses or words in these passages indicate the trouble David is going through?

_____
_____
_____

3. What is his attitude towards it?

_____
_____
_____

Right off the bat, in the first verse, David feels abandoned by God. He feels God is far away, but what is important to note here is that David doesn't start cursing or become angry at God. He speaks of His faithfulness. Even though in this moment he feels lost and alone, he knows God is faithful and good.

4. Are there moments in life when you feel abandoned by people?

_____
_____
_____

5. How about being abandoned by God? Why?

_____
_____
_____

As we continue reading, keep in mind how David's emotions and word choices change the overall connotation of the passage.

Read Psalm 22:12–21: ***"Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted***

within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!"

6. How has the tone changed in this passage compared to verses 1–11?

_____
_____
_____

When reading this, you can feel David ramp up almost as if he is getting louder and louder and writing faster and faster until it ends with him crying out to the Lord because he knows God is the only one who can help.

7. Have you ever felt so much pressure that it made you cry out for help because there was nothing you could do? Talk about it with your group.

_____
_____
_____

One of the most interesting changes in David is that after he feels the suffering, loneliness and feels like God isn't there, he still cries out to Him in faith. David, having a relationship with God, knows that even in this suffering, the salvation of the Lord is still at hand. (We'll come back to this in a moment.)

Read Psalm 22:22–31: ***"I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear***

the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it."

After it all, David sings praises in the Lord's name, praising God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

8. How difficult is it to worship God when things go wrong? Why?

_____
_____
_____

Going back to when I was leaving for Kindergarten, I can tell you that I was in no shape to be happy with my parents, even though, little did I know, they were not leaving me and I would see them shortly. In the same way, when we are suffering and everything is going wrong, we might grow angry, frustrated, and feel hurt by God. Yet, we need to look at what God is doing and trust in His goodness even when things are hard.

Read Psalm 22:1 again.

Now, read Matthew 27:45–46: ***"Now from the sixth hour there***

was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

9. What similarities are there between these two passages?

_____
_____
_____

Jesus, on the cross, called out to God in the same way. Why did He do this? He wanted to point His people back to this passage. Jesus suffered something that, because of Him, we don't have to experience. Jesus became sin and took the full justified wrath of God upon Himself so that we can be saved. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

10. After reading this, do you think Jesus knows what it means to feel abandoned, and hurt?

_____
_____
_____

Jesus fully understands the suffering we go through. He took on the suffering, and had every opportunity to save Himself from it, but He took it willingly because God had a greater plan. His suffering frees us from sin and destroys the gap from God created by it. All of the suffering the world has seen comes from sin. Sin is death and eternally separates us from God, but Jesus, the Son of God, has made a way to free us from that sin. This doesn't mean we won't suffer as the world is still full of sin, but eternally we are free.

11. After reading all of these passages, why do you now think that Psalm 22 turns from lament and sadness to hope and praise?

_____
_____
_____

12. How can you see your pain and hardships differently? Do you feel you can go to God with them? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

Take this moment and write to God in the same way David did in this Psalm. Tell God about your hurt and sadness, then turn your focus to hope and praise. Take time to pray over it and as a group.

NOTES



THE SHEPHERD WHO CARES

ZACH HONNEN

1. Can you think of a time when you felt overwhelmed by school, work, or relationships? Who or what did you turn to? How did you respond?

_____
_____
_____

I remember the first time I spent serious time reflecting on Psalm 23. It was one of those days when my mind felt overwhelmed. I was struggling a lot, work was difficult, and some of the relationships in my life weren't going the way I had hoped. I felt alone. I felt like the Lord was distant. And on top of all that, I had to prepare a sermon.

I wasn't sure what I was doing. I wasn't sure how I was going to do it. I felt confused, lost, and isolated. So, I did the only thing I knew to do; I went for a hike in the woods, put in my earbuds, and tried to hear from God. I started playing Psalm 23 on repeat, over and over again.

As I walked, I began to reflect on who God is. And because of who He is, I started to remember what that means for me. Over the course of forty-five minutes to an hour, I moved from simply meditating to truly praying. God slowly began to direct my steps. He started showing me what to say, and He gave me clarity about the things that were weighing on my heart.

Now, that doesn't mean I got all the answers. It doesn't mean a perfect sermon just fell from the sky, or that my relationships were instantly healed, but it did mean I wasn't alone. It meant there was Someone listening, Someone caring, Someone who is my Shepherd.

2. What do you do when you feel alone?

_____
_____
_____

3. What do you do when it feels like everything in your life is falling apart?

_____
_____
_____

4. Do you try to distract yourself with video games, TV, or sports? Do you turn to Jesus or something else? What does that look like for you?

_____
_____
_____

Take a few minutes to read through Psalm 23:1–6 on your own. Grab your phone or your Bible and read it slowly. Highlight what stands out to you. Write down a few thoughts.

Then take time to share with your group what stood out to you in the passage. If you've never done this before, that's okay. You don't need to have it all figured out to share your thoughts or ask questions.

Now, I hope your discussion was meaningful and helped you see some new things. When we read Psalm 23, it begins with this powerful line,***"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."*** At the time this was written, that statement would've been instantly clear, but for many of us today, it may not be so obvious.

5. What does it really mean for God to be our Shepherd?

_____
_____
_____

In both biblical and historical context, a shepherd's responsibilities included five main things:

- Provision – Leading the sheep to pasture (food) and water (Psalm 23:2).

- Protection – Defending the flock from danger (1 Samuel 17:34–35).
- Guidance – Leading them safely along the right paths (Psalm 23:3).
- Rescue – Going after the one that wanders away (Luke 15:4–7).
- Care – Tending to the sick or injured sheep (Ezekiel 34:16).

So, when God says, "I am your Shepherd," He is taking on the responsibility for your provision, protection, guidance, rescue, and care; not because you earned it, but because of who He is.

6. How do you personally view God? Do you naturally see Him as a Shepherd who cares for you—or do you view Him differently?

_____
_____
_____

7. In the middle of your struggles, how often do you stop and remember that God wants to protect and care for you?

_____
_____
_____

8. How should understanding God's commitment as our Shepherd change our lives?

_____
_____
_____

The way we view God will shape the way we see our lives. It impacts whether we notice His work in our lives or completely miss it.

Let's look at the next verses: ***"He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."*** Psalm 23:2–3

9. What do you see God doing here as the Shepherd?

_____
_____
_____

10. What's being communicated in these verses?

_____
_____
_____

Sometimes, we forget how gentle and caring our God really is. We assume He's angry with us or disappointed in us like He's just waiting for us to mess up, but the reality is He loves us. He leads us. He protects and provides for us, not because we're worthy, but because He is.

"He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." He leads us not for our reputation, not for our performance, but because of His character. God takes care of us and leads us because that is who He is. We should be so grateful that His care is based on His character and consistency, not on our behavior.

The rest of Psalm 23 continues with this same truth: that no matter what we go through, Christ is with us. ***"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me"*** (Psalm 23:4).

11. What is the ***"valley of the shadow of death"***? What do you think it means for us today?

_____
_____
_____

12. Do you fear evil, uncertainty, the future or maybe even your past? How should that fear change in light of knowing God is with you?

_____
_____
_____

Take time with your group now to reflect on the final verses of Psalm 23.

13. What do you think David is trying to communicate to the Lord?

_____
_____
_____

14. How can understanding Psalm 23 change the way you view and live your life?

_____
_____
_____

John Piper says, “Psalm 23 is not a promise of painless paths. It is a promise of His presence, His provision, and His protection in every path He leads us on.”

NOTES



THE LORD IS MY PATH

JOSH PETERSON

Imagine yourself in the woods. In these woods there are two paths: one path leads to the left and the other path leads to the right.

1. Which path would you choose to walk down? Why that path?

_____
_____
_____

When the world looks at Christianity, the world tends to believe that it is just another religion. However, Christianity is not just another religion. Christianity is not really a religion at all. Christianity is a relationship with Jesus. All the Psalms were written many years before Christ came to pay for humanity's sin. However, God was still at work at this time and was setting things in place for Jesus to come. It is clear that David had a relationship with God. David would talk to God when he needed guidance, hope, deliverance, and when he needed to confess his sins.

2. How is your relationship with the Lord? Do you trust God to bring you hope, guidance, and/or deliverance?

_____
_____
_____

When you have a good relationship with someone, you trust them and continually talk to them, wanting to speak with them all the time. If you love your parents, you probably trust them and talk to them often when seeking guidance or comfort. If you love your friends, you're going to want to spend as much time with them as possible. If you are dating, you're going to want to spend a lot of time with your boyfriend or girlfriend. If you didn’t spend a lot of time with your boyfriend or girlfriend, even though you had many opportunities to do so, do you think you’ll have a good relationship?

3. Now think about your relationship with God. Is your relationship with God better than these previous examples of relationships?

_____
_____
_____

Psalm 25 is a psalm that was written by King David. David wrote this psalm as a prayer to the Lord. For this lesson, read Psalm 25 all together, for the psalm was written to be read as a complete section of literary writing. It is likely, like the rest of the Psalms, that this psalm was later used in Israel for worship. So, read this psalm all together at once. You can either assign different readers to read different sections or assign different singers to sing the psalm. Have fun with it!

Read Psalm 25.

This psalm showcases the relationship that David had with God. He trusts in God, seeks out guidance, hope, deliverance, and confesses his sin to his Lord. Are you doing this in your life? Do you trust in God like David does? If not, I encourage you to ask the Lord to change your heart to have a passion like David.

4. What happens to those who do not put their trust in God? (verses 1-3)

_____
_____
_____

Notice how David starts this psalm. ***"To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous"*** (Psalm 25:1-3).

Where do you put your trust? Trust is gained in drops but it is lost

in buckets. You may have lost trust with a friend in the past and it can take a long time to regain that trust, or maybe that trust that was broken was never healed. However, we know that Christ is perfectly trustworthy. Trust will never be broken.

5. Have you ever had trust in a friend but then that friend did something that made you lose your trust? Did you ever regain your trust with that person, and if so, what did that person do to help restore your relationship with them?

_____
_____
_____

6. How often are you asking God to forgive your sins? How often are you asking God to teach you how to follow His path? (verses 4-7)

_____
_____
_____

Our walk with Christ will not be easy. It is easy for us to go back to old habits of sin, whether that is lust, pride, laziness, gossip, etc. Our relationship with the Lord is not just a one-time thing we did when we got saved. It is a daily fight of us picking up our cross and following the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Are you daily fighting against your flesh? Are you daily asking the Lord to forgive you of your sins and asking Him to help you follow His path of righteousness?

7. What are the ways of the Lord? (verses 8-11)

_____
_____
_____

8. What does God do to those who fear Him? (verses 12-15)

_____
_____
_____

To fear God is to have an outpouring of respect towards Him, and with that comes a desire to obey what He has called us to do. God saved us while we were children of wrath, but He chose to save us regardless of our sinful nature. He did not save us because we are good, for we have all missed the mark and no one is good; rather, He has saved us because He is good. Therefore, if you have been saved by His grace, then you should fear the Lord. You should want to serve the One who has saved you. You should have a desire to obey what He has called you to do. If you fear the Lord, He will instruct you on how to follow Him.

9. What is David asking for here? (verses 16-19)

_____
_____
_____

10. In the beginning of the psalm, David makes it clear that his trust is in the Lord. Now at the end of the psalm, where does David's hope come from? (verses 20-22)

_____
_____
_____

David was far from perfect. Remember, David killed a man named Uriah. Just like the rest of mankind, David followed his sinful heart and fleshly desires. However, David also loved God and had a relationship with Him. David trusted that God would take care of him because David feared Him. David could also have hope in God, because of this fear that he had for Him. God forgives those who repent of their sin. Not only does God forgive those who repent, but He also gives them other blessings. If you have a relationship with God, continue to follow the path of righteousness. When you make the Lord your path, He will bless you and give eternal life with Him because of what Christ has done on the cross.

11. Are you daily fighting to be on the Lord's path of righteousness?

_____
_____
_____

12. What are some ways you can practically fight to have your feet on God's path rather than a path of destruction?

_____
_____
_____

Throughout this week, I encourage you to think of practical ways you could be fighting your flesh and steering your mind towards God's path of righteousness.

NOTES

OUR VISION

Matthew 28:19-20: ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

REACH

At The River Church, you will often hear the phrase, "We don't go to church, we are the Church." We believe that as God's people, our primary purpose and goal is to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to reach the world in your local communities.

GATHER

The goal of weekend gatherings at The River Church is to glorify Christ in all we do! Whether it be through singing, giving, serving, or any of the variety of ways He has gifted us and called us together, Jesus is at the center of it all. We celebrate that when followers of Christ gather together in unity, it's not only a refresher, it brings life-change!

GROW

Our Growth Communities are designed to mirror the early church in Acts as having ***"all things in common."*** They are smaller collections of believers who spend time together studying the Word, knowing and caring for one another relationally, and learning to increase their commitment to Christ by holding one another accountable.

The River Church
8393 E. Holly Rd.
Holly, MI 48442

theriverchurch.cc • info@theriverchurch.cc