



**FUEL**

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**PURITY FOR  
LIFE**

8TH GRADE

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# **LIVE DIFFERENT**

HEART OF THE KING

# **ROYAL CHOICES**

HEART FOR THE KING

# **PURITY FOR LIFE**

MY HEART FOR THE KING

The Core: A Seven-Volume Series

My Life of Purity

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Kingsland Baptist Church

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Produced for Carmel Baptist Church.

Commentary is from the ESV Study Bible

# **PHILIPPIANS**

A LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

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Philippians: A Double-Edged Bible Study

Think LifeChange

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Graphic Design by Ryan Jackson

Produced for Carmel Baptist Church.

Commentary is from the ESV Study Bible

# Getting Started

We are so excited that you have chosen to be a part of Discipleship Community! It is our prayer that God will use this study to deepen your relationship with Him. The contents of this material include core truths that we want you to learn so that you will have a firm foundation in your faith. This book will lead you to take time each day to read God's Word and to pray.

Plan on spending 15 — 30 minutes each day of the week with God. This spiritual discipline will help you to grow to be more and more like Jesus Christ. In this book, we have used the English Standard Version of the Bible (ESV). Please keep this version of the Bible nearby while doing this study, or refer to an online Bible, such as the one at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

This material is written based upon our Life in Christ Essentials and Milestone Strategy here at Carmel. The Essentials are the core principles and truths that we want every follower to live out in Christ. The Milestones and Essentials are as follows which help believers live an abundant Life in Christ:

## Milestone 4: Purity for Life

ESSENTIALS:

Biblical Purity, Healthy Relationships, Identity in Christ, Biblical Sex

## Milestone 5: Rite of Passage

ESSENTIALS:

Roles of Men and Women, Spiritual Gifts and Service, Catechism

## Milestone 6: High School Graduation

ESSENTIALS:

Apologetics, Dating/Marriage, God's Plan for Me, Person of Influence, Life Skills

## Life in Christ

ESSENTIALS:

Scripture, Prayer, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple-Maker, Generous Living, Biblical Community

We are confident that God will amaze you as you get to know Him through these studies. It has been a great joy to write these books, knowing that you will get to know the one true God in a deeper way!

# LIVE DIFFERENT

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# LIVE DIFFERENT

## HEART OF THE KING

In this study we will learn that the Israelites were tired of being different from other nations. They wanted to be like everyone else. They asked for a king because they wanted control. Choosing to be in control shows a lack of confidence in God's perfect plan.

Confidence in what the heart of God longs for his people will lead you to a lifestyle that recognizes his kingship. Surrendering to the kingship and lordship of God is a critical part of following Jesus.

Through Jesus, all Christians are to continually be set apart from the world and shine the light of Jesus into their world. Often the simple decisions in life are great opportunities to demonstrate the lordship of Christ. We also must be careful that our focus does not shift from God to man and the things of this world.



# God as King

PSALM 47:2

WEEK

1

## Key Questions and Concepts

Through Jesus, all Christians are to continually be set apart from the world and shine the light of Jesus into their world. We also must be careful that our focus does not shift from God to man and the things of this world.

Welcome to Discipleship Community! This next year has the potential to be marked by deep spiritual growth in your life. The main theme for this series is "Purity for Life." This series includes the intentional instruction leading to Milestone 4: Purity for Life. Each year here at Carmel we celebrate students that make a commitment to live a life of purity. This commitment to purity is a choice to continually present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

**MILESTONE** - AN EVENT, PRECEDED BY A PERIOD OF INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION FROM PARENTS (ESSENTIALS), WHICH CELEBRATES A PARTICULAR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT POINT IN A CHILD'S LIFE.

To help get you ready for this commitment, this book is going to lead you through a study of the kings of Israel. Why the kings of Israel? You might ask. We can learn a lot from these guys. At times, the kings of Israel were pure, but at other times, they were far from pure.

We're not just talking about sexual purity; we will learn about spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical purity. After all, if we want to be sexually pure, we need to learn that it begins in our minds and hearts. After we look at the kings of Israel, we will look at hot topics in our culture regarding sexual purity.

*How are warnings from history useful to you?  
What comes to your mind when you think of the word purity?*

Ultimately, our focus should be on the one and only King. God chose his people to be set apart. We are his chosen people. When we exchange God's truth for lies we reject him. We should allow him to rule our lives.

Ask God to teach you about holiness today. Ask Him to help you live a life of purity beginning today!

## 5-Minute Commentary

Psalm 47. This psalm celebrates God's kingship, his rule over all the earth. The promises to Abraham (47:9), that all peoples will be blessed in him (Gen. 12:3), are founded on the fact that there is only one true God, to whom all mankind owes love and loyalty. Ps. 47:1-4 The Lord Is to Be Feared by All. The Lord loves Israel and gave them their heritage; but this is in order that all peoples might come to fear and love him. Thus God's subduing of the Canaanites is not his final word for the Gentiles. To clap the hands is here an expression of exultation (cf. Nah. 3:19).

Gen. 12:1-3 The divine speech that suddenly and unexpectedly introduces this section is exception-

## A CHOSEN PEOPLE

We've all heard of pure gold or pure water. Pure, it's kind of hard to define.

**What does "pure" really mean?**

**What does it mean that we are supposed to live pure lives?**

We know that God desires that we live pure or holy lives. God desired the same with the kings of Israel in the Old Testament. They didn't always do such a good job with this. However, some of them did, and we will learn a great deal from their lives.

To understand the kings of Israel, we first need to understand the nation of Israel by answering the following questions according to the Bible:

- 1) Where did the people of Israel come from?
- 2) Who are they?
- 3) Why are they important?

Read Genesis 12:1-3, and write verses 2-3 below.

The verses above record God's promise to Abram about the nation that would come from his family.

Read Genesis 22:17-18.

Again, we see God's promises. From these two passages in Genesis we see common wording.

**What did God say He wanted to do for the people of Israel?**

**Then both passages speak of Israel becoming what to other nations?**

**From what nation did Jesus come?**

## Definition

Pure - untainted with evil; innocent.

## Point to Make

When thinking about living a pure life, this is a good definition to use.

## Interact

Have you ever tried to count the granules of sand at the beach? Just a handful of sand could number several thousand granules.

## Point to Make

God wanted to bless the people of Israel. Without this understanding of God wanting to bless the people they will not understand the good purpose behind God's standards. God wanted to bless the people of Israel so they would be a blessing to other nations.

ally important, for it sets the agenda not only for Abram's life but also for his descendants. By focusing on how divine blessing will be mediated through Abram to all the families of the earth, it marks an important turning point within the book of Genesis. The repetition of the verb bless (vv. 2-3) underscores the hope that through Abram people everywhere may experience God's favor, reversing the predominantly negative experience of chs. 3-11. God's plans for Abram have both national and international dimensions, which are developed in the episodes that follow.

1 Pet. 2:9 a chosen race. God's grace rather than human choice is the ultimate explanation for why some people come to faith and others do not. God has elected ("chosen") some to be his people,

In God's perfect plan, a Savior was to be born into the world, and that Savior would come from Israel. What a blessing Jesus is to all nations! God's choice of the people of Israel as His people meant that the Israelites were to be different from the people of all the other nations. The Israelites were to be holy and to live according to God's law. Then the other nations could look at the Israelites and desire to learn more about their God. The Israelites were to be missionaries to the surrounding nations.

The Israelites often failed. They allowed other nations to influence them more than they influenced other nations. The Israelites looked more like the world and less like the nation God intended them to be.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12.

**How are all believers a chosen people like the Israelites?**

## REJECTING GOD

**Do you remember the two reasons God chose the nation of Israel? Write them down.**

1)

2)

God desired to be the Ruler over His people. Although He did appoint leaders of the people, such as Moses, Joshua, and the judges, God remained the ultimate Ruler of His people, their King. However, there came a time when the Israelites rejected God as their King. They wanted to be like the other nations that had a human king.

Read Judges 8:22-23.

**What did Gideon, one of Israel's judges, say to the people when they asked him to rule over them?**

**Look at 1 Samuel 8. Does your Bible have a subtitle for this section of Scripture? If so, what is it?**

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-7.

**What did the people specifically ask for in verse 5? How did God respond in verse 7?**

Do you see the Israelites' foolishness? Think about when God called Israel to be set apart in Genesis 12. Now the Israelites cared more about being like the other nations than being who God called them to be. They wanted to follow their own ways rather than the ways of God.

### Point to Make

Through Jesus, all Christians are to continually be set apart from the world and shine the light of Jesus into their world.

### Point to Make

Students may be wondering why we are focusing so much on the nation of Israel. To understand the kings of Israel, we first must understand God's intention for His people.

therefore no one can boast of being included. Peter views the church as a new Israel, for he picks up what is said of Israel in Ex. 19:5-6 and applies it to the church. The church is a royal priesthood and God's holy nation. As God's chosen ones, Christians are to proclaim the excellencies of the one who summoned them from darkness and ushered them into his marvelous light (cf. Isa. 43:20b-21).

Judg. 8:22-23 Rule over us. This request, while understandable from a human perspective, as Gideon may have begun to conduct himself like a king (v. 18), flew directly in the face of the entire narrative up to this moment: it was God (not any human being) who was to get the credit for delivering his people. the Lord will rule over you. The Hebrew word order might be paraphrased as, "It is the

**When have you been guilty of wanting to do something your way rather than God's way?**

Soon we will see that the Israelites quickly realized God's way is always better. Let's learn from their mistakes and choose to live God's way.

## **EXCHANGING THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE**

Read Romans 1:25.

**How does this verse relate to the Israelites' situation and their desire for a human king?**

Before earthly kings came to power in Israel, the people looked to God as their Creator and Ruler. However, when earthly kings came into the picture, the people lost focus. They began to look to a man, rather than God, for direction.

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-15.

In God's perfect knowledge, He knew that the Israelites would one day seek an earthly king. Deuteronomy 17 foretells what will happen in 1 Samuel 8 when the Israelites demand a king. God is so gracious. He works to accomplish His will even when we get off track. Since God knew the Israelites would one day reject Him as King, He set up guidelines for the kind of earthly king they should seek.

Read Deuteronomy 17:15-20.

**This passage lists several criteria for an earthly king. List as many of them as you can find in that passage. There are at least ten.**

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1) | 2)  |
| 3) | 4)  |
| 5) | 6)  |
| 7) | 8)  |
| 9) | 10) |

This list is extremely important. As we study the kings of Israel, you will notice that some kings met these criteria, while others veered far off this path. Some kings were pure; some were not.

**Why do you think these criteria were important for the king of Israel?**

While we are not kings of Israel, some of these criteria are important for us to remember also.

## **Point to Make**

The people's focus shifted from God to man.

Lord, and no other, who shall rule over you!" While Gideon's words were theologically correct, his subsequent actions show either that he was only pretending or that he was self-deceived; he appears eventually to have been seduced by the lures of being a king (8:24–28, 31).

1 Sam. 8:1–22 Transition to the Monarchy. Chapter 8 is a turning point in OT history, marking the transition from judgeship to kingship. The people want a change: up until now they had depended on the Lord to raise up judges to lead them as needed, but now they want a monarchy, "like all the nations" (v. 5). Why did they want a king? Of course, Samuel's sons were causing problems, but instead of rejecting hereditary judges and demanding that Samuel's sons be removed, they ask for

## NOW WHAT?

Choose three criteria for kings listed in Deuteronomy 17:15-20, and explain why each is important in your life.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

List any areas that you are not representing God well.

In what ways do you need God's help for you to live your life His way?

PRAYER:

Pray one another to abstain from sinful desires and live holy lives.

## GOING DEEPER

How is your life different from the lives of others around you?

What can you do that would cause people look at you and want to know more about your God?

PRAYER:

Thank God that He provides a way for us to live that is right and good. Pray that God will help you walk in His ways and not in your ways.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Psalms 47:2

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a hereditary kingship. Probably they were feeling the threat of the Philistines and Ammonites (v. 20; 9:16; 10:5; 12:12), but the phrase "like all the nations" seems to be a key. Rather than following God's way for them, they preferred to follow the ways of the world around them. It was ultimately a rejection of the kingship of God (8:7).

1 Sam. 8:4–5 appoint for us a king ... like all the nations. They want to exchange their unique glory as the people of the incomparable God (2:2), who had brought them out of Egypt (8:8) and was even now protecting them (10:19), for status in the world, in order to be "like all the nations." The law had given permission, but not a requirement, to appoint a king (Deut. 17:14–20).

# WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 1 PETER 2:9

How does this passage call all believers to purity?

How has your lifestyle truly changed now that God has called you out?

## DAY 2 — PROVERBS 16:9

Despite making plans of our own, who's plans will ultimately come to completion?

Knowing that the Lord's plans prevail, how does this change the way you live?

## DAY 3 — LEVITICUS 20:26

How does this passage point to God's desire for his people to stay pure?

How do you practically live this verse in your daily life?

## DAY 4 — MATTHEW 1:1-17

According to this passage, how did God keep his promise about Abraham's offspring?

How does Jesus' birth, death, and life bless all nations?

## DAY 5 — GENESIS 18:17-19

What do these verses reveal to us about the purpose of the nation of Israel?

In what areas of your life do you need to lean on God keeping his promises?

## DAY 6 — ROMANS 1:21-23

What are some ways that you tend to exchange God for other things?

According to this passage, what is the result of not honoring or giving thanks to God?

## DAY 7 — ROMANS 1:28-29

How easy is it to stop acknowledging God in our lives?

According to this passage, what happened when the people quit acknowledging God?

# Proper Direction

PSALM 119:9

WEEK

2

## Key Questions and Concepts

God's Word is our daily bread. We need it to get through every day. How can you look at God's word for direction?

Getting lost on a road trip is not fun. Especially when it is a family trip. You have probably been in a car where the driver asks for directions from the co-pilot and they deliver incorrect information that leads to an hour of driving the wrong direction. Maybe you have been in a car when the GPS is a bit outdated and the roads have changed and you end up heading south when you should have went north.

Everything is fine and everyone in the car is calm until someone realizes they are going the wrong way. At that point tension typically escalates quickly. Someone always gets blamed and yelling typically ensues.

It is easy to pinpoint reasons why we get lost when are on a road trip. Thankfully, you typically don't go down the wrong road for weeks and months at a time.

When following Jesus, proper direction is essential at all times. Being led astray little by little over time can lead to a life way off course they way God designed it.

We learned last week that God chose us so that we may bear witness about him. He is pure. Our lifestyle is a reflection of him. When we chose to reject God and exchange his truth for the lies of Satan we lead others and ourselves astray. God calls us to be people of the book. He does that not to control us or get his way. He does it so we experience abundant life in Christ.

*What captures your thoughts the most?  
How can you look at God's word for direction?*

What is it that leads your heart astray? All it takes is one wrong choice that throws you off the path. God asks us to know his Word because his word gives us direction. Ask God to open your heart and to teach you today.

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## 5-Minute Commentary

Ps. 119:9 young man. Cf. 34:11 and Prov. 2:1.

Ps. 119:11 stored up your word in my heart. By careful memorization and pondering seek. Cf. vv. 10, 45, 94, 155.with their whole heart. Cf. v. 10 and Deut. 4:29. cf. 119:97.

## LED ASTRAY

Look back at the list you made last week of the criteria for an earthly king. This week, we will focus on two main criteria listed in Deuteronomy 17:17. The warning for the king was to watch out for worldly pleasures that might lead him astray.

- 1) Relationships
- 2) Possessions

Read and fill in the blanks from Deuteronomy 17:17.

“And he shall not acquire many \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.”

You and I are not called to be kings of Israel, but we can still learn from these instructions.

**Describe a friendship or dating relationship that led your heart astray.**

Relationships are a blessing from the Lord, but if they are unhealthy, they can lead us astray.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:33.

**How can you remove yourself from a relationship that is leading your heart astray?**

The Israelite kings were also to be careful when acquiring silver and gold. While you are not likely storing up silver and gold, you might spend too much time and give too much thought to acquiring other possessions. A word for this is “materialism.”

**MATERIALISM** – PREOCCUPATION WITH OR EMPHASIS ON MATERIAL OBJECTS, COMFORTS, AND CONSIDERATIONS, WITH A DISINTEREST IN OR REJECTION OF SPIRITUAL, INTELLECTUAL, OR CULTURAL VALUES.

**Have you ever been guilty of being materialistic?**

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

**What possessions of yours get in the way of your relationship with God?**

While these things aren’t necessarily evil on their own, they can lead us astray on our walk with God.

## Direct

List of criteria can be found in Week 1.

## Fill in the Blank

Wives; himself; silver; gold

## Point to Make

Student may not know how to end a relationship well. Help them seek the wisdom of God through prayer and the scripture.

## Interact

Students may get very defensive of their possessions. Help them to understand that all of our possessions are gifts from God but are to be used for his glory.



Based on your knowledge of the Bible, how does God want you to respond in regard to your possessions?

God knows best, and He wants His best for your life. He knows that relationships and possessions can sometimes get in the way of your walk with Him.

Describe some practical ways that you can please God with your relationships and how you handle your possessions when you go home today.

## PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Hopefully you are paying close attention to God's criteria for an Israelite king. As we study the kings in this series, you will refer back to this list and see how some kings listened to the Lord and others didn't. Remember, God ultimately wanted the kings to have a pure heart that led to a life that honored him.

Read Deuteronomy 17:18-20 again, and fill in the blanks below.

"And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall \_\_\_\_\_ for himself in a book a copy of this \_\_\_\_\_, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be \_\_\_\_\_ him, and he shall \_\_\_\_\_ in it \_\_\_\_\_ the days of his life, that he may learn to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord his God by \_\_\_\_\_ all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his \_\_\_\_\_ may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may \_\_\_\_\_ long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel."

The king was to write a copy of the law. The law is the Scriptures, likely Genesis through Deuteronomy at that time.

Why do you think God wanted the king to write the Scriptures?

WRITING HAS A WAY OF HELPING US REMEMBER WHAT WE ARE LEARNING.

Some Christians write passages of Scripture in a journal. What a great way to study the Word of God!

Have you ever tried writing the Scriptures?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

In addition to writing them, notice that the kings were to read the Scriptures all the days of their lives.

Do you read the Bible every day?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

## Fill in the Blank

Write; law; with; read;  
all; fear; keeping;  
heart; continue

Do you want to read the Bible every day?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

Why do you think it is important to read God's Word every day?

This study is made to help you be in God's Word every day. Make a commitment to complete the devotions in this study daily rather than all in one day. You will grow so much more spiritually if you are in God's Word daily.

God's Word is our daily bread. We need it to get through every day. We are bombarded with worldly messages all day long. We need to be taught the truth, and God's Word is our source of truth.

Read Psalm 119:9-16.

**We don't read it because we have to; we read it because we get to! How is this attitude reflected in the passage listed above?**

PRAYER:

Spend some time around your table asking God to help you be a young man/woman of the Bible. May it truly be your daily bread!

Think back to the Israelites' request for a king. Although they rejected God as their King, God answered their prayer for an earthly king. In His graciousness, He provided direction by telling the people what to look for in a king. Next week we will begin to study some of the kings of Israel. Keep Deuteronomy 17:15-20 in mind as you study the lives of the Israelite kings. You will realize that when the kings led God's way, there was blessing. When they went their own way, there was trouble.

## Point to Make

Stress the importance of spending time each day in the Bible. Give illustrations from your own life of how your daily quiet time impacts your life. Possibly give students a strategy in how to study the Bible.

## Point to Make

It is impossible to live a life of purity without being led by scripture.

## **NOW WHAT?**

Describe the areas that you personally struggle with being led astray?

Describe specific reasons why your relationships either lead you to God or away from him.

PRAYER:

Ask the Lord to reveal a relationship that is unhealthy. Ask Him for wisdom on how to end it. Talk to one of your parents, a mentor, or your Discipleship Community leader if you need help.

**What possessions take your attention from God?**

PRAYER:

Take time to ask God if He is calling you to get rid of any of these possessions. It may be a gaming system, clothing, or a phone.

## **GOING DEEPER**

How can you become an influencer rather than being influenced?

How could you use your possessions that you already have to benefit the kingdom of God?

What would you do if you had an extra \$20 a week?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Psalm 119:9

# WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 1 TIMOTHY 4:12

God gave specific criteria for the king of Israel, what criteria does this passage give for us? List ways that you set an example in these things in your life.

## DAY 2 — MATTHEW 6:19-21

Why does this passage encourage us to store treasures in heaven and not on the earth? What possessions of your do you need to quit "storing" on earth?

## DAY 3 — 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

What does this passage claim about Scripture?

According to this passage, what is the benefit of reading the Bible daily?

## DAY 4 — PSALM 119:104-105

What is the "word" in the life of a believer?

Why do you think the metaphors of a lamp and a light were used?

## DAY 5 — PROVERBS 13:20

What does this passage teach about those with unhealthy or foolish relationships?

What relationships in your life are wise? Which are foolish?

## DAY 6 — PSALM 139:3-4

How does this passage support that God knew the Israelites would want a king?

What comfort does it bring you that God knows everything before you do?

## DAY 7 — PROVERBS 1:1-7

How does this passage capture the reason for spending time reading the Bible each day?

According to this passage, what is the difference between the wise and the foolish?

# The First Earthly King

1 SAMUEL 8:1-10

WEEK

3

## Key Questions and Concepts

The Israelites were tired of being different from other nations. They allowed temptation to dwell within their hearts.

We need to be trust and submit to God in all situations because he knows what is best for us.

What are some areas in your life you typically seek your own way rather than God's way?

Do you remember saving your money for a specific item as a kid? Maybe you can clearly picture this moment when you were in the store with all your change from your piggy bank and you just had to have a specific toy. You may have saved for months and then you finally had the chance to get it. You tell your parents and they list all the reasons it is a bad idea. You don't care. You are focused on how much you want that toy. You buy it anyway.

Then, it happens. It breaks. It wasn't what you thought it would be. All the reasons that your parents told you not to buy it came true. You may have even enjoyed it for a period of time, but eventually it got old or outdated.

Last week you learned the Israelites rejected God as their King. They wanted a man to lead them. They wanted to be like the other nations. We should be careful what we ask for because sometimes God will grant it, even if it is not His best for us.

***What does the saying "the grass is greener on the other side" mean?  
When have you wanted something that someone else had?***

Instead of being led by God and his word they wanted a ruler. They clearly knew the consequences. That is the way it often is in our lives. We know the outcome but choose to do it anyway. Sometimes we think it just gets old being set apart or being different than others. This can get really hard with pressure from those we really care about.

After giving into the pressure to have the first king of Israel, it didn't take the Israelites long to figure out that having an earthly king was not as good as they had thought it would be. That is the way it often is in life when we desire something that would direct off God's path for us. It is important to learn from history and those we trust.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Sam. 8:1–22 See commentary for Week 1.

Prov. 1:29 The foolish refusal to listen to instruction is reflected back to the wayward one in his distress. The effect of this repetition is to highlight the additional comment of v. 29, which warns that the foolish refusal to heed Wisdom's call manifests hatred of knowledge and rejection of the fear of the Lord (see v. 7).

Prov. 1:31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way. Proverbs refers to the way of wisdom and the

## BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

You are going to be overwhelmed by the impact and damaging consequences that one decision can have for years to come for God's people.

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-18.

**Samuel warned the Israelites what it would be like to have an earthly king. List a few of the results of having such a king.**

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1) | 4) |
| 2) | 5) |
| 3) | 6) |

Read 1 Samuel 8:19-20.

**What was the Israelites' response?**

- A) You're right; we're going back to God.
- B) No! We want a king over us!
- C) How could we have been so stupid?

**Ultimately, what did the Israelites want?**

Read 1 Samuel 8:21.

So the Lord granted their request. The Israelites made a foolish choice. God created us with the ability to choose to love and serve Him. He did not make us robotic; we have free will. While being free certainly is a blessing, it also means followers of God sometimes will choose the wrong way.

Read this Proverbs 1:29-31.

**Why is it important to accept advice and disapproval of those that we respect and honor?**

Read Isaiah 40:27-31.

**According to this passage, list the reasons why we can trust God?**

WE WOULD BE WISE TO LEARN FROM THE ISRAELITES' MISTAKES.  
GOD'S WAYS ARE ALWAYS BETTER THAN OUR WAYS.

## Point to Make

They were tired of being set apart or being different from other nations. They wanted to be like someone else. They allowed temptations to dwell in their hearts and eventually it led to sin.

## Point to Make

We need to be careful to submit to God in all situations because he always knows best and has good planned for us.

way of foolishness as sharing this reality: each works according to its nature. A person's actions both manifest the state of the heart and also shape it further in the way a person will walk. The direction of each path indicates the end to which it is headed. Those who refuse to listen to Wisdom's reproof walk in a way that will ultimately produce for their own consumption the very fruit they offered to others: the fruit of calamity, terror, and destruction.

Rom. 1:24 Three times Paul says God gave them up (vv. 24, 26, 28). In every instance the giving up to sin is a result of idolatry, the refusal to make God the center and circumference of all existence, so that in practice the creature is exalted over the Creator. Hence, all individual sins are a consequence

**What are some areas in your life that you typically seek your own way rather than God's way?**

God's way is always better because he has a bigger perspective than we do. We can only see what's happening right now. He sees the past, present and the future.

**When you have you asked for something that you really wanted and after receiving it didn't turn out to be so great after all?**

Read Romans 1:24-31.

**What is the exchange mentioned in verse 25?**

REMEMBER, SATAN IS A LIAR AND HIS GOAL IS FOR YOU TO EXCHANGE  
GOD'S TRUTH FOR HIS LIE.

Human sin is not confined to sexual sins, and Paul lists a whole catalog of the evils common among human beings as a result of turning from God. People do not generally sin in innocent ignorance, for they know God's righteous decree (at least in an instinctive way) that their evil deserves condemnation. Indeed, the evil goes further when people give approval and applaud others for their sin, probably because having others join in their sin makes them feel better about the evil course they have chosen.

## **YOUR HEART**

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-2.

**What were some of Saul's traits as the soon-to-be king?**

- A) Impressive (Handsome)
- B) Young
- C) A head taller than the others
- D) All of the above

**Let's pause here for a moment. Why do you think the people chose this man to be their leader?**

**Why would these traits be desirable for him to have?**

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of the failure to prize and praise God as the giver of every good thing.

Rom. 1:25 exchanged the truth about God for a lie. Paul implies that all other religions are based on false ideas about the one true God; they are not just "different paths to one God," as some claim.

1 Sam. 9:2 handsome young man. Saul seems to be the ideal person, with excellent potential, particularly as a leader whom others would admire and follow. His physical appearance helps Saul to make a good impression on the people. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people (cf. 10:23). This probably means that the heads of most people reached only to his shoulders.

If school officials were going to choose the perfect guy or girl to lead your school, what qualities would they seek? List at least three.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

As people, we see people with such a limited view. However, how does God see people?

## BAGGAGE CLAIMED AS KING

Yes, it's true; the Bible has funny stories. In the first part of 1 Samuel 10, Samuel privately anoints Saul as king. However, what follows is quite humorous.

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-24.

Think through this scenario: Samuel gathered everyone around. He reminded them that they had rejected God. Then He gave them an opportunity to meet Saul, their new earthly king. Verse 22 is a funny Scripture! "So they inquired again of the Lord, 'Is there a man still to come?' and the Lord said, 'Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage.' "

The baggage? Really? Isn't this their tall, impressive new leader? What's he doing in the baggage? Yet the people still wanted Saul as their king. They rejected God Almighty — the Creator of the universe, who delivered them from slavery — and chased after the guy who was hiding in the baggage! You would think this would have been a sign to them that they had made the wrong choice, evidently not. The Israelites continued to look to man for answers to their problems instead of trusting God.

This story sounds ridiculous but we have made poor decisions before as well when we allow our hearts to get set on something other than God and his will.

## Point to Make

Students list probably looked something like this: popular, smart, attractive, great attendance and so on. Some things never change, do they?

## Point to Make

Just like he knew the hearts of the Israelites, he knows your heart as well. In fact, he knows it better than you do.

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1 Sam. 16:7 man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. Outward appearance cannot predict whether someone will faithfully obey the Lord, for a person's actions flow from his heart (cf. 2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 51:10; Prov. 4:23; Mark 7:21–23; Luke 6:45; 1 Thess. 2:4). The "heart" in Scripture refers to a person's inward moral and spiritual life, including the emotions, will, and reason.

1 Sam. 10:17–27 This event is to show that the choice of Saul as king is not just Samuel's, but God's.

1 Sam. 10:22 Saul had hidden himself, perhaps for fear of accepting his new responsibilities.



## **NOW WHAT?**

Describe any warning signs that you have experienced before that pointed out that you were heading down the wrong path.

Are you experiencing warning signs now? What needs to change?

Write out the areas in your life that you need God to lead rather than you.

Read Luke 9:23.

What do you need to do to personally daily surrender to God?

PRAYER:

To close today, ask the Lord to help you look to Him and trust Him in your life rather than trusting in your own plans or trusting in man.

## **GOING DEEPER**

In what ways do we reject God and choose something he created instead of him?

Read Proverbs 4:23.

Why is your heart so valuable?

How is your heart the source of everything you do?

When do you experience the most attacks on your heart?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

1 Samuel 8:7

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1 Sam. 10:24 At last Saul is publicly and officially presented and accepted by the people as the king. Samuel emphasizes the divine decision in Saul's choice. Here he says that the Lord has chosen, while in 12:13 he says to the people, "you have chosen."

# WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PSALM 37:4

How can you "delight yourself in the Lord"?

When you "delight yourself in the Lord" your desires will match his? How is this true in your life?

## DAY 2 — PROVERBS 3:5-6

How does this passage help you to seek God's way and not your own?

In what ways are you leaning on your own understanding right now?

## DAY 3 — PROVERBS 16:1-3

Who is the one who ultimately decides everything that happens?

What happens when we commit our plans to the Lord?

## DAY 4 — PROVERBS 16:9

Why is it important to let the Lord have control over your plans?

What will it take for you to allow the Lord to have control over your plans?

## DAY 5 — GENESIS 1:26-27

Why does it not matter what the world says about your outward appearance?

According to our study this week, what is more important than outward appearance?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Where do you normally run to with your problems?

Where are you supposed to run with your problems?

## DAY 7 — DEUTERONOMY 32:18

Why do you turn from the God who made you to less satisfying things?

How can you break this habit in your life?

# Control vs. Confidence

JOSHUA 24:15-24

WEEK

4

## Key Questions and Concepts

Choosing to be in control shows your lack of confidence in God's perfect plan. Confidence in what the heart of God longs for his people will lead you to a lifestyle that recognizes his kingship. Surrendering to the kingship and lordship of God is a critical part of following Jesus.

We have all been in a moment where you have a choice between controlling the circumstance by taking over, or having full confidence in someone else despite the difficult circumstance. Either way you are placing your trust in a human.

By placing your trust in God, you are not trusting in someone who is prone to fail. God is almighty and always good. Time and time again throughout scripture the writer or leader points back to God's faithfulness. We can trust the Father.

*What do you do when you get impatient?  
How does your confidence relate to peace of mind?*

Losing site of your confidence in God will lead you to attempt to control what takes place in your life. When it comes to living a Christian life you have a choice. Will you serve yourself or God?

Last week we learned that we have to be careful what we ask for because we just might get it. After we get it, we may quickly realize that it wasn't the best thing for us. It is important for us to recognize the warning signs that God places in front of us. For the Israelites, Samuel clearly warned them what the outcome would be. We must be careful to pay attention. The only way that we can pay attention is to have a proper focus on God and his heart for us.

Choosing to be in control shows your lack of confidence in God's perfect plan. Confidence in what the heart of God longs for his people will lead you to a lifestyle that recognizes his kingship. Even when you are in the heat of temptation you have an option. When we focus on his heart, that leads builds our confidence in him.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Josh. 24:15 choose this day whom you will serve. Joshua has urged the people to serve the Lord alone, and to put away the false gods (v. 14). Now he makes his admonition even sharper: if it is evil in their eyes to serve the Lord (i.e., if they prefer not to be loyal to the one true God, the Lord alone), then they must choose between two different categories of false gods: (1) their ancestral gods from Mesopotamia, or (2) the gods worshiped by the peoples they have dispossessed in Canaan. Joshua exercises leadership by example, committing himself and his household to serving the Lord. The people's response was to decisively reject false gods and to serve "the Lord our God" (vv. 16-17)—which Israel did "all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua" (v. 31), but which Israel failed to do

## THE HEART OF GOD

Read 1 Samuel 12:1-25.

We will focus on verses 19-25 for our study today. In verses 19-25, Samuel shared with the people God's will for them and the reason for it. God is very consistent throughout His Word.

**What did God instruct the people not to do through the prophet Samuel? (See 1 Samuel 12:21.)**

**What was the first commandment? (See Exodus 20:3.)**

**What did Jesus say was the most important commandment? (See Mark 12:29-31.)**

**What does God think about idols, based on 1 Samuel 12:21?**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

While idols can be statues made of gold or silver, they also can come in many other forms. Anything we put in the place of God is an idol. An idol can be a friend, a school, a status, popularity, a girlfriend, a boyfriend, a possession, or even your reputation.

**What are you tempted to make an idol in your life?**

**God says idols are no good; they can't rescue us, and they are useless. How have you found this to be true in your life?**

IDOLS ALWAYS OVER PROMISE AND UNDER DELIVER. –UNKNOWN

Read 1 Samuel 12:22 and fill in the blanks below.

"For the \_\_\_\_\_ will not \_\_\_\_\_ his people, for \_\_\_\_\_ great name's sake, because it has pleased the \_\_\_\_\_ to make you a \_\_\_\_\_ for himself."

**According to that Scripture, why would God not reject His people?**

in subsequent generations, as is tragically evidenced in the book of Judges.

Josh. 24:19–21 You are not able to serve the Lord. Joshua's point is surely not that the people are asked to do something impossible but, rather, that serving a holy and jealous God cannot be done casually or without divine assistance. It is disconcerting that the people simply reassert their claim—No, but we will serve the Lord (v. 21)—rather than ask for further instruction or prayer (cf. 1 Sam. 7:8). Joshua's warning in Josh. 24:19 that he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins is not to suggest that God is unforgiving (quite the contrary) but that he cannot condone apostasy, the point at issue in context.

## Read

To better understand the story make sure you read through the entire story in 1 Samuel 12. Consider taking a moment to pray that God will speak to each student personally as you read through the passage.

## Point to Make

An idol is anything that robs our affections for Christ.

## Fill in the Blank

Lord; forsake; his; Lord; people

It is amazing that even though Israel rejected God as their King, God assured the people that He would never reject them. God's name represents His character, and it is not in His character to reject His people. God responded to the Israelites with unconditional love. He does the same for you and me today through Christ.

**How have you experienced unconditional love from God?**

## SAUL'S DOWNFALL

**We are learning what purity looks like through a study on the Israelite kings. Based on what you have learned so far, do you think Saul was a good, pure king?**

Yes       No       Don't Know

**Why or why not?**

Scripture will give us a good idea of the kind of king Saul was.

Read 1 Samuel 10:8.

**Here, the prophet Samuel is giving instructions to Saul. Fill in the blanks to see what Samuel told Saul to do.**

"Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. \_\_\_\_\_ days you shall \_\_\_\_\_, until \_\_\_\_\_ and show you what you shall do."

Read 1 Samuel 13:7b–12.

**What did Saul do wrong?**

This is a major hint that Saul was not a godly king. He decided to do things his way instead of obeying the voice of the Lord through the prophet Samuel.

Most likely your parents have told you that you will have to suffer the negative consequences of your bad choices. They are right. This is a biblical truth. We can read about Saul's consequences for not fully obeying the Lord.

Read 1 Samuel 13:13-14 and fill in the blank below for verse 14.

"... the LORD has sought out a man after his own \_\_\_\_\_ ...."

Josh. 24:23 The mention of foreign gods makes the reader wonder how they could have been tolerated up to this point. Perhaps, as in vv. 14–15, Joshua is referring to the inner motives of their hearts.

1 Sam. 12:1–25 The setting of this address is not clear. The sentence structure at the end of ch. 11 suggests a complete end of a section and therefore that ch. 12 begins a new section. The address was probably given on an occasion different from that in ch. 11. From now on, Samuel is no longer the judge of all Israel: the age of kingship has begun. But this is neither a retirement ceremony for Samuel nor his last public address; his authority as the prophet who gives the word of God to the king and people of Israel remains powerful (see 12:18), and he has one more king to anoint (ch. 16).

### Point to Make

It is important to remember that the purpose of this study is to consider what it means to live a life of purity as we study the Israelite kings.

### Fill in the Blank

Seven; wait; I come to you

### Fill in the Blank

Heart

GOD IS CONCERNED WITH OUR HEARTS. IF WE ARE TO LIVE PURE LIVES,  
WE NEED TO MAKE SURE OUR HEARTS ARE PURE.

If we want to live a godly life, we must be sure our hearts are untainted. This can only be done by a work of the Holy Spirit.

## WHO WILL BE YOUR KING?

If we are honest, we are a lot like the Israelites! They wanted to be like everyone else, they thought they knew better than God, and they continually went after useless idols.

**Do you ever see yourself doing the same thing? In what ways do we “reenact” the Israelites’ actions?**

Read Matthew 2:1-2 and 27:11.

**According to these passages, who is the king of the Jews (the Israelite people)?**

**Describe the irony. In the Old Testament, the Jewish people rejected God as their King and sought an earthly king, and in the New Testament God gave His people the true King in human form, and most rejected Him.**

**Why do you think people in the Old and New Testaments rejected God as their King?**

Jesus didn’t fit their image of a king. He wasn’t rich, powerful (by the world’s standards), or handsome. He came to earth as a humble man. He confronted religious leaders who cared more about their own power and position and showed kindness to thieves and prostitutes.

When Jesus died on the cross, the unbelieving Jews mockingly put a sign above His head that read “King of the Jews.” The Israelites rejected God as their King again. Are we anything like that today? Before you quickly answer, “No way!” consider a few more questions.

**What is the role of a king?**

God is a loving, just, and good King. We can choose to live by His rules because we know they are right and for our good.

## Interact

How does the way we dress, electronics we purchase and desiring name brand everything a reflection of the way the Israelites were acting?

## Point to Make

Our nature is to reject God and rebel from him due to our pride.

## Interact

Students may something like “Someone who rules over a people.” That’s right. A king has influence and rule over the people in his kingdom.

1 Sam. 12:21 Empty things (Hb. *tohu*) refers here to vain idols. An idol is “nothing”—a vacuous entity that gives the one who trusts in it only vanity or emptiness in return.

1 Sam. 12:22 The Lord will not deal with his chosen people according to their wicked deeds (v. 25), but will treat them mercifully for his great name’s sake. This is the biblical principle of divine saving grace or favor.

1 Sam. 12:23 Praying (intercession) and instruction are two of Samuel’s major roles as the prophet of the Lord, even after the inauguration of kingship.

**How well are you living under God's kingship and rule? Answer these questions to help you evaluate your life:**

1) Do you pray about decisions you need to make?

Yes  No

2) Do you go to God for wisdom and guidance before acting out your decisions?

Yes  No

3) Do you know the God of the Bible, or just some version of Him you get from people's opinions?

Yes  No

4) Do you care more about honoring God, or doing what you want?

Yes  No

5) Do you have idols?

Yes  No

6) Do you seek to grow in your relationship with Christ daily?

Yes  No

All these years later, God is still the same. He wants you to reject the useless idols, and trust and serve a loving God, who is pleased to make you His own.

## **Point to Make**

Surrendering to the kingship and lordship of God is a critical part of following Jesus. Luke 9:23.

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1 Sam. 12:25 Both the people and the king are obliged to obey the word of the Lord; otherwise both will be swept away (as in Saul's case; see ch. 13).

1 Sam. 10:8 The events at Gilgal described in 11:15 and 13:8 were probably other occasions.

1 Sam. 13:8–15 Saul had summoned the army to meet at Gilgal, the place where he had "waited" (10:8) and been crowned (11:15). Again, "waiting" at Gilgal seems to have a special religious meaning. After this period of time, however, Saul offers sacrifices and breaks the commandment of the Lord (13:13). Some interpreters take this to mean that he did not obey the Lord's word through

## **NOW WHAT?**

### **PRAYER:**

Think about the ways you have experienced God's unconditional love and spend some time in prayer thanking God for those circumstances.

**What are some ways that you show God's unconditional love to your family and friends?**

**When do you struggle with allowing your heart to wander?**

**How will you allow your heart be softened to the God's leadership in your life?**

## **GOING DEEPER**

**What causes you to have trouble loving others unconditionally?**

Read James 5:19-20.

**Who do you know what has wandered in their relationship with God?**

**How can you show love and grace to draw the individual(s) listed above back to the heart of God?**

**What does confidence do for your heart?**

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

1 Samuel 12:24

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Samuel recorded in 10:8, to the effect that Saul should wait seven days for Samuel to come and offer burnt offerings and show Saul what to do. Others think the statement in 10:8 occurred several years earlier, and that Saul violates another (unrecorded) command from Samuel, or the command that only a priest should offer sacrifices (Num. 18:7), or the general principle that he should have waited to learn God's will through the prophet. In any case, Saul knows he has done wrong, for he starts making excuses (1 Sam. 13:11–12). Apparently he had been told not to make any move until Samuel gave him the word of the Lord. Here Saul shows his tendency to be moved by circumstances and to rely on religious ritual to gain God's favor (see 14:24 and the incident in 4:3) rather than to trust and obey the word of the Lord.



# WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

What does this passage say of God's character?

What is the warning described in this passage?

## DAY 2 — PSALM 139:23-24

Why is it important for God to search your heart?

What are some things that you try to hide from God deep in your heart?

## DAY 3 — ZECHARIAH 13:9

Describe the importance of God purifying our lives.

What are some things in your life that God needs to purify today?

## DAY 4 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-7

What are some idols you have in your life?

How can you destroy the idols in your life?

## DAY 5 — PSALM 86:5-13

What aspects of God's character are revealed in this passage?

How have you seen these characteristics of God in your personal life?

## DAY 6 — HEBREWS 1:8

What impact does the eternity of Jesus' kingship have in your life?

What does it mean for God to be Lord of your life?

## DAY 7 — JAMES 4:7-8

What does it mean to "submit yourself to God"?

What does God promise to do when we draw near to him?

# A Well-Trained Heart

1 TIMOTHY 4:7-10

Increasingly, the world is devoted to health care and physical fitness. Ads for organic foods, low-fat/high-fiber diets, weight loss programs, home gym equipment, workout garb, and health club memberships are all over the media. People want to be fit in their bodies, and that's, of course, a very good thing.

You may even experience specific training for whatever sport or activity that you are involved in. Often athletes are rewarded with more playing time by their coaches for their hard work and attendance at training times. However, it's not the most important fitness we should be seeking.

Paul writes to Timothy and says, "train yourself for godliness." It is important for all of us to understand that training in godliness has eternal value. As we train in godliness, we are preparing ourselves for God to use us in his kingdom service. We must train to be ready for that moment when God calls on us.

*When do have a hard time giving your best effort?  
What part of your life do you like to try to control?*

Last week you learned that God gave the Israelites what they had asked for — an earthly king to follow. However, Saul did not follow the Lord and he led the people astray. This week we will learn about the rise of a new king. While King David was not a perfect man, he did have a well-trained heart. David was prepared for the moment that God called on him. He was faithful one day at a time with the tasks set before him.

The present effect of godly training for us is a changed life and kingdom work being accomplished. In fact, it is so beneficial that training in godliness is worth toiling and striving for it. Paul's goal was godliness in those he taught. Training for godliness directly impacts your life. Train hard.

WEEK

5

## Key Questions and Concepts

The simple decisions in life are great opportunities to demonstrate the lordship of Christ.

May we be faithful in the small things, who knows, one day God might use us for something extraordinary.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Tim. 4:10 to this end. The goal of Paul's labors is that people attain "godliness" (v. 8) and its eternal "value." Toil and strive is typical of Paul's description of gospel ministry (cf. 5:17; Rom. 16:6, 12; 1 Cor. 15:10; 16:16; Gal. 4:11; Eph. 4:28). The statement that God is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe could seem to teach universalism, that every person will eventually go to heaven. However, the rest of Scripture clearly denies this idea. In any case, the emphasis is on God's care for the unsaved world, and in the flow of the letter Paul is stressing once more (cf. 2:3–5) that God's will that people would be saved is the basis of the universal mission (cf. Matt. 28:19–20). On God as "Savior," see note on 2 Tim. 1:8–10.

## WORK WITH ALL YOUR HEART

You've learned by now that David spent his early years tending sheep. When Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel, David didn't strike the prophet (or his own father) as particularly kingly. God reminded Samuel that man tends to be impressed by outward appearance, while God is more concerned with the heart.

Thinking back to elementary school, do you remember that dreaded playground experience of choosing teams for kickball, baseball, or another sport? We can all picture the kids who were picked first or second; they were athletic, confident, game-changing. We can just as easily picture the poor souls who weren't chosen until the end. It's almost like they were invisible. You can't always see what someone is capable of by his or her speed, height, or strength.

David was very young, had a ruddy face, and played a ... harp? He didn't exactly fit the profile of an "ultimate fighter," did he? In comparison, Saul was a head taller than the rest of his army, covered in battle armor, and downright kingly.

**Based on appearance, if you were the team captain and you had next pick, would you choose David or Saul?**

Thinking about David's upcoming battle with the nine-foot Philistine warrior-champion, it seems like David's best preparation would have been wrestling matches, weightlifting, and sprints.

Read 1 Samuel 17:34-37.

**Based on this passage, describe David's training program?**

**Although David was probably still a teenager at this time, how do you think his battles with wild animals affected his self-confidence?**

When David wasn't herding sheep or wrestling wild animals to the death, we get a clue that he had time for other things.

Read 1 Samuel 16:16-18.

**List the six traits for which David had become known.**

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1) | 4) |
| 2) | 5) |
| 3) | 6) |

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1 Sam. 17:34 Both lions and bears were common in the Palestine of the Israelite period.

1 Sam. 17:36 David is confident that God will defend his own honor and defeat Goliath.

1 Sam. 17:37–39 Because of his faith in God, David shows more willingness to do battle on behalf of God's people, and to defend God's honor, than the seasoned warrior Saul.

1 Sam. 16:16–18 David was already skillful in playing the lyre, but a man of valor, a man of war probably refers to his ability and not his experience (cf. 17:13, 33); perhaps some knew of how he single-

**According to verse 17, what kind of harp player did Saul want?**

Saul was the reigning king of Israel, after all. So he must have already been used to enjoying the best food, entertainment, and comforts that his nation had to offer. Talk about high standards! The fact that David didn't just play the harp, but played it well, is easy to overlook, but just in this little observation, we can see that when David set his mind to something, he put his whole heart into it.

**Do you put your whole heart into the things that you accomplish each day? Explain.**

Despite David's young age and body, he already had a giant heart. It's a good thing, because we all know there was a "giant" in his near future.

## **FAITHFUL IN THE SMALL THINGS**

Read 1 Samuel 17:4-7.

As you read the description of the gigantic champion from Gath, it almost sounds like the Bible had already conceded the fight: "Advantage: Goliath!"

**The writer of 1 Samuel used the weights and measures of his day to describe the giant, but your Bible probably has a footnote using today's measures. How tall was Goliath?**

**Goliath wore "a coat of mail" weighing 5,000 shekels. How many pounds did his "coat" weigh?**

What the writer wants us to understand is that this fellow was huge, and his reputation for being mighty was even bigger. God put an obstacle in front of David that made his odds look bad from a human point of view. As if Goliath's size and strength weren't intimidating enough, he was also talking some major smack!

Read 1 Samuel 17:8-11.

**According to verse 8, whom did Goliath single out as the leader of the Israelites?**

Even the mighty King Saul was shaking in his boots. Goliath was certainly a force to be reckoned with. You might know that the writers of the Old and New Testaments often used numbers or images to symbolize a deeper meaning. We see such symbolism in this passage when it describes how long Goliath taunted the Israelite army.

## **Measurements**

Cubit: About 18 inches

Height: About 9 feet 9 inches

Coat: About 125 pounds

Spearhead: About 15 pounds

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handedly defeated both lions and bears (cf. 17:36). The Lord is with him is a continual theme in David's story (17:37; 18:12; 20:13; 2 Sam. 5:10; 7:3, 9; see also Gen. 21:22; 26:3; 28:15; 31:3; 39:2; Ex. 3:12).

1 Sam. 17:4-11 A champion in biblical, ancient Near Eastern, and Homeric literature is a man who steps out to fight between the two battle lines. Here Goliath offers to fight, on behalf of his side, against any champion that Israel will put forward; the victor's side then, would partake of his victory (vv. 8-10). Goliath's armament was the best that the highly skilled Philistines could obtain, either by manufacture or by trade. The shield (Hb. tsinnah) was a large standing shield that covered the whole

Read 1 Samuel 17:16.

**How many consecutive days did Goliath come forward to call Saul's army out to battle?**

**Match these Scripture identifications with the correct verses.**

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1) Genesis 7:12 | A) Moses fasted forty days before writing the Ten Commandments. |
| 2) Exodus 34:28 | B) Jesus was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan.  |
| 3) Joshua 5:6   | C) Rain fell on the earth forty days.                           |
| 4) Mark 1:13    | D) The Israelites wandered in the desert forty years.           |

When we see the number "forty" in Scripture, it often indicates that God wants His people to look to Him and depend on Him. Goliath's taunting the Israelites for forty days is a hint that the Lord wants His people to depend on Him.

Read 1 Samuel 17:17-26.

**What did David's father, Jesse, send David to do? (See vv. 17-18.)**

It seems like a pretty ordinary task, doesn't it? David was just a delivery boy, or so he thought. What seemed to be a food delivery trip turned out to be an opportunity for David to slay a giant! You know, Jesus spoke about this in the New Testament, too. God calls us to be faithful in the small things, and He will give us greater things to do.

**Write Matthew 25:23 in the space below.**

**Do you ever feel like you are doing just ordinary things for God? Like you try to live for the Lord, but you don't have "Goliath" moments every day?**

**What are some things you do that seem just plain ordinary? Examples might include being kind to people and obeying your parents.**

A pure lifestyle is built on one small decision at a time. For example, choosing not to listen to that song stops you from watching that music video, which may have led you to look at that website. Another may be how you obey your parents can lead to you respecting other authority figures in your life.

While those things might be ordinary, choose to be like David. May we be faithful in the small things, and who knows, one day God might use us for something extraordinary!

## Matching

- 1) C
- 2) A
- 3) D
- 4) B

## Point to Make

The ordinary things in life are great opportunities to live a pure lifestyle. How you complete your homework, respect your parents, teachers and coaches, playing an instrument, the movies you choose to watch, etc. These simple decisions build up to large decisions to remain pure.

body. Most of his armament was bronze, except his spear's head of iron—this was just the beginning of the Iron Age. It is not surprising that the Israelites were dismayed.

1 Sam. 17:18 their thousand. The Hebrew term 'elep usually means "thousand," but in the present context it probably refers to a military unit of undetermined size.

1 Sam. 17:25–26 Have you seen? "You" is plural; the question is not directed toward David. What shall be done? By faith, David grasps Goliath's challenge as directed toward the armies of the living God, hence toward the unseen God himself. To David, this battle is fundamentally spiritual in nature

## **NOW WHAT?**

What will it require of you fully commit to Jesus?

Read Colossians 3:23.

How does an eternal perspective impact the way you accomplish the tasks that are set before you?

Describe some areas that you need to work at with all of your might.

PRAYER:

Ask God to help you be faithful in the small things.

## **GOING DEEPER**

What would you like for God to trust you with?

How does your faithfulness now impact your future?

How can the Holy Spirit help you fully trust in the Father's good will?

What does it take to move past outward appearance and get to know the heart of someone?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Matthew 25:23

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(see vv. 45–47; cf. Eph. 6:12). His father's house refers to a person's extended family, smaller than a tribe or clan, with 50 to 100 persons. Free means exempt from taxes and other obligations to the palace.

Matt. 25:20–23 Well done, good and faithful servant. The master's identical statements of praise to both servants show that what was important was not the total amount earned but faithfulness in utilizing their gifts and potential. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Faithful stewardship in this life will result in being given greater responsibility and stewardship in the life to come.

# WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

What should be the goal of everything that you do?

How is it possible to bring God glory in everything we do?

## DAY 2 — COLOSSIANS 3:23

What should be our goal when we work?

How will working for the Lord change the way you accomplish routine tasks?

## DAY 3 — MATTHEW 25:14-30

What does it mean to be "faithful over a little"?

Describe the difference in how the master responded from one servant to the next?

## DAY 4 — PROVERBS 12:11

Describe things that you are pursuing that are worthless pursuits?

What shortcuts are you trying to take in your relationship with God?

## DAY 5 — 1 TIMOTHY 4:7-10

What areas do you need to spend more time training on for godliness?

How can you push others to train hard for godliness?

## DAY 6 — GENESIS 2:15

Why did God put man in the Garden of Eden?

How is work a blessing rather a curse? How does God reward our hard work?

## DAY 7 — PROVERBS 22:29

Why is it important to always improve on your abilities?

How have you seen God use your abilities?

# A Giant Heart

1 SAMUEL 17:46

WEEK

6

## Key Questions and Concepts

What are the major battles you face each day?

How can you lean on the Lord Almighty in your battles?

What are specific steps you need to take to handle opposition better in your life?

Sometimes we face obstacles that seem too large or too big to conquer upon first glance. Many consider that David was the underdog. Why was David the underdog? He had God on his side. We look at this from human perspective. We look at the human things such as Goliath's size and strength.

Although Goliath was a mighty giant, his size was the very thing that forfeited the agility he needed to defeat David. Contrary to popular opinion, David was not the underdog in this story. He was the favored victor and his confidence in his identity in Christ propelled him fearlessly into victory.

The same is true in how we view living a life of purity. We often think that the odds are stacked against us. That is why schools hand out contraceptives. We give up on monitoring movies and music. We dismiss attitudes and actions as something that teenagers do.

David was not the underdog. We are not underdogs. Goliath was and so is our culture today. David knew that Goliath was no match for his God. The power of the living God is at work within our hearts to help us live differently, a godly life, in purity.

*When have you felt like an underdog?  
What obstacles are you facing now?*

Last week we learned the importance of giving your whole heart to God. When you give your whole heart to God you prepare yourself for the kingdom work that you are assigned by God. David fought because he wanted the whole world to know that there is a God in Israel. You are to live a life in such a way so others will know your God.

David was faithful in the small things, which led him to the epic moment in history that we will study today. We may not be asked to defeat a giant. However, every one of us is asked to live differently for our King, and that is epic.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Sam. 17:44, 46 In Israel, being deprived of burial and exposed to birds and beasts was considered worse than death itself (see 31:8–13; 2 Samuel 21; Ps. 79:2–3; Jer. 7:33; 8:1–2).

1 Sam. 17:25–26 "You" is plural; the question is not directed toward David. What shall be done? By faith, David grasps Goliath's challenge as directed toward the armies of the living God, hence toward the unseen God himself. To David, this battle is fundamentally spiritual in nature (see vv. 45–47; cf. Eph. 6:12). His father's house refers to a person's extended family, smaller than a tribe or clan, with 50 to 100 persons. Free means exempt from taxes and other obligations to the palace.



## ENDURING OPPOSITION

Read 1 Samuel 17:26-28.

Unfortunately, when we choose to do something for the Lord, we will often face opposition. Much like David, often it will be from someone we know well.

**Do you think David was discouraged by his brother's words? Why or why not?**

Not only did David's brother oppose him, but he also questioned the motives of his heart. Opposition is always hard, but it particularly hurts when someone speaks against our character.

Read 1 Samuel 17:29-30.

**How did David respond to this opposition from his brother?**

David stood up under the harsh words. He didn't let his brother deter him from doing what he was determined to do for God.

Read 2 Timothy 4:5 and fill in the blanks below.

"As for you, always be sober-minded, \_\_\_\_\_, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

**Describe a time when you tried to do something for the Lord but received opposition from someone regarding it?**

Trials will come our way, especially when we choose to live for the Lord. We should seek to endure those trials. Never give up. Keep your eyes on the Lord, and depend on Him to get you through. Embrace trials with joy as a way to grow in the Lord.

## CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD

From his early days, David focused on God's goodness and might, not his own. The circumstances before him didn't seem to shake his confidence in God's deliverance.

**Think for a moment about something or someone that fills you with confidence, and write it down. How does your behavior change when you are near that thing or person?**

## Fill in the Blank

Endure Hardship

## Interact

Be transparent about a time in your life where you faced opposition from another Christian and how you handled that situation.

1 Sam. 17:28 Eliab the eldest brother (see v. 12; 20:29) is annoyed with the conduct of his youngest brother at this crucial time. David seemed to him to be just a show-off.

2 Tim. 4:5 the work of an evangelist. The full scope of "evangelist" is not made explicit here or elsewhere in Scripture. Paul instructs Timothy in terms of the "gospel" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:8, 10; 2:8), which certainly includes proclamation to the unconverted, i.e., the continuation of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. However, Paul does not typically distinguish between "evangelism" and "discipleship".

**Do you suddenly become bolder? A little reckless, even? How does it impact your confidence?**

If you can relate to this, imagine how confident David must have been when he trusted so fully in His God. As David goes face to face with the giant, let's listen in as the boy-shepherd talks some heavenly smack:

Read 1 Samuel 17:45-47.

**Where did David's confidence lie? (Be specific.)**

Now we're going to play a game called "Name Your Goliath." What giant stands in front of you day after day, intimidating you, scaring the daylights out of you, making you want to tuck your tail between your legs and slink away like a whipped dog? Is it your math teacher? Is it the empty table you sit down to for lunch day after day? Is it the body image you frown at every time you look in the mirror?

**Describe your Goliath below, and if he has some brothers or sisters, describe them, too.**

Now imagine it's tomorrow, time to face your Goliath once again. Can you picture the scene in your mind? Maybe you've faced this giant a hundred times already. As you imagine tomorrow, let's change the scenario just a bit. This time, you're bringing a friend. It's the same one David referred to as "the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel." Can you see it? Pause for a minute, and make a specific request of God. Ask Him to cause you to feel His presence the next time you face your Goliath. Ask Him to turn this "fantasy" into faith.

**Write this request in your own words.**

Now that you've asked Him, take a breath and be still. Prayer is a two-way street. Give God a chance to respond to you. The Bible says God's voice is rarely in the wind, earthquake, or fire. More often, it's a gentle whisper. Just listen for Him.

**If He spoke to you, write down your impression.**

However, if all you heard was cricket chirping, don't lose heart. Listening takes practice and stillness. Try again at home. Get alone in a quiet space and be with God without distractions.

**Interact**

Transparency and trust are extremely important for students to be able to share their "giants." Do your best to create an atmosphere of trust and transparency.

**Pray**

This could be a great time for students to pray for one another. Don't let this moment slip by into another conversation. Prayer is essential to the battle that students fight each day.

Don't dwell too long but give students a moment to just be still and listen for God to speak.

1 Sam. 17:52 men of Israel and Judah. There were divisions between Judah and the rest of Israel from the earliest time of the Davidic monarchy (see 11:8; 15:4; 2 Sam. 19:41-43). "Gai" seems to refer to the valley that leads to Gath. For Ekron, see 1 Sam. 5:10.

1 Sam. 17:54 Jerusalem refers to a suburb in the area around Jerusalem, not the Jebusite walled city that David captured later (see 2 Sam. 5:6-9).

1 Sam. 17:55-18:5 Saul, Jonathan, and David. At first everyone loves David. Saul takes him into his service; all of Saul's officials (his potential rivals) love him; even members of Saul's own family love

## GOD'S GLORY

Our study wouldn't be complete if we didn't read the final outcome of David's battle with Goliath.

Read 1 Samuel 17:48-58.

**With what did David kill Goliath?**

How is it that a little shepherd boy killed a nine-foot-tall giant with one stone? You might think this was a large stone, but the five smooth stones David picked up from the stream were likely no bigger than a baseball. (See 1 Samuel 17:40.)

Isn't that just like God? He takes ordinary things and uses them to bring glory to His name. God's often uses ordinary, everyday items to perform a miracle.

Read John 6:1-13.

With only five small barley loaves and two small fish, Jesus fed more than 5,000 people!

**In both of the previous stories who received the glory for the miracles?**

We see God's character in both the Old and New Testaments, and it remains the same today. God wants to use willing people to make His name famous.

Fill in the blanks of your memory verse, 1 Samuel 17:46.

"This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ may know that there is a \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_."

David's motivation for slaying the giant was not his own glory, but rather that of the God of Israel. David was a king with a heart for God. To review what you have learned the past two weeks, write the major headings in each week's lessons.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

**Which of David's five qualities do you find most challenging? Why?**

## Fill in the Blank

All; earth; God; Israel

## Interact

Encourage students to work to develop all of these qualities in their own lives.

him. Jonathan, who had relied on the Lord in his own victory at Michmash, has an especially close relationship with David, despite realizing at some point that David will supplant him as king.

1 Sam. 17:55–58 whose son is this youth? Even though Saul knew David from before, he would not remember the name of David's father. Saul is asking about David's background—his family and hence his social status or pedigree—so that he may ask his father to let him keep David permanently (see 18:2).

## NOW WHAT?

Based on today's lesson, what did you learn about handling opposition?

What are specific steps you need to take to handle opposition better in your life?

Spend some time researching Voice of the Martyrs website at [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) this week. Consider how you can partner with their ministry to care for those that are being persecuted around the world.

How can you make God famous in your life today?

## GOING DEEPER

What do you think it would be like for it to be illegal to be a Christian?

Describe the importance of your faith settling into your heart and not just your mind.

As we bring the story of David and Goliath to a close, take one more look at the last portion of this week's memory verse, and personalize it. As you pray today, fill in the first blank below with your name. Leave the second blank open for a few minutes while you meditate on it. What extraordinary results does God want to achieve through your "ordinary" self? Ask Him! Keep asking Him! If your desire is to let the world know that there is a God in Israel, He will show up on your battlefields.

"Today \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel."

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 Samuel 17:46

# WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — JOHN 3:30

When do you struggle with wanting to receive glory for your actions rather Jesus?  
How does this passage impact the way that you prepare for each day of your life?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11

How much worth do you assign to knowing Christ?  
What is the ultimate gain in knowing Christ?

## DAY 3 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

What responsibility do you have toward others with your actions?  
How can you actions bring glory to God?

## DAY 4 — 1 CORINTHIANS 4:10-13

What are we called to do when we are persecuted?  
Describe a situation when you have been persecuted and think of a Biblical way to respond?

## DAY 5 — JAMES 1:2-4

What does it mean to "count it all joy" during trials?  
According to this passage, what is the purpose of trials?

## DAY 6 — PROVERBS 3:25-26

Where should our confidence come from?  
How does fear have a way of showing where we place our true confidence?

## DAY 7 — ISAIAH 48:11

What is God's motivation for everything he does?  
How can your life bring him glory?

# Iron Sharpens

## Iron

PROVERBS 27:17

WEEK

7

### Key Questions and Concepts

Your relationships you choose, especially friendships, have a huge impact on your life, including your relationship with Christ.

What is the focus of your friendships?

Deep friendships are hard to come by. Many people look at relationships as a way to gain status or get something that they want. Some friendships are genuine but without a central focus on Jesus those relationships end up being hollow and weak. Friendships are meant for much more than that.

*Have you ever noticed how much your friends influence your behavior?  
What separates a best friend from a good friend?*

The statement, "As iron sharpens iron", was the cutting edge of technology (pun intended). Anyone that heard this at the time would have had great and timely images in their heads. When iron was around other iron, great things happened. To understand this passage of scripture, it is important to understand the process of iron actually sharpening iron. This was carried out in three main steps:

- 1) First was the pounding out of the sword with the iron hammer. They would flatten it around the edges like sheet metal.
- 2) Second, they would use an iron file or and iron-ore stone to take create a razor-edge.
- 3) Thirdly, they would use another piece of iron to rub and lift that edge. This would have to be done whenever the edge would become dull. You have heard the saying that "He's lost his edge." That is referring to a knife that needed to have the edge raised.

Now back to the application. When Christians are spending time with each other, there is incredible sharpening that occurs over time. You have to pay attention to every aspect of your life — in public as well as in private. That includes the people with whom you choose to surround yourself.

Some relationships can't be chosen, including those with parents and other family members. However, those relationships you can choose, especially friendships, have a huge impact on your life — including your relationship with Christ. This week you'll meet David's best friend, Jonathan, and see how friendships focused on God's kingdom contribute to a life of purity.

### 5-Minute Commentary

Prov. 27:17 Another is, as the esv footnote reads, "the face of another." Since the word "face" (Hb. panim) can refer to the edge of an axe or sword (Eccles. 10:10; possibly Ezek. 21:16), the image is that interaction with a good man (both as he encourages and corrects) hones one's skill in handling challenges. Man translates Hebrew 'ish, a word that specifically refers to a male human being. But such concrete examples in Proverbs invite broader application.

1 Sam. 17:55–18:5 Saul, Jonathan, and David. At first everyone loves David. Saul takes him into his service; all of Saul's officials (his potential rivals) love him; even members of Saul's own family love

## DAVID AND JONATHAN

If your perspective about the Bible is that the Bible is outdated and not useful in your life today, think again. The Bible may not list technology we have today but it does speak a lot about relationships. Today's lesson is a story you'll want to remember: Before you look at their relationship, think about your own best friend(s).

**Do you have a best friend, or maybe a few? Write the name of one best friend, and briefly describe how you met and became friends.**

Now read 1 Samuel 17:57-18:1, and fill in the blanks.

"... the soul of Jonathan was \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ of David, and Jonathan \_\_\_\_\_ him as his own \_\_\_\_\_."

**What do you think it means to be "one in spirit" with someone and to have souls "knit" together?**

The words "one" and "knit" clue us in to how close David and Jonathan really were. If you braid three pieces of string, you get one string. If you knit multiple strands of yarn together, you get one blanket. David and Jonathan were bound together in life, friendship, and spirit. If one was happy, the other rejoiced. If one was hurt, the other hurt, too.

**Now think back to your best friend. You explained how the two of you met and became friends. Now explain why you are friends. What keeps you so close? What do you like about this person?**

## SOMETHING IN COMMON

David and Jonathan were bound together through a common interest or focus. Looking at them on the surface, it might be hard to find something they had in common. Strong relationships are based on a common bond. When you look deeper at David and Jonathan's friendship, you'll see what these individuals from different backgrounds had in common. First, take a moment to review some basics about each of these men and the circumstances surrounding their friendship.

David	Jonathan
Youngest son of Jesse the shepherd.	Oldest son of King Saul and in line to inherit the throne of Israel.
Chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as king.	God rejected Saul as king. The throne would no longer be given to Jonathan because of his father's sin.

him. Jonathan, who had relied on the Lord in his own victory at Michmash, has an especially close relationship with David, despite realizing at some point that David will supplant him as king.

1 Sam. 18:2 Saul took him—according to "the ways of the king" (8:11). His father's house refers to David's extended family (see 17:25–26).

1 Sam. 18:3–4 he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan would eventually give up any claim to the throne for David's sake (23:17) and even risk his life (20:30–33) for David; Jonathan ... gave it to David. Primogeniture, whereby the firstborn son received the primary leadership role and a double

## Translation

New International Version:

"... the soul of Jonathan was one in spirit with David, and Jonathan loved him as himself."

## Fill in the Blank

Knit; soul; loved; soul

## Point to Make

Students most likely mentioned how they are similar to their friends. They probably like much of the same things, activities, music, and more. They have something in common that keeps them close. The same was true with David and Jonathan.

Jonathan grew up with the expectation of one day becoming king. He trained to be a great leader and soldier so he would be ready to lead Israel when he took the throne. His life was built on a future expectation, but because of his father's sin, everything changed for Jonathan. He was no longer the future leader of God's people.

**How would you feel if you were Jonathan?**

**How would you feel toward David, the person God chose instead of you to take over as king?**

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-3, and fill in the blanks.

"And Jonathan made a \_\_\_\_\_ with David because he \_\_\_\_\_ him as his own \_\_\_\_\_ soul."

**COVENANT** — A PROMISE WHERE ONE PERSON PLEDGES TO BLESS OR SERVE ANOTHER PERSON IN A SPECIFIC WAY.

Jonathan made a choice based on God's standard for living. Jonathan knew that God had always been and would always be the true King, and he chose to serve God first and honor Him. God chose David as an earthly king over Israel, and Jonathan chose to submit to God's will for the kingdom. Even more, he chose to love David as the closest of friends.

Read 1 Samuel 18:4, and fill in the blanks in the first column of the following table. Then look at the significance of Jonathan's actions described in the right-hand column. Look up each verse listed to help you better understand.

"Jonathan took off the _____ he was wearing ..."	Symbolizes the kingdom of Israel and Jonathan's right to inherit the throne. (1 Samuel 15:24-28)
"... and _____ it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt."	Signifies Jonathan's love for David. Jonathan did not just give up the throne to David; he gave his all to David in love. (1 Samuel 20:42)

David and Jonathan were the ultimate best friends because of what they had in common — a desire to honor God in His kingdom.

**What is the focus of your friendships?**

You've seen the beginnings of David and Jonathan's friendship. You now know they shared a desire to serve God and see His kingdom glorified. Things should be easy from now on, right? Think again.

portion of the family inheritance, was a tradition but not an absolute rule. Nevertheless, as the popular eldest son, Jonathan would have been accepted as Saul's heir (1 Sam. 20:31; 23:17; 2 Sam. 1:4). Since to all appearances the dynasty had just begun, however, David was considered even more of a threat to Jonathan than to Saul. No one seems to have viewed Jonathan's gifts to David as a sign of abdication, but Jonathan's actions (perhaps unwittingly) foreshadowed the transfer of the kingship to David. It is not recorded at what point Jonathan realized that David was God's chosen.

1 Sam. 18:12 Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him. Cf. v. 14 and 16:18. Saul's primary concern was not the Lord's honor or the people's welfare but himself.

**Fill in the Blank**  
Covenant; loved; own

**Discuss**  
Under the world's view, Jonathan and David should have been enemies. Can you imagine making a promise to bless and serve a person who should be your enemy?

**Fill in the Blank**  
Robe; gave



## THE STORY CONTINUES

Relationships are complicated, even for Christ followers. The world presents circumstances, events, and even people that get in the way or cause problems. David and Jonathan's friendship was no exception. God's kingdom brought them together, but Saul, as an earthly king, sought to tear them apart.

Saul was a man full of insecurities. He became a man who longed more for the love and respect of people than of God. David, on the other hand, was more concerned about honoring God. God rewarded David with success and the respect of the people, which caused fear and jealousy in Saul.

Read 1 Samuel 18:12-16, 28-29.

**According to these verses, who were David's admirers?**

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-7.

David wasn't the only one who had a complicated relationship with Saul. Jonathan, Saul's own son, became a victim of his father's jealousy of David. Jonathan was caught in the middle, but he knew his father was in the wrong. He had a decision to make.

David was a shepherd boy who had been brought into the service of the king. That required him to honor the king. He was also a child of God, which required him to honor God and the earthly king God had appointed (Saul).

Saul was Jonathan's father and his king, so Jonathan had to honor him as a parent and as the royal authority over him. Jonathan also had sworn a covenant with David to bless and serve him in friendship and love. Plus, Jonathan was a child of God, which meant his actions had to be right and just in the eyes of God.

**Imagine being caught in this situation. How would you have handled it?**

**How do you honor your God, your family, your friends, and the authority figures over you?**

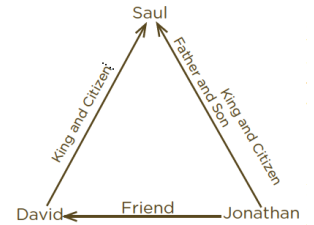
Read 1 Samuel 20.

**Put yourself in Jonathan's shoes for a moment. What thoughts would be racing through your mind?**

ULTIMATELY, JONATHAN'S LOYALTY TO DAVID WAS JONATHAN'S LOYALTY TO GOD'S PLAN.

## Illustrate

Jonathan and David were caught in a royal triangle with Saul. The following diagram shows the relationships of Saul, David and Jonathan.



## Point to Make

Choosing to be loyal to God's plan for a pure lifestyle may play out in your relationships. You may lose friendships or even dating relationships.

1 Sam. 19:4 Jonathan appeals to Saul the king on the basis of a king's obligation to do justice (see 25:31).

1 Sam. 19:5 took his life in his hand. I.e., risked his life (see also 28:21; Judg. 12:3).

1 Sam. 19:1–20:42 Saul's Attempts to Kill David. Saul moves from trying to use the Philistines to kill David to actually ordering him killed. Jonathan brings about one reconciliation (and there may have been another one after ch. 19), but David finally flees the court permanently.

## NOW WHAT?

Write down the names of three friends that you know are not Christians and three friends that are Christians.

PRAYER:

Take time today to pray for your friends. If they are Christians, pray that God will strengthen their relationship with Him. If not, pray for an opportunity to share your testimony with them.

Describe areas that you need wisdom from God to take your relationships to the next level by making God the center of your friendships.

PRAYER:

Thank God for your friends and what you have in common with them. Ask for wisdom for the next steps in taking your relationships to the next level by making God the center of your friendships.

## GOING DEEPER

Describe the how relationships between David, Saul and Jonathan help you better understand how to honor Christ in your relationships.

Read 1 Samuel 20.

The following are three options Jonathan could have chosen. After you read the options, write under each one why you think it would have been the wrong choice.

Option 1) He could have yelled at his father in front of all of the attendants and defended his friend.

Option 2) He could have said nothing. David would have been killed, and Jonathan could have taken back the throne.

Option 3) He could have run to David to warn him, and they could have run away from home together and been safe.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Proverbs 27:17

# WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

What does this passage suggest about the need of good friendships?

How have you been a friend like this passage displays?

## DAY 2 — JOHN 15:12-13

How does this passage relate to your friendships?

Are you a loving friend or do you have a tendency to neglect your relationships?

## DAY 3 — JOHN 15:14-15

Who does Jesus call you once you place your faith in him?

How do you live your life differently knowing that Jesus is your friend?

## DAY 4 — PROVERBS 12:26

Who are your friends that give godly advice?

What does this passage display about God's desire for healthy friendships?

## DAY 5 — PROVERBS 22:24-25

What does this passage teach about how friends can influence you?

Describe friendships in your life that are causing you to stumble in your purity.

## DAY 6 — 1 CORINTHIANS 15:33

Explain how your friend group causes you to grow closer to Christ?

How does this passage help you pick good friends?

## DAY 7 — 1 SAMUEL 20

What does this passage show about David and Jonathan's relationship?

Describe a circumstance that a friend chose to love you the way Jonathan loved David.

# Saul's Rejection as King

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

WEEK

8

## Key Questions and Concepts

Rebellion and arrogance cost Saul the kingdom.

Fear is directly related to pride with King Saul. Much of Saul's downfall was driven by fear and pride. He wanted to be remembered forever as a great king. He feared others taking over or forgetting about him. He placed an expectation on himself that he had to make his name great. This attitude is completely opposite of the attitude that David had.

Even though we have learned that Samuel had already anointed David as the future king, Saul still held the title of king at this point in the story. As we wrap up the story of Saul's life, pay attention to his choices to live an adulterated life. Learn from his mistakes, and ask God to help you have a pure heart to follow Him.

We must be careful in comparing ourselves to others. We are to live out our identity in Christ, which is as sons and daughters of the Almighty King.

*Describe specific expectations you put on yourself to be better than others?  
Who do you try to compare yourself to the most?*

The jealousy that consumed King Saul manifested itself into a burning hatred toward David. Despite bad circumstances and someone intentionally trying to put David in harms way, God protected him. Since David was obedient to God and his word and his commands, God provided a way out of every snare that Saul put before him. God is faithful to provide a way out of sinning. We just have to choose to take it.

## 5-Minute Commentary

2 Tim. 1:7 spirit. Probably the Holy Spirit. fear. The Greek (deilia) in extrabiblical literature refers to one who flees from battle, and has a strong pejorative sense referring to cowardice. Boldness, not cowardice, is a mark of the Spirit (see Prov. 28:1; Acts 4:31).

1 Sam. 15:12 Carmel here is a town in Judah about 7 miles (11 km) south of Hebron. It is the setting for ch. 25. That Saul has gone there to set up a monument for himself raises further suspicions about his character.

## DISOBEDIENT HEART

Remember that Saul was the first king of Israel. He was exactly what the people said they wanted. God was their King, but they demanded to have an earthly king to rule over them just like all the other nations. When God gave them Saul, the nation of Israel was so excited. In 1 Samuel 15, God said he wanted the Israelites to punish the Amalekites for what they did to them when they came out of Egypt. God specifically told Saul to destroy the enemy. Every person was to be killed, along with the animals. Nothing was to remain alive.

Read 1 Samuel 15:8-23.

**What did Saul do?**

**Look at 1 Samuel 15:12, what did Saul do that was very arrogant?**

**Fill in the blanks from verse 23:**

Rebellion is like \_\_\_\_\_.

Presumption (arrogance) is like \_\_\_\_\_.

We don't think of simple disobedience as being equal to trying to contact the dead. That is exactly what God says it is. Divination is witchcraft. God says rebellion against Him is the same as witchcraft.

Presumption (arrogance), being full of pride, is the same to God as worshiping idols. It is when we put ourselves above God.

**In verse 23, what is the ultimate consequence of Saul's disobedience of rebellion and arrogance?**

**Write out what rebellion and arrogance could cost you in the following areas?**

A) School

B) Home

C) Friends

D) Dating Relationships

## SERIOUS CONSEQUENCE

Saul was disobedient to the Lord. From the beginning, he was not willing to do what God told him. So God chose another king — David. You already learned that Samuel anointed David when he was just a kid. David was called a man after God's own heart. He was totally different from Saul. Saul looked like a

### Point to Make

Saul rebelled against the Lord by not following the instructions in the battle. Saul took it a step further by setting up a monument in his own honor.

### Fill in the Blank

Divination – the practice of seeking the knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means.

Idolatry – worship of idols.

### Point to Make

Rebellion and arrogance cost Saul the kingdom.

1 Sam. 15:15 Saul's excuse for his disobedience (the people spared) contrasts with the facts ("Saul and the people spared," v. 9). to sacrifice to the Lord your God. They probably did intend to sacrifice the animals, or there would have been no reason to go to Gilgal. But they were probably also planning to share in eating the sacrifices, contrary to the decree of destruction.

1 Sam. 15:17 Samuel reminds Saul here again (see v. 1) that the Lord anointed you king over Israel. Why should Saul, as God's anointed, yield to the people's opinion over God's? He became king because the people asked for a king; now he is rejected because he listened to them (cf. Prov. 29:25) rather than leading them to obey God.

king physically, but David was willing to follow God as a king or as a shepherd boy. Since he was still so young, David would not become king for many years.

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23 and fill in the blanks below.

Verse 14 says, "... a \_\_\_\_\_ spirit from the \_\_\_\_\_ tormented him."

That is really hard to understand. How could an awesome, good God send something evil to torment Saul? Whenever something does not make sense, it is always good to back up and think about the things you do know.

### What are some things we know about God?

When God's presence departed Saul, His protective covering went away. Without God's protective covering, the evil spirit came to Saul to torment him. God allowed it because of Saul's wickedness.

## JEALOUSY

When David killed Goliath he became an immediate celebrity. Everyone was talking about this boy who killed a giant, which led to the defeat of the entire Philistine army. The people instantly loved David. He was a hero. He had won the people's hearts.

Read 1 Samuel 18:5-7.

### What did the people sing about David?

### Did they say anything bad about Saul?

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

The people were grateful, and even though they said good things about Saul, their song grated on Saul's nerves. He did not like this young kid getting all the attention he wanted for himself.

Read 1 Samuel 18:8-9.

### Why do you think what the crowd said made Saul so angry?

Keep in mind that Saul was still the king. David was just a kid. Saul was eaten up with jealousy; he was consumed by it. Saul had already been told that God had rejected him as king, and it killed Saul to see David get so much attention. David's popularity threatened Saul.

## Fill in the Blank

Harmful; Lord

## Point to Make

Drawing students back to scripture to know who God is when difficult circumstances take place is essential to a Biblical Worldview. God is good, loving, and kind. He is our protection; He is our shield. Without God we have no protective covering.

## Point to Make

Saul's wickedness was the direct reason that God took his protective covering away.

1 Sam. 15:22 The Lord himself does not need sacrifices like gods in other religions. Rather, the people need to bring sacrifices in order to approach the holy God (see Leviticus 1-5). Even the best sacrifice without obedience gains nothing.

1 Sam. 15:23 Rebellion (cf. 12:15) and presumption mean rejecting the Lord, equivalent to apostasy. The Hebrew word *terapim*, here translated idolatry, refers to either "household gods" (Gen. 31:19; Judg. 17:5; 1 Sam. 19:13) or "ancestor figurines" used as aids to divination (Ezek. 21:21; Hos. 3:4; Zech. 10:2). Saul is rejected as king here and also in 1 Sam. 15:26 (see 13:13-14).

Read 1 Samuel 18:12-16.

**Why was Saul afraid of David?**

**Why did David have great success at everything he did?**

You may have a friend who seems to be great at everything he or she does. Maybe this person is an incredible athlete, singer, dancer, or musician, or is amazingly smart. Are you jealous of that person? Or are you glad for his or her success? Circle on the line how you usually feel about this person. Be honest.

Happy for the person    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    Angry at the person

JEALOUSY LEFT UNSETTLED CAN LEAD TO DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR.

## GOD'S PROTECTION

Read 1 Samuel 18:10-11.

**The day after David killed Goliath, Saul acted extremely jealous of David. What did Saul try to do?**

This is no accident. Imagine what David must have thought. Did the king just try to kill me? He was just playing the harp when, Wham! A spear came flying at him.

**Does Saul try to kill David just once?**

Yes                       No

Since Saul couldn't kill David himself, he tried a new method. Do you remember there were prizes for the man who would go up against Goliath? One of the prizes was one of Saul's daughters in marriage. When David killed Goliath, he should have received the reward.

Read 1 Samuel 18:20-27 and note how Saul used the reward for killing Goliath as a plot to kill David.

**How many Philistines did David kill?**

100                       50                       200                       75

## NOTHING TO FEAR

Saul couldn't catch a break. Every one of his plots to kill David was ruined because God was with David. God was protecting David from the king's crazy schemes.

## Interact

Jealousy is something everyone deals with at some point in their lives. Encourage students to be honest.

## Interact

Students can likely relate to Saul's reaction to David's instant popularity. Encourage them let go of any deep-seeded bitterness or jealousy.

## Point to Make

Saul told David he could marry his daughter Michal if he killed 100 Philistines. Saul thought David would be killed in this battle.

1 Sam. 18:6 Women in Israel celebrated a victory with singing and dancing and instruments, especially with tambourines (Ex. 15:20; Judg. 11:34; see note on 1 Sam. 10:5). Many clay figurines or plaques depicting women playing tambourines have been discovered in Israel, Phoenicia, and Transjordan. They may have had a connection with prayers or praises for victory.

1 Sam. 18:7-9 sang to one another. I.e., antiphonally or responsively. Because thousands/ten thousands is a common parallelism, the general meaning of the song is, "Saul and David have killed many thousands." Yet naming two distinct people in a number parallelism is unusual, and Saul interpreted it in the worst possible light. Hearing David even mentioned together with him in the same

Read 1 Samuel 18:28-30.

As a Christ follower, the Lord is also with you. While you and I aren't free from every trouble, we can be sure the Lord's protection is over our lives.

HE WILL NOT LET ANYTHING COME TO US THAT DOES NOT  
GO THROUGH HIS LOVING HAND FIRST.

**Describe a time in your life when you felt God's protection?**

Saul spent the rest of his life hunting down David. He was afraid of David, but he still spent all of his time and effort trying to kill him. God was with David, and God did not allow this to happen.

Jealousy and fear are traps by the enemy. Fearing someone is better than you is no way to live. The truth is there will always be someone better than you at different things. That is not supposed to threaten us; it is supposed to help us become the best we can be. A healthy rivalry is okay. Competition is okay, however, being frightened only brings you down.

**Is there someone whom you fear because that person is better than you at something?**

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

Fear was one of the pitfalls of King Saul. Due to his fear of David, he was unable to do the task set before him. It's time that you and I stop comparing ourselves to others, and get busy focusing on God and fulfilling the plans He has for us. Stop comparing yourself to that person. Stop competing with that person, and start being the best you can be. Start living the way Jesus intended; full of life, not fear. Fear sucks the life out of you. It takes away your vision for yourself and places your focus on what you are afraid of. Saul never reached his full potential as king, partly because of his jealousy and fear.

Ultimately, Saul was a bad example of an Israelite king. Let's learn from his mistakes. If you want to love your life, ask God to rid you of any fear or jealousy, and to allow you to live fully for Him and His glory.

## **Interact**

Jealousy is something everyone deals with at some point in their lives. Encourage students to be honest.

## **Interact**

Students can likely relate to Saul's reaction to David's instant popularity. Encourage them let go of any deep-seeded bitterness or jealousy.

## **Point to Make**

Saul told David he could marry his daughter Michal if he killed 100 Philistines. Saul thought David would be killed in this battle.

song, Saul begins to grow suspicious of David. The rest of the book is a description of Saul's attempts, more and more openly, to get rid of David.

1 Sam. 18:12 Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him. Cf. v. 14 and 16:18. Saul's primary concern was not the Lord's honor or the people's welfare but himself.

1 Sam. 18:20–21 that she may be a snare for him. Saul again tries to make ill use of someone's love (cf. v. 17)—this time, his daughter's—to destroy David.



## NOW WHAT?

Thinking back to what you have learned so far about David and Saul, draw a line to the correct descriptions of these men.

David	Future king of Israel
	Loved by the people
	Killed thousands
	Killed tens of thousands
	Disobeyed God
	Current king of Israel
Saul	Killed a giant
	Filled with fear
	Great success with everything he did
	Played the harp
	Jealous

Who do you often feel jealousy toward?

PRAYER:

If you feel jealousy, confess your sin of jealousy to God. Ask Him to help you release this emotion in your life and truly be happy for the blessings in other people's lives.

## GOING DEEPER

How does being jealous of someone cause you to get so wrapped up in yourself and take your attention away from God?

PRAYER:

Thank God for His protection in your life. Express your gratitude to God for His protection.

Read 2 Timothy 1:7.

PRAYER:

Thank God that He has not given us a spirit of fear. Ask Him to help you walk in courage and boldness as you focus on Him.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

2 Timothy 1:7

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1 Sam. 18:25 The bride-price was normally money, but since David could not afford what was due a king's daughter, the king graciously let him display his valor instead. The Philistines had foreskins because they were "uncircumcised" (see 14:6).

# WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 2:3

What does this verse teach about jealousy?

How are we supposed to view others?

## DAY 2 — 2 THESSALONIANS 3:3

How does this verse comfort you?

According to this verse, how can we see God's protection of believers?

## DAY 3 — PSALM 91:1-3

What structure does this passage compare to God?

How does knowing God is your refuge and fortress comfort you?

## DAY 4 — 1 JOHN 4:18

One of Saul's mistakes was fear. What does this verse teach about fear?

If you truly love your neighbor, can you fear not being as good as them?

## DAY 5 — EXODUS 20:17

What does this commandment teach about jealousy/coveting?

How does this commandment show how God feels about jealousy?

## DAY 6 — EPHESIANS 2:1-5

How does this passage describe human nature before becoming a believer?

How does Jesus save us from our dead rebellious state?

## DAY 7 — MATTHEW 5:21-22

Saul was angry with David. Is there someone that you are angry with?

What does Jesus equate your anger with?

# LOOKING BACK

## How do you feel now that you have completed this study?

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and lived out.

- Learned that God chose us to be pure.
- Discussed how it is our choice to reject or follow his statutes.
- Discussed the danger of exchanging the truth of God for a lie.
- Examined the areas that often lead us astray.
- Discovered the purpose of living according to God's word.
- Discussed the reasons to be careful of what you ask for.
- Considered the importance of protecting your heart.
- Learned how to recognize warning signs of being led astray.
- Discussed the importance of listening to those that you trust the most.
- Examined the danger of following human wisdom.
- Considered the danger of not being patient.
- Learned that we all have the privilege of choosing who is king of our hearts.
- Learned the significance of giving your entire heart to God.
- Discussed the dangers of compartmentalization.
- Studied the impact of being faithful in the small things.
- Discussed how to endure opposition.
- Studied how confidence only comes from the Lord.
- Living a life of purity leads to God being glorified.
- A common bond in Christ creates friendships that last.
- Learned the importance of biblical accountability.
- Friendships focused on Christ contribute to a life of purity.
- Learned about the damage a disobedient heart causes.
- Discussed how jealousy destroys.
- Examined how God always protects those who love him.
- Discovered that we have nothing to fear in Christ.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.

# ROYAL CHOICES

## HEART FOR THE KING

What do you want your legacy to be? That is a question that the majority of us don't consider until our legacy is already written by our choices. In this study we will take a close look at some of the kings of Israel and the choices they made, their influence over the nation, and the results that followed.

God desires that we keep ourselves pure for our good and his glory. It is critical to consider the lifelong impact sin can have in your life. If we always rely on God's Word to guide us in our choices, we will avoid those disastrous consequences. Small decisions each day lead to a lifestyle of righteousness that reflects the heart of the King. Your heart for King Jesus dramatically influences the generations that follow you.

# David and Bathsheba, Part 1

JAMES 1:2-4, 12-15

WEEK

1

## Key Questions and Concepts

God desires that we keep ourselves pure for our good and his glory. When it comes to our purity, we must never sacrifice our future on the altar of the immediate.

By being where you are supposed to be, you can avoid many temptations to sin.

It is better to confess your sin than to try to cover it up.

David is described in Scripture as a man who “walked in integrity of heart and in uprightness.” That is a strong statement and specific in the evaluation of a man. However, this same man, sincere in his faith, his worship, and his commitment to holiness, suddenly made a move that brought severe consequences for himself, Bathsheba, and their children’s future. In a moment, David made a choice that marked his testimony for thousands of years.

The moment that David took his eyes off the Lord he was in trouble. You and I are as well. We have to consider this possibility in our own lives. Every person experiences temptation. Our sinful nature and the extensiveness of evil in the world leads to temptation everywhere we look. There is so much evil to be a part of. Sin is so enticing as well because it appears to be fun and exciting. Yet, it binds and corrupts us.

*Describe a time when your mistake caused someone else pain?  
Describe a long-term consequence you have experienced?*

Temptation, in and of itself, is not sin. It is acting on thoughts and lusts that cause people to worship the immediate and sacrifice the future. No matter how strong we think we are, every one of us must beware lest we fall. If it can happen to David, it can happen to anyone.

The fact is our sin can affect not only ourselves, but also many others. This week we will look at how David’s impurity affected many lives.

God desires that we keep ourselves pure for our good and his glory. When it comes to our purity, we must never sacrifice our future on the altar of the immediate.

## 5-Minute Commentary

James 1:3-4 Testing of your faith defines the meaning of a trial for the Christian: as Jesus was “tested” in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–13), so believers are tested. The Greek dokimion (“testing”) denotes a positive test intended to make one’s faith “genuine” (cf. 1 Pet. 1:7). The result is steadfastness, a life of faithful endurance amid troubles and afflictions. Steadfastness leads ultimately to perfection. Believers grow in holiness but are not yet perfected in it; such perfection will be realized only when Jesus returns.

James 1:13 God tests his people (e.g., Abraham, Genesis 22; Israel, Ex. 16:4; Hezekiah, 2 Chron.

## **WRONG PLACE, WRONG VIEW, DOING WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T DO**

The Bible is full of stories of ordinary people seeking to live lives that are holy and pleasing to God. Such a life is how we spiritually worship God (Romans 12:1). It also shows how these ordinary people sometimes made choices that cost them their purity and led to other consequences that affected many other people. This week we will look at such a story.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-4.

**Write down what you believe David did wrong.**

**In the spring, where were most kings?**

**Where was David?**

**Describe a time when you have you been somewhere you shouldn't have been?**

David was simply at his house in Jerusalem. This wasn't necessarily a bad place to be, but it wasn't where he was supposed to be at that time. David should have been with his army fighting. Since he was in the wrong place at the time, it led him into situations he shouldn't have been in. Verse 2 says David started walking around the top of his palace. He wouldn't have been there to do this had he been fighting with his army.

**What does he see?**

**How is what he sees described?**

**What is the right response if you see something you shouldn't?**

Instead of looking away, running away from the situation, and protecting himself, David allowed the situation to snowball out of control.

### **Point to Make**

Remind students that one of the major reasons that the Israelites wanted a king was for him to fight for them. He was supposed to lead in battle.

### **Point to Make**

The fact is, David was somewhere he shouldn't have been, which gave him reason to see something he shouldn't have seen: a woman bathing.

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32:31) so that their character is strengthened, but he never tempts (i.e., lures people into sin). Since God cannot be tempted with evil, and he is unreservedly good, he would never entice human beings to sin or seek to harm their faith. Tempted (Gk. *peirazō*) is the verb form of the noun translated "trial" (Gk. *peirasmos*) in James 1:12, but the context shows that different senses of the word are intended. God brings trials in order to strengthen the Christian's faith. He never tempts, however, because he never desires his people to sin. Christians should never blame God when they do wrong.

James 1:14 lured and enticed. Here it is the person's evil desire that ensnares; in 1 Pet. 5:8-9 it is Satan who "seeks to devour." Sin is never God's fault.

### In verse 3, what did David do in response to what he saw?

OUR THOUGHTS LEAD TO AN APPETITE THAT DWELLS IN THE HEART AND LEADS TO ACTION.  
—ALEX KENNEDY

He asked about the woman he had just seen. Even his servants had enough sense to let him know this woman was married and therefore not available. Despite all of this, David continued to sin.

### In verse 4, what did David do wrong?

David placed himself where he shouldn't have been and saw something he shouldn't have seen. Instead of looking away and putting the image out of his mind, he dwelt on it, inquired about it, and ultimately used his power and authority as king to take a woman who was another man's wife. Then he slept with her.

THE AFFECTIONS OF OUR HEART FIND THEIR WAY INTO OUR HANDS AND FEET.  
—ALEX KENNEDY

### How would you compare David's sin to what God wants?

Our eyes can lead us into many sins. When we don't value others and see them the way God sees them, it's easy to see others as objects, things that are meant for our satisfaction. This belittles the other person. True love is sacrificial, and it sees the other person as more important. David wasn't looking out for Bathsheba, protecting the purity of her marriage to Uriah, or doing the right thing before God. David was thinking only about satisfying his lustful desires after he saw something from a rooftop he shouldn't have been on.

## THE CONSEQUENCE AND THE COVER UP

**In your experience, are there consequences of the wrong choices we make? Describe some of the consequences that you have experienced.**

In David's life, it was no different. God allows us the freedom to make our own choices, and when we make those choices, we will face the consequences. David made a wrong choice, and it led to a consequence he didn't want. Therefore, he continued to make bad choices to cover up the wrong he had done.

Read 2 Samuel 11:5-13.

## Reference

Matthew 5:27-30;  
6:21-23.

The word "look" is a present participle. Therefore, it is an action that continues to happen. The word "look" means to gaze and continue to gaze until something happens.

## Point to Make

Ultimately, God desires his people to be holy and pure. To be set apart from the world to reflect him.

## Reference

1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

## Interact

Be careful that the individual's action does not become celebrated by the group. Keep the consequence as the focal point.

2 Sam. 11:1 the time when kings go out to battle. ... But David remained at Jerusalem. The connection of these two phrases hints that something is wrong: the kings go out to battle, but this king does not. And all Israel went out to battle, but Israel's leader did not. Readers can see a contrast between the king who is at leisure (11:2) and the soldiers on the field (v. 11).

2 Sam. 11:2 The woman bathing is probably "purifying herself from her uncleanness" (v. 4) after her menstrual period (Lev. 15:19-24). Clearly, then, the child who would be conceived in 2 Sam. 11:5 was not Uriah's. Beautiful is literally "very good in appearance." Compared with the usual Hebrew adjective yapah for "beautiful", the emphasis here is more distinctly on the woman's appearance.

According to verse 5, what happened as a result of his having sex with Bathsheba?

What was David's immediate response?

Why would David want Bathsheba's husband to come back to town right away?

What did Uriah do?

How did this hurt David's plan?

David was trying to get Uriah to go to his own house and sleep with Bathsheba, his wife, so it would look like he, not King David, had gotten her pregnant. Uriah had integrity and didn't think it was right that he would get such an opportunity to be with his family when all the other soldiers were fighting away from their families. He did not go home.

In verses 12-13, David tried one more time to make his cover-up plan work. He even caused Uriah to get drunk on wine so he'd go home. What did Uriah do instead?

Do you see how David continues sinning to try to cover up his original sin? Have you ever done this? Explain.

Following are some lessons we can learn from David's sin with Bathsheba. Circle the ones that speak to you the most.

- 1) When we face temptation to sin, we need to run the other way to avoid that sin. (1 Corinthians 6:18)
- 2) Lying to avoid the consequence of our wrongdoing will make matters worse. (Proverbs 12:22)
- 3) By being where you are supposed to be, you can avoid many temptations to sin. (1 Corinthians 15:33)
- 4) It is better to confess your sin than to try to cover it up. (1 John 1:9)

2 Sam. 11:3-4 Uriah the Hittite is listed among David's top warriors, the "thirty," in 23:39. Given the elaborate attempt David makes (vv. 6–13) to cover up the initial act of his adultery, it is hardly likely that he makes his intention clear when he summons Bathsheba. Probably David makes inquiry about the welfare of the family of his trusted general during Uriah's absence and gives Uriah's wife the honor of a private interview, even sending messengers (plural) to invite Bathsheba; after Uriah's death, David takes Uriah's widow under his protection as his own wife (v. 27).

2 Sam. 11:6–13 The king had rights, but adultery was not one. Instead of repenting and trying to settle the matter openly, David tried to make it appear that his child by Bathsheba is Uriah's.



## NOW WHAT?

How can you respond when you see something that you know you shouldn't have seen?

How can your parents help you when you are in a place that you know you shouldn't be?

What does God desire for you to do in a situation described above?

PRAYER:

Ask God to show you the warning signs where you might have the wrong view or are putting yourself in the wrong place.

## GOING DEEPER

Describe the potential consequences of David trying to cover up the sin with his servants and others involved in making the action happen?

When do you most often put yourself in a place where you shouldn't be?

Analyze your steps that lead you down the path where you shouldn't be.

What can you do to fight back against the temptations that you face daily?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Job 31:1

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2 Sam. 11:9 Sexual intercourse was a source of ritual impurity (Ex. 19:15; Lev. 15:18), and so it was avoided during a military campaign, as is mentioned in 1 Sam. 21:5. (See Deut. 23:9. "Evil" in that passage refers to something "unseemly" or "improper," rather than morally evil. Certainly "excrement" [Deut. 23:13] is not morally evil, but like intercourse it does make one unclean.) Uriah considered himself still on duty, in contrast to David.

2 Sam. 11:14–15 It is ironic that Uriah should unknowingly take with him the letter that orders him killed. David is hopelessly overwhelmed by the need to cover up his wrongdoings, even if it means taking another person's life—and even more, the life of a faithful soldier.

# WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

What temptations have you faced recently?

What steps have you taken to seek your way out of temptation?

## DAY 2 — 1 PETER 4:3 & 1 THESSALONIANS 4:7

What is wrong with the actions stated in the first passage?

Describe the difference between the way of living in 1 Peter 4:3 and a life of holiness?

## DAY 3 — JOEL 2:13

According to the passage, write down the characteristics of God.

How do these characteristics change the way you view God?

## DAY 4 — DEUTERONOMY 22:22 & EPHESIANS 5:5

According to these passages, describe the character of God?

What qualifies as sexual immorality and impurity?

## DAY 5 — JOHN 8:3-11

Which sin was greater: The sin of the adulteress or the unnamed sin of those ready to stone her?

What characteristics of God does Jesus reveal in this circumstance?

## DAY 6 — MATTHEW 6:22-23

What causes your eyes to be "bad"?

What do you need to cut out from your eyesight in order to live a pure lifestyle?

## DAY 7 — PSALM 119:9-11

Describe the importance of reading God's Word.

How does your time along with God compare to the time that you spend on everything else?

# David and Bathsheba, Part 2

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-14

WEEK

2

## Key Questions and Concepts

One bad decision can often lead to another.

To effectively guard against temptation, we must submit to the Holy Spirit's leading one circumstance at a time.

How do you ordinarily handle the circumstance when you sin?

The best thing to do when you are in sin is turn to God. Time does not make the sin go away, only the sacrifice of Jesus and your choice to ask for forgiveness has the power to heal.

If we are honest, all of us have sinned and tried to cover it up. We have tried to hide it from our friends, parents and even God. Lies create tension. Cover-ups cause distrust. Deception generates chains.

Suggested Opening Story: Describe a time when you did something wrong and tried to cover it up. It may have seemed harmless at the time but later on you realized the damage cover-ups cause.

Truth alleviates pressure. Acknowledgement reveals responsibility. Confession leads to freedom.

**What causes you to lie?  
How can a series of small decisions set you on a path of destruction?**

Today we will look at the slow fade of David slipping from God's standard and having a heart after God, to a point where he tried to cover up his sin by killing one of his best warriors. For David, one bad decision led to another. He could have stopped at any moment and turned from his wickedness.

To think that we are beyond slipping to the point of causing pain to keep our sin from surfacing is foolish. We must fight against the temptations of gossip, murder, lying, and adultery that enter in our minds every day. We must flee. To effectively guard against these things it takes one good decision at a time.

The danger we face in living a life for Jesus is not choosing to take the right step each time we are faced with temptation or turning away from our sin when we have failed. We have been given an incredible gift in the Bible to learn from others victories and mistakes. May we learn from God's word and choose the way out of temptation that God always provides.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Cor. 10:11 See v. 6; 9:10; Rom. 15:4. In saying that these things happened, Paul affirms even minor details of the OT, thus indicating his complete confidence in the truthfulness of every detail of the OT Scriptures. Paul's confidence thus supports the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. The OT Scriptures point toward the end of the ages, the age in which the Corinthian Christians are living. Cf. Heb. 11:39-40; 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

1 Cor. 10:12 thinks that he stands. Perhaps a reference to the Corinthians' mistaken "knowledge" that they have the right to eat in an idol's temple (8:9-10).

## WILLING TO KILL

David tried to cover up his sin by bringing Uriah back from the battlefield so he would sleep with his wife, Bathsheba, and think it was his baby when Bathsheba started showing.

Uriah remained loyal to the other soldiers he served with in the army and refused to go home when they didn't have that luxury. David's plan to cover his sin had backfired. David, instead of coming clean, continued to try to cover up his sin. This time, he would go further than would have ever dreamed of when he initially sought Bathsheba.

Read 2 Samuel 11:14-26.

**Describe in your own words what David did wrong, and list the consequences of his decision.**

**Does this sound like a man after God's own heart?**

You may be saying to yourself, I have done wrong, but I'd never have someone killed to cover it up. Hopefully not, but what are you willing to do to cover up wrongdoing?

**Circle any of these things that you have done to cover up your sin:**

- A) Lied.
- B) Blamed someone else.
- C) Remained silent when you knew the truth.
- D) Covered up your crime (sin) in some way.

Read 1 John 1:9 and write the verse below.

God will always honor the sacrifice of Jesus when you admit your sin. You likely still will face the consequences of your sin, but you will do so with God's help.

**How do you ordinarily handle the circumstance when you sin? Do you seek to cover it up or come clean and admit your mistakes?**

**Which of those two choices do you tend to make more than the other?**

## FAR FROM GOD

David did lots of things to cover up his sin. His sin had already had a huge effect on many people beside himself.

## Point to Make

David, so eager to cover up his wrong and impurity with Bathsheba, used his power as king to order that Uriah be placed into the unit that would encounter the heaviest fighting. David's goal was to have him killed in battle! David was willing to allow another man to lose his life just so people wouldn't know the wrong he had done.

## Interact

Don't allow students to glamorize their cover up.

## Point to Make

The best thing to do when you are in sin is turn to God. Time does not make the sin go away, only the sacrifice of Jesus and your choice to ask for forgiveness has the power to heal.

1 Cor. 10:13 will not let you be tempted beyond your ability ... will also provide the way of escape. Even when Christians face morally confusing situations, they should never think that they have no options other than sinful ones. There will always be a morally right solution that does not require disobedience to any of God's moral laws.

1 Cor. 10:14 Therefore, ... flee from idolatry. This is the point toward which Paul has been moving throughout ch. 10. The Corinthians cannot participate in idolatry and then think that they will receive eternal life on the last day.

Look back through 2 Samuel 11:1-26. Next to each person's name, explain how David's sin affected him or her.

A) David's servants (verses 3-4):

B) Bathsheba:

C) Uriah:

D) Joab:

E) The messenger (verses 19-25):

F) David:

Our sin never affects only us. It always affects others! Besides the people listed above, another relationship was hurt in David's life.

Read 2 Samuel 11:27.

According to the last part of verse 27, who else is affected by David's actions?

How did God see David's actions?

Besides the earthly relationships our sin affects, know that our sin also affects our relationship with God. God sees our sin as evil.

Have you ever felt like God was far away from you? Why do you think you that way?

What part did sin play in that distance you felt between you and God? Explain.

## SLIPPAGE

**SLIPPAGE** – IS DEFINED AS AN ACT OR INSTANCE OF SLIPPING, AN AMOUNT OR EXTENT OF SLIPPING, OR FAILURE TO MAINTAIN AN EXPECTED LEVEL OR A FALLING OFF.

We have seen David slip from God's standard and having a heart after God. He was instead placing himself at the wrong place, looking at the wrong things, doing what he shouldn't do, and trying to cover it up with trickery. This ultimately led to taking the life of another. David had slippage in his life!

2 Sam. 11:14–15 It is ironic that Uriah should unknowingly take with him the letter that orders him killed. David is hopelessly overwhelmed by the need to cover up his wrongdoings, even if it means taking another person's life—and even more, the life of a faithful soldier.

2 Sam. 11:25 Do not let this matter displease you. David probably knows that Joab would not have been happy about killing a good commander. David is saying, "He might have been killed anyway."

2 Sam. 11:27 But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord is literally, "The matter that David did was evil in the eyes of the Lord"; see 12:9 and Ps. 51:4. This contrasts with David's words to

## Point to Make

The fact is that in these 26 verses, many people's lives were affected by the sin of one man, David.

## Point to Make

Our sins don't please God. They strain our relationship with Him. God desires us to be holy and pleasing in His sight.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1.

**Underline David's first act of slippage from this verse.**

**Why did you underline what you underlined? How is this slippage?**

**List each act of slippage in David's life from 2 Samuel 11, and put the verse next to it.**

**How have you seen slippage in your life? Explain.**

**How did you slip? List decisions you made, actions you took, and so on, that took you further from what God wanted for you in that situation.**

**Who was affected by your slippage, and how did it affect that person or those people?**

**How was your relationship with God affected? How was your witness to others affected?**

The king of Israel was to be an example to the Israelites of how to live life before God. Through his actions, David became a person not worth following. You, likewise, are to serve as an example to others of how to love Jesus and live your life in a way that pleases God.

**How does your slippage keep you from being a person worth following?**

While David slipped a long way from God's standard, God still offered him grace. That means God still sought to draw near to David as long as David repented and made things right between him and God. There were still consequences to his actions that won't go away. Among them: Uriah was dead, and Bathsheba had lost a husband and was pregnant.

Next week we will look at how God restores us in the midst of our sin. To close out this week, ask God in prayer to show you areas of your life where you have slippage so you can confess those areas to God and get back into right relationship with Him.

## Examples

- 1) Didn't go to war (lazy) – 2 Samuel 11:1
- 2) Watched a woman bathe (wandering eyes) – 2 Samuel 11:2
- 3) Coveted – 2 Samuel 11:2
- 4) Didn't listen to advice – 2 Samuel 11:3
- 5) Committed adultery – 2 Samuel 11:4
- 6) First cover-up – 2 Samuel 11:6-11
- 7) Second cover-up – 2 Samuel 11:13
- 8) Third cover-up – 2 Samuel 11:14-24
- 9) Calloused heart – 2 Samuel 11:25-26
- 10) Deceived Bathsheba – 2 Samuel 11:27
- 11) No sense of remorse – 2 Samuel 11:27

## Point to Make

Explain that God wants us to come clean so that our relationship with him is restored. The worst earthly consequence is only temporary. Confession and forgiveness by God is eternal.

Joab two verses earlier, "Do not let this matter displease you."

1 John 1:9 Christians must confess (their) sins, initially to receive salvation and then to maintain fellowship with God and with one another (v. 3). faithful and just to forgive. God is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression" (Num. 14:18). Yet John also makes it clear (1 John 3:6, 9) that persistent unrepentant sin is not the mark of a Christian—God "will by no means clear the guilty" (Num. 14:18).

2 Sam. 11:1 With the defeat of the Syrians, David is free to concentrate on besieging Rabbah (10:14).

## **NOW WHAT?**

How does the knowledge that your sin impacts others, not just yourself, change the way that you make decisions?

What areas of your life do you need to come clean and admit your sin?

How do the sins from the previous question impact your relationship with God, your parents, your friends or your family?

Describe any relationship that needs to be restored based on your sin?

PRAYER:

Ask God to show you any offensive way within you. Write out anything that God impresses on your heart during your prayer time.

## **GOING DEEPER**

Describe David's attitude in 2 Samuel 11:25.

Describe the deceiving that David had to continue with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:26-27.

What is required to rebuild trust with someone that you have wronged?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Proverbs 21:6

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the time when kings go out to battle. ... But David remained at Jerusalem. The connection of these two phrases hints that something is wrong: the kings go out to battle, but this king does not. And all Israel went out to battle, but Israel's leader did not. Readers can see a contrast between the king who is at leisure (11:2) and the soldiers on the field (v. 11).

# WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — JAMES 1:19-22

What is required to live a life of purity?

How can the Holy Spirit help you live in such a way that reflects God's character?

## DAY 2 — PROVERBS 28:13-14

Why is confession important?

What leads an individual to a point where their heart is hard against the Lord?

## DAY 3 — 1 JOHN 3:11-15 & MATTHEW 5:21

How is it possible to commit murder without physically putting another life to death?

Who do you need to choose to love?

## DAY 4 — ROMANS 12:17

Describe some ways that you can honor someone even if they have wronged you.

How is Jesus reflected when you turn to what is honorable rather than evil?

## DAY 5 — GALATIANS 5:19-23

What does it mean to walk in the flesh? The Spirit?

What fruits do you need to work on in order to walk in step with the Holy Spirit?

## DAY 6 — PSALM 51:10

How often do you ask God to make you pure?

Knowing that you cannot earn your righteousness, what do you do to pursue righteousness?

## DAY 7 — EPHESIANS 4:1-3

What is our mission as Christians?

How does failing to practice gentleness, patience, humility and love impact your witness?



# David and Bathsheba, Part 3

ACTS 5:1-11

WEEK

3

## Key Questions and Concepts

It is important to consider the life-long impact sin can have in your life.

David made mistakes that had lasting consequences. Yet, when he was confronted with his sin, David responded in repentance.

Balance the tension that sin is evil in the eyes of the Lord, with the grace and mercy bought by the blood of Jesus for us when we repent.

You mess up. You sin. You don't repent. You try to cover it up. The cover-up fails. Maybe you did something that you thought was right but it was wrong after all. Your sin is revealed. What do you do? How do you respond? How do you handle the consequences? How you answer those questions reveal your character and ultimately the God you treasure.

Ananias, which means "God is gracious," and Sapphira, which means "beautiful," clearly demonstrated that names don't always reflect character. It was written that the early church was "in one accord" in giving, in providing for others, and in worship. People sacrificially sold their belongings to share with others. Unfortunately, Ananias and Sapphira brought hypocrisy and selfishness to this atmosphere of unity and sacrifice. Seeing the love the members held for one another, this couple wanted to fit in without giving up.

Their sin was hypocrisy, something that God does not tolerate. The sin was not in keeping the money, but in lying about it. Both husband and wife dropped dead on the spot the moment they lied. You can imagine the fear that the people had. We grieve the Holy Spirit and give Satan the opportunity to work in the church when we live as hypocrites.

***Describe a time when someone has called out the sin your life?  
How do you normally respond to someone calling you out?***

David opened the door of hypocrisy for Satan to work in the nation Israel by his sin with Bathsheba. As the king, David was supposed to rule and make fair judgments according to the Law. It is difficult to rule and judge fairly when you are caught up in sin. Shortly after David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin. Today we will see David expose his hypocrisy when he gets angry about a story that Nathan tells him.

David made mistakes that had lasting consequences. Yet, when he was confronted with his sin, David responded differently than Ananias and Sapphira. This week we will see how David is seen throughout the Scriptures as a man after God's own heart.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Acts 5:1-11 The positive picture of the community's sharing is marred by the account of a couple who abused the practice by holding back a portion of a gift while claiming to be giving it totally to the church. The context is important to note: the incident is bracketed by references to the Spirit's power (4:31, 33; 5:12-16). The Spirit was closely linked to the unity of the fellowship manifested in their sharing. Ananias and Sapphira abused the fellowship through their deception and thereby threatened its unity.

2 Sam. 11:27 The thing that David had done displeased the Lord is literally, "The matter that David

## NATHAN'S STORY

Last week we saw the lengths David was willing to go to in order to cover up his sin with Bathsheba. We saw how each new action revealed more "slippage" in his life away from God's standard. The last verse we read showed how God viewed David's sin.

Read 2 Samuel 11:27.

**What did God think of David's sin?**

**Contrast God's response to David's response to Joab in 2 Samuel 11:25.**

To confront David regarding this sin, God sent Nathan the prophet. Nathan didn't accuse King David of his sin. Instead, he chose to tell David a story.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-6.

**In your own words, describe the story Nathan told David.**

**What was David's reaction to the story?**

Read Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1.

**How did Nathan restore David gently?**

This is a great example of confronting a brother in sin. The Holy Spirit was clearly directing Nathan. It is important to understand that Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1 is the process for confronting a brother in sin, not someone's behavior you feel needs modifying in some way because you find it annoying or irritating.

**Without any specifics, describe a time when you had to point out someone else's sin.**

**How did that circumstance make you reflect on your own walk with Jesus?**

## Point to Make

The thing that David did was literally evil in the eyes of the Lord.

## Interact

Have you ever had a pet that you loved like the poor man loved his lamb? What made this pet so special?

## Point to Make

David said he was angry with the rich man because he showed no compassion in what he did. David has true concern for justice when he is not blinded by his own passion.

## Interact

Be careful of not letting students gossip about others when they describe their experience of confronting someone about their sin.

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did was evil in the eyes of the Lord"; see 12:9 and Ps. 51:4. This contrasts with David's words to Joab two verses earlier, "Do not let this matter displease you."

2 Sam. 12:5-6 David has a true concern for justice when he is not blinded by his own passion.

Matt. 18:15 go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If a matter can be settled without getting others involved, that will keep rumors and misunderstandings from multiplying and will keep the conflict from spreading (cf. Prov. 25:9). gained. The ultimate objective is restoration of the offending brother or sister to the path of discipleship.

## THE PAINFUL TRUTH

David was angry with the rich man of Nathan's story because of what the rich man had done to the poor man's lamb. He was also angry because the rich man showed no compassion through this action. David responded that the rich man should make restitution up to four times the lamb's worth and the rich man deserved to die! David felt righteous anger toward the rich man. He was right to be angry at that injustice.

**When have you been angry at the wrong others have done even though you were just as guilty as they were? Explain.**

After David voiced his anger, Nathan came back at David with a painful truth.

Read 2 Samuel 12:7-9.

**Who does Nathan say David is?**

Nathan then used the story as a backdrop of what God thought about what David had done in his sin with Bathsheba.

**According to verse 7-8, write what God had done for David.**

**According to the end of verse 8, what would God have done for David if all those other things were too little in David's eyes?**

**In verse 9, God listed the sins of David that were evil in God's sight. Write down those sins.**

**Verse 9 depicts David as despising the word of the Lord by choosing to do evil. Have you considered that when you choose to sin you are showing God that you despise his word?**

## FURTHER CONSEQUENCES

Last week we saw how there were natural consequences that happened immediately after David's sin with Bathsheba. For example, Bathsheba was pregnant, Uriah got killed, David involved his servants

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Matt. 18:17 If the offending party of vv. 15–16 will not repent after the matter has been brought before the entire church, then he or she is to be excluded from the fellowship and thought of as an unbeliever. This is a unity issue.

Gal. 6:1 you who are spiritual. This does not refer to an elite class of Christians but rather to those who have more maturity and experience in the Christian life and who are therefore in a position to help their beleaguered brother or sister. The adjective "spiritual" means "living and walking according to the Holy Spirit" and includes, but is not limited to, the qualities listed in Gal. 5:22–23.

and messengers in the plot to cover up his sin, and so on. The consequences kept coming as a result of David's sin.

Read 2 Samuel 12:10-14.

**Write the consequences listed in each of the following verses.**

Verse 10)

Verse 11)

Verse 12)

Verse 14)

When we choose to sin and make choices that dishonor God and others, many times the consequences of those wrong choices last for many months, years, and even generations. David probably thought only of the temporary pleasure he wanted to receive when he made these wrong choices. He probably didn't think about the lifelong effects these choices would have.

**Can you think of a time in your life when you had to suffer long-term consequences for a bad choice? Explain.**

**When has the thought of long-term consequences ever deterred you from making a bad choice? Explain.**

In the midst of those horrible consequences being proclaimed to him, and after realizing that he was just like the rich man in Nathan's story, David interrupted the list of consequences in verse 13. Here he made a great statement. Underline what David said. This is to be our response to our sin.

David didn't get away with his sin for very long. You may have. You may still be "getting away with it" according to worldly standards. God knows what you have done.

Read 1 John 1:5-10.

**Summarize this passage of scripture.**

Read 1 John 2:1-2 and Romans 5:8.

Next week we will discuss how we are to deal with sin in our lives, and how God still gives us grace when we mess up.

## **Point to Make**

Most likely when David made the choice to summon Bathsheba he didn't consciously think, "I despise God's word, therefore I am going to do this." However, in that moment he allowed the short-term pleasure dictate what he treasured in his heart.

## **Point to Make**

Balance the tension that sin is evil in the eyes of the Lord, with the grace and mercy bought by the blood of Jesus for us when we repent.

2 Sam. 12:7–13 This passage has similarities with Nathan's prophecy in ch. 7. In both, the Lord looks back on what he has done by grace for David. But while in ch. 7 the Lord graciously promised him an enduring house, here he announces that David by his own deeds will experience misery in his house. David has despised the Lord and his word.

2 Sam. 12:10–11 the sword shall never depart from your house. David's sons Amnon (13:29), Absalom (18:15), and Adonijah (1 Kings 2:25) all will die by the sword. he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. Absalom will rebel against David and publicly lie with David's concubines on a rooftop (2 Sam. 16:22).

## NOW WHAT?

### PRAYER:

It is important to own up to your mistakes. Ask the Lord what you need to do to make past sins right again, if they haven't been dealt with already.

**Who have you wronged? Make a plan to ask forgiveness without placing blame on anyone else.**

**How can an accountability partner help you in your walk with Jesus?**

**How can the method that Nathan used to reveal David's sin be used to approach another Christian about their sin?**

## GOING DEEPER

**Think about sins you've committed. When you realize the damage that has been done as a result, what causes you to cry out like David and say, "I have sinned against the Lord"?**

**Describe the reasons whether or not you have the same passion for confession when it seems as though you were the only one harmed?**

**How is the compassion you express a reflection of the grace and mercy you have received from God?**

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Proverbs 19:5

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2 Sam. 12:13–14 David confesses and appears to have genuine repentance. Yet the results of his actions remain.

1 John 1:5–10 God's Nature and Human Sin. "God is light" (v. 5) reflects an OT background where "light" symbolizes both knowledge and purity. All of John's writing flows from the reality of God in his spiritual perfection, moral excellence, and utter transcendence—his light (see 1 Tim. 6:16). This will contrast sharply with errant humans protesting their innocence (1 John 1:6, 8, 10).

# WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — JAMES 1:13-14

How can man be tempted?

What gives birth to sin?

## DAY 2 — ROMANS 1:21-32

Although mankind knew God, what did they not do?

What was the consequence of their behavior?

## DAY 3 — JOHN 3:20-21

Why do those who do evil hate the light?

What happens to those who come into the light?

## DAY 4 — 1 JOHN 1:8-10

According to verses 8 & 10, what happens when we claim we are without sin?

According to verse 9, what happens when we confess our sins?

## DAY 5 — JAMES 1:21-22

How can you get rid of all moral filth and evil?

What will the Word do for you?

## DAY 6 — COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

According to verse 12, with what must we clothe ourselves?

Why must we forgive one another according to verse 13?

## DAY 7 — EPHESIANS 1:7-8

What do we have in the redemption of Jesus' blood?

What did God lavish on us with his grace?

# David and Bathsheba, Part 4

1 JOHN 1:5-2:6

WEEK

4

## Key Questions and Concepts

A humble and repentant heart is a cornerstone to living an abundant life in Christ.

True repentance brings about freedom in Christ.

How does David's story give a person hope that feels like they have sinned too much for God to love them?

The content of this lesson is extremely important. If you don't know what to do with your sin, it will ruin your life, destroy anyone connected to you and ultimately lead you to Hell. God uses a humble and repentant heart to bring about freedom in Christ.

*When have you witnessed real regret for wrong-doing?  
How did that impact the way you view repentance?*

Many people think that if they let their sins be known to God then he will punish them forever. The truth is, he already knows and is waiting for you to repent and turn to Jesus. While there may be earthly consequences, confession of sin, asking for grace and mercy through Jesus and surrendering to his Lordship leads to eternal life. Yet, many people try to repent in their own way. Culturally, the same methods of repentance have been around centuries. Consider the following:

- 1) Super righteous. "God thank you that I am not like \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you that I am better than \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you that I don't do horrible things."
- 2) Bargaining. If I tell God, "I'm sorry," then he has to do something for me. He has to cover for me so no one will find out or he has to bless me.
- 3) Worldly sorrow. "I'm sorry. I'll go to rehab. I'll give lots of money to children. Etc." The people get put on the throne to declare forgiveness. The heart doesn't change though.
- 4) Mere confession. "You know what, you're right. I was wrong." Then, behavior continues to happen.
- 5) Blame shifting. "They made me angry and I lost my temper or my boss wasn't paying me enough so I stole a little money off the top."
- 6) Minimizing. "At least I'm not like \_\_\_\_\_. What I did isn't as bad as \_\_\_\_\_. You're overreacting"
- 7) Excuse making. "It's not my fault. I didn't have parents that loved me."

So what is true repentance? Today we are going to look at the idea of true repentance. We will see how a man after God's heart dealt with his sin. We will learn that we can also repent of the sin in our lives according to scripture and God is always ready to give us grace and mercy when we mess up. A humble and repentant heart is a cornerstone to living an abundant life in Christ.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 John 1:8 We deceive ourselves. The devil (3:8) or the world (2:15) may contribute to human straying, but in the end each individual bears responsibility for his or her own sin.

1 John 1:9 Christians must confess (their) sins, initially to receive salvation and then to maintain fellowship with God and with one another (v. 3). faithful and just to forgive. God is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression" (Num. 14:18). Yet John also makes it clear (1 John 3:6, 9) that persistent unrepentant sin is not the mark of a Christian—God "will by no means clear the guilty" (Num. 14:18).

## TRUE REPENTANCE

In the midst of Nathan telling David how he had sinned, and what the consequences would be, David declared, "I have sinned against the LORD!"

**When you read that statement, do you believe David was really sorry, or do you think he was just sorry because he got caught? Explain.**

Read 2 Samuel 12:15-23.

**Write any actions, comments, or anything else you notice that shows David was truly repentant, or sorry.**

Repentance carries the idea of agreeing that God's way is right and turning toward that way and away from the way you are going. David was going down a dark path, where he got another man's wife pregnant, tried to cover it up through trickery, ultimately killed that man, and then experienced the death of the baby created by the affair and the destruction of his family. David recognized that his heart was not reflecting what God wanted for him, but what he chose for himself. He admitted that his way was wrong when he said, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Read Psalm 51.

This is a poem/song written by David after Nathan confronted him with his sin.

**Describe some ways David showed he was repentant and wanted to turn from his ways and back to God's ways.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

**Despite David's wrongdoing, how do 2 Samuel 12:15-23 and Psalm 51 show he was still a man after God's own heart?**

**Did this repentance change any of the consequences or stop them from happening?**

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

## Discuss

Our culture uses the statements of "I'm sorry" or "I apologize" often. The difficulty that we have is whether not it is real. The discernment of the truth is often complicated. God desires us to truly repent. A key way to discern the truth is if a person stops doing what they are apologizing for.

## Example

- 1) Humility and recognized his sin.
- 2) A desire to be steadfast.
- 3) Teach others God's ways.
- 4) Restore the joy of salvation.
- 5) A desire to learn.

1 John 2:1-2 Jesus is an advocate, taking up the cause of believers in the presence of God the Father. Otherwise their sin would bring judgment upon them. Paul speaks of Christ as mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), and Heb. 8:1 refers to him as high priest. Propitiation (Gk. hilasmos) here means "a sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it to favor."

1 John 2:3 by this we know. Assurance of salvation is possible. 1 John gives numerous means of self-diagnosis (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:5; 3:14; 4:13; 5:2). Here the test is ethical: do professing Christians have a changed life and keep the Lord's commandments? Obedience to God does not bring about justification (which comes by faith alone), but obedience as a pattern of life does give evidence that one has



The fact is that the consequences of our actions stay with us. However, by repenting, it keeps us from making even more wrong choices and facing even more consequences when we allow God to put us back on the right path to an abundant life in Christ.

## **GOD'S GRACE**

**GRACE** – GETTING WHAT YOU DON'T DESERVE DUE TO THE LOVE AND GENEROSITY OF ANOTHER.

**When have you recently experienced grace?**

David did not deserve God's forgiveness for what he had done. However, God was generous in His love toward David and forgave his sins anyway. God has been gracious to us as well.

Read 2 Samuel 12:24.

**How did David's repentant heart and confession found in scripture allow him to comfort and care for a woman whose husband he had killed.**

Even though one child had died, David and Bathsheba married and had another son.

**What is the name of this son?**

**How did God feel about this son, according to the text?**

God loved this son indeed. Solomon was the son through whom God fulfilled His promise to David to have a house of worship built for God. God also blessed Solomon.

Read 1 Kings 4:29-34 and 5:3-5.

**How did God show grace and love toward Solomon, and by doing so showed grace to David and Bathsheba, despite the sin they committed?**

Solomon received much favor from the Lord. Eventually, God even fulfilled a great prophecy concerning the Messiah.

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been born again. To know him involves a personal relationship that transforms practical behavior.

1 John 2:5-6 love of God is perfected. This love is not only a feeling but also an ethical response (keeps his word). walk in the same way. The way that led to the cross. Believers need not and cannot repeat Christ's unique saving death, but they can mirror his faith, love, piety, obedience, and self-sacrifice, and this pattern of life will give greater assurance "that we are in him" (v. 5).

Psalms 51. This is probably the best known of the "Penitential Psalms" (Psalms 6; 25; 32; 38; 51; 130; 143). According to the title, David composed this psalm as a result of Nathan the prophet convicting

Read 2 Samuel 7:8-16.

**This passage, which took place before David committed adultery with Bathsheba, tells of God's permanent promise to David. List what was promised.**

Verse 10)

Verse 13)

Verse 16)

God promised David that his throne would exist forever. God also promised that this throne would be established through David's son. A permanent kingdom through the lineage of David's son would one day produce an heir that would reign on the throne forever. This is called the Davidic covenant, and the Jews saw this as the promise of the Messiah. David got this promise before he messed things up with Bathsheba and had another man killed, among other sins.

**Why would it be grace if God still chose to fulfill this promise to David, considering how badly David messed things up?**

Read Matthew 1:1-16. Focus on verses 6 and 16.

**Did God fulfill this promise despite David's sin?**

Yes  No

**Which son of David's is named in verse 6? Who is named as that son's mother?**

**Which descendant of David's and David's son's is listed as the Christ, or Messiah?**

**How does David's story give a person hope that feels like they have sinned too much for God to love them?**

God is so gracious! He doesn't give us what we deserve, but still fulfills His plans, despite our sins and mistakes. Even though David sinned, and even though that brought real consequences that caused pain in his life, God still chose to use David. Through David's repentance and getting back in good relationship with God, God used both David and Bathsheba to be the parents of Solomon, who one day would have an offspring that would turn out to be the Savior of the world! Jesus is the Messiah, who will come back and reign on the throne of David forever! This is the same Jesus who paid for our sins and mistakes with His life! God has been gracious to us all.

## Point to Make

True repentance brings about freedom in Christ. David did some awful things. Yet, God freed David from his sin and used him in amazing ways.

## Guide

Manage your time well so that you can discuss the questions in the Going Deeper section this week.

him of his sins, both in his committing adultery with Bathsheba and in his arranging for the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 12:1-14). At the same time, this is more than David's personal prayer: its instructional elements (e.g., Ps. 51:16-19) show that, though the situation that led to the psalm was intensely personal, the psalm in its current form is well-suited to be a hymn by which the members of the worshiping congregation confess their own sins. As is the case with Psalms 25 and 32, the psalm enables its singers to appeal to God's own gracious character as the grounds for their cry for forgiveness, echoing Ex. 34:6-7. The psalm also reinforces the view, found in the Levitical system itself, that the sacrifices bestow their benefits only on those who use them in humble and penitent faith.

## NOW WHAT?

What is the difference between worldly sorrow and true repentance?

Who is your accountability partner? If you don't have an accountability partner, who would be able to fulfill that role well for you?

PRAYER:

Thank God for being willing to send people into our lives to get our attention so we can repent and get back into right relationship with God and with those whom our choices have affected.

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

Even though confession needs to happen between you and God, how can the Church help you live a life of purity?

## GOING DEEPER

Think through everything that you have learned about the following categories base on the last few weeks of lessons.

Sin:

Consequences:

Repentance:

God's forgiveness and grace:

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Psalm 51:10

## Discuss

This activity can really help a student take the knowledge of what they have an opportunity to learn and really personalize it in their own faith. Help students look through the previous weeks to draw out application for their own faith.

2 Sam. 12:24–25 1 Chronicles 3:5 suggests that Solomon was the fourth son of David by Bathsheba. This verse may skip over a number of years to introduce the most important child of the union. And the Lord loved him hints at Solomon's future role as king; God's grace has triumphed over David's terrible sin. The line promised to David will continue through this son of David and Bathsheba, and from this line the Messiah will eventually come (Matt. 1:6).

2 Sam. 7:8–17 God will not let David build him a house; rather, he will build David a house, i.e., a ruling dynasty. According to 1 Kings 5:3, Solomon said David was not able to build the temple "because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him." Also see 1 Chron. 22:8.

# WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PSALM 51:1-4

How does David express his guilt?

Why is it important for Christians to express that they are guilty of sinning?

## DAY 2 — PSALM 51:1-2

How does David express his thoughts on the severity of sin?

How does David express that he no longer takes pleasure in his sinful actions?

## DAY 3 — PSALM 51:1-4, 9

How does David express that he was desperate for something that only God could provide?

How is this passage a portrait of godly sorrow?

## DAY 4 — PSALM 51:10-11

What does David ask for in this passage?

How did David communicate that he is not capable to change on his own?

## DAY 5 — PSALM 51:12-17

What does David express about his desire to do in the future?

How can repentance lead to an individual experience the joy of salvation?

## DAY 6 — ROMANS 5:8

How does verse communicate Jesus' passion to relate to you isn't based on anything you do?

Describe the impact of this "good news" for everyone?

## DAY 7 — ROMANS 8:1-11

What does this verse say is the requirement to be free from condemnation?

How can you walk according to the Spirit?

# He Said, She Said

MATTHEW 22:34-40

WEEK

5

## Key Questions and Concepts

This lesson highlights the difference between lust and love. While this is a harsh example, it is important to discuss the difficult stories and tensions found in Scripture. Love is patient. When we do not wait for God's timing, or disregard the rules and do as we please, we hurt ourselves and those around us.

## Interact

The contents of this material may be difficult for some students because of their experiences or the experiences of loved ones. Please be sensitive and considerate in your presentation of the lesson. Please make sure you send a message to parents before this lesson to help them understand the key concepts and questions.

While the following lyrics may be from a song released in 1984, they are still something that our culture upholds. Rolling Stone magazine has placed Tina Turner's "What's Love Got To Do With It" on its list of all time greatest songs. Listen to the lyrics of the chorus:

Oh what's love got to do, got to do with it?  
What's love but a second hand emotion?  
What's love got to do, got to do with it?  
Who needs a heart?  
When a heart can be broken.

The basis of this song is that love has nothing to do with physical attraction and that love is not needed to take the relationship to the next level physically. Modern lyrics have only become more graphic (pick any current pop song). Often, we don't think that lyrics to hit songs impact us much. However, there are times when we take in every word to a song and personalize them. Truth is, lyrics to songs do impact us. Even the songs that we may not like but pop culture does.

*Do you think that lyrics to hit songs impact your worldview?  
How do you respond to movies and music that elevate lust over love?*

We must be very careful where we receive counsel about how we handle our relationships. This week we will learn about a man named Amnon. Amnon was one of David's sons. He, like his father, did not honor the Lord in his treatment of women. He also did not surround himself with advisors who spoke God's truth about purity.

Today we are going to see if Amnon really loved Tamar. This is a pretty shocking story in the Scriptures, but we can learn from Amnon's mistakes as we seek to follow God's path for us.

### PRAYER:

Ask God to show us what love is supposed to be. Ask Him to open our hearts to hear the true message of love and how we are supposed to treat others.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Matt. 22:37-38 love the Lord your God ... heart ... soul ... mind. This command from Deut. 6:5, repeated twice daily by faithful Jews, encapsulates the idea of total devotion to God and includes the duty to obey the rest of God's commandments (cf. Matt. 5:16-20). "Heart," "soul," and "mind" do not represent rigid compartments of human existence but rather together refer to the whole person.

Matt. 22:39-40 You shall love your neighbor as yourself. See Lev. 19:18, 34. Love signifies a concrete responsibility to seek the greatest good of one's neighbors, both Jew and Gentile. The kingdom life that Jesus initiated—summarized in these two commandments—fulfills the deepest longings of hu-

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WISE COUNSEL

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-5.

**With whom is Amnon in love? Who is she?**

- A) His half-sister  
B) His cousin  
C) His friend  
D) His best friend's sister

Amnon and Tamar have the same father, David, but they had different mothers. It was not uncommon in the Old Testament for a man to marry his half-sister.

**Let's look at verse 2 closely. Fill in the blanks.**

"And Amnon was so \_\_\_\_\_ that he made himself \_\_\_\_\_ because of his sister Tamar, for she was a \_\_\_\_\_, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to \_\_\_\_\_."

**From whom did Amnon get advice? What characteristic is mentioned about this man?**

**What was the plan?**

Amnon got bad advice from a friend. Be wise whom you talk to about relationships. Sometimes we surround ourselves with people who tell us things we want to hear. For example, this friend of Amnon's told him he could have Tamar. Amnon liked that idea. This story could have been different if he had asked the king or a wise friend about Tamar. His life could have ended up so much better.

**Whom do you talk to about guy/girl relationships?**

This is critical! Going out and learning how to deal with the opposite sex is very important. It really helps to have others you can talk to about it. It can shape your future in regard to how you relate to others and whom you ultimately choose to marry. We need advice from people older than we are, such as our parents or DC leaders who have been in good relationships. Your friends do not have any more experience with relationships than you do. So it is not always the best idea to ask them for advice.

## LOVE VS. LUST

Read 2 Samuel 13:6-15.

**Does the Scripture say that Amnon wanted to marry Tamar, or does he simply want to have sex?**

## Fill in the Blank

Tormented; ill, virgin, do anything to her

## Point to Make

Jonadab is described as a shrewd man, not a wise man. He was street smart and devious. He definitely did not have Amnon's back. He didn't really care what happened to Amnon.

## Point to Make

We always have to be careful from whom we ask for advice.

## Discuss

What is the difference between love and lust?

man beings created in the image of God to display his glory. the Law and the Prophets.

2 Sam. 13:1–22 After a time suggests that some time has passed since the end of ch. 12. This is an account of both rape and incest—the brother-sister relationship between Tamar and Amnon is referred to a dozen times. This rape was an outrageous thing (see Gen. 34:7; Deut. 22:21; Judg. 20:6; Jer. 29:23) that was not done in Israel (2 Sam. 13:12). Since it occurred in the royal family, it had implications for the whole nation.

2 Sam. 13:1–2 Tamar was Absalom's full sister and the half sister of Amnon, David's eldest son. he

You may have heard of someone being so in love that he or she could not eat or sleep. That does not mean the person is really in love. It also could mean the person is obsessed with the other person. Love is very powerful. It is meant to be a wonderful thing. However, lust is also a very powerful feeling.

### **LUST – AN INTENSE SEXUAL DESIRE.**

How do we know if Amnon really loved Tamar? Scripture paints a great portrait of what love is and what love compels a person to do. The only way to tell is to look at what his actions were.

### **LOVE IS NOT JUST ABOUT SEX. OUR ACTIONS SHOW WHETHER WE TRULY LOVE SOMEONE.**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

**Find all the things that love is and is not, and list them.**

What LOVE is or does:

What LOVE is not or does not:

**After Amnon raped Tamar, does Scripture say he still loved her? Why?**

When we do things that are wrong, there is a guilt that comes along with it that makes looking at the person we have hurt remind us of what we have done. Imagine for a moment that every time Amnon thought of Tamar or looked at her, he was reminded of his sin — his cruelty. He did the wrong thing! He attacked a helpless woman. He destroyed her life, and his father, the king, was going to find out. He must have hated himself for what he did.

**Instead of admitting it and seeking forgiveness, what did he do to Tamar?**

We can get so easily confused when it comes to our feelings. They are very powerful and strong. Love and lust may feel very similar, but the actions are completely different. Love does not just want what you want, but cares about what the other person wants. Love never demands that you have sex.

**How can you show God that you are willing to wait to have sex until you are married?**

### **Discuss**

Look again at the list you created about what love is and is not based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Ask the students to circle the things listed things did Amnon do to Tamar. After they realize that he didn't do any of these things, discuss the whether it was love or lust.

### **Discuss**

Based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, did Amnon ever love Tamar?

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made himself ill. Amnon's "love" could better be described as "lust."

2 Sam. 13:12–13 such a thing is not done in Israel. Intercourse between brother and sister, even half brother and half sister, was forbidden in Lev. 18:9, and the stress on the outrageousness makes it seem likely that this prohibition was accepted at the time of David. he will not withhold me from you. Perhaps Tamar is saying that David would be willing to bend the rules, or perhaps she is just trying to escape.

2 Sam. 13:15–17 While Amnon's response to Tamar may be an archetypal example of a "blame the

Describe some fences (boundaries) to keep you from making a mistake.

The difficult part of setting up a fence is that you still know how to climb over the top. While it acts as a boundary, an individual can still climb over if he or she wants to get to the other side. What you treasure in your heart will decide if you will climb over. If you treasure your relationship with the Lord and you treasure your relationship with the person of the opposite sex then you won't climb over the fence.

## LOVE IS PATIENT

Pay close attention to how this one awful act of violence destroyed the rest of Tamar's life.

Read 2 Samuel 13:16-22.

**Look at verse 16 closely. It is hard to imagine that anything would be worse to her than being raped. Fill in the blanks of what she said.**

"No, my brother, for this wrong in \_\_\_\_\_ is greater than the other that you did to me."

He does not just ask her to leave; he throws her out! She thought that at least he would make things right by possibly marrying her, but when he threw her out, she knew he had no desire to make things right. Amnon never once thought of Tamar and her life. He was so consumed with his own desire that he never stopped to think about what that would mean for her life. She even suggested marriage to him. Back then, you could marry your half-sister as long as you didn't have the same mother. So what she suggested would have been a real solution. Amnon kept doing the wrong thing with each move he made.

It is important to understand where Tamar lived before she was attacked. She lived with the other virgins. It was an area in the palace that was protected, and the only reason she got to stay there was because she was a virgin. It was her home. She was defined by her virginity. When that was gone, there was no home left for her. She could not go back to the palace and live with the virgins. Notice that she does not even try.

### What happened to Tamar after she was attacked?

Amnon refused to wait, even though David most likely would have let her be his wife. He was impatient and cruel, and it cost him and Tamar everything. They both came to ruin. We will look at the final consequences of Amnon's actions next week.

Love is patient. When we do not wait for God's timing, things get all messed up. God wants us to wait for His timing for our own good. God gave us rules so we would not get hurt. When we disregard the rules and do as we please, we hurt ourselves and those around us.

## Fill in the Blank

Sending me away

## Point to Make

Tearing one's garment and putting ashes on one's head was a sign the person was mourning the death of someone. Tamar was mourning the death of herself. She did not go to her father, the king, and tell him what happened. She went to her brother. That was a mistake. The king, her father, could have helped her far more than her brother could have. Scripture does not tell us why she did not go to her father. Perhaps she felt shame. We can only imagine the things that ran through her mind. This was a violent act done against her. It was not her fault! She did nothing wrong.

victim" mentality, it is particularly striking in the context of sexual lust. wrong in sending me away. Tamar's appeal is based on the fact that within this ancient Near Eastern cultural setting Amnon's actions required marriage (Deut. 22:28-29). Put this woman out. Amnon's hatred and contempt of his sister is expressed by his final refusal to heed her wishes or even use her name.

2 Sam. 13:16 this wrong ... is greater than the other. If a man seduced an unmarried (or unbetrothed) woman, he had to marry her, unless her father refused; if he raped her, he was not permitted to divorce her (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:28-29). Having ruined her life, he had a responsibility toward her.



## NOW WHAT?

Maybe you have had a violent act committed against you. You need to let one of your parents, a counselor or your DC leader know. Do not just go to a friend. Find help, real help. You need to feel safe again. God is the Healer and the only One who can make you feel whole again. He will give you the strength to tell your parents.

If you are still a virgin, know that it is not something that makes you better than anyone else. The reason you are still a virgin is what matters to God. If you chose to stay pure because you desire to please Him, that is wonderful. We are clean before our God because of Jesus Christ, not because of our virginity or lack of it. So listen closely! If you remain a virgin because you have chosen to listen to God's warnings about the problems that can arise from having sex before you're married, that is wonderful. It is pleasing to God! It does not make you better than someone else who has had sex already or anyone who has been forced to have sex.

**How can you build a team of trusted people to help you with relationship advice?**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

**What are some ways that you can flee sexual immorality?**

PRAYER:

Ask God to help you get sound advice from wise people when it comes to guy/girl stuff. Tell God you need His guidance. Ask Him to help you treat women/men with care and respect. Ask Him to help you be wise and know what real love is — not just an intense desire or feeling, but actions. Ask God to help you be patient. Tell God you know His timing is perfect.

## GOING DEEPER

**Go back to the definition of love found in 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 4. When describing love, what are the first two things that are listed?**

**Amnon showed no sign of these. Are you impatient about having sex?**

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Romans 12:9

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2 Sam. 13:20 Do not take this to heart, perhaps because it would be easier to remain quiet, or perhaps because Absalom was determined to take vengeance in his own time. Absalom himself did take it to heart (cf. vv. 23–29).

2 Sam. 13:21-22 David was very angry, but he did not do anything. He showed favoritism toward his eldest son, which was the source of many of the later problems in David's family (cf. 1 Kings 1:6). Heads of households have to deal justly with members of their household, but because of his sin with Bathsheba, David had lost his moral courage and clarity of judgment. Spoke ... neither good nor bad may mean "do nothing against" (see Gen. 31:24, 29).

# WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PROVERBS 19:20-21

List the three verbs in verse 20. How does one action lead to the next?

Why is the truth described in verse 21 important to remember when we think about the future?

## DAY 2 — PSALM 1:1-6

What might it look like to "walk in the counsel of the wicked"?

How can you foster "delight" in God's word?

## DAY 3 — PROVERBS 3:1-35

How can you trust in the Lord and acknowledge him in all your ways?

In verse 7, what is described as the opposite of being wise in your own eyes?

## DAY 4 — 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

How does the fact that love is patient and kind relate to sexual purity?

What is the attribute of love that you are struggling most with right now?

## DAY 5 — HEBREWS 13:4

What does it mean that "God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous"?

What are some ways you can hold marriage in honor now?

## DAY 6 — 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

What does the verse say you should do as a result of the fact that "you are not your own"?

How does "fleeing from sexual immorality" glorify God in your body?

## DAY 7 — COLOSSIANS 3:5-10

What does this verse give as the reason that we should not do "what is earthly"?

Why should this motivate us to be pure?

# Human Instincts Lead to Death

PROVERBS 14:12

Consider opening with a story of when you “thought you were going the right way but then it led to death.”

There are ways that appear to be right at first. The way of living a self-preserving life, or a life of maximizing gain could seem right. Many people try to seek worldly success and fortune, and then seek God. This is a popular idea that we can always turn to God later, but it is folly. We have no idea what tomorrow brings and we have no idea whether we’ll be alive to seek God or not. These ways may appear to be the wise course, but because they don’t lead to God, they actually lead to death.

Have you ever heard the saying, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”? This phrase is often used to say children are a lot like their parents. Amnon, like his father, David, did not honor the Lord in his treatment of women. Amnon sought his own ways that seemed right to him. He even surrounded himself with those that would promote his own selfish desires.

*Describe some of your characteristics that remind you of one of your parents?  
What is your favorite characteristic of your parents?*

One has to believe that David’s response to the awful circumstance must have been influenced based on what he had done in his life. While David didn’t get away with his sin with Bathsheba, he basically allowed his son Amnon to completely get away with his awful act. For whatever reason, David must have thought it was better to leave the situation alone than to lead well as a father and the king. This led to a circumstance where multiple people sinned and nobody won.

We will learn today that the circumstance continued to spiral out of control to the point of death. This is a pretty shocking story in the Scriptures, but we can learn from David’s, Amnon’s and Absalom’s mistakes as we seek to live pure lives. We can clearly see from Scripture that living for money, comfort, acclaim, keeping peace in the family, or pleasure over God is a way that leads to death.

WEEK

6

## Key Questions and Concepts

What started as one person’s desire for another, ended with one desolate woman, a national revolt, and the death of two of the king’s sons. This one act tore David’s family apart. Sin does that. Lust disguised as love broke this family apart. Describe the importance of biblical accountability. How critical is it for you to give biblical advice to your friends?

## Interact

The contents of this material may be difficult for some students because of their experiences or the experiences of loved ones. Please be sensitive and considerate in your presentation of the lesson. Please make sure you send a message to parents before this lesson to help them understand the key concepts and questions.

## 5-Minute Commentary

2 Sam. 13:23 As seen in 1 Samuel 25, sheep-shearing was a time of feasting. Absalom invited all the king’s sons, and the next four verses explain how he gives the invitation. Absalom invited David, probably guessing that he would decline, in order to lend an aura of importance to the occasion and to mask his true intentions. If he had started out by inviting Amnon, it could have seemed suspicious.

2 Sam. 13:29 The king’s sons seem to have normally ridden mules. Absalom even rides one into battle (18:9).

## NOBODY WINS

Have you ever heard someone say, "It doesn't matter because it's my body, and I can do whatever I want"? That statement is a lie when it involves sex because sex is about two people, not just one. Also, sex can create a third person! An entirely new life can be created that would be affected by your choice.

Sex affects those around you! It does not affect just you and the other person involved. It affects your family and your relationship with your family. You may act differently or start lying about where you were so no one knows you were alone with your boyfriend/girlfriend.

Read 2 Samuel 13:20-34a.

**Take a moment to remember where Tamar goes after she's attacked?**

- A) The palace
- B) Her dad's
- C) Her brother Absalom's
- D) Her mom's

If a woman could not get married, there was no way for her to support herself. Women could not have jobs, so there would be no way to make money. This single incident left her dependent on her brother for the rest of her life. Since she never married, she was childless. She would never be a wife or mother because of the selfish act of one man — who was a member of her family. Scripture says she lived with Absalom, her brother, from then on, a desolate woman.

**Does Amnon's father, King David, punish Amnon?**

**How would you feel if you were in the situation as either Tamar or her brother Absalom and your father didn't do anything about the awful circumstance?**

**What did Absalom do to get justice for his sister?**

**What happened to Amnon?**

Consider David and Bathsheba: Bathsheba went back to her home after David had sex with her. David did not see her again until she sent word to him that she was pregnant. One impatient night almost cost him the kingdom. David and his son Amnon were both impatient about sex, and it led to terrible choices and consequences.

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2 Sam. 18:6–8 The forest of Ephraim was actually not in Ephraim, but east of the Jordan in Gilead. Gilead was apparently known for its forests (Jer. 22:6). Here David's experienced army could effectively attack a much larger force, most of whom were apparently unable to move around effectively in a forest (the forest devoured more people ... than the sword).

2 Sam. 18:9 Mules were the normal mounts of the king's sons (13:29). his head caught fast in the oak. Most take this to mean that the specific part of Absalom's head that got tangled in the tree was his hair (cf. 14:26). In God's providence, the source of his pride became the cause of his downfall.

When Nathan the prophet finally confronted David about adultery and murder, David finally realized the severity of what he had done and prayed to God for forgiveness.

**Who confronted Amnon?**

- A) David
- B) Nathan the prophet
- C) Absalom
- D) No one

**Does Amnon show remorse like David did?**

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

Perhaps things could have been totally different if David had confronted Amnon and he had asked God for forgiveness. Maybe if Tamar had gone to her father, King David, he would have provided for her. There are so many chances in this story for the ending to have been better. There are always chances in our lives to make the outcome better if we make a wise choice along the way. Talking to your parents or a trusted adult is a good idea. Do not make a bad choice and follow it with more bad choices, causing a downward spiral in your life.

**THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL**

Amnon’s violent act against Absalom’s sister would almost destroy the king’s family. David ended up at war with his own son. How sad is that! Absalom lost respect for his father when Amnon was not punished.

**How would you respond if you knew the person in power did not do anything to punish the individual that hurt your family?**

So, Absalom took justice into his own hands and had Amnon killed. After leaving the city for three years, Absalom decided to go back, but this time to rule as king! He got a large following to help him do this. He knew David was not going to give him the kingdom. So he decided to physically take the throne from his father, King David. He and his father were at war until the end of Absalom’s days.

Read 2 Samuel 18:6-15.

**What happened to Absalom?**

**What was the root cause for this disaster in David’s family?**

**Point to Make**

What started as one person’s desire for another — Amnon’s lust for Tamar — ended with one desolate woman, a national revolt, and the death of two of the king’s sons. This one act tore David’s family apart. Sin does that. Lust disguised as love broke this family apart.

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2 Sam. 18:14 The narrator stresses repeatedly (vv. 5, 12) that David had ordered all the troops to spare Absalom. Joab probably worries that Absalom, who had risen from disgrace once before, even using Joab himself (14:1–24), might be able to cause problems again.

When we are impatient about having sex, it can have devastating results. Rape is against the law and against God's law! When we encourage someone else to have sex outside of marriage, we are going against God's plan. We cause ourselves a lot of pain that can be avoided.

ONE VIOLENT, IMPATIENT ACT CAUSED A CHAIN REACTION, A DOWNWARD SPIRAL.

## **IMPATIENCE LEADS TO FOLLY**

The impatience of David and his sons Amnon and Absalom caused some serious problems. Consider the following:

- 1) David had sex with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. He later repented.
- 2) Amnon raped his sister, threw her out, and was killed by Absalom.
- 3) Absalom murdered Amnon, fled to another city for three years, tried to take the kingdom from his father, and was killed in battle.

### **Consider the following situation:**

A guy pushes his girlfriend to have sex when they are in eighth grade. The girl ends up pregnant. They decide on their own to get an abortion. That is one bad choice, followed by another bad choice. After the abortion, she suffers from depression, which leads to more bad choices ... The downward spiral keeps going. It can be stopped!

**How could the circumstances change if a girl finds out she is pregnant?**

**What could she do to stop the chain of bad choices?**

**What is the danger about just talking to your friends about important choices?**

**Describe the importance of biblical accountability.**

**How would great biblical accountability have helped in this circumstance? What about Amnon and Absalom?**

Don't be impatient when it comes to having sex. Impatience is not an expression of love. Impatience is what caused this whole mess with David's family. God created sex to be a demonstration of love shared between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage. When it is done outside of that, the results can be devastating. Love is patient. Wait.

## **Point to Make**

Talking with her friends is not going to be the best way to find a solution. Her friends do not know all of her options. Also, they may not have her best interest at heart.

## **Reference**

Galatians 6:1-5; Luke 17:3; James 5:16; Proverbs 27:17; Matthew 18:15-20.

## **NOW WHAT?**

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5.

**Describe the importance of taking captive every thought?**

**Who can you go to for solid advice about relationships?**

**How critical is it for you to give great biblical advice to your friends?**

**PRAYER:**

Tell God you trust that He knows what is best for you. Tell Him you want to remain pure in your thoughts and body.

## **GOING DEEPER**

**Why is important to discipline your children? How would have discipline helped the situation with Amnon and Tamar?**

**How important is it to live a life of purity now to set an example for your children some day?**

Do you have problems in your family? Maybe some of the members of your family are "at war" with each other. Pray for them.

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Proverbs 14:12

# WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PROVERBS 16:25

Why might a way seem right to a man, but not actually be right?

How can you tell the difference?

## DAY 2 — PROVERBS 21:2

Describe a time when what you felt was right turned out to be wrong.

Why can we not trust what is right in our own eyes?

## DAY 3 — JAMES 4:13-17

How does this verse describe your life?

How can this motivate you to seek the Lord today?

## DAY 4 — 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

Describe why we are not our own.

How does this change the way we think about what we do?

## DAY 5 — ROMANS 12:17-19

Look up the words "avenge" and "vengeance." Describe what they mean.

How does this verse apply to wrong done against you for those you love?

## DAY 6 — MATTHEW 18:15-17

Identify the four steps in this verse, describing how we should deal with those who sin against us.

Think about the last time someone did wrong against you or hurt you. How did you respond?

## DAY 7 — JAMES 5:13-18

What is the command given in vs. 16?

How does confession bring healing?



# Heart Full of Wisdom

PSALM 86:11

WEEK

7

## Key Questions and Concepts

You will need God's wisdom to be able to live a pure life in this world. The temptation to be impure is all around you.

The Bible regularly pictures the moral course of one's life as a "way" or path, and an individual's conduct as a "walk" or journey. A faithful person seeks instruction in the ways that please God in order to learn how to better walk in his truth. This is precisely what God desired for the king of Israel to do and model for the nation.

God knows that in order to do that his/her heart must be united and completely loyal to him. This is why God really does care about our hearts. He knows that what goes on in our hearts will ultimately become our habits.

Do you remember David and Bathsheba's son's name? That's right; it's Solomon. Both David and God gave Solomon very specific instructions about the heart.

Consider what David had to say in 1 Chronicles 28:9: "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole **heart** and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all **hearts** and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever."

This week we are going to take a look at part of Solomon's life and the measure of his heart that he allowed God to have. Keep in mind that we want to learn how to live a holy life from these men in Scripture. While Solomon started out on the right foot, he eventually lost his way.

*Describe a charge that you have been given by your parents to carry on for your children?  
What do you want to know for by others?*

In Solomon, Israel at last got what it had asked for, "a king to lead us, such as all the other nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). However this proved to be a mixed blessing. For although over his forty-year reign Solomon built on his father David's successes, giving Israel greater borders, prosperity and influence than ever before, the very same successes sowed the seeds of Israel's destruction. Never has such a wise man been shown to be more foolish. There's a lot to learn from this well-known man in Scripture.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Ps. 86:11 Unite my heart, i.e., make it "one" (cf. Jer. 32:39), undivided in its loyalty (so that all of it can give thanks, Ps. 86:12).

1 Kings 2:2–3 Be strong, and show yourself a man. David's parting words to Solomon echo God's words to Joshua upon his "succession" to the leadership of Israel after Moses' death (Josh. 1:6–9). This injunction begins by using the language of warriorship before moving on immediately to define the framework within which this strength must be exercised (obedience to God, in accordance with the Law of Moses). Particularly in view here (as in Joshua) is the law code of Deuteronomy, as

## THE FATHER'S CHARGE

Solomon was the next man in line to be king. While his father, David, lay on his deathbed, he issued a charge to his son. Imagine for a moment this conversation between father and son. Solomon knew his father was about to die, so he likely leaned in close and listened carefully to every word that came from his dying father's mouth.

Read 1 Kings 2:1-3.

**David challenged Solomon to do five things. Write them down.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

If Solomon would heed his father's advice, he would prosper in all that he would do and wherever he would go.

Read 1 Kings 2:19.

Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, came to make a request of her son. If you were reading through this story quickly, you might miss this very important verse.

"So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king \_\_\_\_\_ to meet her and \_\_\_\_\_ to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right."

Notice the respect Solomon showed his mother. If we are honest, we can all grow in how we show respect to our parents. We are called to seek the honor of the Lord in every area of life.

Read Ephesians 6:2-3.

**How might honoring your parents help you in your path to sexual purity?**

**Describe any rules in your home to help protect you in the area of sexual purity.**

While it may be frustrating at times to follow the rules, remember that God put parents in your lives to guide us in the right direction. Honoring and obeying your parents is a key factor in your pursuit of purity.

## Interact

Describe the importance of final words that you may have had with a loved one.

## Reference

1 Chronicles 28:9

## Fill in the Blank

Rose; bowed down

## Encourage

Challenge the students to sit down with their parents and listen to their wisdom regarding sexual purity.

the language of 1 Kings 2:3–4 indicates (cf. Deut. 4:29; 6:2; 8:6; 9:5; 11:1; 29:9). "Show yourself a man" seems to be an idiom that refers primarily to conducting oneself bravely (cf. 1 Sam. 4:9; 1 Cor. 16:13), as defined specifically here within the framework of faithful adherence to the Mosaic law; it will take bravery for Solomon to lead the people faithfully.

Eph. 6:2–3 Honor. Children obeying their parents (v. 1) is in part how they honor them; see also Prov. 31:28, which describes children rising to bless a wise and godly mother. promise. There were earlier commands of God with promises (e.g., Gen. 17:1–2), but this is the first and only of the Ten Commandments to contain a promise (see also Ex. 20:12). Paul is not teaching salvation on the basis of

## THE FAMOUS REQUEST

Read 1 Kings 3:1-15.

**What stands out to you?**

**How does this passage indicate that if we seek God with all our heart he will be found?**

This is probably a familiar story to you. God told Solomon in a dream to ask for whatever he wanted God to give to him. I know what you are thinking... Wow, I wish God would ask me that question! Before we jump into that story, let's look at verse 3. Fill in the blanks.

"Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, \_\_\_\_\_ he \_\_\_\_\_ and made \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_."

Read Leviticus 17:3-4.

**Where were sacrifices to be brought?**

Solomon brought his sacrifices to the high places. The high places were hilltops and other elevations where the Canaanites brought their sacrifices in order to reach their gods. It was a form of worship to false gods. Here we already see a hint of Solomon's downfall.

What is interesting about 1 Kings 3:3 is that it talks about Solomon's love for God, yet he still worships false gods. Before we start judging Solomon, we would be wise to take a good look at our own lives.

**We say we love God and worship Him only, but when do we sometimes worship other things and people?**

**Now, let's get back to Solomon's famous request from God. What did Solomon ask of God in 1 Kings 3:9?**

**Try to put yourself in Solomon's shoes. He was likely around 20 years old at this time. What do you think you would have asked God for if God asked you this question?**

### Fill in the Blank

Only; sacrificed; offerings; high places

### Point to Make

God required sacrifices be brought to the tabernacle, or the temple, not the high places.

### Point to Make

Sure, we aren't climbing hilltops and sacrificing animals to false gods, but sometimes we show more devotion and love toward things and people of the world.

works. The obedience of children is evidence that they know God, and it results in receiving blessings from God.

1 Kings 3:1 marriage alliance with Pharaoh. This is another dubious act to add to those in ch. 2. Deuteronomy warns against a "return to Egypt" (Deut. 17:16) in terms of too-close relations with that nation. The Hebrew verb (khatan), translated "made a marriage alliance" in 1 Kings 3:1, is translated "intermarry" in Deut. 7:3, where the command not to marry foreigners is explicitly tied to a warning that such marriages will lead the people to serve other gods (Deut. 7:4). This becomes all too real for Solomon (1 Kings 11:3-4). Even though Solomon "loved the Lord" (3:3), he is a king with a divided

Take a close look at 1 Kings 3:11-13. How does this passage indicate that God will honor those who honor him?

## A GIFT WELL USED

Read 1 Kings 3:16-28.

How does this passage indicate that God will equip us to accomplish the tasks He calls us to if we rely on Him?

Read 2 Peter 1:1-3.

What is the promise found in this passage?

While Solomon made some mistakes, he was right on track with his request of God. We would be wise to follow in his footsteps with his choice to ask for wisdom.

How would wisdom come in handy when trying to walk with Christ daily?

## LUKEWARMNESS

An important lesson that Solomon taught us is that the spiritual life is a marathon, not a sprint. A good start is not always enough to finish well. Solomon started out on the right foot. As we continue to learn about him, you will notice how he gradually turned in the wrong direction. It can happen to us if we don't keep our eyes fixed on God.

Read Luke 9:23.

Compare David's charge to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:1-3 to the words of Jesus in this passage.

While Solomon started out with good intentions, he gradually became lukewarm towards God as personal pleasures and the desire for a comfortable life took precedence, leading him to drift away from God and his word. Although he was a wise man, he failed to see that if people do not move forward with God, they drift backwards with the world.

The same is true in our own lives. We must continually seek the face of God and lay down ourselves for his glory.

## Point to Make

We have equal faith and equal standing by the righteousness of Jesus. All things that pertain to life and godliness have been given to us.

## Point to Make

You will need God's wisdom to be able to live a pure life in this world. Temptation to be impure is all around you.

## Compare

Luke 9:23 A disciple requires: (1) deny himself (not simply denying certain things but denying personal control of one's life); (2) take up his cross (make a commitment that will lead to rejection and possibly even death); and (3) follow me (following the example and teachings of Jesus). In Jesus' day, "follow me" also meant joining the company of his disciples who traveled in ministry with Jesus around Palestine.

heart, failing to keep the Law of Moses wholeheartedly as David had instructed (2:1-4).

1 Kings 3:2 the high places. it is not clear that height (whether natural or artificial) was an intrinsic feature of these worship sites. The idea is simply that of publicly accessible structures (including unenclosed altars and temples with altars) within which or on which offerings were made to God or the gods. The continuation and proliferation of these local places of worship (as opposed to the one place of worship described in Deuteronomy 12) is one of the main concerns of the authors of 1-2 Kings (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35). Solomon begins by tolerating worship of the Lord at these places and ends up being drawn into full-blown apostasy (1 Kings 11:7-8), as also later do

## **NOW WHAT?**

Look back that the five challenges David gave to Solomon in this lesson? Describe how these apply to your own life.

Is God showing you something that you sometimes worship other than God? If so, write it down.

What do you need wisdom for in your life right now?

When do you feel least equipped to walk with Jesus?

## **GOING DEEPER**

How do you know if you love God with your whole heart?

How is God's jealousy a sign of his love for us?

Read Matthew 6:33.

Why would God be willing to bless someone who personifies this verse?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

2 Peter 1:3

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Israel and Judah (e.g., 12:28–31; 2 Kings 21:3–9).

1 Kings 3:7–9 I am but a little child. Solomon feels inadequate in view of the great task that confronts him. Although he has used wisdom before in dealing with affairs of state, now he confesses basic ignorance: I do not know how to go out or come in. He needs an understanding mind to govern your people, that he may discern between good and evil.

# WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — GALATIANS 5:16-24

List all the examples in the passage of "works of the flesh" and of the "fruit of the Spirit."  
How does walking by the Spirit keep you from doing "the works of the flesh"?

## DAY 2 — JONAH 2:1-9

Describe the situation Jonah is in as he prays to the Lord.  
Look more closely at verse 8. How do those who turn to idols, forsake steadfast love?

## DAY 3 — ROMANS 1:21-23

What does it mean to "exchange the glory of God" for something?  
What are some things you "exchange the glory of God" for?

## DAY 4 — JEREMIAH 2:13

Describe the two evils stated in the verse? (A cistern is defined as "a tank for storing water.")  
How is the analogy a description of idolatry?

## DAY 5 — COLOSSIANS 3:20

According to this verse, what should be our motivation for obeying our parents? Sexual purity?  
Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord?

## DAY 6 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:12-13

What does it mean to "take heed"?  
How might intentionality keep us from gradually falling into sin?

## DAY 7 — 2 PETER 1:3

According to this verse, what has God granted us?  
How does the "knowledge of him" (Jesus) help us to live a life of godliness?

# Foolishness of an Unguarded Heart

1 KINGS 4:29-34

WEEK

8

## Key Questions and Concepts

Generational sin is real.

Unfortunately, Solomon represents most of us: unassailably strong in certain areas and blindly weak in others. Solomon's strength was that he had "wisdom and very great insight," and his weakness was that he "loved many foreign women, which distracted him from what mattered most: wholehearted devotion to God.

Many heroes of the Bible, similar to Solomon, received amazing gifts and were visited by God himself, but they still fell into sin. Samson, for example, was gifted with supernatural strength but was crippled by his own lust. Consider Peter, Jesus' strong-willed, passionate disciple who disowned Jesus under pressure. What repeating pattern exists in these stories?

The Bible reveals what we intuitively know: that each of us has strengths and weaknesses that can lead us toward God or away from him. Solomon's unsurpassed wisdom was not enough to ensure that he would faithfully serve God; he needed to find a way to overcome his weaknesses. The account of his disobedience is consistent with the stories of other highly gifted people in the Bible who struggled with their own sins and turned from God.

*How is it possible that Solomon, the wisest man on Earth, have so many significant problems? Why does the Bible record so many instances of gifted people failing God?*

Through these stories God comforts us by showing us that no one is perfect. God warns us not to put our confidence in our gifts, which ultimately cannot save us. God urges us to be aware of our weaknesses as we pursue him. We are to rely on him to strengthen us and allow the church to hold us accountable. God shows us our options after we fall; resign ourselves to failure or pick ourselves back up and follow God again like David and Peter did.

Does the sin of a child's parents automatically mean that the child will be just like their parents?

What are some areas in your life that could be potential weaknesses because of your parents' sinful practices?

What are some ways that your parents have set a good example for you?

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Kings 4:30–31 the wisdom of all the people of the east ... of Egypt. Solomon's wisdom exceeded that of people from places renowned for their wisdom, including "all the people of the east" (cf. Matt. 2:1–12). Egypt specifically provides many examples of wisdom literature (e.g., "The Wisdom of Amen-em-ope," which many OT scholars believe influenced Prov. 22:17–23:12). Solomon's wisdom was also greater than that of the named individuals famous for their wisdom.

1 Kings 4:33 He spoke of trees ... beasts ... birds ... reptiles, and of fish. Careful observation of the natural world and how it works is one of the "normal" ways in which people gain wisdom (e.g., Job

## HIS GREATEST WEAKNESS

We saw a hint of Solomon's poor choices last week. Today we will see Solomon totally disregard God's instruction.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-6.

Solomon was the wisest man in the world. Yet even with all his wisdom, he had an area of sin that affected his life greatly.

**What was his greatest downfall?**

- A) Pride
- B) Love of wealth
- C) Love of women

**When it came to women, Solomon blew it. What did God tell Solomon specifically in 1 Kings 11:2?**

Many people believe the lie that God gives us rules to keep us from having fun. That could not be further from the truth. The truth is that God knows best, and He gives us instructions because He wants to lead us to make wise choices and to protect us from unnecessary harm.

Solomon, much like we do sometimes, thought he knew better than God. So he gave in to his fleshly desires and ignored God's commands.

**Describe a time when you ignored God's commands and just did what you felt like doing?**

There are always consequences for our poor choices. The same was true for Solomon.

Read 1 Kings 11:7-11.

**How did Solomon show that his heart was divided?**

**What was Solomon's consequence for disobeying God's command?**

**Describe a time you had to suffer consequences for disobeying God.**

## Interact

Be careful to not allow students to celebrate their misconduct.

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38–41; Prov. 30:15–31; Matt. 6:25–34). Solomon was concerned with the natural world, from the largest tree (the proverbially high cedar that is in Lebanon) to the smallest plant (e.g., hyssop), and including all sorts of fauna. Wisdom "from below" (as here) and wisdom "from above" (as received by Solomon in 1 Kings 3) are thus combined in this one person, the wisest of all Israel's kings.

1 Kings 11:1–4 Solomon loved many foreign women ... clung to these in love. Solomon loved (Hb. 'ahab, 3:3) the Lord, but he also loved (Hb. 'ahab) the daughter of Pharaoh and many other women, and he clung (Hb. dabaq) to them (11:2). Both verbs appear in Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:5; 10:12, 20; 11:1, 22; 13:4; 30:20), where they speak of unswerving human loyalty to God. Solomon's heart, how-



Solomon chose momentary pleasure with foreign women and, in return, was led astray from the one true God. We all have something in our lives that has the potential to lead us astray from God.

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

There is a key similarity between David and Solomon. Each of their downfalls related to women. David sinned against the Lord by sleeping with Bathsheba, and Solomon sinned against the Lord by marrying many foreign women. The truth is, we are all likely to follow in our parents' footsteps, even regarding sinful behavior.

### Consider the following story:

"Sara grew up in a single-parent home. Her mom got pregnant while in high school and later married the father of the baby. Sara's parents' marriage only lasted a couple of years. Sara's mom dated different men and married another man when Sara was in high school. Sara graduated and moved off to college. While in college, Sara met a guy who soon became her husband. A few years into their marriage, Sara decided she couldn't take it anymore. She decided to divorce her husband."

### Describe how the sins of a parent can affect the child.

### Does the sin of a child's parents automatically mean that the child will be just like their parents?

There are always several factors to consider in scenarios like that one. It doesn't mean every child of divorced parents will end up getting a divorce. However, just as Solomon followed in his parents' footsteps in the area of sexual sin, you and I need to go to the Lord and ask for His help so we don't make the same mistakes our parents made.

The goal of this lesson is not to disrespect your parents. (After all, remember the challenge last week to honor your parents.) It's also not our goal for you to begin to judge your parents. No parent is perfect. Yet, every child needs to learn from his or her parents' mistakes. To do that well, we need to consider our parents' mistakes and ask God to help us to not repeat those mistakes. The next part of this lesson is going to challenge you to think about your parents.

### What are some areas in your life that could be potential weaknesses because of your parents' sinful practices? (You might say anger, lying, alcoholism, gossiping, divorce, and so on.)

Once you have thought through this question, check here. \_\_\_\_\_

Pray to God, asking Him to help you learn from your parents' mistakes. Once you have prayed this prayer, check here. \_\_\_\_\_

While it is true that we can learn from our parents' mistakes, it is true that we can learn from their good qualities also!

ever, was divided (1 Kings 11:4); and in spite of his pious hope that God would always turn Israelite hearts to himself (8:58), the king's wives, in his old age, turned away his heart in the opposite direction, after other gods.

1 Kings 11:6 Individual kings are characteristically assessed in 1–2 Kings in terms of whether on the whole they "did what was right" or what was evil in the eyes of the Lord (e.g., 1 Kings 15:11, 26, 34); Judean kings are additionally said to be like David or not (e.g., 15:3, 11).

1 Kings 11:7–8 The worship of other gods at high places lies at the very heart of the authors' concern

## Interact

Assure students that they do not have to share their answers out loud. In fact, they don't even have to write down their answers. This is between them and God. If a student is willing to share be careful to honor the parent in how you speak about their behavior.

What are some ways that your parents have set a good example for you? (You might say kindness, encouraging words, generosity, lovingness, and so on.)

Parents are blessings from the Lord. God is so good to have given us our parents, from whom we can learn every day!

## THE MAIN DIFFERENCE

David's and Solomon's did have similar struggles, but there was one major difference between David and Solomon.

Read 1 Kings 11:4.

**What was the main difference between David and Solomon?**

**What do you think it means to have a heart fully devoted to God?**

If you were to draw a picture explaining the difference between David and Solomon, you might draw one-half of a heart for Solomon and a whole heart for David.

David

Solomon

God desires to have our whole heart. God will not settle for halfhearted devotion to Him.

Read Psalm 86:11 write out the verse in the space below.

**How does a united heart demonstrate a devoted heart for God?**

Even though David and Solomon made similar mistakes, David was the one with an undivided heart before the Lord. We see that in David's willingness to repent of his sin and turn back to God.

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in 1–2 Kings (e.g., 1 Kings 12:25–33; 14:23; 16:31–33).

1 Kings 11:9–13 the Lord was angry with Solomon ... I will surely tear the kingdom from you. This is what 2:4; 8:25; and 9:4–5 have led the reader to expect. Yet the punishment is unexpectedly mitigated: I will not do it in your days (11:12). ... I will not tear away all the kingdom (v. 13). One tribe remains out of grace, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.

Ps. 86:11 The Bible regularly pictures the moral course of one's life as a "way" or path, and one's

## Prayer

Consider taking a moment to let students pray a prayer of thanksgiving for their parents and the good example they have set for them.

## NOW WHAT?

**What are your weaknesses? Where do you need to be careful?**

PRAYER:

Whether you wrote a person's name, an object, a pursuit, or something else, we all have weaknesses. In your prayer time today, talk to God about your weakness. Ask Him to give you the strength and wisdom to follow God well.

**How can you approach your parents about a sinful habit they have that impacts you and honor them at the same time?**

**Describe one way that you can thank your parents this week for leading you toward Jesus?**

PRAYER:

Spend some time praying blessing and thanksgiving for your parents.

## GOING DEEPER

**Consider the following questions to help you assess your own heart.**

- 1) Do I have a burning passion to love and obey God? Why?
- 2) When I mess up, do I run to God and run away from my sin, or do I just continue living in sin even though I know it is wrong? Why?
- 3) Is God more important to me than anything or anyone else? Why?

**Do you think you have a heart fully devoted to God or is your heart divided? Explain.**

PRAYER:

Ask God to show you if your heart is more like Solomon's, a heart divided, or more like David's, a heart fully devoted to God. Ask God to help you have a heart like David's, one fully devoted to God.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Psalms 86:11

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conduct as a "walk" or journey. A faithful person seeks instruction in the ways that please God in order to learn how better to walk in God's truth. Unite my heart, i.e., make it "one" (cf. Jer. 32:39), undivided in its loyalty (so that all of it can give thanks, Ps. 86:12).

# WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PSALM 86:11

What does the word "unite" mean?

Mediate on the context of the word "unite" in verse 11. What should our heart be uniting around?

## DAY 2 — JOHN 14:15

Why should our love for God be motivation to keep his commandments?

What does this verse imply about the state of our heart when we don't keep his commandments?

## DAY 3 — MATTHEW 5:8

Why should "seeing God" be motivation for having a pure heart?

How can this help you when you are tempted to do things that are not pure?

## DAY 4 — 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

How does the command to in this passage relate to Solomon's situation in 1 Kings 11:1-6?

How can you learn from Solomon's mistakes and follow God's command today?

## DAY 5 — HEBREWS 11:24-26

Why did Moses choose not to "enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin"?

How can treasuring Christ help us fight against sin?

## DAY 6 — ROMANS 6:1-14

According to this verse, what is considered "dead" in you and what is considered "alive" in you?

How does this verse help you deal with sin / weakness in your life?

## DAY 7 — ROMANS 6:15-23

Explain, "you are slaves of the one whom you obey."

When you sin, how are you presenting your members to impurity?

# The Domino Effect

1 KINGS 11:38

WEEK

9

## Key Questions and Concepts

Small decisions each day lead to lifestyle of righteousness that reflects the heart of the King. Your heart for King Jesus dramatically influences the generations that follow you.

If we always rely on God's Word to guide us in our choices, we will avoid those disastrous consequences.

When was the last time you lined up a gazillion dominoes end to end, tipped the first one over, and sat back and watched the show? It's quite a thrill, huh? Unfortunately, the "domino effect" that plays out in life isn't always pretty.

Remember the story of David's sin with Bathsheba — lust, lying, and murder. The Bible tells us that when David did all of this that he despised the word of the Lord and did what was evil in his sight. The Bible gives us a clear picture to see how it caused pain, not only in his life, but all the way down his family tree. David repented, he was forgiven and God still punished him.

God's justice seems awfully harsh at times, doesn't it? We don't really get a complete picture of God whenever we focus only on His justice or only on His loving-kindness. It's hard to get our arms around this. We tend to think in terms of "either/or." He is fully just and fully loving, even when the two qualities seem in conflict.

*Describe a simple decision you make each day for purity?  
What choices do you make each day that could result in a domino effect?*

Often we forget that our sin and lead to problems for others in the future. David's sin led to problems for Solomon and Solomon's sin led to more problems. That is one major reason it is so important to live for Jesus on a daily basis. The domino effect can wreak havoc in our lives. Small decisions each day lead to lifestyle of righteousness that reflects the heart of the King. Your heart for King Jesus dramatically influences the generations that follow you.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Kings 11:26–33 Solomon's most important enemy, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, was to be found right on his doorstep. He was the former superintendent of the forced labor of the house of Joseph, those who had been helping with the construction work in Jerusalem (vv. 27–28). He was approached outside the city by the prophet Ahijah (v. 29) with a prophecy concerning the kingship. The scene is reminiscent of the rejection of Saul in 1 Samuel 15; in both passages an outer garment is torn as a symbol of the fact that God is tearing the kingdom away from the reigning king (cf. 1 Sam. 15:27–28; 1 Kings 11:11). The garment here is divided into 12 pieces, of which ten, symbolizing 10 northern tribes, are given to Jeroboam (vv. 30–31). One tribe is to remain for the sake of David and

## PAYING IT FORWARD

Read 1 Kings 11:38.

**Near the end of Solomon's life, how did God speak of David through His prophet Ahijah?**

God's judgment may be harsh, but isn't His forgiveness amazing? You've already learned that the kingship over Israel passed from David to Solomon.

**Speaking of God's forgiveness, who was Solomon's mother again?**

**What does this say about God's attitude toward us when we repent of our sin?**

**In 1 Kings 11:38, a direct promise from God was given to Jeroboam (we'll meet him shortly) if Jeroboam would remain obedient to God. Do you think He would do the same for you? Why?**

HE IS FULLY JUST AND FULLY LOVING, EVEN WHEN THE TWO QUALITIES SEEM IN CONFLICT.

Although Solomon was already under judgment because of his father's sin, we know that God pointed to Solomon's own sin as a further cause for God's judgment.

Read 1 Kings 11:9-13 to refresh your memory on how Solomon sinned against God.

**What did he do? What did God promise as a result?**

## "JAY" and "RAY"

God spoke through Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh at the end of Solomon's rule and revealed that He had a different plan for the next reign over His people. The kingdom was going to be split into two kingdoms. As you'll see, a nation divided cannot last.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM — ISRAEL  
THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM — JUDAH

These two "half-kingdoms" were both eventually conquered and enslaved by enemies on their borders. Even today, Jews are still awaiting a king, or Messiah, who will reestablish Israel as a sovereign, united kingdom.

Jerusalem (i.e., Judah). Benjamin is not included in the math here (cf. 12:21), perhaps because this tribe was regarded simply as Jerusalem's own territory, on the analogy of the Canaanite city-state; this territory came with the city, and needed no special mention.

1 Kings 11:43 The oft-repeated "he slept with his fathers" reflected the reality that almost all Israelite burials were in multichambered, rock-hewn tombs carved into hillsides. They were probably used as family tombs, so that even in death family ties were underscored.

1 Kings 12:4 Your father made our yoke heavy. Solomon's regime in the latter years has been un-

## Point to Make

Remind students of how David lived through the real consequences of his sin.

## Interact

For example, our parents often say, "Do this, or you'll get that." If you don't clean your room when your parents have asked you to do so, what is the expected response? Probably justice, right?

Read 1 Kings 11:26-40.

**Who became Solomon's new enemy (v. 26)?**

**What or who set this new enemy against King Solomon?**

**From what you've read so far, was this new enemy good or evil?**

**To where did Jeroboam flee, and why (v. 40)?**

Read 1 Kings 11:41-12:4.

**Who was the rightful heir to succeed Solomon as king over all of Israel?**

**Who was this new king's grandfather?**

**What finally brought Jeroboam and Rehoboam together?**

It is important to understand the geography of the Middle East during the time that the feud started to brew between "Jay" and "Ray." Looking at the map in the back of the book, Appendix 1, and today's Scripture, and write down the significance of these places:

Jerusalem)

Zeredah)

Moab)

Ammon)

Egypt)

Shechem)

### **Point to Make**

At this point we have no evidence that Jeroboam is bad. Solomon actually put him in charge of the forced labor (v. 28).

### **Point to Make**

Jerusalem – 1 Kings 11:36. Home of the one tribe and the city that God chose to put his name.

Zeredah(h) – 1 Kings 11:26. Hometown of Jeroboam

Moab - 1 Kings 11:1-2, 7. Foreign nations worshiping foreign gods.

Ammon – 1 Kings 11:1-2, 7. Foreign nations worshiping foreign gods.

Egypt – 1 Kings 11:40-12:2. Jeroboam fled there until Solomon had died.

Shechem – 1 Kings 12:1. Place of covenant renewal in Joshua 24:1-27. Ideal place for a king to be invited and confronted with the question of how he is going to exercise his kingship.

duly harsh. The Israelites are no longer a people living in freedom in the Promised Land; they have become once more a people under hard service, as they were in Egypt (Ex. 1:14; 2:23). They toil as oxen would under a heavy yoke.

1 Kings 12:10–11 My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. The foolish advice of the younger men to Rehoboam is literally in Hebrew "my little one is thicker than my father's thighs," most likely a reference to his sexual organ rather than a literal finger. Power and sexual potency were very much connected in the ancient Near East (see ch. 1). The equally obscure scorpions (12:11) is probably a reference to a particularly vicious form of whip.

## A TALE OF TWO KINGDOMS

We need to understand a little more geography. Look at the maps in this book, Appendix 1 and 2, and you can see where the northern and southern kingdoms lie in relation to division of the land for the 12 tribes. With this background, the conflict between Jay and Ray will make a lot more sense.

Read Genesis 49:1-2, 28 and Ezekiel 47:13-14.

**What was the origin of the 12 tribes of Israel?**

**How did this eventually affect the land of Israel?**

**How did God intend to divide the 12 tribes as the nation of Israel was racing toward disaster? (See 1 Kings 11:34-37.)**

Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam prepared to succeed his father as king over all of Israel. Solomon's death also made it safe for Jeroboam to return home from Egypt to stake his claim as king.

Read 1 Kings 12:1-4.

**What did Jeroboam and his assembly ask of Rehoboam?**

**Why did the Israelites want a king originally?**

**What were they willing to give up in order to have a king rule over Israel?**

**What was God's warning to the Israelites, through Samuel, regarding wanting an earthly king?**

Read 1 Kings 12:5-17.

Rehoboam's response to the complaint brought before him was a huge turning point for the nation of Israel. It is at this point where the dominoes began to fall down two separate paths.

### Point to Make

One tribe is to remain for the sake of David and Jerusalem (i.e., Judah). Benjamin is not included in the math here (cf. 12:21), perhaps because this tribe was regarded simply as Jerusalem's own territory, on the analogy of the Canaanite city-state; this territory came with the city, and needed no special mention.

### Point to Make

The complaint that was brought before Rehoboam was a prime opportunity for God to say, "I told you so."

### Research

Read 1 Samuel chapter 8 to get some background on the complaint made by Jeroboam.

1 Kings 12:14 I will add to your yoke. In reacting in this way, Rehoboam is behaving exactly as Pharaoh had behaved before him, responding to the words of Moses by increasing the oppression (cf. Ex. 5:1-21).

1 Kings 12:15 a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord. Amid all the human decisions, God's decision is being carried through, as was the case with the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3-4, 13).

1 Kings 12:16 What portion do we have in David? Kingship cannot be imposed on the people but



What if Jeroboam returned from Egypt and directly challenged Rehoboam for the throne over all of Israel?

What if Rehoboam had heeded the advice of the elders who previously served his father?

What if the people of Israel hadn't asked Samuel to give them a king in the first place?

THE CHOICES PEOPLE MAKE CAN HAVE HUGE AND UNEXPECTED IMPACTS LATER.

If we could see the consequences of our choices upfront, we probably would do a lot of things differently. God knows we can't see the future, and that's why He gave us guidelines for how to live. If we always rely on God's Word to guide us in our choices, we will avoid those disastrous consequences. It doesn't mean our lives will be trouble-free, but when we live within God's will, He works all things together for good.

## Interact

Play a little game of "what if?" There are no right or wrong answers; it's just an opportunity to imagine different outcomes.

## Reference

See Romans 8:28.

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must have their consent, so they take upon their lips a cry that is similar to that of Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:1, and they leave for their tents.

Gen. 49:28 Jacob's blessing of his sons emphasizes the contribution that each will make to the twelve tribes of Israel. While the unity of the 12 is assumed, the tribes of Judah and Joseph are clearly distinguished from all the others in terms of their leadership role within the nation. This outcome reflects in large measure how Joseph and Judah are portrayed within chs. 37–50. Beyond Genesis, the tribes of Ephraim and Judah are consistently portrayed as taking the lead, with the latter eventually providing the Davidic dynasty.

## NOW WHAT?

Read Proverbs 3:7-8.

What will it require of you to fear the Lord and shun evil?

What advice have you been ignoring lately that you know you need to follow?

What choices are you making now that you need to be very careful of the future impact in your future?

How can you ensure that your family is not impacted by a poor choice?

## GOING DEEPER

Is there any love when you receive punishment after you do something wrong? Why?

How great is it when you do something wrong and are expecting to get in trouble, but you get a free pass for no apparent reason?

When you catch a break, does it mean that you were treated unjustly?

Why would God set an enemy against someone?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Proverbs 3:7-8

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Ezek. 47:13–23 The Outer Boundaries. The principles governing division of the land (vv. 13–14) introduce the description of Israel's borders (vv. 15–20). Verse 21 links with vv. 13–14, then makes provision for the settlement of resident aliens (vv. 22–23).

# WEEK 9 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — ROMANS 15:4

Describe how the story of David and Solomon (written in former days) can be for our instruction?  
What does the verse say produces the hope in us?

## DAY 2 — 1 KINGS 11:9-10

Why do you think God reminds us of the fact that he had appeared to Solomon twice?  
How is Jesus the ultimate "appearance" of God to us as the church?

## DAY 3 — PSALM 51

Write down all the verbs in verses 9-12. Who is the one performing these actions?  
How does this reveal our dependency on God's mercy when we sin?

## DAY 4 — 1 JOHN 1:5-10

What does this passage say about how the way we live affects our relationship with God?  
If you have sin, how are you to deal with it?

## DAY 5 — 1 KINGS 11:38

Write down the things God asks Jeroboam to do and the things God promises to do in return.  
Based on the promise to Jeroboam, what can we learn about how God interacts with his people?

## DAY 6 — ISAIAH 10:1-4

What is the cause and effect in this passage?  
How does this passage support the fact that sin has consequences?

## DAY 7 — NUMBERS 20:10-13

Why was Moses not allowed to go into the Promised Land?  
How does this show that God's people are not exempt from consequences?

# A Divided Kingdom

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

WEEK  
10

## Key Questions and Concepts

Why would a person rather learn from someone else's mistakes?

What do you want your legacy to be?

How can you positively use the principle "you reap what you sow?"

Remember our lineup of dominoes we opened last week? Imagine a single row of dominoes falling until one lands against two that are facing left and right. Now there are two rows of falling dominoes, each going down its own destructive path.

That's what happened to the nation, or kingdom, of Israel. Since the people of Israel had first asked God for a king to rule them, the nation had been a united kingdom, except for a brief period at the beginning of David's reign. At the end of Solomon's rule, the kingdom was split into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom — Israel, and the southern kingdom — Judah. As you'll see, a nation divided cannot last.

*Why would a person rather learn from someone else's mistakes?  
Describe an opportunity you currently have to do what is right?*

Rehoboam and Jeroboam had opportunities to make things right but neither one of them made the effort. Jeroboam had a golden opportunity to make God famous by eliminating all false worship and bringing Israel back to its first love, the one true God. Sadly, Jeroboam blew his opportunity big time. One of this story's powerful lessons is about the importance of the choices we make.

Do you want to learn from Jay's and Ray's mistakes, and make an easier road for yourself? Or are you the kind of person who has to stick his own hand into the fire to learn that it's hot? Pray that God would give you the wisdom to avoid getting burnt hands!

## 5-Minute Commentary

Jer. 17:10 heart and ... mind. God understands (v. 9) the inner recesses of human motives, thinking, and decisions to give every man. God is a just and merciful Judge.

1 Kings 12:18 Adoram. He comes not to reimpose conditions of forced labor on Israel (since Israel has not yet been under such conditions; 9:15–23), but to initiate them. If the Israelites think their experience under Solomon was the "hard service" of Egypt, they are to discover now that this was as nothing compared to life under the proposed new regime. This regime will regard them as if they were Canaanites.

## WHO'S IN CHARGE?

One of the attributes of God is His sovereignty. We often associate the word "sovereignty" with governments, kings, and presidents, as in an independent nation or monarch.

### SOVEREIGNTY – SUPREME POWER OR ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

Read 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 and fill in the blanks below.

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above \_\_\_\_\_. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over \_\_\_\_\_. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to \_\_\_\_\_."

Read 1 Kings 11:31-33.

**What had God already determined would happen to the 12 tribes of Israel?**

**Why was God doing this?**

The Bible clearly states that God is sovereign over everything. At the same time, man has the ability to make choices.

Read Joshua 24:15.

"And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, \_\_\_\_\_ this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

So do you see the dilemma? How can God be sovereign, yet man can be free to choose what he will do? What does all this have to do with Jay and Ray, anyway? It matters because they had choices set before them. They also fought to be in "charge" of the kingdom.

Read 1 Kings 11:38.

**Describe the choice that Jeroboam had set before him?**

As you saw in last week's study, Rehoboam also had a choice to make when Jeroboam and company asked him to ease up on the hard labor.

## Preparation

Read through 1 Kings 11-14 to adequately provide context for the students in this lesson.

## Fill in the Blank

All; all; all

## Point to Make

One tribe is to remain for the sake of David and Jerusalem (i.e., Judah). Benjamin is not included in the math here (cf. 12:21), perhaps because this tribe was regarded simply as Jerusalem's own territory, on the analogy of the Canaanite city-state; this territory came with the city, and needed no special mention.

## Fill in the Blank

Choose

1 Kings 12:24 they listened to the word of the Lord and went home. At least for now a war is averted, but this peace does not last long. The reader will later learn of continual war between north and south throughout the period after the division of the kingdoms (14:30; 15:6, 16), until the two sides see that they are indeed relatives (12:24; cf. ch. 22, esp. v. 44) and should accept the status quo.

1 Kings 12:27–28 two calves of gold. Fear that the presence of the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem will lead northern Israel to return to Rehoboam leads Jeroboam to invent his own worship system, central to which are these calves. His words to the people about them—Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt—are almost exactly the words with which the people

Review 1 Kings 12:6-11.

**What were his two options based on the advice he received? Before you write the choices explain who gave the advice.**

1)

2)

Unfortunately, Rehoboam didn't choose the wisest option. However, God did give him the freedom to choose. Understand that God's sovereignty and man's free will are not "either/or." These two truths, as revealed in God's Word, are "both/and." Can you get your arms around that? If not, don't feel bad. Entire church denominations have formed and fought over such things. The bottom line is that God is in control and we are responsible for our choices.

GOD DOESN'T REQUIRE YOU TO UNDERSTAND ALL OF HIS INFINITE TRUTHS,  
BUT HE DOES INVITE YOU TO BELIEVE THEM.

## **"JUST" REWARDS**

Chapters 11 and 12 in 1 Kings show the growing conflict between Jeroboam and Rehoboam, just as God had said. They were also still held accountable for the choices they freely made.

Read 1 Kings 12:18-20.

**Why do you think people responded the way that they did?**

It should have been a glorious national celebration of a new king coming to power. However, it turned into a humiliating rout for Judah's new king who fled his own coronation to escape assassination. In fact, Rehoboam's ceremony turned into Jeroboam being crowned as king of the northern kingdom, Israel.

**In 1 Kings 12:21-24, who claims responsibility for the escalating conflict among the Israelites?**

**How is this an example of God's sovereignty in action?**

Read 1 Kings 12:28, 13:33-34 and 14:7-14.

**What became of Jeroboam? What did Jeroboam do that so angered God?**

greeted the construction of the calf by Aaron (Ex. 32:4). These bull icons were unacceptable as representations of the Lord, since Mosaic religion requires a clear distinction between the Creator and the created. The worship of bull icons as representations of other gods was more unacceptable still. It blurs the distinction between the Lord and other gods, a blurring already in evidence in 1 Kings 14:15.

1 Kings 13:33-34 did not turn from his evil way, but made priests ... again. The Hebrew is literally "did not return from his evil way, but returned and made priests," playing on the verb shub ("to return") earlier in the story (vv. 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 29) and particularly on the phrase "return by

## **Reference**

Remind students of Rehoboam's choice in 1 Kings 12:12-17.

According to God, how did Jeroboam's behavior rate compared with those who lived before him?

What did the future hold in store for Jeroboam?

According to 1 Kings 14:30-31, what was the legacy of Jeroboam and Rehoboam?

Read Galatians 6:7-9.

How is the does the principle of "you reap what you sow" relate to Jay and Ray?

Maybe a good word to describe the steady decline in devotion to God within the house of David is the word introduced to you a few weeks ago: "slippage." You will notice that God references David and his pure heart for God when He was condemning those rulers who descended from David. Even though David sinned greatly, he valued a pure heart and always came back to God in repentance, asking God to cleanse him again. God determined the success of the Hebrew kings based on their devotion to him.

Slippage wasn't limited to the Israelite and Judean kings. Jesus called it out hundreds of years later when He walked the earth. Slippage still happens today. This happens because of the choices we make, even as Christ followers, are often in conflict with what we know is right.

What do you want your legacy to be?

Read Proverbs 20:9.

How would you answer this question?

The Good News of the gospel is that Jesus is the remedy for slippage. He died in our place so God would see His righteousness in us. Jesus really is God. He really did sacrifice himself so that we could be forgiven and set free to experience his love forever.

As a result of their poor choices, Judah and Israel went their separate ways, and each faction got its own king. The son of Jeroboam succeeded him as king of Israel, while the son of Rehoboam succeeded him as the king of Judah, yet, the dominoes continued to fall. Ultimately, the only way to stop the domino effect was to have a true and pure King. His name is Jesus.

## Interact

Discuss the importance of a legacy. Share with the students what it means to leave a legacy even as a student in their school.

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the way" in vv. 9, 10, 17. The man of God was told not to retrace his steps at any point on his journey, but he did so in order to return to the prophet's house (vv. 19, 22). Because he allowed himself to be brought back alive ("returned") by this prophet (vv. 18, 20, 23, 26), he was eventually brought back dead (v. 29), as God's judgment fell upon him. In spite of this, Jeroboam also "retraces his steps," and this too will bring downfall and destruction (v. 34).

1 Kings 14:10 Since Jeroboam has failed to be like David (v. 8) and has worshiped other gods as Solomon did (v. 9), his dynasty will come to an end for lack of male descendants. The Hebrew behind "every male" is literally "he who urinates against a wall" (see also 1 Sam. 25:22, 34; 1 Kings 16:11;

## NOW WHAT?

What recent failure can you learn from?

When you consider your walk with God, do you see slippage? Write an area or two that may come immediately to your mind.

How can you positively use the principle "you reap what you sow?"

## GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Kings 14:25-28.

What did the king of Egypt carry away from Jerusalem?

Fill in the blanks, based on that Scripture. After the temple treasures were plundered, Rehoboam replaced the \_\_\_\_\_ shields with \_\_\_\_\_ shields.

What might this symbolize?

Why does true, lifelong surrender to Jesus sound scary to many people?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 Corinthians 10:12

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21:21; 2 Kings 9:8), and the imagery is thus connected to that of God's judgment (as a man burns up dung or excrement until it is all gone). God is going to clean up Jeroboam's house and Jeroboam's descendants will be cut off.

1 Kings 14:11 Jeroboam's dynasty will come to a dishonorable end, since the bodies mentioned will not be buried but will be eaten by dogs and birds (cf. 1 Sam. 31:8-13 for the importance of proper burial in Israel). Only Jeroboam's son Abijah will escape this fate (1 Kings 14:13).



# WEEK 10 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — ROMANS 8:28

How are "those who love God" and "those who are called according to his purpose" the same?  
How does this verse give believers hope even when you experience sin and suffering?

## DAY 2 — PROVERBS 3:7-8

What does it mean to be "wise in your own eyes"?  
How is "fearing the Lord" the opposite of being "wise in your own eyes"?

## DAY 3 — ROMANS 11:33-36

What does verse 36 tell us about the character of God?  
What truths can we cling to in this passage when we are unsure about the future?

## DAY 4 — JOSHUA 24:14-28

Why must they choose to serve either "the Lord" or "the gods"? Why can't they serve both?  
How does this passage show that God places responsibility on men for the choices they make?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

Identify the places the word "work" is used in the passage. Who is the one doing the "work"?  
Describe how God's work in us does not eliminate our work; it enables it.

## DAY 6 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:7-13

How does the record of people's sin help us "not desire evil"?  
How is the fact that "God is faithful" a comfort to us in temptation?

## DAY 7 — 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

What do the words "examine" and "test" mean?  
How can continual examination of ourselves help us from slipping?

# A Few Good Men

PSALM 119:55

WEEK

11

## Key Questions and Concepts

Asa fully committed his heart to the Lord. Asa made some hard choices in his pursuit to live for God. You will have to make some hard choices too.

Describe the difference between running to friends, family, Google searches and social networks compared to God Almighty.

Have you every tried to walk through your house when it was completely dark? What about if you stayed at a friend's house and tried to walk through their home in the dark? Did you trip or stumble into anything? In those moments you must step forward completely by your memory of where things are at in order to keep yourself from getting hurt or breaking something.

When things are dark you have to rely on your memory. The nations of Israel and Judah suffered through some very dark years. Consider Rehoboam's reign: Not many men can manage to destroy nearly 80 years of work in 3 days, but that is exactly what Rehoboam did. His grandfather (David) had united the 12 tribes and he served them well for 40 years. His son, Solomon, also reigned over the nation for 40 years. Rehoboam's reign over the 12 tribes of Israel lasted 3 days. Jeroboam didn't fair much better. He poisoned the new nation with a new counterfeit religion with counterfeit priests and counterfeit calves he called gods.

*Which is worse in the dark, stubbing your toe or running into a wall face first?  
What do you want people to say about you when you are dead?*

However, those that remembered God's law and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord are honored in Scripture. We have barely scratched the surface of everything we can learn from the kings. Israel and Judah had a total of almost 40 kings. You will find the story and account of all of the kings of Israel and Judah in 1 and 2 Kings. The kings fall into one of two categories: Either they did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, or what was right in their own eyes.

Did you know there was never a good or godly king (20 in total) to follow Jeroboam on the throne in Israel (the northern kingdom)? Every king, without exception, was described as evil, which included the perverse worship of idols and the killing of God's prophets. All of this eventually led to God's judgment of those 10 tribes.

As we wrap up our study of the kings this week, we will take a brief look at a few more famous kings of Israel and Judah. We still have plenty to learn on how to have a pure heart as we follow Jesus.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Kings 15:13 The queen mother played an important role within the family politics of the court, as an adviser of the king and as teacher of the royal children.

1 Kings 15:14–15 the high places were not taken away. By removing the high places Asa could have focused his reforms upon worship in Jerusalem, but otherwise he was commended for his religious policy; he was faithful enough to bring into the house of the Lord the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts. When 2 Chron. 14:3 says that Asa removed the high places, this should be taken as meaning some but not all of them (cf. 2 Chron. 15:17).

## A REFRESHING CHANGE

Read 1 Kings 15:9-15.

**How does verse 11 describe King Asa and to whom is he compared?**

This is the first time we see a break in the cycle of sin among the kings. The break didn't just happen by chance. Breaking a sinful cycle never just happens. To disrupt the sinful cycle, a choice must be made. For a sinful cycle to break in our lives, we must follow God's leadership and make intentional changes.

**Describe the extent of what King Asa was willing to do get rid of evil according to 1 Kings 15:12.**

**What did Asa do according to 1 Kings 15:13?**

**How is Asa's heart described in 1 Kings 15:14?**

The cycle of sin was broken because Asa chose to obey God. He had to make some unpopular decisions in order to honor God. He chose the unpopular, godly way in order to honor God. You can do the same. You can choose to live like Asa.

**When do you feel like the odds are against you and your faith?**

The next few moments are going to require honesty and transparency. At the same time it requires the members of this group to be considerate and gossip must be eliminated. Now is a great time to spend a few moments in prayer for honesty, conviction, and accountability.

**Asa expelled the idols in the land. Describe any idols in your life that you need to get rid of?**

Read 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Asa deposed his queen mother from her position because she did something to worship a false god. To depose means to remove. Take time to think about the people with whom you surround yourself.

**Are there people in your life who are bad influences on you?**

Yes

No

## Point to Make

It is important to notice Asa's intentional choices. Asa completely removed them from the land and he eliminated everything that even his fathers had made.

## Interact

Ask students how they would respond if their own mom were to do something detestable to God.

## Point to Make

Consider that Asa's parents were both against what was right. It doesn't get much more difficult than that.

2 Kings 18:1–20:21 Hezekiah. A king is now presented who is not merely similar to David, like Asa and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 15:11; 22:43), but resembles him more closely than any other Davidic king so far. It is this king who reforms Judean worship, making it what it should be, and whose trust in God is vindicated, as the Assyrians fail to take Jerusalem as they have taken Samaria.

2 Kings 18:4 He removed the high places. This is a significant accomplishment because even the most righteous of Judean kings prior to Hezekiah in 1–2 Kings failed to do this.

2 Kings 18:5–6 He trusted in the Lord. Hezekiah's trust was unparalleled in Judean history (there was

## How can you remove a relationship from your life but honor the person as well?

Asa fully committed his heart to the Lord. Asa made some hard choices in his pursuit to live for God. You will have to make some hard choices too. Choosing to be pure is not the popular thing to do. Most likely, you will lose friends. However, God's way is always best and is always worth it.

## POUR OUT YOUR HEART

We are going to fast-forward a couple hundred years in Israelite history. We need to learn about another king of Judah, King Hezekiah. Several kings came and went between Asa and Hezekiah in the southern kingdom. Some were good kings; some were not. Hezekiah's predecessor was an evil king.

Read 2 Kings 18:1-7.

### Describe 6 things that you learned about King Hezekiah and what he accomplished?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)

During Hezekiah's reign, the Assyrian nation overtook Israel. (Remember, the nations were split into Israel and Judah. Hezekiah was king over Judah.) Then Assyria came knocking on Judah's door. They were threatening to overtake Judah also. In fact, they did defeat several cities in Judah, until they came after Jerusalem. When the Assyrians were going after Jerusalem, the king of Assyria sent his commanders and officers to warn the people not to trust in Hezekiah or their God. Little did the Assyrians know, they were going up against the God of the universe. They couldn't do anything without God's allowing it to be done. Thankfully for the people in Jerusalem, it was not God's will for Jerusalem to be destroyed. God protected Jerusalem through the leadership of King Hezekiah.

Read 2 Kings 19:14-19.

### What did King Hezekiah do once he heard of the Assyrians' plan to destroy Jerusalem?

Just imagine his desperation! He literally spread the letter out before the Lord as he poured out his heart to God. No one can help us the way the Lord can.

### When you face trouble in your life, what is the first thing you run to?

## Interact

Consider sharing a story in your life where you had to remove yourself from a friendship that pulled you away from God. Describe the relevance that it has made in your life today.

## Point to Make

Hezekiah a great example for us to follow! When trouble came his way, he went running to God.

## Point to Make

Describe the difference between running to friends, family, Google searches and social networks compared to God Almighty.

none like him among all the kings of Judah), and was evidenced in the way that he held fast to God (Hb. *dabaq*) throughout his life (cf. Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20), in contrast to Solomon, who in his old age "held fast" (Hb. *dabaq*; see 1 Kings 11:2, "clung") to foreign wives and broke the Law of Moses.

2 Kings 18:7-8 The consequence of Hezekiah's religious faithfulness was that his military exploits paralleled David's in a unique way: the Lord was with him; he prospered in war; and he struck down the Philistines. He was quite unlike his father Ahaz, for he rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him (cf. 2 Kings 16:7). Hezekiah's attack on the Philistines was in fact a preemptive strike

Read Psalm 62:8.

Hezekiah's desire was for God to deliver them so all the kingdoms of the earth would know that the Lord is God. His motives were pure. God heard Hezekiah's prayer. He delivered Jerusalem from Assyria. God used a humble man with a pure heart to bring about His purpose in that time. He wants to do the same with Christians today.

## **GOD'S WORD: OUR TREASURE**

Read 2 Kings 22:1-2.

**Write down every detail that you learn about Josiah.**

In 2 Kings chapters 22 and 23, the temple of the Lord had fallen into disrepair and needed to be restored. Josiah led the people to start repairing the temple. During the renovation, they found the Book of the Law. The Book of the Law is God's Word, Genesis through Deuteronomy. Finding the Book of the Law was no small thing. These were the very words of God that had been lost for some time.

Read 2 Kings 22:11-13.

**What did Josiah do when he heard the words from the Book of the Law?**

The people of God had obviously strayed so far from God's instruction that Josiah tore his robes in grief. This was a wake-up call for the people of God.

**Do you ever feel like we have forgotten the ways of God in our culture? Do we need a wake-up call like God's people in 2 Kings chapter 22? Explain.**

Read 2 Kings 23:1-3.

After finding God's Word, Josiah called all of the people together to hear the Word. Josiah treasured God's Word. Together, they all renewed their commitment to God to follow His instructions with all their hearts. The truth is, we all need to recommit our lives to God's Word at different times in our lives. Sometimes we wake up only to realize that we have strayed from God and His Word. Choose to follow Josiah's example. Choose to treasure God's Word and obey his instructions for our lives.

One man did obey his instructions. His name was Jesus. He knew the Father's heart. His heart was for the King. Now that you have studied some of the Old Testament kings and you know the perfect life Jesus lived, hopefully you are challenged to live a pure and holy life. By learning from some of their mistakes and some of their victories, you are better equipped to live like Jesus in the world today.

## **Point to Make**

That's right ... eight years old! That proves you are never too young to serve the Lord. Josiah's age isn't the only remarkable thing about his life.

## **Reference**

1 Timothy 4:12

## **Point to Make**

Remember, all of the events of Scripture hadn't taken place yet at this time, so this was all of God's Word that they had. It's also important to know that during this time, there were not thousands of copies of Scripture like there are today. Only a few copies existed.

against Assyrian allies in advance of this invasion.

2 Kings 19:15–19 Hezekiah prayed before the Lord. Hezekiah's response on this occasion is not to send messengers to Isaiah, asking the prophet to pray (v. 4), but rather to pray himself to God, who is here envisaged as dwelling in a special way in the Jerusalem temple and as being invisibly enthroned in the Most Holy Place on two enormous cherubim. Hezekiah now asks that Jerusalem be delivered for the glory of God himself: that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone.

## NOW WHAT?

Is your heart fully committed to the Lord? Why or why not?

When you seek God's help is it for your own selfish gain, or to bring God glory in your life?

PRAYER:

In your prayer time today, ask God to help you have the right motives in your prayers.

Do you treasure God's Word in your life? It is important to answer the question honestly.

- A) Yes
- B) Sometimes
- C) Not enough
- D) Not at all

Describe where you want your level of commitment to God and his word to be?

What will it take for you to get to that point?

## GOING DEEPER

What does it take for you to be willing to pour out your heart to the Lord?

Hezekiah made drastic changes for the better within the first month of his kingship. What would cause people to accept and follow such drastic changes?

Describe how difficult you think it would be to go against your parents in order to follow Jesus?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Psalm 119:55

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2 Kings 22:2 Josiah is the ideal king of Deut. 17:20, who does not turn from the Mosaic law to the right or to the left. He transcends even David and Hezekiah in his faithfulness to God.

2 Kings 22:11–13 Although it is not until the eighteenth year of his reign (v. 3) that the new king begins to take action concerning the apostate condition of worship in Judah, the authors of 1–2 Kings do not blame him. Brought up in a royal court that had been apostate for 57 years and that subjected all opposition to a reign of terror, Josiah was not aware of the Lord's demands. As soon as he became aware, he tore his clothes in grief and despair (cf. 1 Kings 21:27; 2 Kings 5:7–8; 6:30; 11:14; 19:1–2) and sent officials to inquire of the Lord.

# WEEK 11 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — MARK 9:42-48

What are the extreme measures described in this passage?

What sin are you actively trying to get rid and what actions are you taking to do it?

## DAY 2 — REVELATION 3:1-6

What is the church being commanded to do?

From this verse what can we learn about the eternal weight of our actions?

## DAY 3 — ACTS 4:23-31

Looking at the context of this passage, what is the situation the believers are in?

What was their immediate response?

## DAY 4 — PSALM 62:8

What are the two commands in this verse?

Explain the way that God is described in this passage and how that supports the commands?

## DAY 5 — DEUTERONOMY 32:44-47

How does Moses describe the Word of God?

How does the Word of God provide life?

## DAY 6 — PSALM 119:97-104

What are all the ways the Psalmist refers to the word of God?

Why does the Psalmist love the word of God?

## DAY 7 — 2 SAMUEL 7:12-16

What does God promise to do for David in this passage?

How does this passage point forward to Jesus as the true king?

## LOOKING BACK

You have done a great job this semester as you have studied the Old Testament kings. All throughout Scripture, God's people are instructed to remember the works and words of God. By doing this, we are better able to keep His law. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

**How do you feel now that you have completed this study?**

**Think back over the lessons you have studied. With what Israelite king do you identify most? Why?**

**What have you learned about purity within this study?**

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalm 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and lived out.

- Learned the importance of being where you are supposed to be.
- Discussed how God always knows cover-ups.
- Examined the danger of slippage.
- Discovered the importance of accountability.
- Understood the proper response to our sin is repent.
- Discovered God's infinite grace when we ask for it.
- Examined the importance of wise counsel.
- Discussed the difference between love and lust.
- Examined how human instincts lead to death.
- Discovered that our greatest gifts cannot save us from destruction.
- Examined the danger of being lukewarm in our walk with Jesus.
- Examined the foolishness of leaving our heart unguarded.
- Learned the importance of leading our own family well.
- Looked at the domino effect of our sin.
- Learned the importance of completely giving our heart to the King of kings.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.



# APPENDIX 1



# APPENDIX 2



# PURITY FOR LIFE

## MY HEART FOR THE KING

Purity begins with a changed heart from a relationship with Jesus. A changed heart leads to changed behavior. We are all bombarded with the temptation to act in impure ways, but with God's help and His Word, we can truly live pure lives.

This study will help students discuss the pressures of dating within a fallen world, how set boundaries, create strategies to flee temptation, learn the importance of modesty, examine the characteristics of a godly spouse, and discover God must be the object of our supreme affection.

# Spiritually

## Pure

GENESIS 3:1-7 & COLOSSIANS 1:22

WEEK

1

### Key Questions and Concepts

Purity begins with a changed heart from a relationship with Jesus. A changed heart leads to changed behavior. We are all bombarded with the temptation to act in impure ways, but with God's help and His Word, we can truly live pure lives.

Describe what it means to be spiritually pure?

Leading up to this study, we have studied the Old Testament kings and how they lived up to the standards set before them. Though it may not have seemed like it, we were studying purity. Those studies helped to lay a foundation about choices for your life of purity. This study will transition to an in-depth look at your personal life of purity.

God has cared about purity from the beginning. To begin our understanding of purity, we must first take a look at the onset of impurity in mankind. Before Adam and Eve's sinful choice, they were pure before God. Sin had not yet entered the equation. However, they chose to disobey God's command and ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a result, they were no longer pure before God, but rather they became impure.

*Describe what it means to be spiritually pure?  
When do you recognize the battle for your spiritual purity?*

To be pure means to be morally clean. Impurity entered the human race when Adam and Eve sinned. Ever since then, all people have been born with a sin nature. Before you became a Christian, you were ruled by your sinful nature. You couldn't help but sin because you were simply living out who you truly were.

God is perfectly holy and righteous and cannot tolerate sin. This creates a dilemma: God loves His children, but He hates their sin. Sin requires a payment in order to satisfy God's wrath. So God did the unthinkable; in the midst of man's sin, He sent His one and only Son to earth to take on human flesh and then purposed for Him to die a horrible death on a cross. Jesus' death on the cross in the place of sinful man satisfied the wrath of God.

Ultimately, purity begins with a changed heart from a relationship with Jesus. A changed heart leads to changed behavior. We will continue to look into God's Word to learn how to be pure in today's world. No doubt, we are all bombarded with the temptation to act in impure ways, but with God's help and His Word, we can truly live pure lives.

### 5-Minute Commentary

Col. 1:21–22 once ... now. Paul presents a strong contrast between the Colossians' pre-Christian status and their favorable situation now as Christians. alienated. Sin has resulted in estrangement from God (Eph. 2:12; 4:18) and thus creates the need for reconciliation. The result of reconciliation is that Christ is now working in all the believers to present you holy and blameless before God. This is the same language used in the OT to describe the unblemished animals that the Levitical priest would bring for a sacrifice to God. When Christ brings his followers to the Father for inspection, they will be found to be above reproach.

## FALLEN NATURE

Total depravity is an important concept to understand. This term expresses that humans are completely corrupt apart from God and that there is nothing man can do to earn God's favor and salvation. In other words, we are all doomed without Christ.

**Describe how different our world would be if all people were controlled by their sinful natures?**

Apart from Christ, nothing good lives in you. Before Christ, you were controlled by your fallen nature. You needed help, and only One could provide the help that you needed. His name is Jesus.

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

While you were still a sinner, Jesus died for you. He didn't wait for you to get better; He took your penalty upon Himself so that you would have a way to be saved. Hopefully, you are beginning to grasp the seriousness of this issue.

## NEW NATURE

Read Romans 6:6-7 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

**How do these verses describe an individual's nature before believing in Jesus?**

Before becoming a Christian, you were a slave to sin. You couldn't help but sin because it was in your nature to do so. However, your sin nature was rendered powerless when you were born again. You now have the power to overcome sin because of your new nature in Christ.

Read Romans 7:15-25.

**Summarize what Paul is saying in these verses.**

**According to verse 25, how did Paul find freedom over this struggle in his life?**

Without Christ, you have no chance of living a holy life. With Him, you are freed from being a slave to sin as He daily empowers you to not give in to the sinful nature.

## Discuss

Think for a moment about the seriousness of your sin. You were separated from your Creator God because of your sin nature. Where would you be without Jesus? What would your life be like if Jesus hadn't rescued you from darkness? What would our world be like without Jesus?

## Reference

Galatians 5:19-21

## Point to Make

There is a battle raging in your soul. Even though you are a new creation in Christ, you still struggle with the sin nature.

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Rom. 6:6 The power of sin has been broken in those who believe, for their old self (lit., "old man," meaning who they were in Adam) was crucified and put to death with Christ. They were born into the world as sinners, with the result that their bodies were ruled by sin. Body of sin refers to the rule of sin, but without excluding the involvement of the personal self that lives through the body. Sin's rule, however, was broken when Christians died with Christ, and therefore they are no longer enslaved to sin. Paul does not argue that Christians do not sin at all (a view called sinless perfection); instead, the tyranny, domination, and rule of sin have been defeated for them. This means that the normal pattern of life for Christians should be progressive growth in sanctification, resulting in ever greater maturity and conformity to God's moral law in thought and action.

## GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

Read Colossians 1:15–23.

### What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

Did you catch the part that God now sees you as holy? You are holy in God's sight! You probably don't see yourself as holy, but what God sees is far more important than what you see. However, you are not holy on your own accord; it is only because of Christ's work on the cross for you.

The word holy means, "to possess certain divine qualities that are in contrast with what is human." As a Christ follower, you now have divine qualities.

### What does it mean to be without blemish?

Read Hebrews 9:14 and 1 Peter 1:19.

### What words or phrases are used to describe Jesus?

### According to Colossians 1:22, how does Christ present you to God?

Even though we are wretched sinners, through Christ's blood God now sees believers without any blemish. The word used to describe us as without blemish in Colossians 1:22 is the same word used to describe Christ as the Son of God without blemish. That means God compares our holiness to the holiness of the Son of God.

So while you and I would not likely describe ourselves as spotless and sinless, God sees us as holy and without blemish. This is an amazing truth for all Christians to know.

### So how does this truth affect your life of purity?

## THE PROCESS OF PURITY

You have likely wondered, "If God sees me as holy, how come I don't live a holy life as a Christian?" Paul could completely identify with you.

Read Romans 7:15.

### Point to Make

To reconcile means "to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken." Our relationship with God was disrupted when sin entered the world, but through Christ's sacrifice, we can once more have a relationship with God.

### Point to Make

Students probably hear the word blemish used in today's world in reference to someone who has acne. To be without blemish means having no defect, or to be blameless.

### Point to Make

When you understand how the God of the universe sees you, you no longer live like the world, giving in to every sinful temptation. You desire to live as God sees you, as a pure and holy follower of Jesus.

Rom. 7:24–25 The living presence of Jesus Christ is the answer to the problem of sin in one's life.

Heb. 9:14 Jesus was both the high priest (for "offered," see 5:1, 3; 8:3; 9:7; esp. 10:11–12) and the sacrifice itself (offered "himself"; cf. 9:25–26), but this verse specifies that the Holy Spirit in some way aided or empowered Christ in making this offering. OT sacrifices had to be without blemish; Jesus is "holy, innocent, unstained" (see 7:26). Purify our conscience. Mosaic sacrifices did not affect the conscience (9:9; cf. 10:2), but Christ's sacrifice purifies the innermost being (10:22).

1 Pet. 1:18–19 Believers were ransomed by Christ's precious blood. "Ransom" recalls Israel's deliv-

### What is Paul saying in this Scripture?

It's true that even though God sees us as holy, we still struggle to walk in holiness every day of our lives. However, as we live our lives on earth, God will help us to walk in holiness. This process of growing in holiness is called sanctification.

Read John 17:17.

### Who said these words and how are believers to be sanctified?

The word sanctify means "to make holy." Jesus is asking the Father to make His followers holy.

God's Word is the key to growing in our walk with the Lord. God has chosen to use His Word to sanctify us. If you pick up your Bible only once a week, you will not grow in your faith.

So how does this affect your life of purity? If you want to live a pure, holy, sanctified life, you have to be a dedicated student of God's Word.

## GLORIFICATION

Justification, sanctification, and glorification are all big words, but they are important truths for you to know in your pursuit of purity.

Read Philippians 3:20–21 and 1 John 3:2.

### According to these verses, what does glorification mean?

Read Romans 8:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51–58.

### Describe the future of a follower of Jesus.

It is likely that you will grow weary of pursuing purity in our world today. Knowing that Christ will come again one day and remove sin from your life should give you hope to press on. Let's face it. It is hard. Yet, it is worth the struggle.

### Point to Make

If you need help in this area, find an accountability partner to remind and encourage you to read God's Word every day. An accountability partner should be a strong Christian friend (same gender) whom you can trust. This person must be able to speak God's truth to you even when it isn't what you want to hear. If you don't have an accountability partner, ask God to show you who it could be.

### Point to Make

Glorification will happen for believers at the second coming of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns to earth to get His bride, He will transform our bodies to be like Him, pure in every way. We cannot attain this level of purity on earth, but one day we will. Glorification is God's final removal of sin from His followers.

erance from Egypt (Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; 24:18), which in turn points to the greater deliverance accomplished by Jesus Christ. Christ's sacrifice is compared to a lamb without blemish or spot. The references to "lamb" and "blood" point to the OT sacrifices and especially to Christ as the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12) and the servant of the Lord (cf. "lamb," Isa. 53:7). As the perfect sacrifice, Christ atoned for the sins of the unrighteous (cf. John 1:29; 1 Pet. 3:18).

John 17:17 The sanctification of Christians is a lifelong process. It involves both a relational component (separation from participating in and being influenced by evil) and a moral component (growth in holiness or moral purity in attitudes, thoughts, and actions). This occurs as Christians believe,

## NOW WHAT?

Take a moment to do an honest assessment of your commitment to God's Word. Answer each question below.

**Do you spend time every day reading God's Word?**

**Do you regularly meditate (think deeply) about God's Word?**

**Do you memorize Scripture?**

**How have you noticed God's Word transforming you to live a holier life?**

You have learned some pretty deep spiritual truths this week. Ask God to plant these truths deep in your heart so that the Holy Spirit can recall them to you as you live for Him. If necessary, recommit yourself to taking time to truly study God's Word. His book, the Bible, is the only book that is living and active and capable of changing your life. No other book can make that claim.

**How does understanding your complete depravity (wickedness) help you understand the deep need you have for Christ?**

## GOING DEEPER

**Why does it require the help of the Holy Spirit for you to live a pure life?**

**Why is it worth your time to think deeply about God's Word?**

PRAYER:

Spend time thanking God for the amazing price Jesus paid so that you could be reconciled to God. Then ask God to help you live like He sees you.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Colossians 1:22

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think, and live according to "the truth" in relation to God, themselves, and the world.

Rom. 8:18 The glory that Christians will receive is so stupendous that the sufferings of this present time are insignificant in comparison (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17). They look forward both to the resurrection of the body (1 Thess. 4:13–18) and to the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1–22:5; see Isa. 65:17).

1 Cor. 15:51–53 Christians who are alive at the time of the resurrection will be transformed so that their bodies become spiritual and immortal like the bodies of those who are resurrected from the dead. (See 1 Thess. 4:13–18.)



# WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PROVERBS 20:9 & ROMANS 3:10

What is the obvious answer to the question in Proverbs 20:9?

Why is it not possible to cleanse yourself from sin?

## DAY 2 — ROMANS 7:18-25

What causes the struggle between doing right and wrong?

How do verses 24-25 provide you hope?

## DAY 3 — TITUS 3:3-7

Describe the practical change that takes place in the life of a believer in Christ.

Write a prayer to God thanking Him for rescuing you from your sinful nature.

## DAY 4 — ROMANS 6:10-14

What responsibility do you have in regards to your choices?

How can you offer yourself as an instrument of righteousness?

## DAY 5 — TITUS 2:11-14

How should we love while we wait for Christ's return?

What characteristics of God does Jesus reveal in this circumstance?

## DAY 6 — 1 JOHN 2:28-3:10

How does this passage describe a way to be confident in the second coming of Jesus?

Describe the danger of living in a continual pattern of sin.

## DAY 7 — COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

Describe how a changed heart leads to changed behavior.

As a follower of Christ, what responsibility do you have to be a servant of the gospel of Jesus?

# Emotionally

## Pure

PROVERBS 4:23

This week we are going to talk about what it means to be emotionally pure. Our emotions are at the center of our beings, stemming from our hearts. Our words and actions also come from our hearts. Our hearts, therefore, are a really big deal to God.

If we want to be emotionally pure, we must be careful to guard our hearts. Scripture is full of warnings about what kind of heart to avoid. If we are diligent to protect our hearts, our pursuit of purity will be much more successful.

***What are you willing to do to protect your heart?  
Why are your emotions tied to what you treasure in your heart?***

Spend some time in prayer for the following areas of your heart. *Ask students to put their hand over their hearts and lead them through the following time in prayer.* Open the time of prayer by reading Psalm 139:23-24 and ask God to search hearts in the following time of prayer.

- 1) Ask God to unite your heart with his.
- 2) Ask God to reveal any stubbornness in your heart.
- 3) Ask God to help you have a high view of him rather than yourself.
- 4) Ask God to help you trust him with your heart and future.
- 5) Ask God to show you how to guard your heart.

You can be sure that when you understand spiritual purity and pursue emotional purity by guarding your heart, you will make wise decisions in the area of physical purity. This week, as we study the heart from God's perspective, ask Him to do something for your heart—ask Him to open it, guide it, and change it in ways you didn't realize He could.

WEEK

2

## Key Questions and Concepts

What are you willing to do to protect your heart?

You can be sure that when you understand spiritual purity and pursue emotional purity by guarding your heart, you will make wise decisions in the area of physical purity.

The pursuit of emotional purity is vital in your pursuit of physical purity. If you decide to guard your heart when dating someone, you are much more likely to walk in physical purity.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Prov. 4:20–23 Heart in Proverbs regularly refers to the center of one's inner life and orientation to God, from which a person does all thinking, feeling, and choosing. Taking words of wisdom into the heart is vital (they are life, v. 22), and wisdom's presence in the heart is worth guarding because out of the heart flow all the thoughts and words and choices of a person's life.

Prov. 28:13–14 To fear the Lord involves confessing and forsaking one's sins, rather than concealing them and hardening one's heart. Such a person receives mercy and is therefore truly happy.

## A DOUBLE HEART

Read Psalm 12:2.

**According to this Scripture, what kind of heart should we avoid?**

**Based on this Scripture, what does it mean to have a double heart?**

Read Proverbs 10:9.

To have a double heart is the opposite of having integrity. A person of integrity has a heart and a lifestyle that match. God cares if we walk with integrity of heart. Our hearts and our lives need to say the same thing; they need to be united.

### DOUBLE HEART EXAMPLES:

1) Sara tells everyone that she is a Christian, but she doesn't act like it when she is at school. She can often be found talking bad about her teachers, cheating on tests, and using foul language in the halls. Even though she says she is a Christian, her life does not demonstrate it. She has a double heart.

2) Mark tells everyone that he is called to missions. Mark, however, has never shared his faith with anyone. He has a lot of friends who are not Christians, but he never takes the time to tell them about Jesus. Mark's heart for missions and his lifestyle do not match. He has a double heart.

3) When Taylor attends church on Sundays, she loves the praise and worship time. She often raises her hands, closes her eyes, and is quite expressive in her worship. However, in her heart, she is only thinking about herself and what other Christians think about her. Her focus is not on the Lord, but rather on herself. Her heart and her actions do not match. She acts like she is praising God, but her heart is not in a posture of true worship. She has a double heart.

**Why do you think it is important to avoid a double heart in your pursuit of purity?**

## A HARD HEART

Read Proverbs 28:14, Mark 3:5 and 16:14.

**What does it mean to have a stubborn, or hard, heart before God?**

### Example

If someone has flattering lips, his speech and his heart do not match. He does not mean what he is saying. This is a warning sign of a double heart.

### Interact

Have students respond to the double heart examples. These examples are meant to help students search their own hearts. Ask students when they have a double heart. If we are honest, we all do at times. Ask students if they can think of another example of someone with a double heart.

### Reference

Encourage students to underline the type of heart to avoid in their Bibles.

Mark 3:3–5 Jesus is not intimidated by his opponents; he makes the Sabbath healing (cf. v. 2) an intentionally public incident. They were silent. The silence of the opponents displays their hardness of heart, and Jesus' anger shows that his question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm ...?" should have been answered: "to do good." This would not violate the OT law, but it would violate the opponents' extrabiblical, mostly Pharisaic tradition. Their tradition misses the point of the Mosaic law: to love God and one's neighbor (cf. 12:29–31).

Mark 16:9–20 In summary, vv. 9–20 should be read with caution. As in many translations, the editors of the esv have placed the section within brackets, showing their doubts as to whether it was

None of us are immune to this temptation. A hard heart is not pleasing to God. To have a hard heart means “to be stubborn, to be unyielding and resisting in an event; or lack humility before a superior.”

### How might a hard heart be dangerous in your pursuit of purity?

Read Ezekiel 11:19.

God desires that you have a heart of flesh that He can easily mold. If you want to have a pure heart, you will certainly need a soft heart before God. By taking time each day to spend time in God’s Word, you are allowing God to mold and shape you to be who He wants you to be.

## A PROUD HEART

To be proud means to be “arrogant, pertaining to an exalted view of self that is improper.”

The Bible has a lot to say about pride. Look up each of the following Scriptures and match them to the correct answer.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| A) Psalm 10:4         | 1) Pride brings destruction.            |
| B) Proverbs 16:18     | 2) Pride is sin.                        |
| C) Proverbs 21:4      | 3) God opposes the proud.               |
| D) 1 Peter 5:5        | 4) Love is not proud.                   |
| E) 1 Corinthians 13:4 | 5) A prideful person does not seek God. |

What did you learn about pride from the above verses?

How do you think a prideful heart can negatively affect your pursuit of purity?

Read Psalm 148.

Prideful people think too highly of themselves and think too often about themselves. To fight against having a prideful heart, we need to think often and highly of God.

## AN UNBELIEVING HEART

Read Hebrews 3:12.

What does it mean to have an unbelieving heart?

### Illustrate

Imagine meeting a person that you are interested in dating. If God knows this person is not good for you, He will show you this through your parents, Christian friends, or sometimes even through an unsettled feeling in your heart. If you have a hard heart, you are likely to ignore this leading and to be unyielding and resistant to God, but if you have a soft heart, you are likely to listen to God and not pursue that relationship.

### Illustrate

Imagine holding a rock in one hand and some Play-Doh in another. God wants your heart to be like the Play-Doh, easily moldable by Him.

### Matching

A) – 5; B) – 1; C) – 2;  
D) – 3; E) – 4

originally part of what Mark wrote, but also recognizing its long history of acceptance by many in the church. The content of vv. 9–20 is best explained by reference to other passages in the Gospels and the rest of the NT. (Most of its content is found elsewhere, and no point of doctrine is affected by the absence or presence of vv. 9–20.)

Heb. 3:12–13 Drawing on several key words in Psalm 95, Hebrews warns against allowing the unbelief of a hardened, sinful heart to cause one to fall away (Gk. *apostēnai*, “turn away from, forsake, apostatize from”; cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1). His counter to this danger is both to encourage personal commitment (take care) and to call on the church to walk together in mutual encouragement (exhort

A person with an unbelieving heart refuses to trust God. Trusting God for your dating life and future marriage is sometimes hard to do. Oftentimes people want to take this into their own hands.

Read Jeremiah 1:5 and 29:11.

It is important not to take these verses out of context. These verses speak to the ultimate plans and purposes of God that are always fulfilled. Therefore, these verses provide hope for our own future because they point to God's sovereignty and ultimately the redemption of his people.

God knows you better than you know yourself. He created every part of you and every part of your personality. Therefore, He knows what is best for you in your dating life and future marriage. He knows the type of person that you need to marry. God knows you better than you know yourself, therefore, you can trust Him to provide the right person for you to date and marry one day.

**How can you use Scripture to make decisions about your future college choice, career choice and even to whom you get married?**

Many people worry about having a boyfriend or a girlfriend and wonder whether they will ever get married. To trust God means to believe that His plans for you are for good and not for evil, to believe that He plans to prosper you and to give you a hope and a future.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.

**Through this Scripture passage, what can we learn about God's will for dating relationships?**

**How well do you trust God for your dating relationships and future marriage? Explain.**

**How would dating a non-Christian express your distrust of God to provide a Christian boyfriend or girlfriend for you?**

An unbelieving heart is often revealed in an inability or unwillingness to trust God for a future godly spouse. If you don't trust God in this area of your life, you are likely to jump at any dating opportunity.

THREE TRUTHS FROM GOD'S WORD

1. God created you and knows you better than you know yourself. Therefore, He knows the best person for you to marry.
2. God has a plan for your life that is for good and not harm.
3. It is God's will for Christians to date and marry other Christians, not non-Christians.

## **Point to Make**

If our minds and hearts are focused on God, we will desire what He desires and want what He wants. This is an extremely important place to be as a follower of Christ.

## **Point to Make**

God's revealed will for us is to love God and to love people. When we do those two things we are within the will of God and our choices about the future reflect our relationship with him.

one another). as long as it is called "today." From the perspective of God's saving plans for world history, the church lives in a special moment in which the Lord has come, spoken, and gone, and believers await his return—faith is called for in this hour, and mutual exhortation sustains and strengthens faith.

Jer. 1:5 God is completely sovereign. He knows all things even before they happen, so he knew Jeremiah even before he was formed in his mother's womb. God's plan for Jeremiah was that he be consecrated, or "set apart," for preaching God's word. Jeremiah's ministry is to be a prophet to the nations, not just to Israel (25:1–14; 46:1–51:64).

## AN UNGUARDED HEART

When it comes to dating, both guys and girls often enjoy the emotional connection they experience with a girlfriend or boyfriend. It feels good to have a trusted person with whom to share your thoughts, fears, and dreams. This is often where couples go wrong. All young people in dating relationships need to be wise in how often and how much of their hearts they share. Once again, it is imperative that we guard our hearts. Consider the following scenarios:

1) Kelly and Ben have been dating for a few months. When they first started to date, they texted just a few times each day, but that quickly changed. Kelly and Ben were soon texting each other non-stop. They often stayed up late talking on the phone too. They started out just sharing about their day, but then they began sharing about their pasts, their inner thoughts, and future dreams. This caused them to form a strong emotional bond very quickly. When they broke up months later, they were both heartbroken because they had given so much of their hearts to each other and now were apart.

**How could Kelly and Ben have better guarded their hearts?**

2) Rebecca and Sam started out as just close friends, but both decided that they wanted to be more than friends. They spent so much time together that they both abandoned their other friends. When something good or bad happened in one of their lives, they both immediately called the other person. They acted as if they were the only two people in the world. Rebecca and Sam often told each other how much they loved each other and how they wanted to get married one day. Since they felt that they were in love, they decided it was okay to become sexually active. Then one day they got into a big fight, and Rebecca broke up with Sam. They were both heartbroken.

**How could Rebecca and Sam have better guarded their hearts?**

**What are some practical ways to pursue emotional purity?**

The pursuit of emotional purity is vital in your pursuit of physical purity. If you decide to guard your heart when dating someone, you are much more likely to walk in physical purity.

## Example

Examples might include limiting the number of times you text or talk in a day, etc.

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2 Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This command, which is Paul's main point in 6:14–7:1, will be restated in different words at the end of the section (7:1). To be "unequally yoked" is to be "hitched up" or even crossbred with another animal who is not the same (Gk. heterozygeō; the related adjective is found in Lev. 19:19; see also Deut. 22:10, though the word does not occur there). It is thus an image for being allied or identified wrongly with unbelievers. In context, it refers especially to those who are still rebelling against Paul within the church, whom Paul now shockingly labels unbelievers (he clearly thinks it possible that some are [2 Cor. 13:5], though he hopes not), but the principle has wider application to other situations where (as with animals yoked together) one person's conduct and direction of life strongly influences or controls the other's.

## NOW WHAT?

Take some time to think about your own heart. Answer the following questions honestly.

- 1) Does my heart match my lifestyle?
- 2) Am I a person of integrity?
- 3) Am I ever stubborn in my relationship with God?
- 4) Am I unwilling to give up my will for God's will?
- 5) Is my heart stiff and hardened towards God?
- 6) Am I unyielding to God's ways?
- 7) Do I resist being obedient to God?
- 8) Do I lack humility before God?
- 9) Do I ignore Biblical advice from spiritual leaders?
- 10) Do I consider myself first in circumstances?
- 11) Do I really trust God to provide a godly spouse?
- 12) Am I willing to date someone who is not actively pursuing a relationship with Jesus?
- 13) How often do I communicate with my boyfriend/girlfriend?
- 14) How much of my heart am I willing to give away?

After answering the questions above you may realize that it is time to repent and change the way you guard your heart. Remember, a pure heart is a soft heart before God.

## GOING DEEPER

Describe some new ways that you have learned how to guard your heart.

How does knowing God created you, knows you intimately, and has good plans for your life impact your trust in Him for providing a future spouse?

### PRAYER:

Take some time to pray for your future spouse. Ask God to bless and protect that person. Ask God to develop your future spouse in his or her relationship with Him.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Proverbs 4:23

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2 Cor. 6:15 Belial (Gk. Beliar, also spelled Belial, from a Hb. term meaning "worthlessness" or possibly "destruction"). This name for Satan is not found elsewhere in the OT or NT but was used in the Judaism of Paul's day. Derived from one of Satan's characteristics (i.e., that he is "worthless" or "treacherous"; see the same word in Deut. 13:13; 15:9; Judg. 19:22; 1 Kings 21:13; etc.), it was often used in contexts that stress Satan's activity as an opponent of God, which fits Paul's concern with his opponents.

# WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PROVERBS 4:23

What does it require to have a physically healthy heart?

What does it require to have a spiritually healthy heart?

## DAY 2 — PROVERBS 19:20

Who gives you the best advice? Why are you willing to accept their instruction?

How can you spend more time with that individual?

## DAY 3 — PSALM 146

Describe how God works according to this passage of Scripture.

Based on this passage, describe how God is a sure hope for those who trust in him?

## DAY 4 — 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1

Describe the danger of dating someone who is not actively pursuing a relationship with Jesus?

What is the ultimate purpose behind being careful with whom you are united?

## DAY 5 — LUKE 6:45

How does your speech or jokes with your friends about the opposite sex impact your dating life?

How can this verse serve as a warning about whom you should date?

## DAY 6 — MATTHEW 6:21

List five things that you think about most often?

What do these things communicate about what you treasure?

## DAY 7 — MATTHEW 7:7-11

Describe the level of value you place on your future spouse to be godly.

According to this passage, how can you know that God will grant your desire for a godly spouse?



# Purity in Dating

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

WEEK

3

## Key Questions and Concepts

It is important that you know what you believe about dating. You need to have clear standards and boundaries set up before you start to date anyone.

Dating—it's something that is sure to be of interest to you at some point in your life. At this stage in your life, you might be longing to be in a dating relationship, or you might not be interested in dating at all. Wherever you find yourself, it is important that you know what you believe about dating. You need to have clear standards and boundaries set up before you start to date anyone.

Dating can be an unclear issue to Christians. Many don't know how to go about dating and how to honor God in it. This week we will take a look at some wise principles to live by in your dating relationships.

***What is the appropriate age to start dating?  
What pressures in culture impact you the most about dating?***

In 1 Corinthians 10:31, the people were debating an issue that was unclear to some. It specifically had to do with eating certain foods. Although this Scripture is not talking specifically about dating, there is an underlying principle we can learn. This guiding principle can bring great clarity for an appropriate path in dating.

Whatever you do in your dating relationships, ask yourself this question:

**"AM I BRINGING GLORY TO GOD THROUGH THIS?"**

The answer to that question is quite telling. An honest answer is essential to staying on the path of purity in dating. The enemy is constantly going to try to convince you otherwise.

This week we are going to see what we can learn from God's Word about dating. Ask God to transform your mind this week as you study His Word to ensure that your future dating relationships are pleasing to God.

Whatever you do in your dating relationships, ask yourself this question: "Am I bringing glory to God through this?" The answer to that question is quite telling. An honest answer is essential to staying on the path of purity in dating. The enemy is constantly going to try to convince you otherwise.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Cor. 10:31 Every aspect of every Christian's life has the potential to honor God.

Rom. 12:2 The present evil age still threatens those who belong to Christ, so they must resist its pressure. Their lives are changed as their minds are made new (contrast 1:28), so that they are able to "discern" God's will. By testing you may discern translates Greek dokimazō, which often has the sense of finding out the worth of something by putting it to use or testing it in actual practice.

2 Cor. 6:14 This command, which is Paul's main point in 6:14–7:1, will be restated in different words

## TRANSFORMED

Describe the kind of dating advice teen magazines provide.

If you were to write a letter to God asking for dating advice, what advice might you receive?

When comparing teen magazines and God's letter, which is the most trustworthy source?

Why do most people date in middle school and high school?

Write below what you think is the purpose of dating. Then discuss it.

Some people date because they want to be loved, desire to be popular, or like the feeling of having someone like them. It is true that the purpose of many dating relationships is not right. Ultimately, the purpose of dating is to find a life partner with whom you can serve God. With this in mind, you can probably think of many dating relationships that do not serve a Godly purpose.

Read Romans 12:2.

According to this Scripture, how can you know God's will?

If you want to know God's will for your dating life, you have to renew your mind with God's Word. If you spend most of your time reading teen magazines or getting dating tips from movies and television, you are sure to miss God's will. If you take time to read and study God's Word, the will of God will be clear to you. It's true that you won't find the words dating, boyfriend, or girlfriend in Scripture, but that doesn't mean God's Word doesn't give guidelines on how to date in a way that is pleasing to God and safe for you.

## FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.

What do you think it means to bring glory to God?

## Point to Make

Who better to give you direction in your life than the One who spoke life into existence? What the world says is right and what God says is right about dating are two totally different things.

## Interact

Student opinion will be varied. Some will repeat what their parents have told them, some may give their perspective based on movies or books, and others may give their own personal opinion. Students may write that dating is for fun, to prepare for marriage, or to find a future spouse. Be aware of your response. The purpose of this question is to get conversation going. Be careful how you express your opinion on this topic.

at the end of the section (7:1). To be "unequally yoked" is to be "hitched up" or even crossbred with another animal who is not the same. It is thus an image for being allied or identified wrongly with unbelievers. In context, it refers especially to those who are still rebelling against Paul within the church, whom Paul now shockingly labels unbelievers (he clearly thinks it possible that some are [2 Cor. 13:5], though he hopes not), but the principle has wider application to other situations where (as with animals yoked together) one person's conduct and direction of life strongly influences or controls the other's.

Deut. 22:9–11 These laws prohibit mixing various items, reflecting God's ordering of creation "ac-

To bring Him glory means to bring Him praise and honor by what we do. Our Christian behavior in every area of our lives, and especially in our dating lives, should be for the glory of God.

**How could a dating relationship can bring praise and honor to God?**

**How can a dating relationship not bring praise and honor to God?**

**Describe what a dating relationship looks like that brings glory to God.**

IF YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP THAT DOES NOT BRING GLORY TO GOD, YOU MUST END IT.

## **UNEQUALLY YOKED**

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14–15.

A yoke is a wooden bar that sits across the necks of two animals and binds them together for their work. If one of the animals turns to the left, the other animal must also turn to the left. They influence and affect each other because they are yoked together.

Read Deuteronomy 22:10.

**Which two animals were not to be yoked together?**

Read Deuteronomy 14:1–8.

**A donkey does not chew the cud. Was a donkey considered to be clean to eat? An ox?**

**With this image of animals yoked together in mind, why do you think God would instruct believers not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers?**

Consider King Solomon. God specifically warned against marrying foreign women because they would turn his heart away from Him. If you yoke yourself with an unbeliever in a dating relationship, that person will negatively influence you. Even if you have good intentions to influence that person for Christ, the likelihood is that you will compromise your faith for this person.

### **Point to Make**

Remember, your life as a Christian exists to bring praise, honor, and glory to God.

### **Point to Make**

The donkey was considered unclean to eat. The ox could be eaten. Since one animal was considered clean and the other unclean, they were not to be yoked together. When Paul taught the people in 2 Corinthians 6:14–15 that they weren't to be unequally yoked, they knew what that meant.

### **Point to Make**

Don't missionary date!

ording to its kind" (e.g., Gen. 1:25). They also reminded Israelites that God had separated them from other peoples to be distinct and holy (Deut. 14:2).

Matt. 10:34–37 Sword is a metaphor for the inevitable separation between those who believe in Christ and those who do not, even within a family. Jesus' own family opposed him before they came to recognize his true identity (13:53–58; Mark 3:21; John 7:3–5). Thus, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Jesus asked for unqualified allegiance, something even the most esteemed rabbi did not demand. The central point of Matt. 10:34–37 is that love of God and his kingdom must take precedence over every other human relationship.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14–15, Paul used eight descriptive words contrasting what it is like when a believer is yoked with an unbeliever. Write the positive descriptions on the left and their counterparts on the right.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| A) Righteousness | _____                                    |
| B) _____         | Darkness                                 |
| C) _____         | Belial (Belial is a name for the devil.) |
| D) Believer      | _____                                    |

Notice the stark contrast between each pair of words. God wants us to see how foolish it is to yoke ourselves with unbelievers.

## SUPREME AFFECTION

A common pitfall in dating relationships happens when the boyfriend or girlfriend becomes more important than God to the other person.

**Have you ever heard someone in a dating relationship say that the other person was “everything” to them and that they could not live without him or her? Explain the danger in that thought.**

Read Matthew 10:37.

In this verse, Jesus was teaching that our love for our family should not be greater than our love for God. The same truth can be applied to a dating relationship. If a guy or girl becomes more important than God to you, then that relationship is not pleasing to Him.

Read Luke 14:26.

The word hate in this passage does not mean hate like we understand it today. It means to love less. Our love for God should be so strong that every other love in our lives looks like hate in comparison.

GOD DESIRES AND DESERVES TO BE THE OBJECT OF OUR SUPREME AFFECTION.

Read Exodus 20:3–5.

The Bible teaches that God is a jealous God. Only God is worthy of our worship and praise. Think now about a dating relationship. Make it your goal to always give God your supreme affection. May God—never a guy or girl—always be your everything.

**How can you ensure to always give God your supreme affection?**

## Comparison

- A) Righteousness – Lawlessness
- B) Light – Darkness
- C) Christ – Belial
- D) Believer – Unbeliever

Luke 14:26 Those who would be Christ’s disciples must (1) love their family less than they love Christ (14:26); (2) bear the cross and follow Christ (v. 27); and (3) relinquish everything (v. 33). These are complementary ways of describing complete commitment. The first condition for discipleship is to hate one’s father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and life (cf. 18:29; see 6:20–22). “Hating” is a Semitic expression for loving less (cf. Gen. 29:30–31; Deut. 21:15–17; Matt. 10:37).

Ex. 20:3 Yahweh demands exclusive covenant loyalty. As the one true God of heaven and earth, Yahweh cannot and will not tolerate the worship of any “other gods” (cf. 22:20; 23:13, 24, 32); in other words, monotheism, the worship of the one true God, is the only acceptable belief and prac-

## CHECKLIST

Read Ephesians 5:15.

By learning the following tips, you are being careful to live as wise rather than unwise.

1) Honor and obey your parents' rules about dating. God has given your parents wisdom and responsibility for you. They love you more than you know and want to protect you. Although their rules may be hard to follow at times, it is for your good to obey them.

2) Consider group dating. When you choose to spend one-on-one time with a guy or girl that you like, you are making emotional and physical purity that much harder to maintain. Hang out in groups with your friends. You will still have the chance to get to know the other person better, but you will be protecting your purity.

3) Have accountability in your life. Make sure there is someone in your life who will ask you the tough questions about your relationships. Below are some sample questions that an accountability partner might ask you about a dating relationship.

- A) Are you honoring and obeying your parents in this relationship?
- B) Are you intentionally spending time in groups rather than alone together?
- C) Does your relationship bring glory to God?
- D) Is this person leading you closer to God or further away from Him?
- E) Do you love God more than you love this person?
- F) Are you guarding your heart with this person?
- G) Is your relationship sexually pure?

4. Keep in mind that the ultimate purpose in dating is to find a future mate with whom you can share your life and serve God. If the person you are dating is not someone that you can see yourself marrying, then the relationship needs to end immediately.

### **What are your parents' rules for you concerning dating relationships?**

Now comes a big challenge. Take some time this week to talk to your parents about what you have learned this week. Ask them to hold you accountable to walk in wisdom in your dating relationships. This conversation may seem awkward and hard, but it is good to have open communication with your parents about such an important topic in your life.

## Interact

Encourage students to respond with their opinions about these tips.

tice. Even though this commandment does not comment on whether these "other gods" might have some real existence, Moses' statement to a later generation makes clear that only "the Lord is God; there is no other besides him" (Deut. 4:35, 39; see also Ps. 86:10; Isa. 44:6, 8; 45:5, 6, 18; and 1 Cor. 8:4–6).

Ex. 20:4–6 The gods of both Egypt and Canaan were often associated with some aspect of creation and worshiped as, or through, an object that represented them. The Lord has made it clear, through the plagues and the exodus, that he has power over every aspect of creation because the whole earth is his (9:29; 19:5), and thus he commands Israel to refrain from crafting an image of anything in

## NOW WHAT?

Write down the top things that you hope to remember from this week's lessons.

### PRAYER:

Thank God for His Word and for the instruction it provides for your life. Ask Him to help you to remember these truths as you date in the future.

Identify someone older than you whose dating advice you can trust. Write their name below.

What are your standards for dating someone?

Take some time today, if you are willing, to commit to date only a Christian who is passionately following Jesus. Your decision now will affect your life forever.

## GOING DEEPER

If you were a parent, what advice would you give your children about dating?

What would help you to have meaningful discussions with your parents about dating?

In humility, make a list of what you hope for in a future spouse.

### PRAYER:

Write a prayer to God expressing your desire to make Him the object of your supreme affection.

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 Corinthians 10:31

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heaven or earth for worship (20:4–5a). The prohibition is grounded in the fact that the Lord is a jealous God (see 34:14; Deut. 6:15), and that the Lord has no physical form, and should not be thought to be localized in one (Deut. 4:15–20). Israel saw what happened to Egypt when Pharaoh refused to acknowledge what was being revealed about the Lord; here Israel is warned against doing the same, while also being reassured that their God is merciful and gracious (see Ex. 34:6–7).

Ex. 20:5–6 a jealous God. God the Creator is worthy of all honor from his creation. Indeed, his creatures (mankind esp.) are functioning properly only when they give God the honor and worship that he deserves. God's jealousy is therefore also his zeal for his creatures' well-being.

# WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

What qualities do you struggle fulfilling the most in caring for others?

How do you think these qualities will impact your dating relationships?

## DAY 2 — PSALM 96:3

How can you ensure that your future spouse wants to declare God's glory among the nations?

Describe the importance of having the same mindset of missions within your dating relationships?

## DAY 3 — PSALM 72:19

How can your dating relationships communicate God's glory within your friend circle?

How would that be making disciples of those nearest?

## DAY 4 — PROVERBS 3:5-6

Why should you not lean on your own understanding?

How does this passage encourage you to trust God in regards to your future spouse?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

How does humility play an important part in dating relationships?

What does it require to look out for the interests of your boyfriend/girlfriend rather than yourself?

## DAY 6 — MATTHEW 5:13-16

How can your dating relationship shine the light of Jesus into the world?

Describe what it means for your dating relationship be a city on a hill. Does that create pressure?

## DAY 7 — EXODUS 20:3

Describing your boyfriend/girlfriend as your "everything" is idolatry. Why?

How can you guard against having an attitude that your boyfriend/girlfriend is your "everything?"

# Sexual Purity

SONG OF SOLOMON 8:4

WEEK

4

## Key Questions and Concepts

Knowledge helps you to make good decisions. Your decision about sex needs to be informed by God's Word. While a marriage relationship and the intimacy that it provides is satisfying, it doesn't compare to the satisfaction found in an intimate relationship with Christ.

## Interact

The contents of this material may be sensitive to some students because of their experiences or the experiences of loved ones. If a student has already had sex encourage them that Jesus died for that sin. They can repent and ask for forgiveness. He wants to restore them and they can be made new in Christ. Please be considerate in your presentation of the lesson.

By this point in your life, you've heard a lot about sex. You see it in the movies, on television, in magazines, on the Internet, and have heard your friends talk about it. It seems to be everywhere. You probably have a lot of bad ideas and beliefs about sex. The hope this week is that you will learn about sex from God's perspective.

*Describe why you appreciate something more after you have learned how it was created?  
How do you think that the media distorts sex?*

God created sex. It was His idea. We know that whatever God creates is good, not bad. We also know that Satan tries to imitate and destroy anything good that God has created. That is why sex can be so dangerous. The Bible is very clear that God designed sex for a man and woman within the covenant relationship of marriage.

However, when sex is not handled God's way, it brings destruction, heartache, and sometimes even death. Sexually transmitted diseases, guilt, shame, unwanted pregnancies, forced sex, and human trafficking are all things that happen when sex occurs outside of God's plan.

Understanding God's purposes for sex is so important to your life as a teenager. When you fully understand the purpose behind the design it helps you to appreciate what was created. Knowledge helps you to make good decisions. Your decision about sex needs to be informed by God's Word.

Illustrate: Imagine two doors. Each one represents a path that you can take. Door 1 represents a path where you will have moments of pleasure but they are fleeting. Walking through this door will lead to shame, guilt, pain, broken-heartedness, broken relationships, disease and regret. Door 2 represents a path where you will say no to difficult temptations. Walking through this door will lead to tremendous pleasure free of guilt and shame and will fulfill your heart.

Knowing the outcome of each path in advance, which would you choose? We know God's plan in advance about sex and marriage. Ask God to open your heart and mind as you study His Word this week.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Song 8:4 Here at the end of the period of longing and waiting is the final instance of the refrain urging the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time (cf. 2:7; 3:5); it is now time to move on to the marriage (cf. 8:5, where the consummation is indicated by her finally "awakening" him).

Gen. 1:28 Be fruitful and multiply. This theme recurs throughout Genesis in association with divine blessing (see 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4) and serves as the basis of the biblical view that raising faithful children is a part of God's creation plan for mankind. God's creation plan is that the whole



## SEX IS A GOOD THING

We know that God created sex, but why did He create it? This week we are going to look at six reasons that God created sex so that we can have a better understanding of the perfect way God designed sex.

- 1) To create life.
- 2) To foster intimate oneness.
- 3) To promote knowledge.
- 4) To provide pleasure.
- 5) To act as a defense against temptation.
- 6) To be a source of comfort.

## CREATE LIFE

Read Genesis 1:28.

**To whom is God speaking in this verse?**

Read Genesis 9:1.

**What did God tell Noah and his sons?**

One of the main purposes of sex is to create more people. In the creation story, Adam and Eve had sex and thus created Cain. If your parents did not have sex, you would not have been born! You are here on this planet because two people had sex. Yes, it's weird to think about that, so keep moving on!

## INTIMATE ONENESS

Read Genesis 2:24–25.

**What does it mean that the two would become one flesh?**

This can help you to understand why sex before marriage is so emotionally difficult for people. If you have sex with someone before marriage, you are becoming one when it was not meant to happen. When that relationship ends, you still feel connected to that person. This was not how God intended it to be. God desires that you share that oneness with one person only: your spouse.

**To whom does the verse say that man should be united?**

## Point to Make

This same command is given again to Noah and his sons after the great flood. God told them to fill the earth with people.

## Point to Make

Becoming one flesh is more than just physical. When two people come together it is about the body, mind, and spirit becoming one. God sees them as one instead of two.

## Point to Make

This is not describing a one-night stand, a casual hookup, or a dating relationship. This is talking about a husband and wife who have made a covenant to God in marriage. That is why God sees them as one. God created sex to be experienced within the covenant of marriage.

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earth should be populated by those who know him and who serve wisely as his vice-regents or representatives.

Gen. 2:23–24 The text highlights the sense of oneness that exists between the man and the woman. This sentence and the story of Eve's creation both make the point that marriage creates the closest of all human relationships. It is also important to observe that God creates only one Eve for Adam, not several Eves or another Adam. This points to heterosexual monogamy as the divine pattern for marriage that God established at creation. Moreover, the kinship between husband and wife creates obligations that override even duty to one's parents (therefore a man shall leave his father and his

Read Ephesians 5:31–32.

Select the phrase that best describes what sex was created to be like.

- A) All about my desires and wants.
- B) Dirty and disgusting.
- C) Something you have to do when you are married.
- D) An earthly picture of Christ and the church.

The oneness of a husband and wife is a picture of the intimacy between Christ and His believers. God desires to have intimacy with you. To be intimate with someone means to know that person very closely. God already knows you well, but He desires that you know Him in a close, intimate relationship.

## KNOWLEDGE

Read Genesis 4:1.

In the ESV, the word “knew” is a way of saying “had sexual relations with,” because it describes a kind of knowledge about someone that is gained only through sexual contact. Today, of course, we use the word “knew” in a totally different way. When we say we know someone, it means that the person is a friend or someone we have met. It does not mean we know them in a sexual way.

To have intimate knowledge of a person through sex is to know someone in a way that no other person can know him or her. You want only one other person on the planet to have that kind of knowledge of you. It is not meant to be shared with many people. The more partners you have, the less intimate you can be, because others “know” you too.

## PLEASURE

Did you know there is a book in the Bible that talks about a husband and wife’s sex life? In this book, we see God’s design and desire for sex to be pleasurable. Solomon and his wife’s honeymoon night is described in chapter 4 of Song of Solomon. In Song of Solomon 5:1, Solomon speaks about the pleasure he finds in his wife. In the last part of verse 1, someone says, “Eat, O friends and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.”

It is highly unlikely that friends or wedding guests would have been present in the bedroom with Solomon and his bride. It is believed that God Himself speaks the last part of verse 1.

**What is God saying to the two lovers?**

SEX, WHEN DONE GOD’S WAY, IS A HOLY INTERACTION.  
IT IS NOT ONLY A PHYSICAL ACT, BUT A SPIRITUAL ONE TOO. GOD IS PRESENT.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:18–20.

mother and hold fast to his wife, 2:24). They “left” their parents in the sense of putting their wife’s welfare before that of their parents. As a result of this special affiliation, Gen. 2:24 observes that when a man leaves his parents and takes a wife, they shall become one flesh, i.e., one unit (a union of man and woman, consummated in sexual intercourse). Jesus appeals to this verse and 1:27 in setting out his view of marriage (Matt. 19:4–5).

Eph. 5:31 one flesh. Marriage from the beginning of creation (Genesis 1) was created by God to be a reflection of and patterned after Christ’s relation to the church. Thus Paul’s commands regarding the roles of husbands and wives do not merely reflect the culture of his day but present God’s ideal for

## Point to Make

Have you ever thought about the intimacy that God desires with you through Christ? He loves you so much that He wants to be one with you. While a marriage relationship and the intimacy that it provides is satisfying, it doesn’t compare to the satisfaction found in an intimate relationship with Christ.

## Point to Make

God was with them in that moment and told them to enjoy themselves! Even though this may seem odd to you, this is a beautiful thing.

As a believer, you are a temple, or a house, for the Holy Spirit, therefore, sexual sin is a big deal to God. It is committed against your body, where the Spirit of God dwells.

Are you seeing it more clearly now? Satan twists what is supposed to be wonderful, pleasurable, and fun and makes it dirty, nasty, shameful, and full of guilt. God is not the one who created sex trafficking, pornography, prostitution, and rape. It is important to hear that again: God created none of these!

### **Why do these terrible distortions of sex happen?**

However, true pleasure does not cause guilt or carry with it the fear of being caught. All those things mentioned above are wrong and destructive. When someone is being injured or filled with shame, guilt, or pain, it is not pleasurable. It is Satan's way of twisting something good into something that can destroy us. God created sex for pleasure between a husband and a wife. When it is expressed that way, it is not destructive; rather, it draws the couple much closer.

## **DEFENSE AGAINST TEMPTATION**

Read Proverbs 5:1–15.

### **After reading the passage, what do you think verse 15 is saying?**

Read Proverbs 5:18–22.

God has designed marriage so that a man and a woman are sexually satisfied within their marriage. There is no need to seek sexual satisfaction in other places. Sex within the marriage relationship helps to defend against pornography, prostitution, adultery, and other traps from the enemy.

If you haven't already, you will soon experience sexual desires that cannot yet be fulfilled because you are not married. You will face temptations such as pornography, masturbation, and other sexual sins.

### **Look up the following Scriptures and record how you can guard against these temptations that you will face.**

- A) Matthew 6:13
- B) Mark 14:38
- C) Matthew 4:1–11
- D) 1 Corinthians 10:13
- E) James 4:7

### **Point to Make**

It is what happens when men and women go outside of God's perfect design. The world says that pleasure happens when we engage in all those nasty things.

### **Point to Make**

Proverbs is using an illustration of drinking water from your own well. To drink water from your own well means to have sex only with your marriage partner, not with someone else's spouse (or from another well).

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all marriages at all times, as exemplified by the relationship between the bride of Christ (the church) and Christ himself, the Son of God.

1 Cor. 6:16–18 Unity with Christ is incompatible with all sin (Rom. 6:6) but particularly with sexual sin. Because sexual union has a spiritual component, sexual activity outside marriage is a unique sin both against Christ (1 Cor. 6:15) and one's own body (v. 18; see Prov. 6:26, 32). Within marriage, sexual union is not only allowed but has positive spiritual significance (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:22–33). temple of the Holy Spirit within you. The Spirit of the Lord lives within individual Christians (v. 17), making each Christian's body a temple just as the church, corporately conceived, is also a temple where God's

You can resist sexual temptation through prayer, memorizing God's Word, resisting the enemy, and realizing that God always provides a way out of temptation. The question is, are you going to make the effort to honor Him in this area of your life? The rewards are worth it.

## COMFORT

Read 2 Samuel 11:26-27 and 12:24.

When Bathsheba was grieving the loss of their son David comforted her through sex. When words were not enough to help her soul after the death of their child, David showed compassion and love by giving her another child. Solomon, was created from the act of a husband comforting his wife.

When sex occurs within the marriage covenant between a husband and a wife, new life, intimate oneness, knowledge, pleasure, defense against temptation, and comfort are natural results. Consider the alternative, sex outside of marriage brings unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, broken hearts, guilt, shame, and regret.

There is a reason why God wants you to wait for your marriage partner before having sex. He wants to bless you sexually as well as spiritually. God created sex to be good. Sex is a blessed and holy event within marriage and certainly worth the wait!

**Do any of the six reasons why God created sex surprise you? If so, which one?**

**By learning these truths, you are arming yourself for a healthy and pure marriage one day. As a student who is not yet married, how does this help you in the meantime?**

## Reference

Do you remember the story of David and Bathsheba? David sinned against God by sleeping with Bathsheba, a married woman. David then had her husband killed when he learned that Bathsheba was pregnant. David took Bathsheba as his wife, and when the time came for their baby to be born, the child died.

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Spirit dwells (3:16). You are not your own. As with other gifts from God (4:2, 7), Christians are to exercise responsible stewardship over their bodies. 1 Cor. 6:20 bought with a price. The image is borrowed from the slave market (7:23; see also Rom. 6:17–18), Christ's blood being the purchase price (Eph. 1:7; see also 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:9).

Prov. 5:1–23 After the introductory words in vv. 1–2, the entire appeal concerns matters of sexual morality. First, the immoral woman is introduced: she is alluring but deadly (vv. 3–6). An exhortation to stay far from such promiscuous women follows (vv. 7–14). The text then gives a brief but powerful presentation of the essentials of biblical teaching on sexual ethics. It asserts that sexual pleasure

## NOW WHAT?

How would you describe the purpose of sex to a friend?

When do you face sexual temptation the most?

What can you change to remove yourself from these moments of temptation?

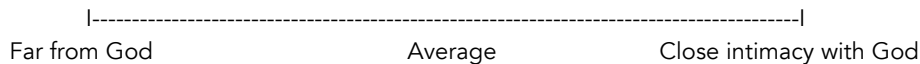
Have you made a decision to remain sexually pure? Why or why not?

### PRAYER:

Thank God for all the reasons He created sex. Ask Him to keep you from harm and to keep you from abusing what He has created as perfect with the right person at the right time within the covenant of marriage. Ask Him to help you wait for your marriage partner before experiencing the physical, intimate oneness of sex. Ask Him to help the person you will marry to also remain pure. Ask God to be with this person and teach him or her how to view sex in a godly way. Even though you do not know who that person is going to be, God knows, and He created the two of you to one day enjoy a fulfilling relationship together.

## GOING DEEPER

How close are you with God right now? Mark where you feel you are on the scale below.



How does the media distort sex based on what you have learned why God created sex?

Why is remaining sexually pure essential after you are married as well?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Song of Solomon 8:4

is good but that it must be confined to marriage (vv. 15–20). The passage concludes with a brief account of the woes that befall the immoral man (vv. 21–23). Of course other sexual dangers exist (such as a woman being tempted by an immoral man, temptations to homosexual conduct, incest, or sexual abuse of children), and the wise person applies this counsel by making the appropriate adaptations.

James 4:7–8a The only way to resist the devil is by also submitting and drawing near to God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). Satan will be defeated and will have to flee, as indeed he did from Christ (Luke 4:13).

# WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — EPHESIANS 5:31-32

In this passage, how is the union between a man and wife related to the union between Christ and the Church?

How does it make you feel to know that God desires this same kind of intimacy with you?

## DAY 2 — SONG OF SOLOMON 5:1-16

How does Solomon describe his new bride?

Describe how God is pleased with Solomon and his bride's actions?

## DAY 3 — 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

What does this passage say about your body?

How can we, as this passage says, "flee sexual immorality?"

## DAY 4 — MATTHEW 4:1-11

How does Satan try to tempt Jesus?

How does Jesus respond to these temptations?

## DAY 5 — PROVERBS 5:1-15

What does this passage say to avoid?

What does this passage say about sex?

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## DAY 6 — 1 PETER 5:6-11

According to this passage, whom should you resist?

How can you resist the temptations of the Devil in your daily life?

## DAY 7 — 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

According to this passage, what has God called us to have?

What changes do you need to make in your life to live a life of purity?

# How Far is Too Far?

EPHESIANS 5:3

WEEK

5

## Key Questions and Concepts

How do you know what kind of behavior is acceptable to God?

Why does God give us boundaries for dating relationships?

The Bible does not give us a list of what qualifies as a "hint", or tell us what physical activities are approved for a couple to engage in before marriage. It really comes down to a matter of what your heart is pursuing. Are you pursuing physical satisfaction, or righteousness? Caring for our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit begins with a heart that is pursuing a healthy relationship with God.

Human beings have a tendency to push boundaries. For instance, we have speed limit signs. Many of us would be very upset at an officer for pulling us over and giving us a ticket if we were traveling 2 mph over the limit. Unfortunately, we take this same reasoning when it comes to the subject of sex.

Even though we have learned that God intends for sex to be fulfilled in a marriage relationship, many people still want to know, "how far is too far?" Most of us in this room have either asked or answered that question before. Let's be honest, you still have certain feelings, thoughts, and desires long before you are married, right? This week we will look at some Scriptures that will help to serve as a guide to answer this question.

*So how do you know what kind of behavior is acceptable to God?  
Why does God give us boundaries for dating relationships?*

Our culture says that many things are okay. We are living in a world where people are playing around with sexual activity like it's just a form of entertainment. Some people say you can still honor God if you do certain things as long as you don't go all the way and have intercourse. Truth is, anything that even "hints" of sexual immorality is inappropriate for a Christian.

Briefly describe circumstances that display a hint of sexual immorality such as heavy touching in public. Make this conversation light. Everyone has seen that couple. It makes a person wonder what they are willing to do behind closed doors.

Here is an idea: make a commitment to not do anything alone with your boyfriend/girlfriend that you wouldn't do in front of each other's parents. The more a married couple has to share exclusively between themselves, the more special and unique the sexual relationship in that marriage becomes.

The Bible does not give us a list of what qualifies as a "hint", or tell us what physical activities are approved for a couple to engage in before marriage. It really comes down to a matter of what your heart is pursuing. Are you pursuing physical satisfaction, or righteousness? Caring for our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit begins with a heart that is pursuing a healthy relationship with God.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Eph. 5:3 sexual immorality. This general term (Gk. *porneia*) covers all sexual sins, including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc. Covetousness is a jealous longing for what others possess (Ex. 20:17), and it amounts to idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

James 1:13-14 God tests his people (e.g., Abraham, Genesis 22; Israel, Ex. 16:4; Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 32:31) so that their character is strengthened, but he never tempts (i.e., lures people into sin). Since God cannot be tempted with evil, and he is unreservedly good, he would never entice human beings to sin or seek to harm their faith. God brings trials in order to strengthen the Christian's faith. He

## RECOGNIZING TEMPTATION

What types of things does our culture say are okay to practice in a dating relationship without going “all the way”?

Read James 1:13–17.

Sexual intercourse is not the only type of sexual sin. Sexual foreplay or sexual acts that may lead to intercourse are also sexual sins. There should not be even a hint of sexual immorality in a Christian’s life. To better understand how to avoid these temptations, we need to learn the root of them.

For our purposes this week, consider sexual foreplay or sexual acts other than intercourse when you read about temptation and sin.

**According to verse 14, where does temptation start?**

**What happens when you dwell on a temptation and think about it all the time? Does it make you more likely to give in or more likely to stand strong?**

**According to verse 15, after we have dwelled on the temptation, or conceived the idea to act on it, to what does it give birth? Then what?**

It is important to recognize temptations for what they truly are. As a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit within you to give you the strength to withstand those temptations and to walk in sexual purity. Temptations come from the lust and desire within our own hearts. When we dwell on tempting thoughts too long, they can weaken us and cause us to miss the mark of purity.

**When you sin, describe other ways death occurs besides physical death? What might this type of death look like in your relationships with your boyfriend or girlfriend, your friends, your parents, etc.? How are these relationships affected?**

**Does God desire for you to sin? Does He want you to experience the death that is brought by surrendering to temptation? Does He want you to experience life to the full? Explain.**

### Point to Make

Temptations come in different forms, not just sexual ones. The Bible says that temptation presents itself when we are enticed by our own lust or desire. Even though we were each given a new nature when we became a Christian, we still battle our old nature. One way to avoid the temptation of sexual sin is to choose not to dwell on the temptation.

### Point to Make

If you give in to sexual temptation, you are destroying your trust with your parents and friends, the purity within your relationship, and your clear conscience. It is not worth it!

### Point to Make

See John 10:10. You will often be tempted to stray from God’s path and to follow the standards of our culture, but it always leads to death.

never tempts, however, because he never desires his people to sin. Christians should never blame God when they do wrong. lured and enticed. A fishing metaphor for drawing prey away from shelter in order to trap them with a deadly hook. Here it is the person’s evil desire that ensnares; in 1 Pet. 5:8–9 it is Satan who “seeks to devour.” Sin is never God’s fault.

James 1:15 This dramatic depiction shows the terrible result when one gives in to temptation. James 1:17 James moves from evil temptations (which God never gives) to the observation that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God (cf. Matt. 7:11). As in James 1:5, James reminds the readers of God’s goodness. In their trials, God is not tempting them to sin, but the difficulties in life



## SHIFT YOUR FOCUS

Read 2 Timothy 2:22

According to this passage, what we are to flee? Give an example.

**PURSUE** – TO STRIVE TO DO SOMETHING WITH AN INTENSE EFFORT TOWARDS A GOAL.

What does it mean to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace?

How might striving to do these things with an intense effort keep you from giving in to temptation?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What is the promise of God regarding temptation?

Who or what in your life can help you escape temptation and pursue faith, love, peace, and righteousness?

A good question to ask yourself is, "what are you pursuing...sexual satisfaction and the allure of fun, or your relationship with Jesus and the glory of God?"

The heart of a follower of Jesus must shift to a life that pursues faith, love, peace and righteousness. When you allow your heart to do this your question shifts from "how far is too far?" to "how can I honor God in my dating relationships?"

The Bible is a love letter that shows us a better way to live. When we live life God's way, we avoid the negative consequences of living in a way that does not honor Him.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote a letter to a group of people who had been told by their culture that it was okay to use their bodies for things that did not honor God. Paul, however, taught the Corinthians that everything has a proper use and that to use things improperly is not good.

## Point to Make

If you focus your attention on striving towards righteousness, faith, love and peace, fleeing temptation will be much easier. It is important to be aware of temptation so you can follow through with what you know you should do when you are tempted.

## Discuss

See Matthew 5:8. Why is seeing God motivation to be pure? We should so long for God that we are passionately pursuing and longing to see him rather than determining how impure we can be and still "see God."

are intended to strengthen and perfect them and make them more like God. God's intentions for them are always for good (cf. Rom. 8:28). There is nothing in this world that is truly good that has any other origin than from above, namely heaven, descending from the Father of lights, which refers to God as creator of the heavenly "lights" (Ps. 74:16; 136:7-9)—a prime example of his good gifts. God is unchanging in his character and therefore in his giving of good, unlike the variation of the night changing to day or the shifting shadow caused by the sun or moon.

2 Tim. 2:22 "Passions" in this context refers to sinful desires in general (not only sexual desire) that tend to be characteristic of youth. The command to flee wrong is combined with the command to

Read 1 Corinthians 6:13–20.

**For each of the verses listed below, write what Paul says about the body or the actions of the body.**

Verse 13:

Verse 15:

Verse 18:

Verse 19:

Verse 20:

**Looking at what you wrote about the body, what is the proper use for your body?**

In other words, “how far is too far?” can be answered in this way: It is too far sexually when . . .

- 1) You are not glorifying God.
- 2) You violate your body, which is the temple of God and where His Holy Spirit dwells.
- 3) You are united with someone in the oneness He desires us to have with Him and our spouse in a marriage covenant.

**Which of these behaviors are bait that would entice you to come out from under God’s protection?**

- Holding hands
- Kissing
- Touching another person sexually
- Touching yourself sexually
- Being alone with your boyfriend/girlfriend
- Allowing your thoughts to be constantly on another person
- Putting more importance on a relationship with another person than you put on your relationship with God (time, thoughts, money, etc.)
- Watching provocative images
- Listening to provocative music
- Joking about sexual content with friends

## HONEST DISCUSSION

**What is the purpose of having physical boundaries in a relationship?**

### Point to Make

Our bodies were bought for a price and are not meant for sexual immorality, rather, they are meant to be a member of the body of Christ and a temple for the Holy Spirit. Therefore, flee sexual immorality.

### Point to Make

Some actions listed are certainly sinful, but some actions can go either way. For example, holding hands and kissing can cause us to think about things that will tempt us to live in a way that will not honor God. See 1 Cor. 10:13.

pursue what is right. The pursuit of right is to be done along with other believers. Connection with the community of faith is essential for both progress in sanctification and perseverance in the faith.

1 Cor. 10:13 Even when Christians face morally confusing situations, they should never think that they have no options other than sinful ones. There will always be a morally right solution that does not require disobedience to any of God’s moral laws.

1 Cor. 6:12–20 Some of the Corinthian Christians were using prostitutes, theorizing that bodily appetites were matters of indifference for Christians just as they apparently were for everyone else. Paul

What boundaries do you need to establish in order to avoid the temptations you may face in a dating relationship?

How early do you need to set the physical boundaries in your relationship?

How would you set up physical boundaries in a relationship?

Who should be involved in setting those standards?

How is staying out of dating relationships until you have the opportunity to take the marriage step a way to protect yourself from going too far?

In your own words, what has God shown you about the answer to the question, "how far is too far?"

## Point to Make

Setting boundaries are important. It is most wise to establish rules when your clothes are on and you are thinking clearly. Don't be a fool and think that you can stop when you want.

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reminds them that the bodies of Christians are one with the resurrected Christ and, in risen form, the Christian's body will be eternal. What they do with them now, therefore, is important. 1 Cor. 6:12–13 "All things are lawful" & "Food ... for the stomach." Are probably commonly used slogans among the Corinthians. The Corinthians have adopted from the culture around them the idea that the body is permitted to have everything that it craves. Paul knows that human desires are tainted with sin, which uses these desires to master the person for its own evil purposes (Rom. 6:6, 12, 16–22; 7:7–25). 1 Cor. 6:15 bodies ... members of Christ. Unity with Christ is incompatible with all sin (Rom. 6:6) but particularly with sexual sin. Because sexual union has a spiritual component, sexual activity outside marriage is a unique sin both against Christ (1 Cor. 6:15) and one's own body (v. 18; see Prov.

## NOW WHAT?

When are you most vulnerable to sexual temptation? Are there certain times of day, certain people, or certain circumstances connected with these desires? Be specific.

How will you handle a circumstance when your boyfriend/girlfriend wants to go further than you are comfortable?

### PRAYER:

Ask God to help you to not be deceived, but to clearly recognize when you are being tempted to sin. Ask God to help you to resist those temptations and thus honor Him. Ask God to show you how you can pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace and how you can flee from the temptations of lust and desire. Thank Him for providing you the means of escape when confronted with situations that make you want to go too far.

## GOING DEEPER

Read 2 Samuel 13:1–17 and James 1:14.

Look at the progression of temptation and sin in this story. In James 1:14, the Bible says that a person is tempted when he is enticed by his own evil desire. The word enticed portrays the idea of a baited hook that lures fish from their protective spot or a hunter who sets a trap for an animal. You can see this idea of enticement in the story you just read.

List each action Amnon did to act on his temptation to be with Tamar (see verses 6, 8-11, 14).

After Amnon acted on his temptation, how did it produce the kind of death that James described (see verses 14-17)?

Have you ever done things that you knew didn't please God in order to get what you wanted? Did you find that once you had what you thought you wanted, you experienced anger, guilt, or frustration?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Ephesians 5:3

6:26, 32). Within marriage, sexual union is not only allowed but has positive spiritual significance (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:22–33). Flee. Paul also tells the Corinthians to “flee from idolatry” in 1 Cor. 10:14. Idolatry and sexual immorality were closely connected in Israel's history (Ex. 32:6; Num. 25:1–2) as well as in Paul's thinking about the problems in Corinth (1 Cor. 10:7–8).

1 Cor. 6:19 The Spirit of the Lord lives within individual Christians (v. 17), making each Christian's body a temple just as the church, corporately conceived, is also a temple where God's Spirit dwells (3:16). You are not your own. As with other gifts from God (4:2, 7), Christians are to exercise responsible stewardship over their bodies. 1 Cor. 6:20 bought with a price.

# WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — COLOSSIANS 2:8

When have you given in to temptation because it looked like the right choice?

How can you follow the warning in this verse?

## DAY 2 — 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

Do you trust this promise?

Describe an example when you have noticed God provided a way out of temptation?

## DAY 3 — ROMANS 7:18-25

If your goal is to live in purity, what types of temptations would cause you to miss the mark.

Describe the hope that Paul has at the end of this passage?

## DAY 4 — 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-8

Describe the reason that Christians should live differently according to verse 5.

Describe the stern warning against rejecting the teaching found in this passage.

## DAY 5 — GALATIANS 5:19-26

Is it possible to display all the fruit of the Spirit and participate in the acts listed in verse 19-21?

How important is self-control for the life of a follower of Jesus?

## DAY 6 — ROMANS 13:11-14

Describe the imagery of living in the daytime versus the night illustrated in this passage.

How are your heart's desires impacted by the amount of time you spend thinking about them?

## DAY 7 — 2 TIMOTHY 2:20-22

How does fleeing from sexual immorality prepare you to be used by God?

Describe the role of the church (the people) in helping each other pursue righteousness?

# For Girls/Guys Only

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

WEEK

6

## Key Questions and Concepts

The responsibility to lead in the marriage relationship falls on the man. The fact that God chose to create man first and to address him first after the fall illustrates His heart for men to lead.

Have you considered that dressing modestly is an act of worship? It shows who you truly treasure.

## Leader Note

This week girls and guys will study similar topics however the lesson is divided into two studies on the following pages. The Now What and Going Deeper section will apply to both groups.

It is important to remember God's plan for leadership within a relationship. (See Genesis 2:7; 18-22; 3:8-9.) By reading Scripture, you can clearly see the responsibility to lead in the marriage relationship falls on the man. The fact that God chose to create man first and to address him first after the fall illustrates His heart for men to lead. Husbands are to love their wives in a self-sacrificial manner, following the example of Christ, who "gave himself up for" the church in loving self-sacrifice. The biblical picture of a husband laying down his life for his wife is directly opposed to any kind of male tyranny or oppression. The husband is bound by love to ensure that his wife finds their marriage a source of rich fulfillment and joyful service to the Lord.

You might be thinking, "I'm not even close to being married, so how does this apply to me?" While it's true that you are not yet married (or even close), that doesn't mean you should ignore these future roles, especially when the purpose of dating is to find a future spouse. In the meantime, you should expect the guys in your life to begin leading now. The following four truths are only a few of the ways a young man should be leading in a dating relationship.

- 1) **Pursue the girl.** Girls, this is up to the guy to do. It takes courage and confidence for both of you to do this. The guy should be the one to take the initiative to call the girl, introduce himself to her parents, and ask her on a date. In his pursuit, he should communicate his dating intentions clearly.
- 2) **Protect her.** This goes beyond physical protection. As the leader, guys have the responsibility to help guard her heart with their actions and words.
- 3) **Lead her closer to God.** As we have already established, the girl he is pursuing needs to be a strong Christian. It should be his goal to sharpen her in her walk with God.
- 4) **Serve her.** In His relationship with His bride, Jesus set the perfect example of the best way to show love. He served. Men should do the same.

*Which of the four tips is the most desirable trait in a future boyfriend or spouse? Why? Why is it important to think about these things now?*

Look for these qualities in a guy who might be a potential boyfriend or spouse. When men lead like Jesus it makes it easy for their wives to follow their leadership. Today as we look at some specific topics it is important for all of us to know the man should lead in these areas of the relationship.

This lesson is divided into two sections in order to specifically speak to guys and girls. This study should teach you what qualities you should strive for and what to look for in a future spouse. Don't settle to be passive as a man, and ladies don't settle for a man that is passive about these topics.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Tim. 2:8-10 the men should ... likewise also that women. Paul addresses particular concerns in regard to each gender. The issue for men is anger and for women it is modesty and proper submission. not with ... gold or pearls or costly attire. Paul is not prohibiting the wearing of jewelry; the principle is that women should not dress gaudily or seductively, but in a way that is proper.

Matt. 22:39 Love signifies a concrete responsibility to seek the greatest good of one's neighbors, both Jew and Gentile.

# For Girls Only

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MODESTY

Read 1 Timothy 2:9–10.

**What do you think it means for a woman to dress modestly?**

**Do you find it hard to dress modestly in today's world?**

Yes

No

Sometimes

Read Matthew 22:39.

**How might this Scripture apply to dressing modestly?**

If you haven't already figured this out, it's time you know. Most guys are visually stimulated. What they see affects their physical bodies. When they see a girl dressed immodestly, showing lots of skin, revealing her body through tight clothes, guys often fall into the trap of lustful thoughts. As young Christian women, you are to love your brothers in Christ (and non-Christian guys as well). One way to do this is to help protect them from lustful thoughts by dressing modestly.

Read Romans 14:13.

**Think through your wardrobe. Does your choice of clothing ever lead a guy to sin?**

Yes

No

Maybe

It is true that guys have a responsibility to choose not to look or to dwell on a girl's immodest clothing. It's a both/and kind of situation. Girls need to love their brothers and honor God by dressing modestly. Guys need to love their sisters and honor God by choosing to look away and avoid lustful thoughts.

When you choose to dress modestly, you allow a guy to like you for who you are (your heart and personality) rather than for how you look. Your looks are temporary. Even though it is true that immodest clothing will get you attention from many guys, is that the type of guy you want to attract? It's likely that the guys you attract because of your immodest dress are after more than your heart.

**Write down a few ways you have learned to dress modestly.**

Much of today's fashion is immodest. If you like fashionable clothing, you will likely face a hard decision when considering what kinds of clothes to buy. Please know that it is still possible to dress fashionably and modestly. It will take a little more work, but it is definitely worth it!

## Interact

It's true that each person's definition of modesty will be different, and it's also true that the Bible does not give a list of trending immodest and modest clothing. So what's a girl to do?

## Definition

A stumbling block is something a person trips over, and an obstacle is anything that leads another person to sin.

## Discuss

What should you do with the clothing that is immodest?

## Discuss

Have you considered that dressing modestly is an act of worship? It shows whom you truly treasure.

## Discuss

What is more important: to be fashionable or to prevent a brother from sinning?

Prov. 4:20–23 Heart in Proverbs regularly refers to the center of one's inner life and orientation to God, from which a person does all thinking, feeling, and choosing. Taking words of wisdom into the heart is vital (they are life, v. 22), and wisdom's presence in the heart is worth guarding because out of the heart flow all the thoughts and words and choices of a person's life.

1 Pet. 3:3–4 Do not let your adorning be external. Peter's instructions here were common in his day. Such "external ... adorning" can be witnessed in portraits and sculptures from the first century, where the elaborate braiding of women's hair and the wearing of gaudy jewelry was common in upper-class Roman society. In contrast to this, the Christian woman should focus on inner (hid-

## GUARD YOUR HEART

Read Proverbs 4:23.

**What do you think it means to guard your heart? Why is it important to guard your heart?**

### Things To Do:

- 1) **Pursue Jesus.** He will not break your heart. No man will ever love you more than him.
- 2) **Maintain close female friendships.** If you abandon your friendships with other girls, you will look to a guy to meet all your emotional needs. This is not healthy.
- 3) **Be careful of flattery.** Many guys are genuine and it's great to hear compliments. However, it makes it more difficult to guard your heart because the desire for more compliments may change your actions. Sometimes, this is a manipulative way for guys to get what they want.
- 4) **Have another girl hold you accountable in your relationships with guys.** Ask her to ask you hard questions. You can use the suggestions listed here as a guide.
- 5) **Spend time together in groups.** This will help you to avoid frequent heart-to-heart conversations.
- 6) **Avoid frequent late-night talks.** It's often during late-night talks, that you will reveal your deepest thoughts. This forms an emotional bond that is not healthy for young relationships.
- 7) **Don't make promises you can't keep.** Yes, your intent in dating is to find a future spouse. However, avoid planning your future together. If you continuously talk about one day getting married or even dating for a long time, you are giving more of your heart to him.
- 8) **Avoid one-on-one prayer time together.** Yes, you are both Christians. Yes, you should pray for each other. However, prayer is an intimate thing. By avoiding one-on-one prayer time together, you are helping to guard your heart.

While these tips may seem too strict, they will help you and the guy more than you know. By taking these precautions, you love your neighbor as yourself. If you put these tips into practice, a possible future breakup will be less heartbreaking and leave you both with a whole heart.

**When have you struggled to follow through with the actions mentioned above? Why?**

## TRUE BEAUTY

**How does our culture define beauty?**

Read 1 Peter 3:3-4 and Proverbs 31:30.

**What do these passages teach us about beauty?**

### Point to Make

Many girls are emotionally stimulated and the emotional ups and downs of a relationship can take a toll on your heart. Remember, what you do now impacts your future.

### Point to Make

A woman's beauty should not come from fancy hair, jewelry, and clothes, but rather from a beautiful heart. Peter is not saying that women shouldn't wear nice clothes and jewelry, but rather that those things are not the source of genuine beauty.

den) beauty of the heart. What matters to God is the godly character of the wife, characterized by a gentle and quiet spirit. It is clear that Peter is not literally prohibiting all braiding of hair or all wearing of gold jewelry! Instead, Peter warns against both an inordinate preoccupation with personal appearance and material excess in such matters.

Prov. 31:30 The mention of a woman who fears the Lord at the end of this long list of excellent qualities brings back the theme of the book of Proverbs stated in 1:7. It reminds readers that this woman excels in her fear of the Lord, and therefore that she is a model of the character traits and wisdom taught throughout the book's 31 chapters. The appearance of this woman's fear of the Lord at the



Let this be an encouragement to you as a young woman. In a world that worships external beauty, it's hard to keep up. You probably often feel like you have to buy the newest fashions and have the best body and hair to be beautiful. God's Word gives a far different and better definition of beauty. It's what is on the inside that is of great worth! If you disagree, ask your grandmother and grandfather how they define beauty. It's likely that their external appearances have changed a bit over the years!

**What word does 1 Peter 3:3–4 use to describe beauty that is found in a gentle and quiet spirit?**

**Which do you spend more time on in the morning? Circle one.**

External Beauty

Internal Beauty

If we are honest, we all probably spend more time on our external beauty. We might read the Bible or pray for five minutes, but then we take forty-five minutes to fix our hair. Let this be a challenge to take more time each day to grow in inner beauty through reading God's Word and praying to Him!

**What do you think guys focus on when they are telling a friend about a girl they are attracted to? Circle one.**

External Beauty

Internal Beauty

Many girls care about external beauty because they think that is what a guy cares about most. However, you want them to be attracted to your external and inner beauty. A godly guy will elevate the inner because he knows God's definition of beauty. It is worth waiting for a guy like that.

Remember the definition of true beauty. It's hard when the world is screaming a different message, but just tune your ears to God's voice, and you will be on the right path.

## **BOUNCE YOUR EYES**

Even though this may seem like a guy issue. Many girls are tempted visually as well. Like girls, guys have responsibility to dress and carry themselves modestly as well, but that doesn't mean you don't have a responsibility too!

**So what are you to do when you see a guy dressed immodestly? Circle your answer.**

- A) Stare.
- B) Share it on social media. (#mancrushmonday or dream guy board on Pinterest)
- C) Turn your eyes away from him.
- D) Fantasize about him.
- E) Store the picture in your mind.

If you are honest, you are likely tempted to do all of the above. God cares about what you put before your eyes. It's true that guys can be immodest, but it's up to you to turn away when you see them.

Read Psalm 101:2-4.

### **Point to Make**

Unfading and imperishable beauty is beauty that doesn't change over time. External beauty will eventually fade, but true inner beauty grows over time.

### **Point to Make**

Most girls probably focus on external beauty because they know that will get attention. A godly guy will elevate inner beauty because he knows God's definition of beauty.

### **Discuss**

Don't dismiss this topic for girls. Many girls secretly struggle with this temptation.

end of this list is also a reminder that this quality is more important than even great skill and talent, and is foundational to the wise and right use of all activities and skills. A godly woman may well have outward charm and beauty, but these are of secondary importance to her godliness.

Ps. 101:1–4 The King Will Aim to Be Blameless. The song opens by declaring the king's firm commitment to live out covenant faithfulness: he will ponder the way that is blameless (cf. 18:32; 119:1; Prov. 11:20; 13:6) in order to walk in that way (cf. Ps. 101:6, which echoes v. 2 here); he wants to display integrity of heart within his own house (i.e., in his private life); when it comes to whose advice and help he will seek in ruling, he will also reject those who fall away and those who have a

David, the psalmist, wanted to guard his eyes from anything that was not worthy of his walk with God. God desires for a woman to delight in one man's body, and that is her husband's. Girls, guard your eyes. Save the stares for your future husband. You not only honor him when you do this, but you also honor God.

### **How exactly can you bounce your eyes when you see an attractive image?**

It is inevitable that you will see these images, but it is up to you whether you will dwell on those images or bounce your eyes to something else. It has been said that if you choose to bounce your eyes immediately, your mind does not have time to entertain those images.

You must be careful of the images, stories and songs that you fill your mind about relationships. It becomes hard to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Don't be fooled into believing that images and stories don't create an impression in your mind. They can lead you down a road of future disappointment when you find that no man can measure up to your expectations.

Read Proverbs 7:6–27.

Even though this story is about a male falling into a trap, the principle of being slowly seduced into believing lies applies to girls as well. Pay close attention to verses 21–23. You have got to make wise decisions in order to pursue purity in your life. By choosing to bounce your eyes, you are choosing to keep your mind and thoughts pure, and you are therefore honoring God with your thoughts.

### **Point to Make**

Simply put, when your eyes are drawn to a sexy image, you must immediately turn them away. For example, if you see a racy image on television, turn away or leave the room. If there is a suggestive image in a movie, focus your eyes downward until the scene is over. If you see someone in public who is dressed immodestly, look in the opposite direction.

### **Interact**

Have your students practice the look away. Notice the guys who do this well. They might be a guy worth dating.

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perverse heart (i.e., those who are openly unfaithful). The policies and plans of a Davidic king should be focused on serving the people, especially in promoting the conditions in which piety can flourish; unfaithful advisers do not share these goals.

Prov. 7:1–27 The appeal begins with the plea for the son to take the father's wise instruction to heart in order to keep himself away from the adulteress (vv. 1–5). The main section is a narrative about a man who willingly allows himself to be entrapped by the adulteress (vv. 6–23). The final verses appeal to the sons (plural, v. 24) to learn the point of the narrative: wisdom includes keeping off paths that one knows will lead to temptation, paths on which many have walked naively to their own ruin

# For Guys Only

## GUARD HER HEART

Read Proverbs 4:23.

What do you think it means to guard her heart? Why is it important to guard her heart?

### Things To Do:

- 1) **Pursue Jesus.** A passionate relationship with him will give you a passionate desire to protect her.
- 2) **Encourage her to maintain close female friendships.** If she abandons her friendships with other girls, she will look to you to meet all her emotional needs. This is not healthy.
- 3) **Be careful of flattery.** Yes, you can give genuine compliments. However, don't use this as a way to manipulate her to get what you want.
- 4) **Have another guy hold you accountable in your relationships with girls.** Ask him to ask you hard questions. You can use the suggestions listed here as a guide.
- 5) **Spend time together in groups.** This will help you to avoid frequent heart-to-heart conversations.
- 6) **Avoid frequent late-night talks.** It's often during late-night talks, either on the phone or in person, that a girl will reveal her deepest thoughts to you. This forms an emotional bond that is not healthy for young relationships.
- 7) **Don't make promises you can't keep.** Yes, your intent in dating is to find a future spouse. However, avoid planning your future together. If you talk about one day getting married or even dating for a long time continuously, the girl will likely give more of her heart to you.
- 8) **Avoid one-on-one prayer time together.** Yes, you are both Christians. Yes, you should pray for each other. However, prayer is an intimate thing. By avoiding one-on-one prayer time together, you are helping to guard her heart.

While these tips may seem too strict, they will help you and the girl more than you know. By taking these precautions, you love your neighbor as yourself. If you put these tips into practice, a possible future breakup will be less heartbreaking and leave both you and the girl with a whole heart.

Which of the tips is most challenging to you? Why?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MODESTY

As you know, most guys are visually stimulated, meaning that what we see affects our physical bodies. When girls dress immodestly, showing lots of skin, revealing their bodies through tight clothes or low-cut shirts, guys often fall into the trap of lustful thoughts.

Read 1 Timothy 2:9–10.

## Reference

Appendix 1 at the back of this study is designed to help guys understand their role as a leader of the relationship and give them tips on how to lead.

## Point to Make

Many girls are emotionally stimulated and the emotional ups and downs of a relationship can take a toll on her heart. As the leader in the relationship guys need to be careful to help guard a girl's heart. Remember, what you do now impacts both your futures.

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(vv. 24–26). This is the third paternal warning about adultery (see 5:1–23; 6:20–35).

Prov. 31:10–31 An Alphabet of Womanly Excellence. This wisdom poem is an acrostic, in which each verse begins with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The poem begins and ends with mention of the woman's "excellence" (vv. 10, 29–31). The probable intention of putting this together with the acrostic pattern is to show that this woman's character runs the whole range of excellence. The woman is married (as expected in that culture), and she is devoted to the well-being of her household (vv. 11–13, 15, 17, 19, 21–22, 25, 27), to which she contributes by her participation in outside economic concerns (vv. 14, 16, 18, 24). At the same time she makes her home the center of

## What do you think it means for a woman to dress modestly?

Read Matthew 22:39.

### How might this Scripture apply to dressing modestly?

Read Romans 14:13.

Now, guys, before you think that your lustful thoughts can be totally blamed on girls, stop for a moment and think. You still have a responsibility to choose not to look or to dwell on a girl's immodest clothing. It's a both/and kind of situation. Girls, need to love their brothers and honor God by dressing modestly. Guys, you need to love your sisters and honor God by choosing to look away and avoid lustful thoughts.

When a girl dresses modestly it is an act of worship to the God who loves her. Don't encourage her to dress immodestly. When a girl chooses to dress modestly, she is allowing a guy to like her for who she is (her heart and personality) rather than for how she looks. Seek after godly girls who dress modestly. This will allow you to appreciate her for her true beauty, which is a heart that loves the Lord.

### Write down why you think it is important for girls to dress modestly.

If a girl dresses immodestly, ask yourself what type of guy is she is trying to attract. One that cares about her or her external appearance? It is true that much of today's fashion is immodest. Girls who like fashionable clothing will likely face a hard decision when considering what kinds of clothes to buy. Please know that it is still possible to dress fashionably and modestly. It will take a little more work, but it is definitely worth it! Even though this may seem like only a girl issue. Many girls are tempted visually as well. Like girls, guys also have responsibility to dress and carry themselves modestly!

## TRUE BEAUTY

### How does our culture define beauty?

Read 1 Peter 3:3-4 and Proverbs 31:10-31.

### What do these passages teach us about beauty?

## Discuss

How does every new trend make it more difficult to dress modestly?

## Definition

A stumbling block is something a person trips over, and an obstacle is anything that leads another person to sin.

## Point to Make

A woman's beauty should not come from fancy hair, jewelry, and clothes, but rather from a beautiful heart. Peter is not saying that women shouldn't wear nice clothes and jewelry, but rather that those things are not the source of genuine beauty.

ministry by giving generously to the poor (v. 20) and by instructing her children and household workers in true kindness (v. 26; neighbors may be included in this audience). So her husband and children enjoy their lot and honor her for her industry (vv. 11–12, 23, 28–29). This lofty portrait of excellence sets such a high standard that it can be depressing to godly women today until its purpose is understood. First, the woman embodies in all areas of life the full character of wisdom commended throughout this book. This shows that even though the concrete situations up to now have generally envisioned a cast of males, the teaching of the entire book is intended for all of God's people. Second, as with other character types, this profile is an ideal: a particular example of full-scale virtue and wisdom toward which the faithful are willing to be molded. It is not expected that any one woman

In a world that worships external beauty, it's hard for girls to keep up. Girls often feel like they have to buy the newest fashions and have the best body and hair to be beautiful. God's Word gives a far different and better definition of beauty. It's what is on the inside that has great worth! If you disagree, ask your grandmother and grandfather how they define beauty. It's likely that their external appearances have changed a bit over the years!

**What word does 1 Peter 3:3-4 use to describe beauty that is found in a gentle and quiet spirit?**

**Guys, when you tell a friend about a girl you are attracted to, what do you focus on? Circle one.**

External Beauty

Internal Beauty

You might have always determined a girl's beauty by her outer appearance. While it is okay to be attracted by a girl's appearance, make sure you take time to get to know her heart as well.

Inner beauty is much more important than outer beauty. Have you ever noticed how a really attractive girl doesn't seem so attractive if she is mean and rude? Guys, let this challenge you to keep your tongue in check when speaking about girls. Let it also challenge you to look deeper than what is on the surface. Remember the definition of true beauty. It's hard when the world is screaming a different message, but just tune your ears to God's voice, and you will be on the right path.

## **BOUNCE YOUR EYES**

**So what are you to do when you see a girl dressed immodestly? Circle your answer.**

- A) Stare.
- B) Share it on social media (#womancrushwednesday)
- C) Turn your eyes away from her.
- D) Fantasize about her.
- E) Store the picture in your mind.

If you are honest, you are likely tempted to do all of the above. God cares about what you put before your eyes. It's true that immodest girls are everywhere, but it's up to you to choose to turn away when you see them.

Read Psalm 101:2-4.

David, the psalmist, wanted to guard his eyes from anything that was not worthy of his walk with God. God desires for a man to delight in one woman's body, and that is his wife's. Guard your eyes. Save the stares for your future wife. You not only honor her when you do this, but you also honor God.

**How exactly can you bounce your eyes when you see a provocative image?**

### **Point to Make**

Unfading and imperishable beauty is beauty that doesn't change over time. External beauty will eventually fade, but true inner beauty grows over time.

### **Point to Make**

It certainly is a Christian girl's responsibility to dress modestly to help protect guys, but that doesn't mean you don't have a responsibility too!

### **Point to Make**

Simply put, when your eyes are drawn to a sexy image, you must immediately turn them away. For example, if you see a racy image on television, turn away or leave the room. If there is a suggestive image in a movie, focus your eyes downward until the scene is over. If you see someone in public who is dressed immodestly, look in the opposite direction.

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will look exactly like this in every respect.

It is inevitable that you will see these images, but it is up to you whether you will dwell on those images or bounce your eyes to something else. It has been said that if you choose to bounce your eyes immediately, your mind does not have time to entertain those images.

**When you choose to look away, how are you promoting modesty?**

Read Proverbs 7:6–27.

**What was the cause of this young man’s downfall?**

**Describe modern examples of how Satan baits people into a circumstance like the young man in the passage.**

Don’t be fooled into believing that images and stories don’t create an impression in your mind. They can lead you down a road of future disappointment when you find that no woman can measure up to your expectations. You must be careful of the images, stories and songs that you fill your mind about relationships. It becomes hard to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

Not every girl is a Christian. Therefore, they will not practice modesty. By choosing to bounce your eyes, you are choosing to keep your mind and thoughts pure, and you are therefore honoring God with your thoughts.

## **Interact**

Have your students practice the look away. Challenge the students to only look at the opposite sex above the shoulders.

## **Point to Make**

Notice verses 8–9. The young man was putting himself in a tempting situation by going near this woman’s house. He went at night, when his judgment was not as sharp. Pay close attention to the principle of being slowly seduced into believing lies in verses 21–23. You have got to make wise decisions in order to pursue purity in your life.

## **NOW WHAT?**

Look back over the lesson today. What did God teach you?

How has God shown you to better guard your heart from this lesson?

Why is it crucial for the man to lead in a relationship?

Who can hold you accountable about looking away?

In your own words, describe the Bible's definition of beauty.

How can you promote modesty?

## **GOING DEEPER**

Describe a marriage that you admire?

How does the husband lead and serve his bride?

How does their marriage impact your view of a great marriage?

What would cause our culture to shift perspectives about beauty and modesty?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Psalm 101:3

# WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — GENESIS 2:18-24

What does this passage reveal about God's plan for leadership within a relationship?

How can you live out God's plan for leadership in your life?

## DAY 2 — MATTHEW 22:39

According to this passage, why is modesty important?

What would it require of you to focus on dressing modestly?

## DAY 3 — PROVERBS 4:23

How can one keep their "heart pure?"

Why is it important to keep your heart pure for your future?

## DAY 4 — 1 PETER 3:3-4

According to this passage, where is true beauty found?

How can you focus more on "inner beauty" than "outer beauty?"

## DAY 5 — PSALM 101:2-4

According to this passage what are you to do when you are tempted to stare/lust over a guy/girl?

What kind of heart/life should we be striving to have/live?

## DAY 6 — ROMANS 14:13-19

What are areas in life do you strive to make sure you are not a stumbling block for someone?

How is dressing modestly an act of worship?

## DAY 7 — PROVERBS 31:10-31

How is a woman who portrays these traits beautiful?

How does having a heart that fears the Lord as your first priority impact your relationships?



# A Pure Mind

PSALM 139:1-12, 23-24

WEEK

7

## Key Questions and Concepts

God knows your thoughts. He knows what you are thinking, whether you speak it out loud or remain silent. He knows the desires of your heart, both good and bad. The secrets you keep are laid bare before Him, whether you purposely show Him or try to conceal them.

Christians are transformed by the renewing of the mind through Christ. If something is changed completely then nothing of the old can remain.

What instructions does Scripture give to help you in your pursuit of a pure mind?

Living a life of purity means you seek to honor God and choose to be set apart for His purposes in every aspect of your life, from your prayer life to your school life, in both daytime and nighttime, in a crowd and alone, on the inside and out. You have already learned how to honor God emotionally and physically, and this week we are going to talk about honoring Him in your mind.

*What is the purpose of asking God to search us if he already knows our thoughts and actions?  
What anxious thoughts do you desire to be free of?*

God knows your thoughts. He knows what you are thinking, whether you speak it out loud or remain silent. He knows the desires of your heart, both good and bad. The secrets you keep are laid bare before Him, whether you purposely show Him or try to conceal them.

You could choose to be afraid or intimidated by God's ability to know your deepest thoughts and desires. If you do, you will miss out on the freedom you could experience in this knowledge. Instead of coming to God like a whimpering child expecting to be punished for doing something wrong, come before Him knowing that His light exposes sin so that He can help you get rid of it. Instead of being afraid to pray because you don't know what to say about your situation or your sin, dive right into prayer, knowing that God knows your circumstances and is right there in the middle of it with you, waiting to help and forgive.

There is no pretending with God—no masks to wear, fake attitudes to assume, or popularity contests to win. Let that be a freeing thought to you today.

Consider spending time talking to God this week about the things He already knows are happening in your mind. Have an open conversation with Him about your desires, fears, and sins. Discuss the good and the bad. He already knows both sides. Experience the freedom it brings to talk to the One who knows you better than you know yourself.

God desires purity, not only in our physical lives, but also in our minds.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Psalm 139. In this hymn the closing request echoes the opening statement. The key word of the psalm is "know": God knows (vv. 1, 2, 4, 6, 23), and the faithful soul knows (v. 14). These features highlight the Psalm's theme: God's intimate knowledge of his people (a theme that vv. 1–6 begins). God knows all of my activities, all of my words, even my inmost thoughts. The response (v. 6) is, such knowledge is beyond my ability to comprehend. Then vv. 7–12 declare that there is no place one can go to get away from that knowledge, and vv. there is nowhere in the universe that God will not be present to lead and hold the believer (vv. 7–10). Some have supposed that the impulse to flee (v. 7) comes from a guilty conscience, or from a desire for independence, but this is unlikely: these

## PURPOSE OF THE MIND

Read the following verses. In the space to the right, write down what you learn from the verse about the mind (characteristics, functions, importance, etc.).

- 1) Jeremiah 17:10 –
- 2) Matthew 22:37 –
- 3) Romans 8:6–7 –
- 4) Romans 12:2 –
- 5) 1 Corinthians 2:16 –

## WHO CONTROLS YOUR MIND?

Read Ephesians 2:1-3.

According to this Scripture, who ruled our minds when we were lost?

### Real-Life Story

"I became a Christian when I was sixteen years old. I can look back and see the difference in my life from before I met Christ and after I met Christ. Before, I was ruled by my sinful nature. The way I thought and acted did not honor God. For example, I did not see anything wrong with gossiping about people. I thought it was okay to have sex with my boyfriend if I loved him. I also believed that it was okay to cheat on tests and to lie to people. I certainly didn't see anything wrong with thoughts that didn't honor God. I was ruled by my sinful nature. After I became a Christian, I noticed a difference in my life. I wanted to honor God with my life and my thoughts. I started to think differently. Not only did I not want to sin, I didn't even want to think sinful thoughts. It's still an everyday battle with the sinful nature, but now I have the power through God's Holy Spirit to live differently. I was given a new nature as a Christian, and God totally changed my life."

Can you relate to the story above? Can you recall how God changed your heart and mind to want to honor Him rather than to live according to your sinful nature? Explain.

Read Ephesians 2:4–7.

To have a pure mind before God, you must first realize that God has given you a new nature. You no longer have to dwell on impure things and act according to your sinful nature. Choose today to dwell only on things that are pure.

## GUARDING YOUR MIND

God desires purity in our innermost lives, even our thoughts. This is really hard in our culture today. We are bombarded with impure images and influences.

## Point to Make

We are all born with a sin nature. Before we choose to follow Jesus, that sin nature rules our lives and our thoughts. We cannot help but sin because we are living according to our sinful nature. However, when we trust Jesus as Savior, we are given a new nature. We no longer have to sin; by God's power, we can resist temptation and live pure lives.

## Discuss

It may be difficult for students to remember what they thought about before they chose to follow Christ. Help them to see they were not good and became better. They were dead and now alive. Encourage them to see the difference between doing good to stay out of trouble and doing the right thing out of worship for a God who loves them.

verses take delight in the fact that God will "lead" him, an entirely positive benefit, and "hold" him. There is no place where he is beyond God's care. 13–16 illustrate the point by describing life in a very dark place (the mother's womb). Verses 17–18 exclaim how delightful this "knowledge of God's knowledge" is; vv. 19–22 affirm the singer's loyalty to the Lord; and vv. 23–24 invite God to continue examining the singer's inner life, in order to purge it from all that hinders him from walking in "the way everlasting."

Eph. 2:1–3 "God helps those who help themselves" is not from the Bible but from the ancient Greeks. As Paul emphasizes in this section, the truth is the exact opposite: God helps the helpless!

Read Matthew 15:18–20.

**According to verse 18, what is the source of the things that come out of the mouth?**

Ultimately, Jesus is saying that we need to be careful about what we think because it will eventually come out in our actions.

A huge negative influence on people today is pornography. It is easy to access and addictive once you start to look at it. This is a very dangerous road you do not want to go down. The world wants you to think that there is nothing wrong with looking at pornography. The truth is that it can and will destroy you if you allow it to take hold in your life and eventually it will play out in your actions. You will likely choose to be sexually active before marriage if you continually look at pornography. You will find yourself often lusting after people because of what you have allowed your eyes to see. The guilt and shame not only hurts your closeness to God, but it also affects your daily decisions and can affect your future marriage.

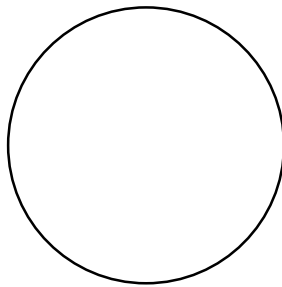
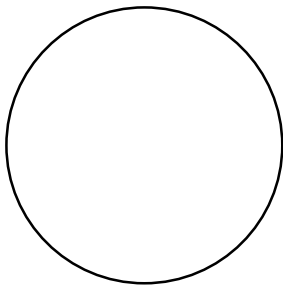
**Resist this Temptation**

- 1) **Walk closely with God.** Commit to read His Word and pray daily. When you are tempted to look at pornography, pick up your Bible instead, and read it until the temptation leaves you.
- 2) **Set up accountability in your life.** If you do not have software to either block or report pornography, ask your parents to install this on your devices. It may be embarrassing to ask your parents to do this, but it is worth it to protect you. Also, have a parent, a Bible-study leader, or a strong Christian friend to ask you weekly if you have looked at pornography.
- 3) **Use electronic devices only in the family room.** Being alone with a device is only asking for trouble.

**AN INNER LOOK**

The amount of time you spend with a person or in an activity can determine how much influence you allow them to have in your life. It can also help you identify a habit, addiction, or relationship that you need to reevaluate or get rid of in order to allow more time for Christ’s influence in your life.

**The circles below represent a normal week (not counting sleep). Divide the first circle into pie pieces based on the activities you spend your time. Divide the second circle based on who you spend your time and how much time you spend with each person. Label each piece of the pie.**



**Discuss**

Have you ever heard the phrase “Garbage in, garbage out”? It means that if you choose to let impure things into your life, you will eventually make impure choices.

**Reference**

Heart in Matt. 15:18 has a special emphasis on thoughts.

**Point to Make**

Pornography is a temptation for guys and girls. As a Christian, you are no longer controlled by the sinful nature. God will give you the strength to resist temptation.

**Activity**

Bigger the slice, the more time you spend in that activity. Have students be specific with activities such as homework, video games, quiet time, texting, social media, online, extracurricular activities, etc. Encourage them to use specific names of friends and family.

Even more, he helps his enemies who have transgressed his holy law.

Eph. 2:4–10 In contrast to the hopeless state of the nonbeliever, Christians exult in hope because of God’s incredible grace and free salvation. Paul accents this grace in contrast to the pre-Christ hopelessness analyzed in vv. 1–3. Eph. 2:4 But God. No hopeless fate looks any grimmer than that which awaits the forlorn company of mankind marching behind the “prince of the power of the air” (v. 2) to their destruction under divine wrath. Just when things look the most desolate, Paul utters the greatest short phrase in the history of human speech: “But God!” rich in mercy. God’s mercy on his helpless enemies flows from his own loving heart, not from anything they have done to deserve it.

You should notice what and who influences you the most. Are these things healthy or unhealthy, positive or negative? Do they help you grow spiritually or stand in the way?

Read the following definitions. In the column to the far right, note any areas of your life that may be addicting or habitual. Be honest and take a hard look at yourself.

DEFINITIONS	EXAMPLES	IN MY LIFE
Habit—"involuntary pattern of behavior acquired by frequent repetition." In other words, this is something you've repeated enough that it's become natural for you to do. You don't have to think about doing it; you just do it. Keep in mind, there can be positive and negative habits.	Nail-biting Cussing Quiet time	
Addiction—"a habit so strong that it is <i>not easily given up</i> ; compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance; persistent, compulsive use of a substance known to be <i>harmful</i> ." Look at the italicized key words and phrases in this definition. Things that may start off as innocent and not harmful can turn into harmful addictions when they take control of us. Are there things you do that you just can't live without doing? Are there things you can't give up? Are there things you do in excess that you can't seem to limit?	Alcohol Pornography Texting Food	

Hopefully, you have a new awareness of yourself and your activities and relationships. Recognizing harmful habits and addictions is an important step in moving forward in your life of purity.

## RENEWING YOUR MIND

Read Romans 12:2.

**TRANSFORM** - TO CHANGE OR ALTER COMPLETELY IN NATURE, FORM, OR FUNCTION.

**RENEW** - TO A RESTORE FRESHNESS OR PERFECTION.

According to this verse, how can you move forward in the Spirit and away from the flesh?

### Example

If a band said, "Our music is mainly influenced by the Beatles," do you think they heard only one song from the Beatles and never listened to them again? Or did they hear a whole album and play the songs over and over? In order for the Beatles to have a major influence on another band's music, that band had to spend a lot of time listening to the Beatles.

### Point to Make

Evaluating the way you spend your time can tell you a lot about whether an activity or relationship you're in is a habit or an addiction.

### Point to Make

Christians are transformed by the renewing of the mind through Christ. If something is changed completely, then nothing of the old can remain.

Eph. 2:5 when we were dead. Paul resumes his original thought, which began with "you were dead" in v. 1. made us alive. That is, God gave us regeneration (new spiritual life within). This and the two verbs in v. 6 ("raised up" and "seated with") make up the main verbs of the long sentence in vv. 1-10. Since Christians were dead, they first had to be made alive before they could believe (and God did that together with Christ). This is why salvation is by grace alone.

Eph. 2:6-7 Raised us up with him means that, because of Christ's resurrection, those who believe in him are given new life spiritually in this age (regeneration). They will also be given renewed physical bodies when Christ returns (future resurrection). seated us with him in the heavenly places. God

**Is it really possible to take a mind that is trashed with the horrible influences of the world (filthy language, sexual images, etc.) and renew it to perfection? How can that be?**

Scripture does not say that you are automatically transformed and renewed. Instead, it begins with a command: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world."

Take a moment and draw a stop sign next to that sentence (feel free to draw one in your Bible as well). God is saying, you've walked according to the way of the world, according to the influences and patterns it sets for you, now stop! Transformation and renewal can't happen if you continue in the old ways and patterns. You have to decide to stop doing the old before the new can develop.

IF YOU WANT TO STAY CLEAN, STOP PLAYING IN THE MUD.

Read Colossians 3:1–2 and Philippians 4:8.

**What instructions do these Scriptures give that will help you in your pursuit of a pure mind?**

If you are faithful to do what is suggested in these Scriptures, you can have a pure mind and pure life. There is no better way to live!

## **Point to Make**

Reading God's Word is a great way to renew your mind. When you choose to fill your mind with God's truth, a life of purity will follow.

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has allowed his people even now to share in a measure of the authority that Christ has, seated at the right hand of God (cf. 1:20–22; 6:10–18; James 4:7; 1 John 4:4). Verse 7 of ch. 2 answers the question of why God lavished such love upon his people: so that they will marvel for all of eternity over the incredible kindness and love of God. It will take all of eternity to fathom God's love, and those who are saved will never plumb the depths of it.

Rom. 12:2 The present evil age still threatens those who belong to Christ, so they must resist its pressure. Their lives are changed as their minds are made new (contrast 1:28), so that they are able to "discern" God's will. By testing you may discern translates Greek dokimazō, which often has the

## NOW WHAT?

How does the new nature you are given in Christ help you to live a pure life and think pure thoughts?

List some things that are negative influences for your mind and thoughts. Be specific.

Describe how you can remove these negative influences from your life and replace them with positive influences.

PRAYER:

Pray this prayer from your heart or make up your own: "Lord, I am surrounded by influences, both good and bad. The world is not going to censor itself for me. It is up to me to be aware of what I'm doing, whom I'm hanging around with, and how I am spending my time. Jesus, keep me aware of those influences that dishonor You, and help me to purposefully guard my heart from them. Help me to walk away from anything that could hinder my Christian walk so that I can live a life of purity."

## GOING DEEPER

How does it make you feel to know that God knows your thoughts?

Read Philippians 4:8.

Describe how you can use this verse as a filter for movies, music, conversations, books, attitudes and thoughts.

How will your choices of what you allow yourself to hear impact your relationships?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 4:8

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sense of finding out the worth of something by putting it to use or testing it in actual practice.

Col. 3:1–2 raised with Christ. See 2:13–14. Set your minds on things that are above contrasts with the things that are on earth and refers to pursuing a deeper knowledge of Christ himself (Phil. 3:10) and all that belongs to living with and for him. This would include seeking first his kingdom (Matt. 6:33) and living a life worthy of his name (Col. 1:10; 2:6). Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1; Eph. 1:20) in a position of authority where he can make intercession with the Father. The false teacher may have claimed to have heavenly secrets, but Paul dismisses his theology as earthly.

# WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PROVERBS 16:1-9

According to this passage, what is "an abomination to the Lord?"

How can you surrender your heart to the Lord the way it is described in this passage?

## DAY 2 — LUKE 8:4-8

Which ground did the seed take root and grow? Why?

How does this parable relate to having a pure heart?

## DAY 3 — PSALM 139

Who is speaking in this passage and why is that important?

According to this passage, why is it important to God that we have a pure heart?

## DAY 4 — ROMANS 12:2

According to these passages, why is it important that we be "transformed?"

How can you transform and renew your mind daily?

## DAY 5 — MATTHEW 15:18-20

According to this passage, what "defiles" a person?

At the root, where do the things that come out of your mouth stem from?

## DAY 6 — EPHESIANS 2:1-7

Through what are we saved?

How have you noticed a change in your old life to your new life with Christ?

## DAY 7 — COLOSSIANS 3:1-2

What should we now seek since we have been raised with Christ?

How have you focused on things above this week?

# Distortions From God's Design

ROMANS 1:18-25

WEEK

8

## Key Questions and Concepts

Satan is always twisting and distorting the truths of God. In many different ways, our culture has exchanged the truth of God for a lie, but especially in the area of sexuality.

## Leader Note

Parents will be equipped the week of this lesson to lead a discussion with their student(s) about homosexuality, same-sex attraction and the Church. Parents will be encouraged to watch Pastor Alex's message from October 26, 2014 addressing this topic and follow up with a family Bible study that will be provided for them. If this topic is brought up, encourage students to look forward to the discussion that they will have with their families about this topic.

We have learned this semester that sex within marriage is a beautiful and holy thing. Satan is always twisting and distorting the truths of God. In many different ways, our culture has exchanged the truth of God for a lie, but especially in the area of sexuality. Satan has perverted what was meant to be a holy union between a man and woman. As a result, many people face serious consequences from doing things their own way. Here are some examples:

- The divorce rate is over 50 percent.
- There is an increase in sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.
- People dress in ways that portray themselves as sexual objects.
- Many people are forced into the sex trade and slavery.
- Pornography is everywhere.
- Self-esteem is low.
- Suicide, cutting and depression are at all-time highs.

These are just a few examples why God's laws are right and good. Take notice that when humanity allows Satan and the evil desires of the human heart to twist and distort God's plans, nothing good comes from it. It's not that God gives us laws and rules to keep us from having any fun. His ways are perfect and protect us from unnecessary harm. God is so good that even when we break His laws, His grace and mercy are sufficient to heal and restore us.

*Give an example of how Satan distorts God's truth?  
How many people do you know that cohabit?*

If you struggle with or have been affected by any of the issues we discuss this week, know that you are just as loved by God as those who haven't struggled with these issues. We are all striving to live in a way that honors God. This study is not meant to condemn or judge.

While this study won't cover everything, our prayer is that you will be challenged to choose to live according to God's desire and to reject anything else. May we all find the grace of God to live the life He desires us to live.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Rom. 1:18 The wrath of God refers to his personal anger against sin. God's anger is not selfish or arbitrary but represents his holy and loving response to human wickedness. Some have understood God's wrath in impersonal cause-effect terms, but that would be a deistic worldview rather than a biblical one. Rom. 1:19–20 God's wrath is expressed for good reason since his power and divine nature are clearly revealed through the world he has made, and yet he is rejected by all people.

Rom. 1:21 The root sin is the failure to value God above all things, so that he is not honored and praised as he should be. Human beings are foolish, not in the sense that they are intellectually de-



## ADULTERY

Read Genesis 2:23–24 and Mark 10:1–12.

**According to verses 6–9, what was God’s original plan for men and women in marriage?**

Read Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18.

**ADULTERY** – WHEN A MARRIED PERSON HAS SEXUAL INTIMACY WITH SOMEONE OTHER THAN HIS OR HER SPOUSE.

**If you are not married would it be considered adultery on your part if you had sex with someone? Explain.**

Read Matthew 5:27–33.

**How did Jesus define adultery here?**

**What does the culture say about looking at someone lustfully (the whole “you can look but don’t touch” idea)? Does it see it as something wrong or sinful? Explain.**

**Based on what you read in Matthew 5:27–33, what would Jesus say about this? Would He say that looking at someone in this way is (circle the answer):**

Sexual distortion

God’s norm

Jesus was and is concerned with the heart. What you take in through your eyes, ears, and thoughts is going to eventually come out. If you choose to look at someone lustfully, you are one step closer to committing a sexual sin physically. Jesus’ solution was to deal with the problem of lust and adultery in the heart before it became the actual act.

Jesus’ solution wasn’t for us to literally cut off our limbs or gouge out our eyes. He was using hyperbole, an exaggeration, to make a point. He was saying that we should do everything possible to keep our hearts pure so that the temptation to act outside of God’s plan will not result in our distorting His intent for marriage.

Read Job 31:1.

May we always strive to follow God’s norm and not allow our culture to lead us toward a distortion of human sexuality.

## Point to Make

The idea of becoming “one flesh” is a way of saying “being married.” Notice the design from the beginning: it involved one woman and one man. Jesus reinforces the blueprint for marriage in Mark 10. Adultery is mentioned here because it is an act outside of the original design. It is a distortion of God’s original plan.

## Point to Make

Although premarital sex is not considered adultery, it still falls under the category of sexual immorality. When speaking about this topic in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave a new definition of adultery.

## Discuss

What did Jesus say to do if your eye or hand caused you to sin? To what extent are you willing to go in order to keep your heart pure?

ficient but in their rejection of God’s lordship over their lives. They knew God not in a saving sense, but they knew of his existence and his attributes.

Rom. 1:22-23 Even brilliant people who do not honor God miss the whole purpose of life and are therefore fools. Idolatry is the fundamental sin. Modern “idols” don’t look like ancient ones; images served today are often mental rather than metal. But people still devote their lives to, and trust in, many things other than God.

Rom. 1:24 Three times Paul says God gave them up (vv. 24, 26, 28). In every instance the giving up

## UNWANTED SEXUAL CONTACT

This portion of the lesson deals with one of the most twisted and evil forms of sexual immorality.

Read Deuteronomy 22:25–27.

**Summarize what this Scripture teaches.**

Moses, the author of Deuteronomy, stated God's laws for the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 22. In this particular law in verses 25–27, we see God's heart for issues like rape. When sexual contact is forced upon anyone (virgin or not), it is unacceptable to God. It is sinful on the part of the perpetrator.

Forced sexual contact can happen in many different ways. It can be a male forcing himself sexually upon a female or vice versa. Statistics say that three out of every five people have been a victim of unwanted sexual contact. If you have not been exposed to this, it is likely that you know someone who has.

If you have been wounded in this way, it is important that you work through the emotional pain caused by this sexual encounter. By revealing the truth of what happened, you are on your way to working through this difficulty.

**In the meantime, there are a few things you should know:**

- 1) It is not your fault. Just as Deuteronomy says, the one who is sexually assaulted did nothing wrong.
- 2) Satan wants you to keep this a secret. However, when you do that, you do not have the opportunity to heal emotionally. Don't listen to his lies.
- 3) God is able to heal you emotionally, physically, and mentally.

Take a few moments and pray on the prayer focuses listed below:

- 1) Pray for those who have been wounded by unwanted sexual contact.
- 2) Pray for the perpetrators who have wounded someone through unwanted sexual contact. Ask God to save them and to transform their lives.
- 3) Thank God for His perfect grace and mercy that restores.

## COHABITATION

**COHABITATION** – AN UNMARRIED COUPLE CHOOSES TO LIVE TOGETHER IN THE SAME HOME.

**What does our culture say about cohabitation? Is there anything wrong with it? Why or why not?**

While it is true that Scripture does not speak directly to cohabitation, it does provide Biblical principles that apply to this topic. First, it should be noted that if a couple has chosen to live together before they are married, they are very likely participating in sexual immorality.

to sin is a result of idolatry, the refusal to make God the center and circumference of all existence, so that in practice the creature is exalted over the Creator. Hence, all individual sins are a consequence of the failure to prize and praise God as the giver of every good thing.

Rom. 1:25 Paul implies that all other religions are based on false ideas about the one true God; they are not just "different paths to one God," as some claim.

Gen. 2:23–24 The text highlights the sense of oneness that exists between the man and the woman. This sentence and the story of Eve's creation both make the point that marriage creates the closest

## Interact

This portion of the lesson may be especially difficult to discuss. Take extra care to be sensitive to those in your group who may have loved ones who experienced such circumstances.

## Reference

Deut. 22 goes on to talk about a virgin. God's heart is the same. The purpose for the money and marrying the girls appears to be the bride-price (see Ex. 22:16). The law seeks to protect the woman, who is less likely to be married because she has been violated.

## Point to Make

If you have ever been wounded by a forced sexual encounter, it is important that you talk to someone about this. Tell your parents, a Bible-study leader, a counselor, or another trusted adult.

Read each Scripture below and summarize it in the space provided.

A) 1 Corinthians 6:18 –

B) 1 Thessalonians 4:3 –

Scripture clearly teaches that sexual immorality is a sin. What if, you may ask, the couple is not involved sexually? What is wrong with living together then? Though that scenario is highly unlikely, the Bible gives principles that apply. Read the following Scriptures. After reading each one, explain why you think that living together would not be right according to that verse.

A) 1 Thessalonians 5:22 –

B) Ephesians 5:3 –

Even if a couple wanted to live together prior to marriage and set a goal to be sexually abstinent until their wedding day, cohabitation is not a wise decision. We are told to flee sexual immorality, which means to run away from it as fast as possible. If a couple chooses to live together prior to marriage, they are placing themselves in an extremely tempting situation and thus are not fleeing sexual immorality.

Our world is becoming more and more accepting of cohabitation. It is important to note that unbelievers cannot be expected to live up to God's standard. We should be careful not to expect Christian behavior from non-Christians. As Christians, we are called to reflect Christ in our conduct. One way we do this is by living according to God's standards of sexual purity.

It should also be noted that couples who live together before marriage are 46% more likely to divorce than couples who choose to wait to live together until after marriage. God knows what He is talking about! Doing life God's way is always best.

## OUR RESPONSE

So many people are hurting and confused and facing the natural consequences that come from not doing things God's way.

**How do you think we ought to treat people who participate in sexual distortions?**

Read 1 John 4:7–12.

**It is often said, "Hate the sin, love the sinner." How exactly does that work?**

## Point to Make

Though we will often find ourselves going against the grain when we walk in sexual purity, blessing and reward are found there.

## Point to Make

As Christians, we are called to love people. We hate sin by refusing to take part in it and by condemning it when we see it. We hate the sin by refusing to condone, ignore, or excuse it.

## Consider

Read John 8:11. He spoke in love and told her to leave her life of sin. That is true love. Jesus doesn't want us to continue to live a life of sin because he doesn't want us to suffer the consequences of our behavior. He desires freedom for us from the snare of sin. All Christians must rely on the strength that Jesus provides to overcome our sin.

of all human relationships. It is also important to observe that God creates only one Eve for Adam, not several Eves or another Adam. This points to heterosexual monogamy as the divine pattern for marriage that God established at creation. Moreover, the kinship between husband and wife creates obligations that override even duty to one's parents (therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, 2:24). They "left" their parents in the sense of putting their wife's welfare before that of their parents. As a result of this special affiliation, Gen. 2:24 observes that when a man leaves his parents and takes a wife, they shall become one flesh, i.e., one unit (a union of man and woman, consummated in sexual intercourse). Jesus appeals to this verse and 1:27 in setting out his view of marriage (Matt. 19:4–5).

### How do we love the sinners who are living in sin?

We cannot expect non-Christians who are struggling with sexual immorality to walk in purity. They are still controlled by the sinful nature. They need Jesus. We are called to love these people and trust God for a change in their lives. Will you be the one to bring them the good news of Jesus?

If someone is a Christian but still struggles with sexual immorality, a close Christian friend needs to lovingly and gently correct this person. Biblical accountability is a good thing. Again there is no room for mean talk or gossip. Such unkind behavior from a fellow believer will only drive the person further away from Christ.

The fact is, we have all struggled with temptations to live contrary to God's norm and according to the cultural distortions around us. When we give in to those temptations, it not only affects us, but also others. May we commit ourselves to living differently, in a way that shows we love both God and others.

### Point to Make

We love them by speaking the truth in love, by being faithful to witness to them. They need to hear about the forgiveness that is available through Jesus Christ. A true act of love is treating people with respect and kindness even when we do not approve of their lifestyle or choices.

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Mark 10:5–6 Jesus emphasizes that marriage, as a permanent relationship between a man and a woman, goes back to God's purpose at the beginning of creation (Gen. 1:27; 2:24; Ex. 20:14). Moses' regulations on divorce (Deut. 24:1–3) were not part of God's original ("beginning") plan but were instituted because of your hardness of heart.

Matt. 5:27 Adultery was considered an extremely serious offense (cf. Ex. 20:14) because, in addition to violating another person, it broke the marriage covenant (Mal. 2:14) that was a reflection of the relationship between God and his people.

## NOW WHAT?

How do you think we ought to treat people who participate in sexual distortions?

Describe the care that you could give to someone who you know has committed adultery?

How can you pray for those that have unfortunately been a victim of unwanted sexual contact?

What advice would you give to someone who is considering moving in with someone of the opposite sex?

## GOING DEEPER

Consider Job 31:1 about making a covenant with your eyes as a way to guard yourself against sexual impurity. Spend some time in prayer, and then write down how God is leading you to protect yourself against adultery in the areas listed below.

Eyes (what you look at, watch, view, and how you look at others):

Ears (what you hear, listen to, consider):

Tongue (what you say, speak about):

Hands (what you touch, hold, how you touch):

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Romans 1:25

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Matt. 5:28 with lustful intent (lit., “for the purpose of lusting for her”). Lust begins in the heart, the center of a person’s identity and will. It is not enough to maintain physical purity alone; one must also guard against engaging mentally in an act of unfaithfulness. Jesus is not adding to OT law but correctly interpreting it, for even in the Ten Commandments God had required purity of heart.

1 Thess. 4:3–8 Paul commands the Thessalonians to live in sexual holiness. Some converts may have found it a struggle to adjust to Christianity’s demanding ethical code.

1 Thess. 5:22 Paul now moves on to stress the importance of rejecting every form of evil.

# WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — MATTHEW 5:27-33

What did Jesus say to do if your eye or hand caused you to sin?

How far are you willing to go to make sure your heart remains pure so that you aren't presented with the temptation to act outside of God's will regarding sex?

## DAY 2 — ROMANS 5:8-9

To what does this passage compare Satan?

How can you resist his temptations?

## DAY 3 — MARK 10:1-12

According to this passage, what is Jesus' definition of adultery?

How does Jesus' definition of adultery change your view on God-honoring actions?

## DAY 4 — DEUTERONOMY 22:25-27

According to this passage, who is in the wrong?

What does this passage reveal about God's heart toward rape?

## DAY 5 — 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

According to this passage, what is the will of God for you?

How are you to live your life according to this passage?

## DAY 6 — 1 JOHN 4:7-12

How does this passage relate to what we are studying?

What are we, as Christians, called to do according to this passage?

## DAY 7 — ROMANS 1:18-25

Why are we without excuse when it comes to knowing God and his standards?

When have you exchanged God's truth for a lie?

# Your Future

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-2, 7-9, 32-35

WEEK

9

## Key Questions and Concepts

Does your future include marriage, or will you choose to be single so you can focus solely on the Lord?

There is no reason to rush into marriage. God gives you the freedom to choose a single life or a married life. Instead of automatically assuming you will marry, seek the Lord. He may lead you to choose singleness for His glory.

What are the key godly qualities you look for in a spouse?

When most people think about their future, they think about the person they will marry. Did you know that you have the option to not marry? The Bible even speaks of this.

*Read 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7-8, 32-35.*

A single person has a much simpler life than a married person. A married person must look after his or her household, while a single person can wholeheartedly focus on the Lord. This does not mean that it is a sin to get married. God is the Creator and Blessor of marriage, but a life of singleness can also be a gift from the Lord. It really is okay to not get married. This is called celibacy. Choosing to stay single so that you can wholeheartedly devote yourself to the Lord.

God gives you the freedom to choose a single life or a married life. Instead of automatically assuming you will marry, seek the Lord. He may lead you to choose singleness for His glory. While it is true that most people choose marriage, we should at least consider a single life as well.

*Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 9.*

We must remember that God created marriage in Genesis. Marriage is good. A major reason for marriage is to multiply. This is a good desire but it should happen within the covenant of marriage. If this desire that God put within burns deeply, Paul says to marry so that you may remain pure.

***Why do you think a single life can be a blessing?  
Describe your fears about getting married?***

Today, we will look ahead to your future. Does your future include marriage, or will you choose to be single so you can focus solely on the Lord? Even if you remain single only through college and young adulthood, it is still a wonderful time to focus solely on the Lord. There is no reason to rush into marriage. Until then, take some time today to pray about the possibility of singleness for your life. You still have a lot of time before making these important decisions, but believe it or not, your life choices today can affect your future.

## 5-Minute Commentary

1 Cor. 7:1 Some Corinthian Christians appear to have adopted the view that sexual relations of any kind, even within marriage, should be avoided. Paul seeks to carefully refute this view throughout this chapter (see 7:2, 5, 9, 10, 28, 36). 1 Cor. 7:2 Have probably refers to sexual intercourse (cf. 5:1). Each man ... his own wife and each woman her own husband affirms the goodness of monogamous marriage and excludes polygamy, for a "shared" husband would not be "her own" husband.

1 Cor. 7:6-7 Both marriage and celibacy have their own benefits, and both should be considered "gifts." Paul is happy that God has given him the gift of being content with remaining unmarried,

## WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?

If you do choose to marry one day, it is important that you seek a godly spouse. The world often teaches very different traits to look for in a spouse from what the Bible teaches.

**If you were to take a poll at your school for the qualities to look for in a boyfriend or girlfriend, what do you think the top answers would be?**

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14.

**As a Christian, what should your be number one quality at the top of your list?**

Read Matthew 12:33.

If the fruit from a person's life does not look like the fruit you would find in Jesus, then that is not the kind of person you want to marry. You want to marry a Christian who is truly walking with God. It's easy to find someone who talks the talk, but you want to find someone who walks the walk as well!

### 2 EXAMPLES

People base their marriage choice on a variety of reasons. Two of which are looks and money. Neither of these things is evil in and of itself, too much of an emphasis on them can prove unhealthy.

**Read the following Scriptures and then record why you think money and looks might not be the most important qualities to look for in a future mate.**

- 1) Proverbs 31:30 –
- 2) 1 Timothy 6:10 –

### What is a healthy expectation for looks?

1) It is important to be attracted to your future spouse, but it is not good to expect him or her to look like magazine models or movie stars. The unrealistic pictures that we see in magazines simply aren't real. They have been cropped, edited, and retouched to present a person without any flaws.

2) Remember that beauty is fleeting. Look at your grandparents. Though they are still beautiful people, they certainly don't look like they did when they were your age!

### What is a healthy expectation for money?

- 1) Money can come and go. Don't expect it to always be there.
- 2) Money can't buy happiness.
- 3) Look for is someone who works hard. If they work hard, they will work hard to meet your basic needs.
- 4) To be financially stable is important, but not the most important thing.

### Point to Make

The most important quality your future spouse needs to have is simply to be a Christian. Keep in mind that just because someone says he or she is a Christian doesn't always mean it is true. A true Christian will look and act like a Christian growing in their walk with Christ.

### Point to Make

Look for someone who is financially wise. Notice if they spend every dollar they earn or are given, especially when they hang out with friends.

since this permits single-minded devotion to the Lord's work (vv. 32–33, 40). Paul recognizes, however, that his situation is not the norm. Remaining unmarried is a gift that many others do not have. See vv. 28, 36; Matt. 19:12.

2 Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This command, which is Paul's main point in 6:14–7:1, will be restated in different words at the end of the section (7:1). To be "unequally yoked" is to be "hitched up" or even crossbred with another animal who is not the same (Gk. heterozygeō). It is thus an image for being allied or identified wrongly with unbelievers. In context, it refers especially to those who are still rebelling against Paul within the church, whom Paul now shockingly labels



## A GODLY WIFE

This section is important for both guys and girls to study. Guys, it's important for you as you think about a future spouse, and girls, it's important for you as you prepare yourself for marriage one day.

Proverbs 31 is a well-known passage of Scripture about a godly wife. The words of Proverbs 31 came from a king's mom. It can be understood as a mom's advice to her son. God chose to make these words a part of His Word. Listen well to this wise advice about a godly wife.

Read Proverbs 31:10–31.

### What stood out to you as you read this passage?

Many women who read this passage feel a little overwhelmed. The wife described in Proverbs 31 is a superwoman. She can do it all! The point of this passage is not meant to discourage women, but rather to show both guys and girls important qualities for a wife to have.

**Below are some of the qualities that are mentioned in Proverbs 31. Guys, choose three qualities that are most important to you, and girls, choose three qualities in which you would like to grow.**

- Noble (vv. 10, 25) –
- Respected (v. 28) –
- Diligent (v. 13) –
- Early riser (v. 15) –
- Provider (v. 14) –
- Good steward (vv. 15–16) –
- Wise (vv. 16, 26) –
- Strong (v. 25) –
- Persistent (vv. 19, 27) –
- Resourceful (vv. 18, 21–22) –
- Hospitable (v. 20) –
- Confident (v. 18) –
- Happy (v. 25) –
- Faithful (vv. 27, 30) –
- Blessed (vv. 28–31) –

A word to the girls: Even though you are not yet a wife, that doesn't mean you should ignore this list. You've got to develop in each of these areas as you grow up and prepare to be a wife. When a man puts a ring on your finger one day, you won't just magically become a Proverbs 31 woman. It takes training and practice as a single young woman to adequately prepare for marriage.

Read Proverbs 31:30b.

## Interact

Have students explain why they chose the qualities they did. Encourage students to write next to each quality why each quality is important.

unbelievers (he clearly thinks it possible that some are [2 Cor. 13:5], though he hopes not), but the principle has wider application to other situations where (as with animals yoked together) one person's conduct and direction of life strongly influences or controls the other's.

Prov. 31:30 The mention of a woman who fears the Lord at the end of this long list of excellent qualities brings back the theme of the book of Proverbs stated in 1:7. It reminds readers that this woman excels in her fear of the Lord, and therefore that she is a model of the character traits and wisdom taught throughout the book's 31 chapters. The appearance of this woman's fear of the Lord at the end of this list is also a reminder that this quality is more important than even great skill and talent,

It is no accident that this phrase sums up the chapter. First and foremost, young men, you want a wife who fears the Lord. Young women, first and foremost, your goal is to fear the Lord. In this passage, fear is not fear like you might think. It does not mean to be afraid of God, but rather to honor and respect God. It's kind of like the honor and respect you have for your parents. You want to obey your parents out of respect and honor for them. Your attitude towards God should be the same: to obey Him out of respect and honor.

## A GODLY HUSBAND

The book of Proverbs does not list the desirable qualities for a husband in one specific chapter, as it does for a godly wife. Rather, these qualities are discussed all throughout Proverbs. Since Proverbs was written to young men who would one day be husbands, there are many verses that teach us what a godly husband should look like.

**Look up each of the Scriptures below and write the character qualities described in each verse. Some will be qualities that are good, and some will be qualities that are bad.**

- Proverbs 12:10 –
- Proverbs 29:24 –
- Proverbs 12:11; 27:23–27 –
- Proverbs 12:17,19 –
- Proverbs 12:15 –
- Proverbs 12:18 –
- Proverbs 14:21; 28:27 –
- Proverbs 15:12 –
- Proverbs 19:1; 20:7 –
- Proverbs 17:17 –
- Proverbs 29:3 –
- Proverbs 19:11 –
- Proverbs 16:18–19 –
- Proverbs 17:1 –
- Proverbs 14:29; 16:32 –
- Proverbs 20:1 –
- Proverbs 29:7 –
- Proverbs 17:9 –
- Proverbs 13:13 –
- Proverbs 27:4 –
- Proverbs 15:15 –

A word to the guys: After looking through this list, you might feel a little overwhelmed. Don't worry, your future wife will not expect perfection out of you (or at least she shouldn't). You will be working to develop in each of these areas for the rest of your life. God, who began a good work in you at salvation, will continue to work in you for the rest of your life (Philippians 1:6). Trust God to work out these qualities in you. If you simply love Him and walk with Him daily, He will cause you to grow in each of these areas.

## Interact

Circle the qualities that are good to pursue.

## Interact

Now take a look back over the list. Guys, put a star by the qualities that challenge you the most. Girls, put a star by the qualities that are most important for you to have in a husband.

## Reference

Ultimately the guy must be willing to lay down his life just like Jesus did for his bride. See Ephesians 5:25-30.

and is foundational to the wise and right use of all activities and skills. A godly woman may well have outward charm and beauty, but these are of secondary importance to her godliness.

1 Tim. 6:9–10 What is condemned here is the desire to be rich, not material things per se when rightly used for the glory of God. The desire to be rich leads one to fall into temptation. This in turn results in the love of money, which Paul identifies as a root of all kinds of evils (v. 10). The connection between false teaching and the desire to be rich has been a problem from the church's very beginning. wandered away from the faith. The warning is not simply that "love of money" is harmful but that this has led some to deny the faith, showing themselves to be unbelievers (cf. 1:19).

## YOUR LIST

Read Proverbs 3:5–6.

Now that you have taken a big-picture look at what qualities are important in a future spouse, in the Going Deeper section of this lesson you will make a list of what is most important to you as you await your future husband or wife. There are a few things to remember in making your list.

- First, no human being is perfect. Every person has flaws. If you look for someone who is perfect, you will never find a spouse!
- A spouse will not complete you. Only God, the Author of your life, can make you whole. A spouse will complement you as a person, but not complete you.
- Don't place undue importance on your list. A list is important to help you stay on track with the type of person you want to marry, but God is bigger than your list. The list just helps you to know what qualities to look for in a person, while also helping to steer you away from someone who might not be good for you.
- Your list might change. As you grow older, God may show you new things that are important to seek in a future spouse. Be open to the Holy Spirit.
- Trust God to provide what He knows is best. Again, if you place too much emphasis on your list, you might miss what God is showing you. Seek God first, and He will lead you.

God will make your path straight when you trust in Him. He is a good and loving Father.

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Prov. 31:10–31 An Alphabet of Womanly Excellence. This wisdom poem is an acrostic, in which each verse begins with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The poem begins and ends with mention of the woman's "excellence" (vv. 10, 29–31). The probable intention of putting this together with the acrostic pattern is to show that this woman's character runs the whole range of excellence. The woman is married (as expected in that culture), and she is devoted to the well-being of her household (vv. 11–13, 15, 17, 19, 21–22, 25, 27), to which she contributes by her participation in outside economic concerns (vv. 14, 16, 18, 24). At the same time she makes her home the center of ministry by giving generously to the poor (v. 20) and by instructing her children and household workers in true kindness (v. 26; neighbors may be included in this audience). So her husband and children

## **NOW WHAT?**

**Why would it be a good thing for you to remain single throughout your life?**

**What qualities do you need to grow and develop into godly qualities for your future spouse?**

**Why is it important to grow and develop godly characteristics now as a teenager?**

**What is your biggest fear in trying to find a godly spouse?**

**How long should you continue to date an individual that doesn't exhibit godly characteristics?**

### **PRAYER:**

Thank God that He is in control of your life. He will provide a Godly spouse for you in His timing if He desires for you to marry. Ask God to help you to trust Him in this area of your life.

## **GOING DEEPER**

Now it's time to begin your list of the qualities you would like to have in a future spouse. First, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to show you the qualities you should seek in a future spouse. After spending time in prayer, search out and write down the qualities that are important. Make sure you have a Scripture verse that goes along with each quality. You can use the Scriptures provided this week or other Scriptures that you may find. Ask your parents to help you make your list. Share your list with your DC group next week. Remember, this is a working list. Add to it when you think of new qualities.

**How can you utilize this list to keep you focused when you are in a relationship?**

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Proverbs 16:9

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enjoy their lot and honor her for her industry (vv. 11–12, 23, 28–29). This lofty portrait of excellence sets such a high standard that it can be depressing to godly women today until its purpose is understood. First, the woman embodies in all areas of life the full character of wisdom commended throughout this book. This shows that even though the concrete situations up to now have generally envisioned a cast of males, the teaching of the entire book is intended for all of God's people. Second, as with other character types, this profile is an ideal: a particular example of full-scale virtue and wisdom toward which the faithful are willing to be molded. It is not expected that any one woman will look exactly like this in every respect.

# WEEK 9 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — 1 CORINTHIANS 7:7-9

Does everyone have to get married?

How can you practice self-control to avoid sexual sin without getting married?

## DAY 2 — JOHN 13:12-17

What is Jesus' command?

How does Jesus' actions illustrate the way that you should serve your spouse?

## DAY 3 — MATTHEW 12:33

Describe the importance of acting out your faith.

How does this apply when looking for and becoming the right spouse?

## DAY 4 — LUKE 12:22-26

What have you been worrying about related to your future?

Describe the influence that worry has on your attitudes and actions.

## DAY 5 — PROVERBS 31:10-31

Explain what you like about the wife of noble character described in this passage.

Describe the influence the wife of noble character would have on her family.

## DAY 6 — PROVERBS 1:5 & 3:5-6

Describe ways that you could gain guidance about your future.

Why does Scripture tell us to not lean on our own understanding?

## DAY 7 — MATTHEW 6:25-34

What should a believer be seeking above all else?

When do you find yourself seeking after things as if God doesn't already know you need them?

## LOOKING BACK

You have done a great job this semester as you have studied the Old Testament kings. All throughout Scripture, God's people are instructed to remember the works and words of God. By doing this, we are better able to keep His law. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

**How do you feel now that you have completed this study?**

**What have you learned about your future during this study?**

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalms 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and lived out.

- Understand we all have a fallen nature.
- Through Christ we are given a new nature and are to set ourselves apart as holy.
- Examined the importance of having a united heart with God.
- Discovered how to examine our heart.
- Discussed pressures of dating within a fallen world.
- Learned the importance of dating and marrying a follower of Jesus.
- Discovered God must be our supreme affection over anyone or anything else.
- Learned that sex is a good thing within the covenant of marriage.
- Discussed the importance of pursuing holiness rather than determining how far can you go without crossing the line sexually.
- Learned strategies to flee sexual temptation.
- Discovered the importance of modesty and defined true beauty.
- Examined the purpose of guarding and renewing your mind.
- Discussed distortions from God's design for dating, sex, and marriage.
- Discovered that it is okay to remain unmarried so you may devote yourself to the Lord.
- Examined the characteristics defined in Scripture of a godly wife.
- Examined the characteristics defined in Scripture of a godly husband.
- Created a list of characteristics according to Scripture for your potential future spouse.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.

# APPENDIX 1

## WHO IS THE LEADER?

Read Genesis 2:7, 18–22 & 3:8–9.

**Whom did God create first? After Adam and Eve sinned, God approached them in the garden, whom did God speak to first?**

God has clearly given one gender the responsibility to be the leader in the marriage relationship. God chose to create man first and to address him first after the fall illustrates His heart for men to lead.

Read Ephesians 5:23.

**How does this verse describe the role of the husband?**

You might be thinking, “I’m not even close to being a husband, so how does this apply to me?” While it’s true that you are not yet a husband (or even close), that doesn’t mean you should ignore your future role, especially when the purpose of dating is to find a future spouse. What should you do in the meantime? You can practice being a leader to the girls in your life now. These four truths are only a few of the ways to be a leader as a young man in a dating relationship.

### Guys: How To Be A Leader In Dating Relationships:

- 1) **Pursue the girl.** Oftentimes in today’s culture, girls are taking on this role. Guys, this is for you to do. It takes courage and confidence to do this. You should be the one to take the initiative to call the girl, introduce yourself to her parents, and ask her on a date. In your pursuit of a girl, communicate your dating intentions clearly.
- 2) **Protect her.** This goes beyond physical protection. As the leader, you have the responsibility to help guard her heart. Choose your words wisely. If you sweet-talk a girl all of the time, she is going to have a more difficult time guarding her heart.
- 3) **Lead her closer to God.** As we have already established, the girl you are pursuing needs to be a strong Christian. Make it your goal to sharpen her in her walk with God.
- 4) **Serve her.** In His relationship with His bride, Jesus set the perfect example of the best way to show love. He served. Look for opportunities to serve the girl you are pursuing.

**Which of the four tips challenge you the most as the future leader of your home? Why?**

**Why do you think it is important to begin thinking about these things now, even though you may not yet be ready for a marriage relationship?**

# PHILIPPIANS

## A LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Within this study you will learn a practical method of studying Scripture.

The chief theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony, as evidenced by a growing commitment to service to God and to one another.

We are challenged to do the same as followers of Jesus in learning and living.



# Greetings and Thanksgiving

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

WEEK

1

## Key Questions and Concepts

Paul is above all concerned that the Philippians continue to make progress in their faith (1:25). The Philippians appear to be a healthy congregation. Can they then relax and rest? Paul's answer is an emphatic no. The world is too perilous, and the gospel too glorious, for them to be content with past achievements (3:12–16).

Describe the encouragement you would feel due to a letter from a spiritual leader in your life?

## Encouragement

Don't pass up the opportunity to write a personal note of encouragement to the students in your small group during this study.

The apostle Paul wrote over half of the books in the New Testament. In your reading of the NT, you will find that Paul was passionate about God. He not only wanted to live for Christ, he wanted others to know Jesus as well. Paul came from an elite Jewish background and spent several years trying to persecute and destroy the early Christian Church. If you are not aware of how Paul became a Christian, I encourage you to read about his conversion experience in the book of Acts (it's mentioned three times: Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:12-18). Once God changed Paul's heart, he was one of God's key instruments in the rise of Christianity and the building of the early Church.

Paul wrote the book of Philippians from a Roman jail cell. The church at Philippi had a special significance for Paul, since it was the first church he founded in Europe (Acts 16:6–40). Paul himself wanted to encourage the Philippians in their faith, and his imprisonment meant he could do that only through a letter. He was eager to thank them for their continued support: imprisonment carried with it a social stigma, and it would have been easy for the Philippians to turn their back on Paul at this point. Yet, they had remained faithful to him.

*Describe the encouragement you would feel due to a letter from a spiritual leader in your life? What would it be like to be a part of a brand new church?*

Paul is above all concerned that the Philippians continue to make progress in their faith (1:25). The Philippians appear to be a healthy congregation. Can they then relax and rest? Paul's answer is an emphatic no. The world is too perilous, and the gospel too glorious, for them to be content with past achievements (3:12–16). They must follow Paul's example and "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14). Christian maturity does not come through special mystical insights available to only a few, but rather through the patient practice of the familiar virtues of love and service to others. Spiritual progress involves effort: they are encouraged to "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12). They can do so knowing that "it is God who works in [them], both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (2:13).

Paul expresses, in great detail, his love for his friends. He wants them to know that he loves Jesus, and he wants them to follow and love Jesus too. Paul is filled with the love of Christ and everything else is worthless in comparison. May you find everything in life worthless in comparison to knowing Jesus.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 1:1–11 Greeting and Prayer. Paul greets his readers, expressing his gratitude (vv. 3–6) and affection (vv. 7–8) for them, followed by a prayer that their love would abound and their holiness increase (vv. 9–11).

Phil. 1:1–2 Salutation from Paul and Timothy. Paul, along with Timothy, gives the standard early Christian greeting of grace and peace. Paul does not identify himself as an apostle but designates Timothy and himself as servants. The emphasis on service anticipates the rest of the letter, and this emphasis is seen especially in what is said of the humiliation of Christ Jesus (2:5–11). It is uncer-

## GREETING

Read Philippians 1:1-2.

**Describe a present-day servant. Give some specific examples.**

The Greek word “servant” has a two-fold meaning as follows:

**SLAVE** — A PERSON WHO COMPLETELY BELONGS TO HIS OWNER  
AND HAS NO FREEDOM TO LEAVE.

**SERVANT** — A PERSON WHO WILLINGLY CHOOSES TO SERVE HIS MASTER.

Read Exodus 21:1, 5.

**Why would a slave want to stay with his master?**

**Why would Paul call himself a servant or slave of Jesus Christ?**

The joy of serving the Lord overflows into his writing to the church in Philippi. Paul wanted to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of Heaven, evidenced by a growing commitment to service to God and to one another.

When Paul addresses all the Christians in Philippi he greets them using the words “grace and peace.” “Grace” was a Greek greeting and “peace” was a Hebrew greeting.

**GRACE** — GOD’S FAVOR IS GIVEN TO SINFUL PEOPLE WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED  
OR UNDESERVED FAVOR.

**PEACE** — THE TOTAL WELL-BEING AND SECURITY THAT ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE  
OR QUIETNESS AND REST FOR AN INDIVIDUAL.

**Why would Paul start a letter with this greeting?**

## THANKSGIVING

Read Philippians 1:3-6.

In verses 3-6 you can sense Paul’s love for these Christians by the way that he writes.

tain what level of formal church governance is implied by overseers and deacons. The former are presumably elders, who would be charged with spiritual oversight of the congregation (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1–4), while the latter would be entrusted with matters of practical service (cf. Acts 6:1–7; 1 Tim. 3:8–13).

Phil. 1:3–11 Paul’s Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Philippians. Paul’s letters frequently begin with thanksgiving and prayer. The prayer here helps establish the major themes of the letter.

Phil. 1:3–5 Paul prays for the Philippians with joy, a word that will become a keynote theme in ch. 4.

## Point to Make

A slave could go free after six years but if the master treats him well and he wants to stay he could choose to stay under the care of his master. Describe Paul’s knowledge of the ultimate reward found in Christ would make him willingly stay under the care of his master, Jesus.

## Point to Make

Jesus bought Paul with the blood he shed on the cross. God set Paul apart to be his servant according to Romans 1:1.

## Discuss

How would a greeting of “grace and peace” serve as a great reminder the church in Philippi?

List three examples of Paul's love and concern for the Philippians.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Who is someone in your life that when you think of them, you break out in a prayer of thanksgiving? Why?

Paul specifically affirms the Philippians' partnership with him in his goal to spread the gospel of Christ. He recognizes them for how they have partnered with him from the very beginning.

Read the following verses and describe how the Philippians partnered with Paul to spread the gospel.

- Philippians 1:7 —
- Philippians 1:19 —
- Philippians 1:27 —
- Philippians 2:25 —
- Philippians 4:3 —
- Philippians 4:14-16 —

How do these same methods apply today?

What would it be like to partner with a missionary from the beginning and see the impact they make over a long-term period?

Paul points out that it is not his work, rather, it is God who has done and will complete the work when Jesus returns.

Why was Paul is so confident that God will "bring it to completion"?

If you are a follower of Jesus, what "good" work has God started in your life?

Based on these verses (1:3-6), how will you look and act as God continues to work as you walk in fellowship with Jesus?

## Point to Make

- 1) He is thankful to God for them.
- 2) He prays with joy for them.
- 3) Their partnership in the gospel from the beginning.

## Examples

- 1:7 – Identified with him even in his chains
- 1:19 – Prayed
- 1:27 – They were unified
- 2:25 – They sent one of their own to him
- 4:3 – They served next to him
- 4:14-16 – They sent finances to him

## Interact

Discuss Carmel's mission strategy of "Go, Pray, Give." Talk about missionaries you have partnered with and seen the long-term impact that they have made.

## Point to Make

As a follower of Jesus, the good work that has been started in you is the forgiveness of sin.

This joy springs from their partnership in the gospel, which involves not only their financial support of the apostle (4:15–16) but also their deep personal concern for his well-being.

Phil. 1:6 Paul is sure about God's commitment to the Philippians. The foundation for spiritual growth is recognizing that it is God who began a good work in you and will bring it to completion. Genuine spiritual progress is rooted in what God has done, is doing, and will do. His faithfulness ensures that he will be with believers until Jesus returns (the day of Jesus Christ; cf. 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:2–11; 2 Pet. 3:10–13; Rev. 20:11–21:8). They can have confidence that the God who has saved them will never let them go, and that they will inherit their eternal reward.

Read Philippians 1:7-8.

Based on several references within this letter, we know that when Paul was going through some difficult times. The Christians at Philippi helped him with money, housing and sending people to encourage him. This is especially important because he was imprisoned for sharing the message of Jesus.

**How do you like to be treated during difficult times?**

**How was their response an act of spiritual maturity?**

**Describe how it is easy or difficult for you to help your friends during their difficult times?**

**Describe your actions, or lack thereof, demonstrate the impact Jesus has made in your life.**

**Think of a specific friend that needs your help. List three ways you could care for them this next week.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

## Reference

The church in Philippi was united with Paul according to verse 5. They shared a common goal with Paul.

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Phil. 1:7–8 Again Paul expresses his warm thoughts about the Philippians and the fellowship they enjoy in God's grace. Paul's imprisonment would have been a source of great shame in the ancient world, but the Philippians have nonetheless stood in solidarity with him. This was no doubt an encouragement as he shared the good news with his captors and judges.

## NOW WHAT?

Who is someone that encourages you? Have you ever told this person? Write them a note and let them know you appreciate them.

Reread Philippians 1:1-8 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

What is one area of your life that you'd like God to focus His attention on?

## GOING DEEPER

What is sanctification?

How do you know God isn't done with you yet?

Christians will be made complete one day according to Philippians 1:6. What would the finished product look like in your life?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 1:6

## Prayer

This is a great opportunity for students to pray for one another.

# WEEK 1 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark each promise and summarize the promise.

Is this promise for back then, today or the future? If this promise applies to you, how would your future be different if you claim this promise?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark wherever suffering or hardship is mentioned.

Who is causing the hardship, suffering or persecution? How can you apply how the person faced the hardship in one of your present circumstances?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark each time prayer is mentioned.

Who is the person praying for? How can you pray this prayer for someone in your life?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

As you read, mark something God reveals to you that is important in red.

Why did you find that part of passage important?

# Progress in the Faith

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-18

WEEK

2

## Key Questions and Concepts

Lasting growth begins within the heart. There must be a heart change within the believer that alters external behavior. Otherwise, an individual can give their best effort to change but fall woefully short on their own.

Don't be fooled into believing that there is something that you can do to make God love you more or less. Your righteousness, as a Christian, comes directly from Jesus.

How have you taken steps of faith this past year?

There are eight major themes throughout the book of Philippians. Each of the remaining weeks we will look at a major theme during our opening. This week, the major theme that we can observe from the book of Philippians is that a proper spiritual outlook is critical for progress in the faith. That means we have to have a correct view of our life in Christ in order to growth in our faith.

We often think spiritual growth is only a matter of behavior change. In reality, lasting growth begins within the heart. There must be a heart change within the believer that alters external behavior. Otherwise, an individual can give their best effort to change but fall woefully short on their own.

***How is your spiritual outlook impacted by your circumstances?  
How have you taken steps of faith this past year?***

Don't be fooled into believing that there is something that you can do to make God love you more or less. Your righteousness, as a Christian, comes directly from Jesus. That righteousness does it's work to make an impact in your life. What does spiritual progress look like? Paul gives us a glimpse throughout the letter to church in Philippi (See *Philippians 1:5-11; 2:1-11; 3:7, 15; 4:7-9*).

- Fruit of righteousness only comes through Jesus.
- Christians should abound in love.
- Knowledge and discernment will lead you to what is excellent.
- One should overflow with humility and have an attitude like that of Jesus.
- Anything good comes from the Father in the first place.
- Your life should be about God's glory.
- Christ was a servant. Do likewise.
- Whatever we gain we must count as loss for the sake of knowing Christ.
- Continue to press forward to the goal of knowing Jesus.
- Put into practice the things that you have learned.
- The fruit of the Spirit should be evident in your life.

This theme illustrates the point; "he who began a good work in you, will also carry it on to completion." Spiritual progress will take place in the life of a faithful follower of Jesus.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 1:9-11 The first petition in Paul's prayer is that God would cause the cardinal Christian virtue of love to abound more and more, and that it would be accompanied by knowledge and all discernment, so that the Philippians' love would find expression in wise actions that would truly benefit others and glorify God. As Christians grow in their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus, they will increasingly be able to affirm and practice what is excellent. Such joyful obedience to God will give them the confidence of being found pure and blameless when Jesus returns. This does not imply instantaneous spiritual perfection but rather an increasing likeness to Christ. But fruit of righteousness is not produced in the believer's own power. Because that fruit comes through Jesus

## PRAYER

After his initial greeting Paul broke out into prayer for the Christians in Philippi. Paul's prayer for the Philippians is much more than asking God for good health and wealth. Paul chooses to pray for things that have eternal value.

Read Philippians 1:9-11.

**Describe why Paul's prayer is directed toward things of eternal value.**

**What does knowledge and discernment have to do with love?**

**How does abounding in love with knowledge and discernment relate to you being pure, blameless, bearing fruit and glorifying God?**

Read Galatians 5:22-25.

Paul understood that an individual could not do these things on his or her own. Moral discipline without the Holy Spirit will lead to failure. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that produces these virtues.

**Using verses 9-11 as an example of a prayer, spend a few minutes praying for the person to your left. An example is provided below:**

*Father, I pray that your love will continue to grow in (insert name here) each day. I also pray that (insert name here) would follow through with wise actions that would truly benefit others and glorify God. Give (insert name here) wisdom to determine what is excellent. May (insert name here) live out joyful obedience and be found by you to be pure and blameless. I pray that fruit of the Spirit will evident in (insert name here)'s life. Ultimately, may You be glorified because of (insert name here).*

## THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL

Read Philippians 1:12-14.

**Describe three things that happened as a result of Paul's imprisonment?**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

### Point to Make

Good health and wealth pass away. Fruit of the Holy Spirit and God being praised has eternal value.

### Point to Make

Biblical knowledge is not merely the possession of facts. Rather, knowledge and wisdom in the Bible are practical, having to do with godly living. Knowledge, wisdom and understanding result in a life worthy of the Lord.

### Point to Make

- 1) The gospel was advanced.
- 2) The entire palace guard knows he is for Jesus.
- 3) Brothers were encouraged to speak the word of God without fear.

Christ, it will result in the glory and praise of God.

Phil. 1:12–18 Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment. Paul assures the Philippians that, though he is imprisoned, the gospel is still advancing (vv. 12–18).

Phil. 1:12 The word Paul uses for the advance of the gospel (Gk. *prokopēn*) is the same word he will use in v. 25 for the Philippians' "progress" in faith. He thus underscores the need to push God's kingdom forward rather than dwelling on past or present problems.



Read Isaiah 55:8-9.

**What does Paul's experience say about how God can work through difficult circumstances?**

Read Romans 8:28.

**How does Paul's experience relate to Romans 8:28?**

Paul realized that the Philippians were grieved over his imprisonment, so he encouraged them by pointing out that his circumstances furthered the proclamation of the gospel. His imprisonment led others to be confident in the Lord. That confidence produced boldness to no longer fear man. Paul's joy in difficult circumstances is meant to be an example to the Philippians to likewise rejoice even in difficult times.

Read Genesis 50:15-21.

Sometimes it is really hard to see how God is working through our difficult circumstances. Joseph experienced some significant highs and lows throughout his life. However, he remained faithful to God. God ended up using him save nations of people from starvation.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

Most likely you have experienced disappointment, heartache, pain, loss, and other afflictions. God uses those circumstances in your life so that you can extend his grace to others in their times of need. Sharing one another's burdens is a part of being the body of Christ.

**How might God use your personal difficult circumstances or past trials to care for others and glorify God? Be specific.**

Read Philippians 1:15-18.

Paul is talking about two types of preaching being conducted while he's in jail. One group has sincere motives while the other group has greedy motives. These other preachers are not to be viewed as being heretical. Their message of Jesus crucified and raised was true. The objectivity of the gospel message is true apart from those who proclaim it. Paul recognizes the mixed motives but he's thrilled the message of Christ is getting out regardless of motives.

**How do we see evidence of this today?**

## Get Involved

Prisoner Alert at [prisoneralert.com](http://prisoneralert.com) is a ministry of The Voice of the Martyrs that equips believers to write letters of encouragement to Christians around the world that are imprisoned for their faith.

## Reference

Familiarize yourself with the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50.

## Reference

See commentary below for potential greedy motives.

## Point to Make

Be cautious and do not let students tear other pastors or churches down. The point here is to recognize that Christians still do the same thing today.

Phil. 1:13 The gospel has advanced because Paul has let the whole imperial guard (Gk. *praitōrion*) know that he is imprisoned only because of his testimony that Jesus is Lord. The Latin word *praetorium* could refer to a governor's residence and by extension those living in the residence. Those who believe that Paul wrote from Caesarea would understand the word in that sense here (see Acts 23:35). However, the word could also refer to the special guard of the emperor in Rome, as the translation above suggests.

Phil. 1:14 When the Christians in Rome, where Paul was imprisoned, saw his boldness even as his life was in danger, his example inspired them to be more courageous as well, so that they were much

Repetition in writing was an important method to prove a point or a key idea for Paul. In verse 9 Paul prays for their love to abound more and more with knowledge and discernment. In verse 16 Paul sites the reasoning others preach from a good will is because of love. This is further proof that the Christians in Philippi need to grow in their love with knowledge and discernment.

**Why does it require love and discernment to know those who preach out of a good will vs. envy and rivalry?**

**What can an individual do when he/she recognizes impure motives?**

**What is an area of your life where you find yourself with impure motives on a regular basis?**

**How difficult is to rejoice and be glad when a task you were working hard on got accomplished by someone else and they got the credit?**

**Did their work benefit you in any way?**

Paul had a great spiritual outlook even in his bad situation. He trusted God was still good and the goal of the gospel being advanced would happen anyway. That kind of trust is a true mark of progress in faith.

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more bold in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

Phil. 1:15–18 The identity of those here who preach Christ from envy and rivalry is difficult to determine. They are clearly antagonistic to Paul, and thus one could imagine they are the same “Judaizing” people mentioned in ch. 3. But it is hard to see how Paul could rejoice in the proclamation of something (namely, a return to the old covenant) which he saw as a betrayal of the good news. It seems more likely that these were other Christians who preached a generally sound gospel but were personally at odds with Paul. They may have dismissed him because of his poor speaking abilities (see 1 Corinthians 1–2) or his constant suffering and weakness (see 2 Corinthians 10-12); whatever

## **NOW WHAT?**

Read 1 Corinthians 13.

Describe an area of love that you need to grow.

What is something that Paul writes from the passage today that excites you, inspires you, confuses you or convicts you?

Reread Philippians 1:9-18 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## **GOING DEEPER**

Do you know any Christians who could be described as pure? What is it about that person that is attractive to you?

How do their actions spur you on toward love and good deeds?

How does your dependence on God change in difficult circumstances? Why?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Philippians 1:18

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their rationale, they were not motivated by love but only by a desire to harm Paul in some way. But Paul, like Jesus, is not concerned for his own interests (cf. Phil. 2:4), and he will "rejoice" as long as the gospel is progressing.

# WEEK 2 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As you read, mark each command/teaching and summarize it below.

Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As you read, mark wherever suffering or hardship is mentioned.

Who is causing the hardship, suffering or persecution? How can you apply how the person faced the hardship in one of your present circumstances?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As you read, mark each sin or bad example and summarize it below.

Do you need to ask forgiveness for this kind of sin or bad example? What will it take for you to forsake this sin or example in your future?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As your read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

As you read, mark each time prayer is mentioned.

Who is the person praying for? How can you pray this prayer for someone in your life?

# Role Models

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

WEEK

3

## Key Questions and Concepts

Jesus is the supreme example of loving and faithful service to God. However, Christians can serve as role models in this regard as well.

Who do you look up to as a role model? Have you ever considered yourself a role model?

Role models are not just those who triumph. Great role models often are those who face very difficult circumstances.

There are eight major themes throughout the book of Philippians. This week, the major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is that Jesus is the supreme example of loving and faithful service to God. However, Christians can serve as role models in this regard as well.

**Who do you look up to as a role model?  
Have you ever considered yourself a role model?**

Don't be fooled into believing no one is watching you as his or her role model. How can you serve faithfully as a Christian role model? Paul gives us a glimpse throughout the letter to church in Philippi (See *Philippians 1:12-26; 2:5-11, 19-30; 3:3-17; 4:9*).

- Positive attitude despite difficult conditions.
- Make great use of their time wherever God leads them.
- Actions overflow from an attitude of love.
- Celebrate and rejoice in team victories.
- Positive expectations.
- Put others interests ahead of their own.
- Joyful in the progress of others.
- Serve others in humility.
- Sacrifice.
- Bring others along and disciple them.
- Confidence comes from God, not their abilities.
- Know that the things of this world pail in comparison to knowing Jesus.
- Work hard toward the goal of being more like Jesus.
- Follow through with the example set before them.

Role models are not just those who triumph. Great role models often are those who face very difficult circumstances. Any condition can exalt Jesus if you approach it with courage and creativity. Remember that God is the one who brings success, he asks us to be faithful and follow through with his commands. We don't know how many of Paul's guards came to faith in Jesus. We only know that some did because Paul did his part to preach the gospel. Pray for the students to have courage and creativity.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 1:19 Paul, who has prayed for the Philippians, now solicits their prayers for deliverance. The tension between temporal deliverance and eternal salvation is, in fact, evident throughout this passage (vv. 19–26). Although Paul seems to have alluded to his temporal deliverance, clearly his longing for eternal salvation is “far better” (v. 23). In this regard, Paul alludes to Job 13:13–18 in this passage, where Job clearly speaks of his final destiny; and Paul speaks of his hope of not being ashamed, which is elsewhere related to the final judgment (cf. Rom. 5:4–5). Either way, Paul wants the Philippians to know that even if his expected deliverance from prison fails to materialize, and he is executed, he will still be “saved” to eternal life by God.

## TO LIVE IS CHRIST

Read Philippians 1:19-26.

The conditions of imprisonment, with all its associated anguish and persecution, form a real temptation for Paul to abandon the gospel and his firm service for Christ. However, Jesus was the source of Paul's continual joy and meaning for his life. Paul knew that either he would be set free or he was going to be sentenced to death, and that would free him to be with Jesus. Paul's generous attitude toward others who made life hard for him also functions as a model for all Christians.

**Why do you think Paul had such a great attitude while he was in jail?**

**What would it take for you to get to the point in your spiritual maturity where you would say, "everything God wants to do in and through me will be done?"**

**How is Paul's attitude a reflection of his statement in verse six?**

**How will Jesus be honored if Paul lives?**

**How will Jesus be honored if Paul dies?**

Paul's imprisonment became his platform because he preached while he was there. Paul understood Jesus' command of as you go...make disciples.

**What platform has God given you? What message are you "preaching?"**

Read Romans 10:14-15.

Does sharing your faith require words? Yes, it does and it is a privilege! Paul's attitude in Philippians is pretty amazing! He's saying, "If I'm alive I can preach . . . if I'm dead I get to be with God. I can't lose!" This passage clearly teaches that when believers die they are with Jesus.

**Why do you think it was such a hard choice for Paul to decide between life in heaven or on earth?**

## Point to Make

Paul had a great spiritual outlook. He knew that he was in communion with God wherever he was. Paul also believed that the proclamation of the gospel and the prayers of the Philippians would benefit him by him being released from prison.

## Reference

To be absent from the body is to be united with Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8-9

## Point to Make

Talk about the fruitful labor that Paul experienced versus experiencing the full presence of God. Paul thought it was necessary to remain in the flesh to disciple others.

## Discuss

How is Paul's viewpoint different from the kind of escape some people seek in suicide?

Phil. 1:20-21 The crucial thing for Paul is not life or death. It is maintaining his faithful witness to Christ. Or by death indicates that Paul hopes to honor Christ even in the way he eventually dies. Paul's life is not a matter of seeking his own comfort or advancement. It is all about seeking the advancement of Christ's kingdom: to live is tantamount to serving Christ. In fact, to die should be seen as gain, because it would mean that Paul would be freed from his trouble-filled life on earth to rejoice in Christ's presence.

Phil. 1:22-26 In light of v. 21, Paul is hard pressed as to which outcome he should desire. Being with Christ now would be more attractive for him, while remaining alive (in the flesh) would enable him to

How do you think someone gets to the point in his/her life where all they think about is being with Jesus?

How does a person get courage like Paul's?

Read Daniel 3:18.

It required great trust to respond to King Nebuchadnezzar like that. Their courage, like Paul's, came from a faithful relationship with God. Being scared or depressed in bad circumstances is normal. However, through the Holy Spirit and others lifting us up in prayer we too can have courage like Paul. God simply asks us to be faithful. He will bring the success.

## WORTHY CITIZENS

Read Philippians 1:27-30.

**MANNER** — GREEK WORD "POLIS" WHICH MEANS TO LIVE AS A CITIZEN OR CITY-STATE.

The English word politics comes from polis. The war veterans in Philippi were proud of their city, and even prouder that they were citizens of the most important "polis" (city-state) in their world: Rome. Paul wants his readers to think of themselves not just as citizens of Philippi or Rome, but above all as citizens of God's kingdom. He wants their manner of life to be worthy of their citizenship in God's kingdom.

What is the measurement used to evaluate behavior in this passage?

What does it require of you so that what others say about you is the same if they see you in person or only hear about you?

Paul wants his readers to work together by fearlessly standing firm in one spirit to spread the truth about Jesus. What reasons does he give for doing this?

How can standing firm through suffering without fear be a clear sign of your salvation to others?

## Reference

Familiarize yourself with the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3.

## Point to Make

Paul's sacrifice will be futile if the Philippians do not continue to live in a way that is "worthy of the gospel of Christ."

## Point to Make

Students must realize that our standard is not determined on other Christian's behavior. Our standard is Jesus.

## Interact

Talk about compartmentalization and being a person of integrity.

help the Philippians further on their own spiritual journey. Since Paul knows that the way of Jesus is the way of service (cf. 2:5–11), he is convinced that his own preferences will be put aside so that he can remain and continue with the Philippians for their progress and joy in the faith. Paul is not merely musing on his own crisis; he is giving the Philippians a model of the service-driven life. My desire is to depart and be with Christ indicates that when Christians die they are immediately with Christ, long before their bodies are raised from the dead.

Phil. 1:27–30 Paul's sacrifice will be futile, however, if the Philippians do not continue to live in a way that is "worthy of the gospel of Christ." The Greek for Only let your manner of life be worthy of the

**Why do you think it is important for a church to stay united and all be following the same purposes?**

When Paul refers to “the same conflict” he is writing about persecution that some Christians in Philippi were going through. This persecution was a result of their faith.

WHEREVER CHRISTIANS WILL LIVE AS THEY OUGHT TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD,  
WHERE THEY WILL LIVE RIGHTEOUS LIVES AND AGGRESSIVELY SEEK TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL,  
IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL BE PERSECUTION. THIS IS TRUE FOR ALL CHRISTIANS.  
IF YOU BEAR A PROPER WITNESS FOR JESUS CHRIST, AS GOD INTENDS YOU TO DO,  
THERE WILL BE PERSECUTION FOR YOU.  
—DOUG FIELDS

**What is your response to that quote?**

Throughout chapter one Paul has been talking about the way he’s dealing with his condition, and he is encouraging his friends in Philippi to deal with their difficulties the same way. He is essentially saying four things:

- I’m finding the courage to deal with opposition; be courageous.
- I don’t let petty stuff with other Christians get to me; please don’t let it get to you either.
- I’m not wrapped up in myself; my focus is the glory of God.
- I treat you as partners; stand firm together as one.

In fact, he doesn’t just want them to be like him; he wants them to be like Jesus.

**Interact**

See if students can say Carmel’s Mission Statement. Carmel is committed to making disciples of those nearest, our neighbors and the nations. Nearest Strategy: Go Home First  
Neighbors Strategy: Love and Serve Your Neighbor  
Nations Strategy: Go, Pray, Give

gospel can also be translated “only behave as citizens [Gk. politeuesthe] worthy [of the gospel],” a phrasing that nicely captures Paul’s play on words here and in 3:20, “our citizenship [Gk. politeuma] is in heaven.” Philippi prided itself on being a Roman colony, offering the honor and privilege of Roman citizenship. Paul reminds the congregation that they should look to Christ, not Caesar, for their model of behavior, since their primary allegiance is to God and his kingdom. They need to stand together with one another and with Paul in striving for the gospel.

Phil. 1:28 As the Philippians maintain courage in the face of their opponents, these opponents will realize that such remarkable strength could come only from God, and thus anyone who continues to



## NOW WHAT?

How could a current situation you are facing honor Jesus and spread the gospel?

If you were given an opportunity to speak about it what would you say?

Reread Philippians 1:19-30 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## GOING DEEPER

Read Philippians 1:12-26.

Describe the reasons why Paul is not depressed about his circumstance.

Have you ever known someone who looked at death like Paul? Describe what they were like.

How does Paul order the importance of himself, God and others?

How do your priorities stack up against Paul's?

Answer the following question: "For me to live in such a way that I promote the message of Jesus I would need to . . ."

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 1:21

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oppose God's people will be marked for destruction. "Destruction" (Gk. *apōleia*) here means eternal destruction. But God's sustaining grace amid trouble will assure the believers of their own final salvation. Paul follows the teaching of Jesus here (Matt. 5:10–12), reminding them that persecution is a sign that they belong to Christ.

Phil. 1:29–30 Troubles will come, because the reality is that believers in Christ will suffer for his sake. Paul teaches that both suffering and faith are gifts of God; for both, Paul says, have been granted to you. Suffering for the sake of Jesus is a great privilege (see Matt. 5:10–12; Acts 5:41). Paul again holds himself out as an example of one who has maintained his joy while experiencing troubles.

# WEEK 3 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by. Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark each time prayer is mentioned.

Who is the person praying for? How can you pray this prayer for someone in your life?

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark wherever suffering or hardship is mentioned.

Who is causing the hardship, suffering or persecution? How can you apply how the person faced the hardship in one of your present circumstances?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark each command/teaching and summarize it below.

Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

# Exalted as Lord and Christ

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

WEEK

4

## Key Questions and Concepts

Jesus is fully God and fully man, yet one person, forever.

This week, the major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is the doctrine of the Incarnation—that Jesus is fully God and fully man, yet one person, forever. The relevance of the following truths to us should go without saying. Knowing these truths will greatly affect the way you view Jesus and will make the gospel accounts of His life come more alive.

The Incarnation is one of the most important truths of our faith.

### Because Jesus is God:

- He is all-powerful and He cannot be defeated.
- He is the only adequate Savior.
- Believers are safe and can never perish; we have security.
- We can have confidence that He will empower us for the task that He commands us for.
- All people will be accountable to Him when He returns to judge the world.

### Reference

Excerpt of “How Can Jesus be God and Man.” by Matt Perman from [desiring-god.org](http://desiring-god.org)

### Because Jesus is Man:

- He has experienced the same things that we do.
- He can identify with us more intimately.
- He can come to our aid as our sympathetic High Priest.
- We can relate to Him—He is not far off and uninvolved.
- We can't complain that God doesn't know what we are going through. He experienced it first-hand.

### Reference

Place these points on the screen for students see.

The early church considered the Incarnation to be one of the most important truths of our faith. They formulated what has come to be called the Chalcedonian Creed, a statement of what we are to believe and what we are not to believe about the Incarnation.

### 5 Main Truths:

- 1) Jesus has two natures — He is God and man.
- 2) Each nature is full and complete — He is fully God and fully man.
- 3) Each nature remains distinct.
- 4) Christ is only one Person.
- 5) Things that are true of only one nature are also true of the Person of Christ.

Having this richer understanding of the Incarnation of God the Son should greatly enhance our worship. Our faith in Him will be strengthened by having this deeper understanding of who He is. The union of Jesus' deity and humanity in one Person makes it such that we have all that we need in the same Savior.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 2:1–4 The Philippians are encouraged to live out their life in Christ and in the Spirit by living in unity.

Phil. 2:1–2 Paul is not doubting that encouragement, participation in the Spirit, affection, and sympathy are realities in Christ and are present in the congregation at Philippi. He uses a conditional sentence (if) to provoke the Philippians so that they will reflect on whether these qualities are evident in their lives. The Philippian believers must make sure they continue to progress in the absolutely critical area of love for one another. As Paul emphasizes, they must be of the same mind. This does not

## CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY

Read Philippians 2:1-4.

**Paul asks his readers to follow through with eight actions. List these eight actions and circle the three that need the most work in your life.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)

**What is the basis for doing these actions?**

In Paul's teaching, encouragement, comfort, fellowship with one another through the Holy Spirit, affection and sympathy are basic realities of salvation in Jesus. These benefits and fruits of salvation flow out of a personal relationship with Christ.

Read John 17:21.

Jesus asks the Father that all Christians will be one. Our unity is a reflection of the unity that has existed eternally between the Father and the Son. The purpose of unity is so the world may believe the gospel message. Paul asked his readers to have the same mind and purpose to fulfill Jesus' desire for unity.

Paul goes on to share how believers can accomplish this task. He warns them to not do things out of envy and selfishness. He also emphasizes humility is required to achieve unity.

**HUMILITY — A MODEST OR LOW VIEW OF ONE'S OWN IMPORTANCE.**

**Why do you think humility is a marker of spiritual maturity?**

In Scripture, humility is an inside-out virtue produced by comparing ourselves to the Lord rather than to others. This keeps one from being self-exalting. For the believer, humility means living in complete dependence on the Lord, without any reliance on yourself (the flesh).

**When do you struggle the most at laying down your own desires?**

### Point to Make

Direct students to verse one. These actions all stem from the relationship that the Christian has with God because of what Jesus did on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit in their life.

### Reference

Unity of the Father-Son relationship was revealed by Jesus' own ministry: Common mind and purpose, an absolute mutual love, and a sustained comprehensive togetherness in mission.

### Point to Make

We can look to our own interests. However, we are to equally consider others as our own. This is following through with loving your neighbor as yourself.

imply a drab intellectual uniformity; rather, the Philippians are to use their diverse gifts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12) in an agreeable, cooperative spirit, with a focus on the glory of God.

Phil. 2:3-4 There is always a temptation to be like Paul's opponents in 1:17 and operate in a spirit of selfish ambition, looking to advance one's own agenda. Such conceit (lit., "vainglory") is countered by counting others more significant than yourselves. Paul realizes that everyone naturally looks out for his or her own interests. The key is to take that same level of concern and apply it also to the interests of others. Such radical love is rare, so Paul proceeds to show its supreme reality in the life of Christ (2:5-11).

Humility is not feeling worthless. Jesus didn't feel worthless. In fact, he knew that his life mattered for our eternity. Jesus was humble in deciding not to obsess about himself or insist on his rights. There was no reason for him to be hung on a cross to die. He chose to lay his life down so that we could have eternal life.

Read Philippians 2:5-8.

**How is Jesus a model of humility?**

Read John 1:14.

**Why would Paul make such big deal about God becoming human?**

**What rights did Jesus put aside when he became human? What rights did he put aside when he let people kill him?**

**As a follower of Jesus according to verse five, why are you capable of living in humility like Jesus?**

**List three things that Jesus did that you could also do according to verses 5-8.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

**Based on the Philippians 2:5-8 and Matthew 6:25-34, do you believe God can relate to and understand your human needs? Why or why not?**

Read Philippians 2:9-11.

**How did God reward Jesus' obedience?**

**Why will all created beings bow in worship before Jesus?**

## **Point to Make**

This is the most amazing event in all of history: the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, infinitely holy Son of God took on a human nature and lived among humanity as one who was both God and man at the same time, in one person.

## **Discuss**

Jesus remained fully God while he was on earth (Col. 1:19; 2:9; Heb. 1:3). So what did he give up in becoming fully human too? Look at John 4:4-7. How was that different from his life before he became human? Look at Hebrews 2:14-18. What would it have been like for someone who had always been God to suddenly start suffering? How would that have tempted Him to sin?

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Phil. 2:5–11 This passage is often referred to as the “hymn of Christ.” Paul depicts Christ’s example of service in a stirring poem that traces his preexistence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. Paul wrote this magnificent theology to encourage the Philippians to consider other people’s interests first (see v. 4). Jesus is the paradigm of genuine spiritual progress: not a self-aggrandizing struggle for supremacy, but a deep love for God and neighbor shown in deeds of service. In view of the myriad theological questions that arise in these verses, it is critical to keep two things in mind: (1) these verses were written not to spur Christians to theological debate but to encourage greater humility and love; and (2) the summary of Christ’s life and ministry found here is not unique: the same themes are evident throughout the NT.

## LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

Read Philippians 2:12-13.

After reminding his readers how Jesus lived, Paul encourages the Philippians to live in obedience now that he was away from them. We have the same call to action as followers of Jesus today.

**Do you need encouragement to live in obedience to Christ's teachings? How are you getting that encouragement?**

**Who is someone in your life that can encourage you on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? Have you told this person of your need for accountability? Why? Why not?**

**How would you describe salvation?**

**Why should you be enthusiastic about your salvation?**

**Paul says God works in you to will what is good (2:13). That means he influences your desires, goals, and even choices. Have you ever been aware of God doing that?**

- A) I'm aware of it and you can provide an example.
- B) God does it and you just don't notice.
- C) God tries to do it but you don't cooperate.
- D) God doesn't do it.

**How do you know that God is working in your life?**

Bottom line, kingdom citizens look at life the way Jesus lived and choose to imitate him. When we choose to live like him we are living out our salvation for the world to see.

### Interact

What kind of encouragement works best for you?

### Interact

Having students explain salvation may give you a clue about their relationship with Jesus. Be sure to listen well help students understand salvation.

### Gospel Prayer

In Christ, there is nothing I can do that would make you love me more, and nothing I have done that makes you love me less. Your presence and approval are all I need for everlasting joy. As you have been to me, so I will be to others. As I pray, I'll measure your compassion by the cross, and your power by the resurrection.

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Phil. 2:12–13 The Philippians have obeyed (cf. Christ's obedience, v. 8) in the past and should continue to do so as they work out their salvation with fear and trembling. They cannot be content with past glories but need to demonstrate their faith day by day as they nurture their relationship with God. But while God's justice is a cause for sober living ("fear and trembling"), it is not as though Paul wants the Philippians to be anxious that they can never be good enough to merit God's favor. Rather, it is God's love and enabling grace that will see them through: it is God who works in you. They can rejoice in God's empowering presence even as they work hard at living responsible Christian lives. While v. 12 may seem to suggest salvation by works, it is clear that Paul rejects any such teaching (cf. 3:2–11). In 2:12 Paul means "salvation" in terms of progressively coming to experience

## **NOW WHAT?**

What part of the mind-set of a kingdom citizen would you most like to grow? For instance, unity, unselfishness, humility, getting over yourself, not being afraid share your faith, etc.

What practical step can you take to build that mind-set?

Ask God to help you notice what other people need and how you can serve them.

Reread Philippians 2:1-13 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## **GOING DEEPER**

Who is someone you know that fits that description of humility? Write a note of encouragement to them.

Philippians 2:13 states that God works in you. Describe your responsibility in working out what God works in. What are some ways you can do that?

Why is it important to share with others how God is working in your life?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Philippians 2:3

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all of the aspects and blessings of salvation. The Philippians' continued obedience is an inherent part of "working out" their salvation in this sense. But as v. 13 demonstrates, these works are the result of God's work within his people. both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Even the desire ("to will") to do what is good comes from God; but he also works in the believer to generate actual choices of the good, so that the desires result in actions. (On fear of God, see notes on Acts 5:5; 9:31.)

# WEEK 4 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

As you read, mark each command/teaching and summarize it below.

Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

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As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

As you read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

As you read, mark each sin or bad example and summarize it below.

Do you need to ask forgiveness for this kind of sin or bad example? What will it take for you to forsake this sin or example in your future?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13

As you read, mark each promise and summarize the promise.

Is this promise for back then, today or the future? If this promise applies to you, how would your future be different if you claim this promise?



# Promoting the Gospel

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-30

WEEK

5

## Key Questions and Concepts

The gospel is not individualistic: Christians are to share in rich fellowship with one another and be united together in service to promote the gospel.

Fellowship is something much deeper than a social gathering.

This week, the major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is the gospel is not individualistic: Christians are to share in rich fellowship with one another and be united together in service to promote the gospel.

***How can having a partner help when sharing the gospel?  
Have you ever described fellowship as something deeper than a social gathering?***

If you were to look up the definition of fellowship you would find two key concepts. 1) Fellowship means being a part of a group or a body of people. That seems like a given. It is opposed to isolation, loneliness, and our present-day independent kind of individualism. Of course, it does not stop there because we can be in a crowd of people and even share certain things in common, but still not have fellowship. 2) Fellowship means having common goals, beliefs, labor, responsibilities, and concerns. These things lead to a partnership that involves working together and caring for one another, like a company of soldiers or members of a family.

As Christians, we are partners working together to spread the gospel. What does being united together to promote the gospel look like? Paul gives us a glimpse of this understanding throughout the letter to church in Philippi (See *Philippians 1:4, 7, 24-27; 2:1-4, 19-30; 3:2-4, 14*).

- Praying with joy for each other.
- Having a deep connection with one another.
- We disciple one another.
- Help each other progress in faith.
- Stand firm together in unity.
- Strive side-by-side.
- Encouraged by good news of others.
- Genuine concern for the welfare of others.
- Minister to each other's needs as your own.
- Long to be with one another.
- Put no confidence in the flesh.
- Press on toward the goal.

Paul clearly understands that fellowship is much deeper than a social gathering. This advice is just as relevant today to believers today. We would do well to live out these truths

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 2:14–15 Paul continues the theme of “working out” one’s salvation (vv. 12–13). The Philippians should shine as lights amid a crooked and twisted generation. Paul’s choice of words recalls the wilderness generation of Israel, who in Deut. 32:5 are described by these very words (“crooked and twisted generation”) and whose spiritual progress was thwarted by grumbling and disputing (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1–12). Shining “as lights” probably alludes to Dan. 12:2–3. Those who express their faith by living in this way will be raised to eternal life (see Dan. 12:2), to Paul’s great joy.

Phil. 2:16 The Philippians’ obedience to the word of life is not merely a matter of private concern.

## LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

Scripture clearly communicates that works cannot earn salvation. Salvation is a gift through Christ Jesus. However, an individual's salvation does express spiritual growth and development as the believer pursues his or her relationship with Jesus. It is an ongoing process to be done in fear and trembling. Not because of doubt or anxiety, rather, an active reverence and focus in response to God's grace. To this point, Paul goes on to list some things involved in working out our salvation.

Read Philippians 2:14-16.

**Why would Paul ask Christians to do everything without complaining or arguing?**

**What reasoning does Paul give for not grumbling or disputing?**

**What is the result when people mutter and quarrel within the church?**

**How can you provide your family and friends with a glimpse of God by following Paul's command?**

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

**What does it mean to shine as lights in the world? What does it require of you?**

**How does light dispel the darkness?**

**What is the ultimate purpose for you to be a light in the world?**

Paul doesn't expect sinless perfection in this life. He is talking about wholehearted commitment to living according to God's good purpose. Thankfully Paul gives us a method of how can we shine in a dark world? He commands us to hold onto the word of life.

Read Psalm 119:9-11.

## Reference

John 3:16. John 14:6. Romans 6:23. Ephesians 2:8-9.

## Point to Make

Paul makes describes a clear distinction between a crooked and twisted generation and those that shine as lights in the world.

## Point to Make

Unfortunately, many people cause disputes in the church. They grumble or argue about the way they think things should be done. They take their good intentions of being fully invested and turn them into something that is bad by causing dissension within the body of Christ. Describe why this is a poor reflection of Jesus.

## Interact

Respond to the following statement: You may be the only representative of Jesus that someone will ever see.

As an apostle and fellow sharer in the gospel, Paul's own labor would be in vain if they failed to hold fast until the day of Christ (cf. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:2-11; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20:11-21:8) and thus proved not to be genuine believers. Holding fast means both believing God's Word and following it. Since the Greek *epechō* can mean either "hold fast" or "hold out to, offer," some think that Paul may have in mind "holding forth," i.e., proclaiming, the word of life.

Phil. 2:17 Paul compares himself to a drink offering (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6). This type of offering, familiar in both the OT and Greco-Roman culture, involved pouring out wine, either onto the ground or, as here, on an altar along with an animal or grain sacrifice (see Num. 28:7). It was a vivid illustration of a

Based on what you have read and learned in Philippians, is Paul being prideful about his reputation in his concern of laboring in vain or showing his depth of concern for the Philippians?

Read Philippians 2:17-18.

Paul is probably referring to his present imprisonment as a drink offering, which may end in a martyr's death. When animal sacrifices were offered in Jewish or Roman temples, wine was poured over the animal before it was burned (Exodus 29:38-41). For Paul, Jesus is the main sacrifice and Paul is just the wine that is added. Even facing death Paul rejoiced and encouraged the Philippians to do the same.

**REJOICE** — FEEL OR SHOW GREAT JOY OR DELIGHT.

**What does it require to rejoice?**

**Why can Paul rejoice in jail while facing possible execution?**

**How is Paul's joy an example for you?**

## TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS

Read Philippians 2:19-24.

Paul trusts the Lord for the opportunity to send Timothy. The purpose for sending Timothy is so he may be encouraged when he hears reports of their lives in Christ.

**Why do you think a pastor wants to see his people grow?**

**Paul introduces his friend Timothy and comments on his genuine love for God. List a few terms that Paul uses to describe Timothy.**

**What similarities do you see between how Paul describes Timothy in Philippians 2:20-22 and Philippians 2:2-4?**

## Pronunciation

EE - p ae - f r oh - d  
AY - t uh s

## Discuss

How can sharing your growth in Christ encourage your pastors/leaders?

How can you creatively share with your pastors/leaders that you are growing in the Lord?

## Discuss

How does it encourage you to see someone live up to standards within Scripture the way Timothy did?

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life "poured out" for God's service. The Philippians, too, are a sacrificial offering; they are to emulate Paul's joyful service to God.

Phil. 2:19–24 Timothy as an Example of a Service-centered Life. Paul's desire to send his protégé Timothy highlights the very personal nature of early church life. Timothy emulates Christ in that he is concerned for the Philippians' welfare; he does not look out for his own interests, but for those of Christ.

Phil. 2:25–30 Epaphroditus as Another Example of Service. Epaphroditus, who is himself from Philip-

How would someone that knows you well describe your relationship with God?

Read Philippians 2:25-30.

Since Paul couldn't send Timothy right away he sent Epaphroditus. List three things Epaphroditus did for Paul.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What types of qualities or attitudes does each of Epaphroditus' actions require?

Why do you think Timothy and Epaphroditus are so important to Paul's work?

Are you a "Timothy" or "Epaphroditus" to anyone's work?

If not, is there any ministry or minister that you can help? What's an action plan to help you get started?

Sometimes people think of working out their salvation in simplistic terms, like, "seeking other people's interests. Sure, no problem. I'll start doing that now. Next question." However, often it's not so easy. Our ingrained self-focus can make it hard to be aware of what others think, feel and need. Even when we're aware, sacrificing our own needs is painful, and something inside us makes excuses.

On the other hand, some of us are so routinely self-sacrificing that we are hardly have a self at all. Being invisible or playing the martyr isn't what Paul has in mind. He doesn't play the martyr; he lets Timothy and Epaphroditus serve him. However, he doesn't let Epaphroditus just keep on serving even when he's sick.

We need each other, just as the Philippians needed each other, and just as Paul needed Timothy and his friends from Philippi. We are called and chosen to be partners in the in proclaiming the gospel.

## Discuss

How did Epaphroditus demonstrate Philippians 2:2-4?

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pi, is another example of genuine Christian love. He has been longing for the Philippians just as Paul longs for them (1:8; 4:1), and has been eager to let them know that God has spared him from his severe illness.

Phil. 2:27 To die and be with Christ is far better (1:21), and yet God shows mercy to Epaphroditus in sparing his life. Christians can be assured that a fellow Christian truly is in Christ's presence upon his or her death (see note on 1:23); even so, it is proper on such occasions to feel sorrow upon sorrow.

Phil. 2:30 The Christlikeness of Epaphroditus is highlighted by Paul's careful use of words. Having

## NOW WHAT?

What opportunities for humble sacrifice, looking to others' interests, or giving up grumbling and arguing do you have in your current situations?

Reread Philippians 2:14-30 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## GOING DEEPER

What quality of Timothy or Epaphroditus do you especially admire?

Is this a quality you would like to have more of? Why or why not?

Read Galatians 6:1-5, Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:24-25 and James 5:16, 19-20.

How do these passages illustrate how a group of Christians can help each other work out their salvation?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 2:14

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said that Christ was obedient "to the point of death" (v. 8, Gk. *mechri thanatou*), Paul now says that Epaphroditus was "near to death" (v. 27) and that he nearly died (v. 30, also with Gk. *mechri thanatou*). Epaphroditus had faced this peril on behalf of the Philippians, who had desired to send gifts to support Paul but had not been able to do so (what was lacking in your service to me) until Epaphroditus made it possible (see 4:10, 18).

# WEEK 5 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

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**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 2:14-30

As you read, mark each sin or bad example and summarize it below.

Do you need to ask forgiveness for this kind of sin or bad example? What will it take for you to forsake this sin or example in your future?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 2:14-30

As you read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

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## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 2:14-30

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Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 2:14-30

As you read, mark wherever suffering or hardship is mentioned.

Who is causing the hardship, suffering or persecution? How can you apply how the person faced the hardship in one of your present circumstances?

# Saved by Faith Alone

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

WEEK

6

## Key Questions and Concepts

The old covenant and observance of the law cannot provide the necessary right standing with God. Believers can be saved only through faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing more. Nothing less.

How can you protect yourself from false teachers?

This week, the major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is the old covenant and observance of the law cannot provide the necessary right standing with God. Believers can be saved only through faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Everybody grows up with a subculture with certain rules, beliefs, and practices. Even if you have pale skin and your family has lived in the United States for generations, you have an ethnicity. It doesn't matter where you grow up, you have a subculture. Everybody does.

As you become more and more serious about being a follower of Jesus, you have to ask yourself, "which parts of my subculture are consistent with being a follower of Jesus here and now, and which parts will get in the way of my being faithful to Jesus in the situation where He's placed me?" If you want to help someone else follow Jesus, you have to ask, "which parts of my Christian subculture are things all Christians everywhere should follow, and which are optional? How does Jesus want this other person, from his or her culture, to live?"

*What are some good things about the culture you've grown up with?  
What is something that others say you have to do to be saved apart from faith in Jesus?*

The Philippians are having trouble with these questions. Some Jewish Christians have come to town and they say the non-Jewish Christians of Philippi have to adopt the practices of Jewish subculture—basically become Jewish—in order to be real Christians. After all, Jesus was Jewish and lived as a Jew. All of the original disciples were Jewish. So they concluded a person needs to convert to Judaism and live that way in order to be a real follower of Jesus.

It makes Paul crazy to hear that the Philippians are being fed this nonsense. Yes, Paul is Jewish, and yes, being Jewish is wonderful. However, to tell believers from other ethnic groups that they have to follow the rules of Jewish subculture is just wrong. So now Paul tackles this question: does a person have to live like a Jew in order to be true follower of Jesus? This theme is relevant for us today because we often fight over styles of music, where to gather for small group, and the list goes on. We must be careful to not add to Jesus' simple command of "follow me."

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 3:2 Dogs was not only a general term of derision in the ancient world, it was particularly a word used by some Jews in reference to Gentiles, who were considered ritually unclean. With biting irony, Paul says that the Judaizers, not the Gentiles, deserve that label. Paul's irony continues as he labels those who extol good works of the law as evildoers and those who mutilate the flesh. This last phrase (Gk. *tēn katatomēn*) is a play on words with circumcision (Gk. *peritomē*). The Judaizers' supposed badge of pride turns out to be the sign of their destruction. On Jewish views of circumcision, see note on Acts 15:1.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

The topics taken up in the start of this chapter are most likely something that Paul dealt with verbally when he was in Philippi or perhaps in an earlier letter. Paul is purposeful in repeating himself because he knows that there is safety in repetition for his readers.

Read Philippians 3:1-6.

Paul uses some severe language to describe the false teachers who were trying to steer the Christians away from Paul's original teaching. Paul's use of harsh words shows the seriousness of the errors and how destructive this false teaching they were hearing could be if they accept it.

**What is a present-day example of a false teacher who is leading Christ-followers away from the truth?**

**How can you protect yourself from false teachers?**

It may seem strange to read the words "circumcise or circumcision" in the Bible, but there was a significant spiritual meaning attached to circumcised Jews in the Old Testament. To be Jewish, a male has to have his foreskin cut away. This procedure is called circumcision, and it's usually done when the baby is eight days old.

For Jewish people, circumcision has a symbolic, spiritual meaning demonstrating that the man's whole life, even the most personal part, is set apart for God. Today lots of male babies are circumcised for various reasons, but in Paul's day only Jews did it. It's a painful procedure for an adult, and it was very much contrary to the culture of non-Jewish people in Philippi. Therefore, it would seriously limit evangelism if men thought they had to be circumcised in order to be real followers of Jesus.

Paul goes as far as to say these false teachers mutilate the flesh. Again a strong, painfully vivid term to illustrate that the false teachers had so distorted the meaning of circumcision that it had become nothing more than a useless cutting of the body.

When Paul says, "We are the circumcision," he means that true followers of Jesus have had their hearts circumcised (set apart), and that signifies faith in God for Gentiles (non-Jews) who normally weren't circumcised.

**Are there things that have come to you naturally—from the body you were born with, from your family or culture, or from your natural talents—that you tend to look to for confidence or to boast about? If so, what are they?**

## Reference

For further study about circumcision: Genesis 17:1-14; Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:28-29, 4:6-12; Galatians 3:7, 29; Colossians 2:11-14.

## Interact

These could be good things like intelligence or a particular skill. Students may place their confidence in money or the way they look. What do you think about the idea of treating those things as less important than knowing Christ?

Phil. 3:3 In contrast to those promoting physical circumcision (v. 2), the true people of God (the circumcision) are those who worship by the Spirit of God (cf. John 4:23-24). They glory in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 1:26) and put no confidence in the flesh (that is, as Calvin put it, in "everything that is outside of Christ"). This verse mentions all three members of the Trinity: "God" (the Father), "Christ Jesus" (the Son), and "the Spirit of God" (the Holy Spirit).

Phil. 3:4-6 Paul's opposition to the Judaizers was not because he himself in any way lacked a Jewish "pedigree." When it came to the things of the flesh—the whole system of life that held sway before the coming of Christ and the giving of the Spirit—Paul had perfect credentials. He was circumcised



Paul tries to show, by his own example, that if godliness had to do with impressive credentials or following the rules he has more reason to brag than anyone. Below is the list that Paul gives. Next to each credential write a present day "rule" that someone might try to keep to "earn" their way to God.

### Paul's Credentials

- Legitimate Jewish birth.
- Circumcised on the eighth day.
- From an elite tribe.
- A strict and devout follower of the Law.
- A strong defender of purity.

Paul's confidence completely changes from his perfect legalistic approach to the law as his righteousness to his complete confidence in Jesus alone for his salvation and righteousness.

Read Philippians 3:7-11.

Paul's Jewish heritage isn't bad. In fact, it gives him an understanding of the Old Testament that helps him teach so well about Jesus. The same is true if you have grown up in a Christian home or if you were dedicated to the Lord as a child. These things are gifts and they are good.

**Why does he consider what he has gained to be "loss" or "rubbish?" What does he value more?**

**Before becoming a Christian, what are a few things you thought were significant that are no longer essential?**

Knowing Jesus is not just a mere knowledge of facts, but also knowledge gained through experiencing God and his surpassing greatness. This is what transforms the individual. Paul doesn't view his life now as a Christian simply preferable or a better alternative than any other way of life; in contrast, his former way of life was worthless and despicable to him now. He recognized that being united with Jesus was not merely something that happened in the past, it is a present, continuing relationship.

### **RIGHTEOUSNESS — THE QUALITY OF BEING MORALLY RIGHT WITH GOD.**

The temptation for the Philippians was to seek righteousness by obeying Old Testament laws according to the customs of Jewish subculture.

**Why do you think Paul was opposed to making a religion out of rules?**

Read Matthew 23.

on the eighth day in accord with OT law (Lev. 12:3). He was an ethnic Israelite and knew the tribe from which he came. Hebrew of Hebrews probably indicates his descent from Jewish ancestors, and many think it also means that he spoke Aramaic (the national language of Israel in his day), even though he came from Greek-speaking Tarsus. He was from the strictest religious sect—the Pharisees (Acts 26:5). His zeal was such that he had even been a persecutor of the church. He probably had thought of himself as following in the footsteps of Phinehas (Num. 25:11) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:10, 14) in his zeal. If anyone could be said to be blameless in following the law, it was Paul. But before God it was no righteousness at all, for though Paul thought he was pleasing God, in persecuting the church he had shown himself to be the "foremost" of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

## **Examples**

Growing up in a Christian home  
Parent/Child dedication  
Upper financial class  
Shows up to church/follows the rules  
Calls out sinners/virgin

## **Interact**

Students probably don't picture Jesus speaking with this kind of language or authority. Talk about how this passage changes their view of Jesus.

How is Paul's response similar to Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees?

What are some wrong ways of seeking relationship with God you might be tempted by?

Look at the things Paul says he wants in Philippians 3:10-11. Which of them do you want?

Are there any you don't want or you're not sure about? Why do you suppose Paul wants those things?

Paul wanted to know Christ personally. He didn't want to focus on following rules and rituals. He wanted to embrace Jesus and be embraced by Him. There is a real cost to what Paul is asking here, and we shouldn't pretend otherwise.

What would it look like for you to "embrace Christ and be embraced by Him?" Where does this embracing take place?

Complete the following sentence: "Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is . . ."

## Prayer

No matter where each person is in the process of making Jesus more important in their lives than other things, pray for each other about this.

## Point to Make

We embrace Jesus during quiet times, at church, in worship, while alone, with our choices, etc.

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Phil. 3:7–9 Paul's accounting, however, has now changed completely: what formerly went into the gain column—his power, prestige, and "obedience"—now goes into the loss column. Likewise, the crucified Messiah, whom he had assumed must be a "loss," is now seen as the ultimate "gain." The language of loss and gain probably alludes to Jesus' teaching (see Matt. 16:25–26). Found in him means being spiritually united to Christ and therefore found not guilty before God as divine judge. Paul had trusted in a righteousness of my own based on obedience to the law rather than the right standing before God that comes through faith in Christ. God "imputes" Christ's lifelong record of perfect obedience to the person who trusts in him for salvation; that is, he thinks of Christ's obedience as belonging to that person, and therefore that person stands before God not as "guilty" but

## NOW WHAT?

What are some things that are too important (and should be gone) that keep you from growing in Christ?

What's your plan to get rid of these? Who is going to hold you accountable to this plan?

Reread Philippians 3:1-11 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## GOING DEEPER

PRAYER:

Ask God to stir up in you a desire to know Jesus that is stronger than every other desire.

How would that make your life better?

Are there ways it might make your life more challenging?

Read Luke 9:22-26; John 12:23-26; Romans 6:5-10; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

Why can't Paul experience Jesus' resurrection without sharing in his suffering and death? Is it the same for you?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 3:8

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as "righteous." This is the basis on which justification by faith alone is considered "fair" in God's sight. As explained in Rom. 10:1-8, righteousness cannot come by the law because all human beings sin, and therefore right standing before God as the divine judge is possible only through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the believer's righteousness before God.

Phil. 3:10-11 The goal of trusting in Christ is to know him in a personal relationship, and also to know the power of his resurrection—namely, the power Christ exerts now from the right hand of God. But this power is made known as the believer shares the same kind of sufferings Jesus faced. The good news is that those who suffer with and for Christ will attain the resurrection from the dead.

# WEEK 6 DEVOTIONS

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**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

As you read, mark wherever suffering or hardship is mentioned.

Who is causing the hardship, suffering or persecution? How can you apply how the person faced the hardship in one of your present circumstances?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

As you read, mark each command/teaching and summarize it below.

Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

As you read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

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As you read, mark each sin or bad example and summarize it below.

Do you need to ask forgiveness for this kind of sin or bad example? What will it take for you to forsake this sin or example in your future?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

As you read, mark each promise and summarize the promise.

Is this promise for back then, today or the future? If this promise applies to you, how would your future be different if you claim this promise?

# One Day at a Time

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

WEEK

7

## Key Questions and Concepts

Christians need to keep making progress in their walk with Jesus one day at a time. Growth requires us to continue to learn what it means to be a disciple and live out what we learn.

Looking back at your life how have you seen steady growth in Jesus?

This week, the major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is Christians need to keep making progress in their walk with Jesus one day at a time. Growth requires us to continue to learn what it means to be a disciple and live out what we learn.

Deuteronomy 6:5-6 states, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart."

As a church, we believe that there are seven key essentials that answer the questions, "What do we learn", and How do we live?" At Carmel, Life in Christ is composed of seven key principles taught by Jesus throughout His ministry on earth.

The Life In Christ Essentials are: Scripture, Prayer, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple Maker, Generous Living, and Transformational Community. These seven themes reoccur numerous times throughout the gospels. None of these principles can ever be perfected and each allows for life-long growth. This journey is completed only when a believer steps from this world into eternity with Christ.

Once you are a believer in Jesus you begin living Life in Christ. Only then will you be able to fulfill the mission that God has for you. Remember John 15:5, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing."

***Looking back at your life how have you seen steady growth in Jesus?  
What does it require to rest in knowing Jesus?***

All that we go through in life serves as a method to advance the gospel or for us to progress in our faith. It also, helps produce joy in the faith. Being a disciple is simple. Keep learning and live out what you have learned. This happens one day at a time.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 3:1–21 Paul begins this section by calling the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (v. 1) but then warns them about the Judaizing opponents of the gospel (vv. 2–3). In contrast, Paul has renounced his spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ (vv. 4–11); his righteousness comes through Christ, not the law (vv. 12–16). He then calls the Philippians to follow his example of commitment to Jesus as Lord (vv. 17–21). Paul's conflicts with the Judaizers can be seen in greater detail in Acts and Galatians (e.g., Acts 15:1–19; Gal. 2:15–21; 3:6–4:31), as well as in the rest of his letters. Their teaching that Gentiles must first become Jews and obey all the OT laws in order to be saved was abhorrent to Paul. Not only did it show a lack of welcome (in complete contrast to God's own

## STRAINING TOWARD THE GOAL

Read Philippians 3:12-16.

For the convenience of studying Scripture, we chop a book of the Bible into manageable pieces, but the writer didn't write verses or chapters. He wrote a whole letter, and it's important to keep checking in with what the current passage has to do with what went before.

**What are the five things that Paul referring to "obtaining this?"**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

**How does it make you feel to know that the apostle Paul doesn't have it all together when it comes to following Christ?**

**At Carmel we say that life in Christ is a journey. What are we trying to communicate?**

The Life in Christ essentials are a list of priorities and characteristics that are evident in the life a believer. We see each of these lived out in the life of Jesus. They answer two questions: 1) What do we learn? 2) How do we live?

### LIFE IN CHRIST ESSENTIALS

- Scripture
- Prayer
- Authentic Faith
- Obedient Follower
- Disciple Maker
- Generous Living
- Transformational Community

**What does Paul consider the goal when he says he is pressing on toward the goal?**

**Circle where you consider yourself along this journey?**

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| A) At the beginning.         | D) Somewhere in the middle.                |
| B) Off the path.             | E) Running strong with my eye on the goal. |
| C) Moving slowly but moving. | F) Near perfection.                        |

## Point to Make

See verses 2:10-11.

- 1) Know him.
- 2) Know the power of his resurrection.
- 3) Share his sufferings.
- 4) Become like him in his death.
- 5) Attain the resurrection from the dead.

## Reference

The Getting Started section of this book show how the Life in Christ essentials are tied to Scripture.

## Reference

Paul often uses imagery of a race to describe the journey of life in Christ. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Matt. 24:13; Heb. 12:1

## Point to Make

Winners of Greek races received a wreath of leaves and/or cash. Christians receive an award of everlasting glory. Paul's ultimate aspirations are found in heaven, not in this life, because Christ is there (Col. 3:1-2).

attitude) but it also sought in effect to divert Gentiles away from Christ into a covenant that could never save them. While the law might be "holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12), the old covenant pertained to the age before the giving of the Spirit, and thus inevitably brought curse rather than blessing since human beings were unable to keep it. The "righteousness" it offered could only be an incomplete, superficial righteousness, in contrast to the perfect righteousness given as a gift to believers by virtue of the life and death of Christ. The fury of Paul's response in these verses was fueled by his thankfulness for his own deliverance from this system.

Phil. 3:12-16 Paul's Progress in the Gospel: Through Christ, Not the Law. Paul emphasizes the need

Paul's goal reflects Jesus' goal and he knows that God is the one who works in him to will and to act according to his good purpose.

**Why does Paul choose to forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead?**

**What are the past failures or troubles that you keep looking back at even though you've been forgiven?**

**What can you do to move forward?**

Paul encourages Christians to keep focused on the goal and to stay on the right path. We must be careful to not become complacent with where we are in our walk with Jesus. Paul is clear in his statements that he and his readers haven't reached such spiritual perfection that they have no room to grow, and those who are mature—who have a somewhat perfected character—should remember this about themselves.

Read Proverbs 1:5-7.

**What will it take in your life to respond this way?**

It's easy to think that pressing on toward the goal is something you do on your own. The point isn't to get yourself across the finish line and forget about others. Part of pressing ahead is helping others move forward as well.

**How can we, as fellow Christians, stick to the path and run together in this journey?**

**How does it encourage you that God doesn't just reveal himself to the brilliant mature Christian?**

**How does the following quote relate to Philippians 3:16?**

WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE TO LIVE OUT THE TRUTH WE KNOW.  
—DOUG FIELDS

Read Philippians 3:17-19.

## **Point to Make**

Paul does not lose all memory of his sinful past, rather he is leaving it behind him as done with, settled and forgiven.

## **Interact**

This will require transparency Encourage students to share something beyond the "safe Christian confessions."

## **Prayer**

Don't miss this opportunity to pray with your students.

## **Discuss**

Sometimes Christians who have reached some level of maturity act like they've arrived at the top. What do you suppose leads someone to think like this? Why is this a problem?

## **Reference**

Look to the interest of others. Philippians 2:4

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for progress in Christian living, presenting himself as one who continually reaches ahead to see God's kingdom expanded.

Phil. 3:12 Paul stresses that he is not already perfect—he is still involved in the struggles of life in a fallen world and hence he still sins; the full glory of the resurrection remains in the future. I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. There is a balance of faith and works, of God's call and the believer's response.

Phil. 3:14-15 Goal (Gk. *skopos*) could also refer to the finish line in a race or an archery target. Paul's

Paul encourages his readers to imitate him and others that are living according to God's word. It should be inspiring to us that there are faithful examples of Christ-followers to encourage us.

**According to verse 18, how would you describe today's "enemies of the cross of Christ"?**

**Think of some friends who have chosen other goals and try to get you to "run" with them. What do you do when this happens?**

**Warning Against Three Kinds of People:**

1) Those who their god is their belly — The belly or stomach is used as an illustration of where their desires or deep self-centeredness come from.

**What beliefs and messages in your world encourage people to do this?**

**How do people act when their desires are their god?**

2) Those who their glory is their shame — These were the people who determined their righteousness through strict observance of the law. They would often boast about it.

3) Those who have their minds on earthly things — These are the people who have set their minds on the things of this life. They are opposite of those that follow the law perfectly. They choose to live for whatever pleasures this world has to offer.

**What is the final result of living life as "enemies of the cross of Christ"?**

According to Paul, we can drift into being the kind of people whose god is their desires, or we can aim passionately at being citizens of God's kingdom, of heaven. Heaven isn't just about what will happen after we die. It's also about who we're being and becoming right now.

NOW ALL I HAVE, I COUNT IT ALL AS LOSS,  
KNOWING I'M FOUND IN THE LIGHT OF THE AFTERMATH  
—HILLSONG

## Reference

Paul warns us of these people in Romans 16:17-18.

life is purposeful, for he constantly aims toward a heavenly goal. The prize is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come, most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever. "Mature" (Gk. teleios) is the same adjective translated "perfect" in v. 12 ("not ... perfect"). Thus, Paul is saying, in effect, "If you are really perfect/mature, you will realize you are not yet perfect/mature!"

Phil. 3:17-21 A Call to Follow Paul's Example of Commitment to Jesus as Lord. Paul calls the Philippians to imitate him, a common theme in his letters (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). Paul's intent is not for the Philippians to focus on him per se but rather for them to join him in humble, radical dependence on Christ.



## NOW WHAT?

### PRAYER:

Talk with God about your desires. Some may be good, others okay, others not so good, but they are your desires, so you need to deal with them. Figure out what they are and write them in the space below.

Ask God what he wants you to do with each of your desires. Some of them might be good things you should ask, and keep on asking, Him to fulfill. They may be things God has put into your heart to pursue. Others he may be asking you to let them go for your own benefit.

**Who do you look up to as someone who is running toward the prize in Jesus? Write a note of encouragement to them.**

**Reread Philippians 3:12-19 and summarize the passage in one sentence.**

**What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?**

## GOING DEEPER

**How does Philippians 1:6 relate to Philippians 3:16?**

A lot of the time, choices come to us in shades of gray. It's not always clear if a choice is good or bad. We may have to choose the best (or even the least bad) of several imperfect options. And in the moment, it's often hard to discern what will eventually turn out to be the best choice.

**Describe how you can prepare yourself for these difficult circumstances.**

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 3:14

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Phil. 3:17 While Paul is not yet perfected, he is confident enough in his Christian walk to ask the Philippians to join in imitating me and other mature Christians. Much Christian growth comes through imitation of other Christians (4:9; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:8–9; 1 Tim. 4:12, 15–16; 2 Tim. 3:10–11; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:3).

Phil. 3:18–19 The enemies of the cross could be the Judaizers of v. 2 or “worldly” people in general. Their destiny is final judgment (destruction), they worship themselves (their belly), and they are consumed with earthly things.

# WEEK 7 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark each promise and summarize the promise.

Is this promise for back then, today or the future? If this promise applies to you, how would your future be different if you claim this promise?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark each sin or bad example and summarize it below.

Do you need to ask forgiveness for this kind of sin or bad example? What will it take for you to forsake this sin or example in your future?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark each command/teaching and summarize it below.

Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 3:12-19

As you read, mark something God reveals to you that is important in red.

Why did you find that part of passage important?

# Maintaining

## Joy

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

WEEK

8

### Key Questions and Concepts

Prayer is crucial for maintaining a joyful Christian life.

What is the difference between happiness and joy?

How can your obedience lead to joy?

This week, the major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is that prayer is crucial for maintaining a joyful Christian life. This theme is evident in all of Paul's writings in the New Testament. Based on his writings, joy would well up inside of him when he prayed. It didn't just come when he prayed for himself. It happened when he prayed for others as they were growing in their faith. He had an eager expectation of their growth in Jesus. Knowing God was at work brought him great joy. Paul knew that the peace of God would encourage him. This is how he could encourage others to rejoice.

Typically, we take advice from someone who appears to know what they are talking about or have experienced circumstances that seem beyond us. Paul seems to know the secret of having joy no matter what happens. It is important to note that we are getting advice on joy from someone who spends his days chained to a guard, because if someone like that can have joy, any follower of Jesus can have it.

Joy is something we all long for but often seems difficult to grab hold of. Experiencing joy should be a part of every Christian's life. After all, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, produced only by God's work in us. It is necessary to realize that joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is circumstantial and fleeting. Joy is a heart posture. Joy is both a gift of God as well as a response to the gifts of God. Joy comes when we are aware of God's grace and His favor.

*What is the difference between happiness and joy?  
How can your obedience lead to joy?*

Jesus also gave some instructions regarding joy. Read John 15:9-11. One of the necessities to joy is living in obedience to God.

With this in mind, it becomes evident that one way to experience joy is to focus on God. Rather than dwelling on our difficulties or those things robbing our contentment, we can dwell on God. This is not to say we should deny our discontent or stuff negative emotions. As many of the psalmists patterned, we can pour out our hearts to God. We can tell Him bluntly all the things that ail us. Then we must submit those things to Him and remember who He is.

### 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 3:21 Transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body echoes 2:5-11. Those who follow Christ's example of service will share in his vindication and glory as well. Perfection will come only at the resurrection (cf. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 15:12-28). To subject all things to himself is messianic language drawn from the OT (e.g., Ps. 8:6; 110:1).

Phil. 4:1 The Philippians' spiritual success would be Paul's "crowning achievement" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19-20), and their perseverance and final salvation will bring him great joy (cf. Phil. 2:17).

## STRAINING TOWARD THE GOAL

Read Philippians 3:20-21.

For the convenience of studying Scripture, we chop a book of the Bible into manageable pieces, but the writer didn't write verses or chapters. He wrote a whole letter, and it's important to keep checking in with what the current passage has to do with what went before. Paul offers an alternative to living for something much more than one's own desires, rules or earthly pleasures.

**Paul says that Christians have a different citizenship. Why is this important?**

**How does knowing you are a citizen of heaven impact your outlook on life?**

**How should heavenly citizenship affect your behavior, priorities, attitude, relationships, and goals?**

**What will happen when Jesus returns?**

Paul thinks our bodies are important. Being spiritual for him doesn't mean living just from the neck up. He's not looking forward to a heaven where we leave bodies behind and just float around as souls. He's looking forward to a heaven where we have glorious bodies like the one Jesus has had ever since He rose from the dead.

Investigate what your body might be like when it's transformed. Read the following Scriptures that describe Jesus' appearances after He was raised from the dead.

Read Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-27 and 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

## EXHORTATION, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND PRAYER

Read Philippians 4:1-3.

**How does Paul suggest that we stand firm in the Lord?**

Paul gets specific when he chooses to address two women in the church who seem to be in conflict. We do not know why they are in conflict. However, it is obviously serious enough to be mentioned by Paul, especially since this letter would be read publically.

## Reference

For further study on our citizenship, see John 17:14-16; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 1 Peter 2:11.

## Point to Make

We are fully involved in this world but we are not of it. The world is where Christians are to do their work of proclaiming Jesus. Jesus did not even wish that we would be taken from it until our work is done (John 17:15). We await something much greater than this world can offer.

## Reference

There is a correlation between this passage and Philippians 1:27-30. Paul is writing about their behavior being same whether he is there or absent in chapter 1. In chapter 3, the mind-set challenge is because they are awaiting Jesus' return.

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Phil. 4:2 Paul does not reveal the source of tension between Euodia and Syntyche. He exhorts them to apply the principle stated in 2:2; agree (4:2) and "being of the same mind" (2:2) are the same Greek phrase (to auto phronein/phronēte).

Phil. 4:3 Reconciliation often requires third-party intervention, in this case a true companion. This person is unnamed in the esv, although the word could be read as a proper name. Paul is especially eager to see Euodia and Syntyche reconciled because they have labored side by side with him in the gospel. Cf. 1:27, where Paul also encourages unity among those who are "striving side by side" (Gk. synathleō, the same verb used here) for the gospel. Paul did not isolate himself and minister alone;

It is critical to notice that Paul does not take a side but encourages others closer to the situation to help promote reconciliation. He has full expectancy that the situation can be reconciled.

**Why doesn't God want Christians holding grudges?**

**How does Philippians 2:2 relate to 4:2?**

**When you're in conflict with another Christian, whose responsibility is it to reconcile the conflict?**

**Paul encourages a "true companion" (a guy actually named Syzygus) to help them resolve conflict. When is it appropriate to ask for help in resolving conflict?**

Read Philippians 4:4-9.

**Look up the following Scriptures in and describe what gives Paul joy?**

- A) Philippians 1:18-19 —
- B) Philippians 2:2 —
- C) Philippians 2:28-29 —
- D) Philippians 4:1 —
- E) Philippians 4:10 —

**What messages do you get from the world around you about what supposedly gives people joy?**

**How are these things like or unlike the things that give Paul joy?**

A reasonable person looks at things from the other person's point of view and keeps the other person's needs in mind. Reasonable people stand firm on moral principles but don't demand to have their own way in other areas. They don't strike back when provoked, not because they're weak or afraid, but because they're not wrapped up in looking like their reputation.

**How would reasonableness help a person have joy?**

## **Pronunciation**

Euodia - ee - OO - d  
aa

Syntyche - SIHN-tih-  
tshee

Syzygus - Sy-Zy-gus

## **Reference**

Matthew 18:15-20.

Progression is you go, you go with someone, you go before the church.

The purpose is to reconcile through the first step.

## **Point to Make**

- A) Through suffering Christ is proclaimed.
- B) Unity.
- C) A loved one coming home.
- D) Friends
- E) Their concern for him.

he deliberately worked with many others. In view of first-century culture, Euodia and Syntyche probably ministered mainly among women.

Phil. 4:4-9 Paul calls the Philippians to attitudes of joy and reason, so that they replace anxiety with expectant, grateful prayer. He also calls them to think upon and practice Christian virtues.

Phil. 4:4 The joy that Paul calls for is not a happiness that depends on circumstances but a deep contentment that is in the Lord, based on trust in the sovereign, living God, and that therefore is available always, even in difficult times.

**How does Paul suggest we deal with our wants and needs?**

**How would his suggestion make it easier to have joy?**

Anxiety could be defined by self-centered counterproductive worry. Anxiety and prayer are opposing forces in the Christian experience.

**List some things you've been worrying about lately.**

**What formula does Paul give when we are anxious?**

**What qualities of God can you think about when you begin to worry?**

Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-11 is now reflected as a command in 4:8-9 to encourage us to be aware of filling our minds with good things.

**According to Philippians 4:8, what are we to fill our minds with?**

**How does verses 8-9 provide a filter for the things you watch, listen to, speak and read about?  
How does it help filter your actions?**

**Again Paul encourages them to imitate him. From what you have read and learned is Paul conceited or worthy of imitating?**

## **Discuss**

How does prayer help you when you worry?

## **Prayer**

Spend a few minutes and ask God to help you replace the worries you listed earlier with things worthy of praise.

## **Point to Make**

This is a practical way to cultivate the attitude Paul speaks of by simply choosing what we think about. That is why Philippians 4:8 is such an important verse to memorize.

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Phil. 4:5 Reasonableness is crucial for maintaining community; it is the disposition that seeks what is best for everyone and not just for oneself. The Lord is at hand emphasizes the fact that Jesus will surely return as judge and will hold people responsible for their deeds (cf. James 5:9). Paul does not specify when this will happen (cf. Matt. 24:36–44; 2 Pet. 3:1–13).

Phil. 4:6–7 Paul echoes Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 6:25–34) that believers are not to be anxious but are to entrust themselves into the hands of their loving heavenly Father, whose peace will guard them in Christ Jesus. Paul's use of "guard" may reflect his own imprisonment or the status of Philippi as a Roman colony with a military garrison. In either case, it is not Roman

## NOW WHAT?

If you could live more like a citizen of heaven in one way this week what would it be?

What are some practical things you can do to pursue joy?

Reread Philippians 3:20-4:9 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## GOING DEEPER

When it comes to standing "firm in the Lord," are you more on track this year than you were last year? Why or why not?

List ten things about God that are worthy of your praise:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)

List three specific ways you can celebrate God every day:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

## MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 4:8

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soldiers who guard believers—it is the peace of God Almighty. Because God is sovereign and in control, Christians can entrust all their difficulties to him, who rules over all creation and who is wise and loving in all his ways (Rom. 8:31–39). An attitude of thanksgiving contributes directly to this inward peace.

Phil. 4:8-9 The Philippians are to fill their minds with things that will inspire worship of God and service to others. Beyond having a proper spiritual outlook (v. 8), the Philippians are to practice what they have seen Paul doing. As they make progress in this way, they will find that it is not simply the peace of God but the God of peace himself who will be with them.

# WEEK 8 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark each command/teaching and summarize it below.

Is this command for only back then or also for you today? How will your future be different if you obey this command/teaching?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark each promise and summarize the promise.

Is this promise for back then, today or the future? If this promise applies to you, how would your future be different if you claim this promise?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:9

As you read, mark each time prayer is mentioned.

Who is the person praying for? How can you pray this prayer for someone in your life?



# Suffering Met With Joy

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

WEEK

9

## Key Questions and Concepts

We are promised that suffering will come, but through faith it can be met with joy (1 Peter 4:12-19).

Joy comes when we are aware of God's grace and His favor.

How would you describe your typical attitude when you face difficulty? It is actually possible to maintain joy even in bad circumstances?

The final major theme that we will observe during our opening from the book of Philippians is suffering will come, but through faith it can be met with joy. Is that really possible? Can suffering be met with joy? It seems like those two things do not go together.

As we learned from our last study, joy is a heart posture. Joy is both a gift of God and a response to the gifts of God. Joy comes when we are aware of God's grace and His favor. How can we be aware of his grace and favor when we are facing trials and difficulties? One would think that grace and favor would mean that we would not face trials or difficulties. This is the problem with not having a full understanding of the gospel. God's grace and favor required suffering for Jesus on the cross. On that cross Jesus took the eternal wrath that we deserve. What happens here on this earth is only temporary. When Jesus took the eternal wrath of God upon his shoulders we were given eternal life through Jesus when we believe. It is because of eternal life that we can face suffering in this life with joy.

"I would be really happy if only I..." Most of us have probably finished this statement before with had electronics, clothes, toys, house, acceptance to a particular college, boyfriend/girlfriend, boat, etc. Most of us have probably not finished this statement with if only I could suffer like Jesus.

Paul speaks of this desire in Philippians 3:10. He wanted to share in Jesus sufferings because of the eternal joy of the resurrection in Christ. As Christians, we are promised that suffering will come, but through faith it can be met with joy (1 Peter 4:12-19). What does meeting suffering with joy look like? Paul gives us a glimpse of this understanding throughout the letter to church in Philippi (See *Philippians* 1:12-26; 2:14-15; 4:4, 11-13, 19).

***How would you describe your typical attitude when you face difficulty?  
It is actually possible to maintain joy even in bad circumstances?***

Look at some of the deep convictions that helped Paul be joyful even when he was short of money and facing possible death. See Romans 8:18-30 and 2 Corinthians 4:13-18. Think and ask yourself, "Do I really believe this?" If you do, you can meet suffering with much joy.

## 5-Minute Commentary

Phil. 4:10–20 Paul thanks the Philippians for their gift to him and assures them that God will in turn supply all of their needs.

Phil. 4:12–13 The secret of living amid life's difficulties is simple: trusting God in such a way that one can say, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. This does not mean God will bless whatever a person does; it must be read within the context of the letter, with its emphasis on obedience to God and service to God and others.

## GOD'S PROVISION

Read Philippians 4:10-14.

Paul concludes this letter by thanking the Philippians for their support. Paul genuinely appreciated the financial gift. He goes on to express he has learned to be content. Ultimately, he was not dependent on them; his trust was in the Lord even in horrible conditions.

**CONTENT**—SUFFICIENT, COMPLETE, SATISFIED WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33.

List at least 8 ways Paul was persecuted or endured hardships.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)

How do you think Paul's use of his own advice in Philippians 4:8 impacts his attitude in 12-13?

How do you think Paul goes about staying connected to Jesus so that he can receive this strength?

Paul knows he's not able to have this outlook on life just by trying. Jesus gives him the strength to find joy in the right things and to have contentment and peace.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19.

How can Paul's attitude of joy and contentment challenge your wants?

Explain why it is possible to be discontent even in prosperity.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.

## Examples

Stoned and left for dead.

Beaten with rods three times.

Whipped with 39 lashes five times.

Attacked by an angry mob.

Many death threats.

Shipwrecked three times and floated for 24 hours.

Criticized by other Christians.

Under arrest for two years without a trial.

Bitten by a viper.

## Reference

Inform students that Paul also wrote 2 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.

Phil. 4:14–16 The Philippians share in Paul's ministry, not just at the spiritual level but at the practical level of financial support (cf. note on 1:3–5). They contributed to his work after he had left Macedonia (4:15) as well as when he was just down the road in Thessalonica, which was also in Macedonia (v. 16; cf. Acts 17:1).

Phil. 4:17 Lest they imagine he has moved away from the service-centered perspective of the earlier chapters, Paul reminds the Philippians that even his reception of their gifts is ultimately for their benefit. Likely using a business metaphor, he is seeking the fruit that increases to your credit. God sees their sacrifice and is pleased.

**What is the secret to being content?**

**Do you think there is an issue with contentment in our society?**

**Describe some ways that Christians can set an example for the world about contentment.**

Read Philippians 4:15-23.

Paul says that the church of Philippi was the only church to support his missionary work. With today's missionaries it might not be that much different—only having the support of one church.

**Based on what you have read and learned about Paul, was he really after; the financial gift, or the fruit of saving lost souls?**

**Why do you think Christians love to send missionaries out to the mission field but so many missionaries have a tough time raising money?**

**Do you have any opportunities where you can financially help some missionaries? If yes, how?**

**What about helping with the needs of local Christians in need? Who are they? How do you find out their needs?**

**FRAGRANT OFFERING**—AN OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-10.

**How does this passage help you understand how to give beyond your tithe for missions?**

**Paul tells the Christians that their generosity will be rewarded. How do you think this will happen?**

## **Point to Make**

Union with the living, exalted Christ and the source of abiding strength.

## **Reference**

Encourage students to visit <http://carmel-baptist.org/connect/missions-outreach/> for a list of ministry partners, missionaries and trips that they can be a part of.

## **Reference**

A fragrant offering was not atonement for sin. See ESV note in 5-Minute Commentary.

Phil. 4:18 Paul is well supplied by the Philippians' gift, and because it has been offered to him for the service of the gospel, he can return to images drawn from Israel's worship. The gift is a fragrant offering (the Gk. *osmēn euōdias* occurs often in the Septuagint in connection with the "pleasing aroma" of sacrifices to God; see Gen. 8:21; Ex. 29:18; Lev. 4:31) and a sacrifice acceptable to God. While the literal offerings of the OT system have been done away with in Christ, the principle behind them of costly devotion to God remains.

Phil. 4:19 Those who are generous toward God will find that he is generous toward them and will supply their every need ... in Christ Jesus.

The exhortation to greet every saint at the end of Paul's letter reinforces the personal nature of Paul's communication and shows that the truths of the letter were to be lived out by real people in the real world. Since this is the last lesson in this study. Spend time together talking about how this study has encouraged you in your walk with Jesus.

**Look back at your whole study of Philippians. If someone asked you how a citizen of God's kingdom lives, what are some things you would say?**

**Describe two specific ways you have been encouraged?**

**Has your small group changed in any ways?**

**How are you doing with treating each other as partners in the gospel?**

**How can this group help you as you move forward in following Jesus?**

Take some time to pray for each other in the group, one at a time. *Example: Tell God something about this person you're grateful for, and ask him to work in this person to strengthen such things as contentment, peace, discernment and joy.*

## Reference

Point students to the Looking Back section of this book to be reminded of key truths that they have learned.

## Prayer

Have each person pray for the person to their right.

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Phil. 4:20 Just as the "hymn of Christ" (2:5–11) ended with "to the glory of God the Father," so Paul concludes the body of his letter with a doxology: To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Phil. 4:21–22 Greetings. The exhortation to greet every saint reinforces the personal nature of Paul's communication and shows that the truths of the letter were to be lived out by real people in the real world. Caesar's household could refer not only to the "royal family" but to anyone connected with the emperor's service, including soldiers, slaves, or freedmen. It is likely that some of the latter group had responded positively to Paul's message; there is no evidence that the emperor's actual family

## **NOW WHAT?**

When do you struggle with contentment in your life?

How can lack of contentment become a monstrous sin if you don't do something about it now?

Reread Philippians 4:10-23 and summarize the passage in one sentence.

What is one truth you've learned from this lesson? How can you apply this truth to your life?

## **GOING DEEPER**

Take a look at how God was the source of his abiding strength from the following Scripture.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, John 15:5, Ephesians 3:16-17, and Colossians 1:11.

Based on these Scriptures how can God be a source of abiding strength for you?

Do you still have unanswered questions this study raised? If so, what are they? Who can help you answer your questions?

## **MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

Philippians 4:11

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were believers at this point. The fact that some within Caesar's circles had believed would have had particular resonance in Roman Philippi.

Phil. 4:23 Paul ends his letter with a reminder that true progress in life is a gift of God through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

# WEEK 9 DEVOTIONS

Spending time in God's Word is essential to growing in your faith in Jesus. The REAP Bible study method is a simple tool that you can use during your quiet times.

**READ** - Take the time to carefully read the Bible passage with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction and correction.

**EXAMINE** - Grab your journal and write out your answers to the questions. Make note of what stands out to you.

**APPLY** - A great question to ask is "How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?"

**PRAY** - Then, talk with God about the passage and your application. Ask Him to change your heart and life based on the time you've spent in His Word.

## DAY 1 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As you read, mark wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned and summarize why.

Describe the source or reason for the joy. How can you face a current circumstance with more joy?

## DAY 2 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As you read, mark each promise and summarize the promise.

Is this promise for back then, today or the future? If this promise applies to you, how would your future be different if you claim this promise?

## DAY 3 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As you read, mark each truth about God and summarize the truth.

What have you learned about God based on this truth? How can you live differently knowing this truth?

## DAY 4 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As your read, mark each positive example to follow and note whom the example is set by.

Summarize the example and describe what it would take for you to follow this example.

## DAY 5 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As you read, mark interactions or attitudes between Christians.

Summarize the attitude or interaction. How is God asking you to reflect this attitude or interaction with other believers?

## DAY 6 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As you read, mark wherever suffering or hardship is mentioned.

Who is causing the hardship, suffering or persecution? How can you apply how the person faced the hardship in one of your present circumstances?

## DAY 7 — PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

As you read, mark something God reveals to you that is important in red.

Why did you find that part of passage important?

## LOOKING BACK

You have done a great job this semester as you have studied Philippians. It is such a privilege and joy to study Scripture. Take some time to reflect on all that you have learned during this study.

**How do you feel now that you have completed this study?**

**Describe how your future will be impacted because of this study.**

So now you are thinking, okay, now that I've completed this study, I know everything I need to know now, right?

Psalms 119:55 says, "In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law." Discipleship isn't about completing a study. It is about a lifestyle of learning and living as you follow Jesus throughout your lifetime. What you have learned throughout this study will become more important to your Christian life in the months, even years, to come. Think about some of the major concepts that you have learned and can live out.

- Practical way to study Scripture.
- The joy of being a servant of Jesus.
- Learned how to pray for others.
- You can approach every situation with joy.
- How to partner with others with the gospel.
- How to care for missionaries.
- Discovered how to discern good and bad through the filter of Scripture.
- Developed community with others that are walking with Jesus.
- Learned the importance of seeing other's needs as your own.
- Discovered that living for Jesus is much better than anything this world could offer.
- Examined your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.
- Discussed how to live a life of humility that glorifies God.
- Discovered what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.
- Learned how to encourage others in their difficult circumstances.
- Examined the characteristics of false teachers.
- Learned a practical method to laying down your anxiety and worry before God.
- God will provide for your needs and teach you how to be content with plenty or in need.

Wow! That's a lot! Now it's time to continue to live out what you have learned in this study.

# APPENDIX 1

## BIBLE MARKING PLAN

Seriously, who doesn't love to color? The following categories and Bible marking plan is meant to be a tool for you help understand Scripture as you study. As you study the book of Philippians be on the lookout for the following themes. Use the categories below and colors to mark up the scripture as you study.

**Truth About God (purple):** Everything you learn about God.

- What is he like? What has he done? What is he doing? What will he do? What pleases him? What displeases him?

**Promises (orange):** What God is going to do or what is in store for the believer.

- This will often overlap with purple because it answers the question about God "What will he do?" for Christians.

**Commands/Teachings (light green):** Things TO do.

- Strong or direct instruction or encouragement that is good.

**Sins (black):** Things NOT to do.

- Specific sins, bad examples or what sin will lead to.

**Examples (dark green):** Positive examples of loving and faithful service to God.

- Note whose example you are to follow, such as, Paul or Jesus.

**Suffering/Hardship (dark blue):** Wherever suffering or persecution is mentioned.

**Joy (yellow):** Wherever joy or rejoicing is mentioned or referenced.

**Prayer (light blue):** Where prayer or terms/phrases for addressing God are mentioned.

- "I thank my God", "supplication", etc.

**Interactions/Attitudes between Christians (brown):** When fellowship, partnership, affection for one another, unity, doing something for another is mentioned/encouraged.



# PHILIPPIANS 1

## Greeting

<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Thanksgiving and Prayer

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

## The Advance of the Gospel

<sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

<sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

## To Live Is Christ

Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

<sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, <sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

# PHILIPPIANS 2

## Christ's Example of Humility

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## Lights in the World

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

## Timothy and Epaphroditus

<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. <sup>20</sup> For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, <sup>24</sup> and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

<sup>25</sup> I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, <sup>26</sup> for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. <sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. <sup>29</sup> So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, <sup>30</sup> for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

# PHILIPPIANS 3

## Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

<sup>1</sup> Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

<sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

## Straining Toward the Goal

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

<sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

# PHILIPPIANS 4

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

## Exhortation, Encouragement, and Prayer

<sup>2</sup> I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

## God's Provision

<sup>10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and

again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.





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