

Dear Church Family,

Every fall before hunting season begins, good, responsible hunters spend time on a firing range. For most of us in Montana, that means driving up into the hills, finding a secluded area to accomplish the task. We look for an alley way through the trees with a good earthen backstop and at least 100 yards of open space. The first step is to set out targets. I prefer milk jugs, but some use paper plates, steel plates, or fancy color burst targets. Whatever we choose, they become the objects we aim at to ensure that our sites are on and our aim is true. We do this so that in the moment it matters most, we can hit our target.

Every January, I love to sneak away for some alone time to evaluate how my last year went and dream into the new year in hopes of doing better. Some years yield a lot to celebrate, others do not, but I love to at least “set out targets” to aim at as the journey of my life goes along. A brilliant professor of mine many years ago was fond of saying, “If you aim at nothing, you will always hit it with amazing accuracy.”

As we begin 2018 together, we will spend the first three months setting out targets. Specifically, we will set out spiritual growth targets in key areas of our lives and challenge ourselves to live more fruitfully. We’re going to look at some key areas of life and be challenged by what the Bible has to say about how we should be investing our lives and making a difference in ways that are eternally fruitful.

I would like to invite you to join us on this journey, to commit to setting out some targets, to improve the accuracy of your aim. I would also encourage you to prayerfully consider not only doing the five days of personal devotions that correspond with each week’s sermon, but to also get plugged into a Small Group here at Easthaven. If you will be faithful to spend time five days per week in personal study, gather with a group, and be in church regularly to hear the sermons in this series, I promise you that 2018 will be the most fruitful year of your life. Take the challenge, join us for this study, and choose to be fruitful.

Let’s grow together!

Pastor Daniel <><

Week One



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WEEK ONE – DAY ONE

Bearing much fruit by staying connected to the vine!

Read John 15:1-8

In this passage, **WHO** is the vine?

WHO are the branches?

WHO is the vineyard keeper?

In this parable, Jesus divides the branches into two categories. **WHAT** are those categories?

Let's focus for now on those branches described in verse 2a and verse 6. **HOW** would you describe those vines?

WHAT is the outcome for those branches?

Compare these verses to what you see in Hebrews 6:7-8. **WHAT** do these verses have in common?

Slow down, clear your mind for a minute, and look back in time. Was there a time when you felt like you were not producing much fruit? **HOW** strong was your connection to the vine at that point? Were you trying to produce that fruit on your own?

WEEK ONE - DAY TWO

Read John 15:4-8

WHAT phrase is repeated in these verses?

In the context of our parable about the vine and the branches, **WHAT** does “remain in Me” mean?

And **WHAT** is the result of us remaining in Christ and Christ remaining in us?

Read John 15:5, 7-8 again. Do you see a cause and effect scenario? **WHAT** is it that causes us to produce much fruit?

Based on John 15:8, how is the Father glorified? Once again, take five minutes to stop and reflect. In those cases where you feel like you bore fruit and God was glorified as a result, **HOW** strong was your connection to the vine at that point?

WEEK ONE - DAY THREE

Read John 15:3

WHY do you think Jesus introduced this concept of being clean while talking about the Vine and the branches?

WHAT is it that made them clean?

Read John 13:2-11. WHICH two men are mentioned in this passage?

WHOM did Jesus call clean?

WHO was Jesus talking about when He said that "not all of you are clean"?

Stop and think about these two men. Which one do you think had a solid connection to the vine? Which one did not?

Based on this passage, what should we do to make sure that we are "clean"?

WEEK ONE - DAY FOUR

Read John 15:8, 16

WHAT purpose do you see in these verses?

Read Genesis 1:11-12, 22, 28

When God was creating vegetation, wildlife, man, and woman, WHAT phrase is repeated as He spoke?

Do you hear a purpose for all of creation in these verses? WHAT is that purpose?

If the ultimate purpose in our actions is to glorify God, how should that impact our motives?

**“Being fruitful by staying connected to the vine.”
Find a quiet spot and sit for a while to think about what that might look like for you personally on a day to day basis. List a few ideas below as they come to you.**

WEEK ONE - DAY FIVE

Read John 15:7-8

Let's think about this from two perspectives:

First, if we remain in Christ and His words remain in us, what can we expect?

Are there conditions to this promise? While you're pondering this question, also take a look at John 14:13-14.

WHAT is the ultimate goal in staying connected to Christ and in bearing fruit as a result?

Second, let's take a look at verses 7-8 from the converse perspective. If we do **NOT** remain in Christ and His words do **NOT** remain in us, can we still expect the same outcome?

How sobering is that thought?

Take a few minutes to evaluate the effects of not remaining connected to the vine. List some of those effects below:

WEEK ONE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read John 15:1-8

What kind of “fruit” should we be producing if we are “remaining in the vine”? Think in practical, day-to-day terms.

If we are not producing much fruit, why not? Also think in practical, day-to-day terms.

What is the ultimate goal in our being fruitful?

How does our sense of purpose impact our actions in our homes or at our workplace/school?

Can you look back in your life and identify times when maybe you were “not so connected” to Christ? If so, were there consequences?

Week Two



SMALL GROUP
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WEEK TWO – DAY ONE

Being fruitful in Bible knowledge, reading, meditating, and studying

Read Ezra 7:10

Before assuming his new role upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra had determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, obey it, and teach its statutes to others. Let's talk about these three over the next few days. First, take a look at Ezra 7:25. **HOW** does King Artaxerxes describe Ezra in this verse? From where did this wisdom come?

As a scribe and a priest, Ezra would have spent years studying the laws of God and would have been considered an expert on these laws. Is there a difference between knowledge of the laws and wisdom concerning those laws? Describe the difference.

Put yourself in Ezra's shoes years before he came to Jerusalem. **WHAT** kind of effort would he have had to invest in order to gain this kind of knowledge?

Ask yourself how much time and effort you invest in the study of God's Word? **HOW** can we improve in that area?

WEEK TWO - DAY TWO

Read Psalm 119:9-11

Check out the phrases “sought you with all my heart” and “treasured Your word in my heart.” **WHAT** do they tell you about the writer’s commitment to learn and understand God’s Word?

Is it really that important that we truly search scripture for truth and wisdom? **WHY?**

If you have any doubts about that, grab a cup of coffee and read through the entire chapter of Psalm 119. Yes, it is a long one, but that is a great excuse to refill that cup a couple of times, right? As you are reading, take note of phrases which describe how God’s Word has impacted his life. Jot down a few of those phrases that stand out for you below.

Read Proverbs 2:1-22

As you read, jot down the positive results that God’s Word brings about for those who “store up his commands” within them.

WEEK TWO – DAY THREE

Read Psalm 1:1-3

When you hear the word “meditate”, **WHAT** comes to mind?

Merriam-Webster defines meditate as to engage in contemplation or reflection, or to focus one's thoughts on, reflect on or ponder over. **WHEN** was the last time you stopped while reading scripture to meditate on that passage?

WHAT did those words mean to those to whom Jesus was speaking?

HOW do those words translate for us today?

HOW do those words apply to us in our daily lives?

HOW do those words change my motives or actions?

Read Psalm 49:3

WHAT does meditation bring to the mind of the writer?

Read Psalm 143:5

What value is there in meditating or reflecting on the work that God has done in your life?

Have you ever read a few verses and didn't really understand what you read, but just keep moving on? Or have you read a scripture verse and only minutes later have no idea what you read? Be honest...how much value did you really get while reading through those verses? Do you think that spending a few minutes to contemplate that passage might help us to understand and remember?

WEEK TWO – DAY FOUR

Read Ezra 7:10 again

Ezra had determined to teach God's words to those who do not know them. Once you've studied God's Word and gained understanding, WHO can you pass it on to?

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Timothy had been taught scripture at an early age. Paul encouraged him to teach others as well. Take a couple of minutes to scan through 1 and 2 Timothy and note how many times you find the word *teach*. WHAT does this tell you about Paul's commitment to teaching God's Word to others?

Read Titus 2:1, Colossians 1:28, 2 Timothy 3:16

Does it sound like teaching scripture is serious business? Take a minute to reflect on those who may have taught you over the years. WHAT were the characteristics of those who had the biggest impact on you spiritually?

In what ways are you different as a result of their teaching?

WEEK TWO - DAY FIVE

Read Deuteronomy 12:28

It is one thing to know God's word, but something altogether different to actually obey it. Ezra had determined that he would obey God's laws. **WHAT** is the outcome in Deuteronomy 12:28 for those who obey God's Word?

Read Luke 6:46-49

In this parable, Jesus tells us of two men...one who obeys and one who does not.

To **WHAT** does Jesus compare the man who obeys God?

And what about the man who does not obey? The sarcastic phrase "let me know how that works out for you" comes to my mind.

Think back on week one of this study. Read John 15:1-8 again. Remember those words, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you". When he says, "and my words remain in you" think about what that means. Is he referring to those who obey His commands?

WEEK TWO – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Ezra 7:10 again

Have you ever read a few verses and didn't really understand what you read, but just keep moving on? Or have you read a scripture verse and only minutes later have no idea what you read? Be honest...how much value did you really get while reading through those verses?

Is it really that important that we truly search scripture for truth and wisdom? WHY?

What value is there in meditating or reflecting on the work that God has done in your life?

Think back on week one of this study. Read John 15:1-8 again. Remember those words, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you". When he says, "and my words remain in you" think about what that means. Is he referring to those who obey His commands?

How well are you/we doing at being fruitful in Bible knowledge, reading, meditation?

Week Three



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WEEK THREE – DAY ONE

Being fruitful in spiritual nurture and daily time with God.

Read Psalm 1:1

This verse talks about the things a happy/blessed man does NOT do. List those things.

Read Psalm 1:2

This verse talks INSTEAD about the things a happy/blessed man DOES. List those things.

Read Psalm 1:3-6

These verses describe what his life looks like because of what he has done in verse 2. WHAT benefits are listed?

What impact does a man's meditation on the Lord's instruction DAY and NIGHT have on the way things turn out in verses 3-6?

It is no coincidence that a man who meditates on God's Word is bearing fruit, prospering, and full of spiritual life. So WHY is it that we so often disregard time in God's Word and in prayer/meditation with God?

WEEK THREE – DAY TWO

Read 1 Chronicles 16:7-13

WHEN are we instructed to seek the Lord?

Take another look at verses 12-13. This passage is part of a beautiful Psalm of Thanksgiving. Let's talk about that for a minute. Many times, David pauses to give thanks to God for "the wonderful works He has done". In some cases, he does this even when he is in the midst of turmoil. **WHY** do you think that is the case?

How do we benefit from focusing our attention on God's Word and offering thanks to Him for His work in our life?

Think about your current status. Do you have any "turmoil" going on in your life? Follow David's lead. Take a few minutes to seek out scripture that applies to your situation. As part of your meditation on that scripture, make room for time to reflect on "the wonderful works that He has done" in your life.

Take a few minutes to read 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 (the full Psalm). Jot down a few things below that God has done in your life. Ponder those things while you are meditating on this Psalm.

WEEK THREE - DAY THREE

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17

“Pray constantly.” WHAT does that mean? Could it mean that we are ALWAYS in prayer, every minute of every day?

If not, then how often should we pray?

Read Romans 1:9-10

In his letter to the church in Rome, he says that he always asks in his prayers that God might allow him to come to them. Do you think he was literally praying about that all day, every day?

While it would certainly be a good thing to be able to pray all day long, it is not very practical. But these passages do remind us that we should pray frequently, and pray regularly.

Let's be honest. We sometimes tend to pray only when we are in need or in trouble, but not any more frequently than that. Am I right? What would our lives look like if we were praying on a daily basis?

WEEK THREE - DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 6:18

WHEN are we instructed to seek the Lord in prayer?

WHAT do the phrases “stay alert” and “with all perseverance” tell us about the message in this verse?

Do you get the feeling that this verse implies that prayer becomes a persistent part of our lifestyle as Christians, as natural as breathing?

How encouraging is it to know that at any time of day or night, we are just a moment away from reaching God?

List the “types” of prayers that you might offer up to God in the course of a day.

WEEK THREE - DAY FIVE

Read Luke 18:1-8

“Day and night”. There it is again! Jesus shares a parable on the need to pray always and not become discouraged. Which word would you use to describe the widow in this parable?

And how did this attribute bring her success?

Have you ever brought something to God in prayer so many times that you finally just stopped bringing it up...or maybe even stopped praying altogether? Perhaps the message here is that we should never give up on prayer.

Read Luke 11:9-13

In what way do these verses emphasize the need to be persistent in going to God in prayer?

Is it possible that sometimes our faith is demonstrated by our continued persistence in prayer? Explain below.

WEEK THREE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Psalm 1:1-6

It is no coincidence that a man who meditates on God's Word is full of life, bearing fruit, and prospering. So why is it that we so often disregard time in God's Word and in prayer/meditation with God?

How do we benefit from focusing our attention on God's word and offering thanks to Him for His work in our life?

Have you ever brought something to God in prayer so many times that you finally just stopped bringing it up...or maybe even stopped praying altogether? What lesson have we learned about this from this week's scriptures?

What "types" of prayers might you offer up to God in the course of a day?

"Day and night." This phrase is repeated often when we are reading in the Bible about prayer and meditation. How about a "checkup from the neck up" as some of my friends say? Ask yourself how close you come to this kind of commitment to prayer and meditation.

Week Four



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WEEK FOUR – DAY ONE

Being fruitful in prayer life, growing in connection/intimacy

Intimacy is defined as a relationship in which we feel very close to someone or know them on a deep level. This would be in stark contrast to knowing someone on a superficial level. It is about nearness as opposed to distance. Have you ever felt distant from God? That is an indicator of your level of intimacy with Him.

Read Daniel 6:1-12

What in this verse tells us about Daniel's level of intimacy with God? Focus on verse 10.

Let's think that one through. Daniel's life is at stake. He is not praying out of rebellion against the king, he is praying out of obedience to God. With his life at stake, he had better KNOW his God if he's going to pray to God against the king's decree. Reflect on your past. Describe an instance where your faith was tested, but you persisted in obeying God because you KNEW God and His faithfulness.

Daniel continued to do exactly as he did in the past, regardless of the consequences that doing so might bring. Does that sound like someone who has a level of trust that fosters an intimate connection with God?

Read Acts 5:29

The apostles are in a similar situation. They've been ordered to cease teaching in Jesus' name, with threats building against them. What was their answer in verse 29?

Pause for a while to contemplate what it takes to build that sort of intimate relationship with God. Take that question to God in prayer and linger a while to listen.

WEEK FOUR – DAY TWO

Let's continue that thought. How do I build that intimate relationship with God?

Read Psalm 73:28

A thirst for God's presence is a good start. James tells us "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Is it as simple as choosing to be nearer to God?

What about seeking out more knowledge *about* God? Will that get us there?

Read John 5:39-40

What do those verses tell us about relying solely on accumulating more knowledge about God? Also read 1 Corinthians 8:1. What is still missing?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25

Based on these verses, where should our focus be?

Read Philippians 3:7-9

What does this passage say about our ability to create righteousness by merely observing the law?

In faith, ask God to free you from the temptation to rely on "doing stuff" in order to become closer to Him.

WEEK FOUR - DAY THREE

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4; Hebrews 11:6

“God is impressed with our faith, not our feats. Where faith is lacking, he is not pleased with the quantity of our knowledge or the quality of our aesthetic events.”

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What is required to attain an intimate connection to God?

Read Proverbs 3:5

Have you ever found yourself realizing that you really have trouble trusting God completely in your current circumstances? Well, you're not alone, but even in those things that come our way and test our faith, as our faith grows stronger and brings us closer to God along the way.

Read James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:8-9

Count it all joy....when you meet trials of various kinds? On the surface that sounds totally counter-intuitive, but take time to list the steps that take place when you accept the testing of your faith.

Find a quiet spot. sit and meditate on the tests that you're facing right now. Jot them down below. Ask God for faith that allows you to see the work those test are doing in you as you are being made complete.

WEEK FOUR – DAY FOUR

Read Philippians 3:8

Explain the value in **KNOWING** Christ, not just knowing **ABOUT** Christ.

How encouraging is it to know that in losing all the things that you've trusted in the past, you will gain Christ in the process?

Read Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17

What are our sufferings producing in us? Would you say it is worth it?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

What does it mean that we *share in the sufferings of the Messiah*?

What is the outcome of having suffered with Him?

Suffering for Christ identifies us as strangers in this world, with rewards in heaven. Ponder that for a while.

WEEK FOUR – DAY FIVE

Read Psalm 63:1-8

What images does David paint in describing his desire for God? (verse 1)

How does he react to God's presence? (verses 2-3)

For what does David praise God in verse 4?

In the midst of his troubles, what does he meditate on? (verse 6)

What does he rejoice in? (verse 7)

In what ways does verse 8 describe a man who has an intimate relationship with God? A man who has drawn near to God?

Take a few minutes to read Psalm 63 aloud. Slow down. Pause and think on each verse as you read.

WEEK FOUR – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17

Reflect on your past. Describe an instance where your faith was tested, but you persisted in obeying God because you **KNEW** God and His faithfulness.

James tells us “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). How does that happen?

Count it all joy....when you meet trials of various kinds? On the surface that sounds totally counter-intuitive, but take time to list the steps that take place when you accept the testing of your faith. (James 1:2-4)

Explain the value in **KNOWING** Christ, not just knowing **ABOUT** Christ. (Philippians 3:8)

Week Five



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WEEK FIVE - DAY ONE

Being fruitful in witness... prepared, focused, and fully convinced.

Read Acts 4:5-8

WHAT was the first question presented to Peter and John?

WHY would they start with this question?

WHAT assistance does Peter have (verse 8)?

Is the same true for us today?

Read Luke 12:11-12

What does Jesus tell his disciples in these verses?

Do you think these words came to Peter's mind at this time?

How much of Peter's confidence at this point is a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit?

WEEK FIVE - DAY TWO

Read Acts 4:9-10

Peter goes straight to the point: it is by the name of Jesus (which they crucified and God has raised from the dead) that this man has been healed.

He has now made it clear that he answers to a different authority. How would that message have been received by those who are confronting him?

In what ways are we encouraged by knowing that our authority comes from Jesus?

When Peter says that the man was healed “by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene”, what does that mean?

Read Matthew 18:20. What encouragement is there in knowing that when two or three believers are gathered in His name, He is there among them?

WEEK FIVE - DAY THREE

Read Acts 4:11

Peter continues by quoting Psalm 118:22, which all present would recognize. He has prepared himself.

What is his message to them regarding the cornerstone? Also read 1 Peter 2:4-8.

Based on Peter's speech, how convinced is Peter that Jesus is exactly who he says He is?

How would our message be different if we were not totally convinced that Jesus is the Son of God?

WEEK FIVE - DAY FOUR

Read Acts 4:12

WHAT claim does Peter make at this point?

The fact that there is salvation in NO ONE other than Jesus goes against everything the Jewish leadership hold as truth. How would those listening have reacted to this news?

This verse is controversial even today. Why does this statement anger many people today?

Given the anger that this could generate, Peter must be absolutely persuaded that he is right about this statement. How persuaded are you that Jesus is the ONLY source of salvation?

How should we handle this conversation with non-believers who believe that there are multiple paths to salvation/heaven?

WEEK FIVE - DAY FIVE

Read Acts 4:13-22

What is the reaction from the Sanhedrin leadership?

What did they order Peter and John to do? (verse 18)

How did Peter reassert his claim that he answers to a higher authority than the Sanhedrin? Look specifically at verse 19.

As a result of Peter's and John's preparation, confidence, focus, and reliance on the leadership of the Holy Spirit, what was the reaction from the people who witnessed these events? (verse 21)

WEEK FIVE – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Acts 4:5-12

Peter and John had seen 5,000 come to Christ the day before they were arrested. After these events, many were glorifying God for what had been done. How much of Peter's and John's confidence at this point is because of the 5,000 new believers the day before? How much is a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Read Matthew 18:20

What encouragement is there in knowing that when two or three believers are gathered in His name, He is there among them?

How would our message be different if we were not totally convinced that Jesus is the cornerstone?

When talking with non-believers who believe that there are multiple paths to salvation/heaven, how should we handle this message that there is no other name by which we must be saved?

Week Six



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WEEK SIX – DAY ONE

Being fruitful in giving finances

Read Leviticus 27:30-34 and Proverbs 3:9

Let me start by saying that I cannot claim that I have this whole earning/spending/giving/tithing thing completely figured out, and I realize that it can be a very “touchy” subject. That said, it is something that scripture discusses a lot. So, let’s talk through some of those scriptures.

In this passage, WHO is it that instituted the idea of a tithe?

What items were listed as part of the tithe?

What constitutes a tithe?

According to this passage, to WHOM does the tithe belong?

Is this discussion about tithing even relevant now?

WEEK SIX - DAY TWO

Read Deuteronomy 14:22-28

WHAT is it that the Israelites were to learn as part of their tithing?

From verse 29, list those who are the beneficiaries of this tithe.

The Israelites are told to not neglect one group when tithes are distributed. Which group is that? (verse 27)

Also read Numbers 18:21, 26

Why should they not be forgotten?

Are the Levites not required to tithe?

And what blessing is given because of bringing a tenth of your produce into the gates as a tithe?

WEEK SIX - DAY THREE

Read 2 Chronicles 31:1-10, 20-21

King Hezekiah has reestablished the priests and Levites who serve in the temple. Those who serve in the temple have no inheritance of their own, so the tithes that are collected are dedicated to the priests and Levites and for the temple itself. When word spread, how did the Israelites respond? (verse 5)

King Hezekiah gave from his own possessions. **WHAT** effect did this have on the rest of the people who were giving?

Was Hezekiah all about the tithe, but not serving God in other ways? (verses 20-21)

Read Matthew 23:23

What is Jesus message to the Pharisees?

Does Jesus indicate that they should ignore the tithes and spend all their effort on matters of the law? (verse 23b)

Can we choose whichever one we want, justice/mercy/faith - or - financial contributions?

WEEK SIX – DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 6:19-24

Do we tend to collect treasures (possessions)?

How many of us have a garage, but we can't even park our car there because it is packed with stuff?

How long has it been since we actually used or even touched most of that stuff?

Matthew seems to tell us that all this stuff is really a heart issue. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." OK...that isn't true for every one of us in America, but it seems to be true for a lot of us. I'm no exception. What does this have to do with tithing? Maybe tithing is a heart issue as well. If we'd rather spend our earnings on 'stuff' that we collect in the self-storage room and almost never touch instead of giving a portion of those earnings to God, does that mean that our hearts are in the wrong place?

To be fair, we can go to the other extreme and give to the poor but make such a scene about it that it is almost counter-productive. (Matthew 6:1-4) Is that also a heart issue?

It is not my place to tell you how to make those decisions, but when was the last time we paused to take an honest look at our giving/tithing and make sure our heart is where it should be regarding our finances?

WEEK SIX - DAY FIVE

Read Hebrews 13:5

**“Your life should be free from the love of money.”
Does that sound like good advice?**

**If we are NOT free from the love of money, what kind
of problems can that cause for us?**

**What value is there in being satisfied or content with
what we have?**

**In this text, the writer of Hebrews reminds us
that God says, “I will never leave you or forsake
you.” What does that have to do with this idea
of the love of money?**

**Is it possible that we tend to put our trust in
money more than in God?**

WEEK SIX - GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Leviticus 27:30-34

Is this discussion about tithing even relevant in this modern age?

WHAT is it that the Israelites were to learn as part of their tithing? (Deuteronomy 14:22-28)

When was the last time you paused to take an honest look at our giving/tithing and make sure our heart is where it should be regarding our finances?

What value is there in being satisfied or content with what we have?

Is it possible that we tend to put our trust in money more than in God?

Week Seven



WEEK SEVEN - DAY ONE

Being fruitful in ministry/service

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different gifts, ministries, activities ...
but what is common to all of them?

List the “gifts” found in verses 8-10.

WHO benefits from these gifts?

WHAT is the one thing common to all of those
gifts? (verse 11)

What are the benefits of this diversity of gifts?

In the middle of all this discussion about diversity
of gifts, we are reminded that same Spirit is
active in all of them. Why is that important?

WEEK SEVEN - DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

WHAT issue do you think Paul is addressing in these verses?

WHY would he use the human body as a tool to convey his message?

Paul makes his point that if all parts of the body were the same, the entire body would not function. Translate that thought to the church body. What would happen if every member of the church was a musician? A pastor? A teacher?

Take a closer look at verses 21-26. Based on these verses, what kinds of issues are going on at the Corinthian church?

WHAT happens when several members feel like they are inferior? When others think they are superior?

Some of the Corinthians had apparently fallen into the trap of grading the spiritual gifts. Some are more honorable, others less honorable. Do we do the same? How does verse 18 address this?

WEEK SEVEN - DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

List the roles that Paul identifies in these verses.

Which of them is the most important (if any)?

What is Paul's point in verses 29-30?

What is meant by "the greater gifts" in verse 31?

These may be the gifts that do not focus on the individual but on the entire body. Note that this leads into chapter 13 and a discussion about love.

Paul is addressing disagreements between church members regarding who is "the most honorable". What changes when members relate to one another in love, rather than ambition?

WEEK SEVEN - DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

ASK: What are the impacts of me *overestimating* my importance to the church body? List them below.

ASK: What are the impacts of me *underestimating* my importance to the church body? List them below.

ASK: What are the effects of us realizing that each of us is an important part of the church body? List them below.

ASK: In what ways can we celebrate both the diversity and solidarity of the church body? List them below.

WEEK SEVEN - DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 12 again

Take some time to slow down and meditate on these questions. Jot down a few ideas for each.

How can I as an individual be a better member of the body of Christ?

How can I foster better connection with the body of Christ at large?

How can I better care for individual members of the body of Christ?

How can I build more intentional relationships with other members of the body of Christ?

How can I avoid creating divisions in the body of Christ?

Take a few minutes to read 1 Corinthians 13. There are a few things in that chapter that could help with the questions above.

WEEK SEVEN - GROUP DISCUSSION

Read 1 Corinthians Chapter 12.

In the middle of all this discussion about diversity of gifts, we are reminded that same Spirit is active in all of them. Why is that important?

Some of the Corinthians had apparently fallen into the trap of grading the spiritual gifts. Some are more honorable, others less honorable. Do we do the same? How does verse 18 address this?

Paul is addressing disagreements between church members regarding who is “the most honorable”. What changes when members relate to one based on love, rather than ambition?

How can I as an individual be a better member of the body of Christ?

Take a few minutes to read 1 Corinthians 13.

Week Eight



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK EIGHT - DAY ONE

Be fruitful in mentoring, investing in others

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-2

Paul refers to Timothy as “my true son in the faith”. Based on that phrase alone, what are your thoughts on the relationship between the two?

We will learn more about Paul’s mentoring role in Timothy’s life this week. Paul and Timothy first met in A.D. 50 and Paul writes his letter (2 Timothy) in A.D. 67 near the time of Paul’s martyrdom in Rome. For 17 years, Paul invested time/effort in Timothy.

Read Acts 16:1-3, 2 Tim 4:1-8

Paul and Timothy first meet in Acts 16:1-3. What was his impression of Timothy?

What was the outcome of that first meeting?

That must have been quite an interview, huh? What characteristic of Timothy would have appealed to Paul?

Paul immediately set out to prepare Timothy for ministry. He realized that Timothy had not been circumcised and this would limit their access to synagogues and a greater audience so the circumcision took place. This established his Jewish heritage from his mother while also leaving common ground between Timothy and the gentiles because of his Greek father. With that taken care of, they set out on their journey.

Is there someone who might be your “true son (or daughter) in the faith”? Give that some thought and prayer.

WEEK EIGHT - DAY TWO

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:2

How does Paul describe Timothy when writing the Thessalonian church? Does this lend credibility to Timothy in Paul's absence?

Read Philippians 2:19-23

In your own words, explain the confidence that Paul has in Timothy in his letter to the Philippians.

Read 1 Timothy 6:11-14

Even as Timothy rises to meet the challenges he faces, Paul continues to encourage him to remain steadfast in this "good fight for the faith". Is there someone who encouraged you in your "good fight"? How important was that encouragement to you at that time?

Read 2 Timothy 4:8

Even when Paul is nearing his "departure" he reminds Timothy of ministry goals and the rewards that await those who keep the faith. What are the rewards that Paul lists in this verse?

As a mentor, Paul has consistently seen Timothy face challenges and succeed. He has made mention of Timothy's credentials when writing to the churches, enabling Timothy's efforts there. And when discouragement creeps in, he sends reminders of the rewards of continuing in ministry. What can we learn from Paul regarding the role of a mentor?

WEEK EIGHT - DAY THREE

Read 1 Timothy 1:3-19

Paul has spent a lot of time in Ephesus establishing the church there. He has entrusted Timothy with the task of addressing a few issues in the Ephesian church, serving as the pastor of the church. What are those issues?

Realizing the difficulties in dealing with false doctrine, Paul sends a message to Timothy about Timothy's own spiritual well-being. What is that message (verses 18-19)?

Read 1 Timothy 4:6-10

What reminder is Paul sending to Timothy in this verse?

Paul's trust and confidence in Timothy has grown. He views Timothy as a fellow minister, fighting the battle alongside him. He continues to challenge Timothy with difficult tasks, but still holds him accountable as a brother and shows genuine concern for his well-being. How does that translate into our modern culture and mentoring younger believers?

WEEK EIGHT – DAY FOUR

Read Philippians 2:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:2-4; Hebrews 13:23

What words and phrases are repeated in these verses regarding Timothy?

How has the relationship between Paul and Timothy changed since that first meeting in Acts chapter 16?

How have Paul’s actions facilitated that growth?

How have Paul’s letters strengthened that relationship?

How successful has Paul been in developing a “next generation” minister?

Stop and think about the passage of time from Acts chapter 16 to 2 Timothy 4. What does that say about the duration of a mentoring relationship?

WEEK EIGHT - DAY FIVE

Read Acts 16:1-3; 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-23; 1 Thessalonians 3:2,6; 2 Timothy 1:4-5 in order.

Chart out Timothy's personal growth in the passages above by listing the tasks he was entrusted with and the terms Paul used when referring to him.

How can we best assure that those we mentor are making that kind of steady growth?

Is it possible that the protégé might exceed the abilities of his mentor? If so, how does that happen? What role does the mentor play in enabling him to do so?

WEEK EIGHT – GROUP DISCUSSION

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-2

Is there someone who might be your “true son (or daughter) in the faith”? Give that some thought and prayer.

Even as Timothy rises to meet the challenges he faces, Paul continues to encourage him to remain steadfast in this “good fight for the faith”. Is there someone who encouraged you in your “good fight”? How important was that encouragement to you at that time?

Realizing the difficulties in dealing with false doctrine, Paul sends a message to Timothy about Timothy’s own spiritual well-being. What is that message (1 Tim 1:18-19)?

Stop and think about the passage of time from Acts 16 to 2 Timothy 4. What does that say about the duration of a mentoring relationship?

Is it possible that the protégé might exceed the abilities of his mentor? If so, how does that happen? What role does the mentor play in enabling him to do so?

What truths stand out for you in this week’s study on the mentoring relationship between Paul and Timothy?

Week Nine



WEEK NINE – DAY ONE

Being fruitful in righteousness

Read Galatians 6:1; Psalm 51:12; James 3:13

WHAT should happen when a person falls into sin?

WHO should intervene at this point?

In what way should that person handle the situation? See Galatians 5:22–23.

WHAT are the dangers for the one who does intervene?

If there is danger of the one who does such restoration being pulled into sin themselves, how do they prevent this from happening?

Think about this idea of restoring a brother in gentleness. How does one go about being firm in requiring a change while still doing so in a gentle way?

WEEK NINE - DAY TWO

Read Galatians 6:2

Think of the picture of several hikers, each with a heavy pack, and the stronger hiker carrying a weaker hiker's pack until the weaker can once again carry his own pack.

WHAT types of burdens might the brother in Galatians 6:2 be carrying?

WHY should we take on this role of restoring a brother? (See Galatians 5:14 and John 13:34)

In very practical terms, **HOW** would we carry these physical, emotional, or spiritual burdens alongside them?

In **WHAT** way does carrying a brother's burden "fulfill the law of Christ"?

If we are restoring a brother based on Christ's law of love, does that help us to restore him with a gentle spirit?

WEEK NINE - DAY THREE

Read Galatians 6:3

This verse speaks about the one who intends to carry his weaker brother's load. Consider this statement from the Holman Study Bible: "Anyone who considers himself superior to a fallen believer is deceiving himself and risks being tempted also." Do you agree with that statement?

If someone feels that he is superior to his brother who has fallen into sin, can he truly restore that brother with a gentle spirit?

WHAT are the dangers of comparing our own load to our brother's load?

If a man feels that he can "in his own strength" overcome the same temptation as a failing brother, how likely is it that he could help that brother?

My paraphrase of a Matthew Henry comment on this verse: *If either of these men thinks lightly of his sin when it is committed, he will quickly learn that it is a heavy burden when he comes to reckon with God about that sin.* Stop and contemplate that one for a while.

WEEK NINE - DAY FOUR

Read Galatians 6:4

How much bragging would we do if we stopped comparing our work to our brother and started comparing it to the work of Christ?

Read Mark 14:3-9

Another case of a group of prideful people lashing out at someone who had done something that they deemed wrong. It seems that the legalists focus on their own strengths and on the weaknesses of others. **WHAT** did the woman do that caused others to scold her?

HOW did Jesus react to those who scolded her?

They claimed that she had done wrong, but what did Jesus say about what she'd done?

Back to our brother who has fallen into sin...if we are persuaded that we are somehow better than him, could it be possible that we might also need restoration?

WEEK NINE - DAY FIVE

Read Galatians 6:1-5

Think about this idea of restoring a brother in gentleness. How does one go about being firm in requiring a change while still doing so in a gentle way?

A question posed about these verses by John Piper on www.desiringgod.org:

“Why ... would Paul write to spiritual people to bear the burdens of others and then spend most of the paragraph warning the spiritual people against the danger of their own pride?”

What are your thoughts about this question?

What are the connections between Galatians 5:22 and 6:1?

So, must we be perfect to reach out to a brother who has fallen into sin and offer restoration? No, but maybe we can learn from our own mistakes and allow that to make us more gentle in the way we handle the task of restoring that brother.

WEEK NINE - GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Galatians 6:1-5

Think about this idea of restoring a brother in gentleness. How does one go about being firm in requiring a change while still doing so in a gentle way?

In WHAT way does carrying a brother's burden "fulfill the law of Christ"?

My paraphrase of a Matthew Henry comment on this verse: *If either of these men thinks lightly of his sin when it is committed, he will quickly learn that it is a heavy burden when he comes to reckon with God about that sin.* Stop and contemplate that one for a while.

Back to our brother who has fallen into sin...if we are persuaded that we are superior to him, maybe it is not him who needs restoration. How much bragging would we do if we stopped comparing our work to our brother and started comparing it to the work of Christ?

"Why ... would Paul write to spiritual people to bear the burdens of others and then spend most of the paragraph warning the spiritual people against the danger of their own pride?" - John Piper

Week Ten



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK TEN - DAY ONE

Being fruitful in marriage

Read Ephesians 5:22-32; Colossians 3:18

Paul compares the relationship between the husband and his wife to what?

How does the idea of the wife's submission to her husband compare to Christ and the church?

Is the wife's submission forced upon her, or is she expected to voluntarily submit to her husband?

Read Philippians 2:5-8

Would you say that the wife's submission is patterned after Jesus' example?

A lifestyle of submission to Christ distinguishes all Christians. Is the same true for the wife who submits to her husband?

Read Genesis 3:16

What is meant by "your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you"?

In what ways are Christian marriages different from many non-Christian marriages in respect to the wife's voluntary submission to her husband?

WEEK TEN - DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 5:22-32; Colossians 3:19

How does the idea of the husband's love for his wife compare to Christ and the church?

Is the husband forced into a role patterned after Christ's self-sacrificing love for the church? Or is he expected to voluntarily take on that role?

Read Titus 2:14

Would you agree that the husband's self-sacrificing love is patterned after Christ's sacrifice for the church?

What changed for man in Genesis 3:17-19 as a result of his choices?

Are Christian marriages different from non-Christian marriages in respect to the husband's voluntary self-sacrificial love for his wife?

WEEK TEN - DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 5:31; Genesis 2:22-24

What is the meaning of “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh”?

How is Genesis 2:24 related to the preceding verse?

Ephesians 5:28-30 says, “He who loves his wife, loves himself,” and “No one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it.” What can we take from this passage regarding the husband’s love for his wife?

If we take these verses together with Ephesians 5:31, we must ask the question, “If husband and wife are one flesh, why would he ever harm himself by harming his wife?”

With this in mind, should Christian marriages ever reach a point of physical harm to one another?

In week 4, we discussed a Christian’s intimate relationship to Christ. Is marriage in any way a picture of that intimacy between Christians and their Savior?

Given everything we’ve discussed this far, in what ways should our marriages be impacted by these Scriptures?

WEEK TEN - DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 5:32

What is this profound mystery Paul is talking about?

How is this verse related to 1 Corinthians 2:7-9?

All along we've seen that marriage is a picture of Christ's love for the church. 1 Corinthians 2:7-9 mentions God's hidden wisdom in a mystery. We see in these verses that this mystery is the Gospel. We were predestined before the ages to benefit from Christ's sacrifice. What no man could have conceived, God had prepared this for those who love Him. For more about this mystery, read Ephesians 3:1-7 telling us how Gentiles have been made coheirs, members of the same body.

Hopefully, Christian marriages represent that amazing mystery of the Lord of glory sacrificing Himself for His church.

As husband and wife, one flesh, make time to pray together regarding your marriage and how it reflects on Christ and the church.

WEEK TEN - DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 5:31-32

What is the final summary in this passage regarding marriage? (verse 32)

A couple of additional notes regarding marriage:

The mystery of Christ and the Church is the mystery of God bearing new life through intimate communion with man. You have the husband, Christ, becoming one with His wife in an act of covenant making, and we become born again. The marriage is then consummated and in the act of sowing spiritual seeds within us, new life is born around us. People see our passion for God and turn to Him. They hear the word of our testimony and learn how to overcome the enemy. They experience the life of God in us being expressed through unconditional love and sacrificial action, which kindles a flame for God within them.

-- Focus on the Family -

www.focusonthefamily.com

God created marriage to be a metaphor of Christ's relationship to Christ. Has sin confused the word so much that it is losing its purpose?

WEEK TEN - GROUP DISCUSSION

Ephesians 5:22-32

A lifestyle of submission to Christ distinguishes all Christians. Is the same true for the wife who submits to her husband?

Would you agree that the husband's self-sacrificing love is patterned after Christ's sacrifice for the church?

Are Christian marriages different from non-Christian marriages in respect to the husband's voluntary self-sacrificial love for his wife? How so?

In what ways are Christian marriages different from many non-Christian marriages in respect to the wife's voluntary submission to her husband?

In week 4, we discussed a Christian's intimate relationship to Christ. Is marriage in any way a picture of that intimacy between Christians and their Savior?

God created marriage to be a metaphor of Christ's relationship to the church. Has sin confused the word so much that it is losing its purpose?

Week Eleven



SMALL GROUP
ministry

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY ONE

Be fruitful in family life and parenting

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9

What instruction is given in verse 5?

When verse 6 says these words are to be “in your heart”, it is implied that they are not just deeply ingrained, but also put into action. How can we put these words into action with our entire family, spouse, and children?

We are told to repeat these words to our children. For those who are parents, what types of distractions prevent us from doing this well?

We are told to talk to our children about these words:

When we are sitting in the house
When we are walking on the road
When we lie down
When we get up

So is there a time when we would NOT be talking to them about these words?

How intentional are you about repeating God's Word to your children?

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY TWO

Read Deuteronomy 11:19-25

Compare these verses to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What additional instructions are included in today's passage?

What is meant by "as long as the heavens are above the earth"?

What commands are given in verse 22?

If the Israelites obey these commands in their homes and families, the nation will prosper. Would that continue to be the case in our day?

Do you think it is a coincidence that God says first that parents are to "imprint these words on your hearts and minds," then afterward says that parents should teach them to their children?

"There will not be good practices in the life, unless there be good thoughts, good affections, and good principles in the heart." - Matthew Henry commentary

This is one of those times that deserves some deliberate meditation on the subject of loving the Lord our God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind....then teaching those words to our children.

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 6:4

List the commands for fathers that are given in this verse.

Why are these commands directed specifically to fathers?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16

How does the idea of Scripture being profitable for teaching and training in righteousness apply to children?

Some commentators say that “teaching” implies getting the Word into our minds, while “training” implies learning how to put those words into action. What would you say the best method of teaching children to put God’s Word into action?

Read Colossians 1:28

WHAT better thing could we do for our children than teaching them God’s Word and in doing so present them as one who is mature in Christ?

Take a few minutes to stop and ask God for wisdom in how to best teach your Children God’s Word and demonstrate for them how to put it into action.

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY FOUR

Read Acts 16:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:14-15

Let's return to Timothy's early childhood in Acts 16:1-2. How old was Timothy when his grandmother began to teach him Scripture?

Paul continues that thought in 2 Timothy 3:14-15. What is the challenge given to Timothy in these verses?

As parents, what would you say are the benefits of starting to teach Scripture to your children at a very early age?

And based on your experience as parents, what are the disadvantages of waiting until children are older before starting to teach them Scripture?

What is the importance of repeating Scripture frequently to children? (hint: AWANA)

We should not assume that if we waited until later in a child's life to begin to teach them Scripture, it is too late to start. It is never too late to start.

Those of you who are parents, dedicate some time to focused prayer for your children, and for wisdom in teaching them God's Word.

WEEK ELEVEN - DAY FIVE

Lest we lose track of their place in God's heart, let's read a bit of what Jesus thinks of children? Read each of the verses below and write in your own words what is said about them.

Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Mark 10:13-16

Matthew 19:13-14

Luke 18:15-17

Luke 9:46-47

Are you picking up the pattern? Jesus is **VERY** fond of children.

WEEK ELEVEN - GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:19-25

When Deuteronomy 6:6 says these words are to be “in your heart”, it is implied that they are not just deeply ingrained, but also put into action. How can we put these words into action with our entire family, spouse, and children?

Do you think it is a coincidence that God says first that parents are to “imprint these words on your hearts and minds,” then afterward says that parents should teach them to their children?

Some commentators say that “teaching” implies getting the Word into our minds, while “training” implies learning how to put those words into action. What would you say the best method of teaching children to put God’s Word into action? Share your experiences with others in your group.

Take a few minutes to stop and ask God for wisdom in how to best teach your Children God’s Word and demonstrate for them how to put it into action.

