

Birthday Bash

RESONATE



Birthday Bash: Gifts

One of the highlights at a birthday party is opening gifts. People show appreciation for you by buying you a gift. It is a way of honoring your life. This illustration is a meager comparison to the gift that we bring to God in order to honor Him. This gift is worship.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-3, 29:1-2, 150:2, 71:14' 13:6, 32:11, 33:2, 2 Samuel 6:16

Worship is our gift to God. Even though worship should be a staple of a believer's life, often we overlook its importance in our spiritual life. Investigating worship helps us to understand the what, when, where, and how of it.

Worship is often associated with the music time in a church service. This is only a small part of worship for it far exceeds a few moments each week.

Psalm 34:1-2

1 I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

2 My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Verse 1-2: Worship is an activity that goes beyond once a week. Instead, it is to be a part of our daily lives. If worship extends beyond music at a service, what is worship?

Worship is giving worth to God. The praise of Him involves recognizing His character and action.

Psalm 29:1-2

1 Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

Psalm 150:2

2 Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Verse 1-2, 2: Every day we are to give praise to God. In order to worship Him, we must be intent on seeking reasons to praise the Lord. He is worthy to be honored and we need to constantly seek out why this is true. We have the opportunity to explore the mystery of God and praise Him for what we discover.

The more we seek ways to worship our Lord, the more we will find reasons to worship Him.



Psalm 71:14

14 But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.

Verse 14: Our praise increases as we discover more about God. This worship is displayed in various ways.

Psalm 13:6

6 I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.

Psalm 32:11

11 Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Psalm 33:2

2 Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Psalm 34:3

3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.

2 Samuel 6:16

16 As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

What is worship? Ascribing worth to God based on His character and actions. When should we worship? Daily Where can worship take place? Anywhere How do we worship? Songs, Instruments, Dance, Words, Actions, Shouting, All Alone, In a crowd, and so much more!

Worship connects us to God. He is worthy of honor and we are allowed the honor of honoring Him!



DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Spend time worshipping God.

How do you worship God throughout the day?

How could you learn how to worship God even more?

In what way do you usually worship God?

Why should we worship God?

How is worship beneficial to you?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Revelation 1:9-18, 4

I want you to picture Jesus. Right now, get a picture of Him in your mind. Does that picture want you to fall down like you were dead? Then maybe you do not have the right picture.

Revelation 1:9-18

9I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Verse 9-18: Our worship of Jesus Christ our Lord is often weak because our idea of Him is weak as well. We have grown up with pictures of an anorexic blue-eyed man who is supposed to be our Savior. How do we experience powerful worship to someone who seems so fragile? We must have a right understanding of Jesus in order to praise Him as He deserves.

Revelation 4

1After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the

throne. 4Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty- four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." 9Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Verse 1-11: When we truly understand the Object of our worship, we will no longer feel compelled to worship. The living creatures could not be restrained in proclaiming the holiness of God. The twenty four elders continually fell before Jesus and worshipped Him. They threw their crowns at His feet, in reverence to Him. They were acknowledging the fact that they do not deserve honor but the Lord alone deserves to be crowned.

Picture the scene created in Revelation 4. Imagine the living creatures and the twenty four elders. Look at their worship of the One seated on the throne of heaven. He has “the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.”

After you have reflected on this scene I want you to now picture a typical Sunday morning at a church service. See that guy over there yawning. There is a lady looking intently at what others are wearing. Friends are talking to one another. One person is writing a to-do list for the week. Another is thinking about last night’s game.

Do these two scenes look anything alike?

If Jesus Christ stepped down into our service and we saw Him in all His glory, we would fall down like dead people. If we truly understood Who we are worshipping, all the other petty things that preoccupy us would fade away. Our services would be alive with people, who like the twenty four elders, cannot contain their heart’s desire to worship.



DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Confess any lack of interest in worship. Ask the Lord to show you more about Himself so that you will have a greater desire to praise Him.

If someone watched your church service, how would he describe it?

How is knowledge of the Lord connected with the worship of Him?

What keeps people from fervent worship?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Job 1, 2:1-10; Romans 8:28-30, 38-39

Worship is not a state of life but a state of mind. In other words, it does not depend upon our circumstances but on our will. We choose to worship. A classic example of this is found in the book of Job.

Job 1

1In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2He had seven sons and three daughters, 3and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

6One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. 7The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

8Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

9"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

12The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

13One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 14a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

16While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has

escaped to tell you!"

17While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

18While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 19when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

20At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

22In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Everything you love, everything you have, everything you worked for is gone in one day. Imagine the loss. Yet, in the midst of heart break, Job responded with praise. His example has helped many through the centuries. God is worthy of worship despite the state of our children, the state of our possessions, or even the state of our health.

Job 2:1-10

1On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. 2And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

3Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

4"Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

6The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

7So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. 8Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

9His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.



Verse 1-10: With painful sores all over his body, Job continues to worship. His entire life is summed up in verse ten. Read it again. (By the way, I am referring to the latter half of the verse, not the part when he calls his wife foolish. I know some of you are ready to make that your life verse!) Job's life's statement would be "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

This one sentence alone should be a part of every believer's life. We need to understand that God is God and we are not. Job was able to praise the Lord in the good or bad times because he accepted the fact that there was One Almighty God and it wasn't a guy named "Job".

Worship springs forth from true understanding of our relationship with God. When I realize who I am and then I think of who God is, I am drawn to worship. The Creator chose to create you and me. The Omniscient God chose to love me despite my failures in life. The King of the universe humbled Himself to die on a cross for us. I am a wretch (and so are you) yet the Lord of heaven and earth has made us His children. When I accept that God is God and I am not, then I am able to worship Him whatever may come my way.

Romans 8:28-30

28And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Verse 28-30: If we truly believe that God is in control of the universe, then we can rest assured that He is watching over our lives. Despite our circumstances, we can trust that He has allowed the situations to come into our lives. He will work the situation for good. What is the good? These circumstances are going to conform us into the likeness of Christ. We can accept whatever comes into our lives for we know that it is filtered through the hand of God. Like Job, nothing can come our way without the permission from the Lord. Job, confident of this truth, could worship in the middle of so much loss. For he knew what he could never lose: the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39

38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Verse 38-39: Worship the Lord, in good or difficult times, for He is still in control of the universe. The One who is seated on the throne of heaven loves you and that will never change. Trust Him. Worship Him.



DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Meditate on Romans 8:28-29. Spend time in prayer.

In what way do you usually respond to difficult circumstances?

What can you learn from the life of Job when facing hardships?

How will understanding that God allows hardships into our lives to conform us in the image of Christ help you in the future?

Give an example of someone who has praised God in the midst of difficult times.



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: 2 Samuel 24:4-25

If I was to give you a gift, it would cost me something. A gift costs us money to purchase and it also costs us time. It takes time to search for the right gift to give to someone. Since worship is our gift to God, it, too, costs us something to give it.

David was a man who understood the truth of the cost of worship. It was a lesson that he thankfully learned before he encountered a terrible trial. The trial was the result of his sin. He had decided to take a census of his fighting men. Thus, he was placing the victory of his battles in the hands of men instead of God. Even though he was advised not to take this census, he overruled the godly advice and demanded it to be taken.

2 Samuel 24:4-10

4The king's word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enroll the fighting men of Israel.

5After crossing the Jordan, they camped near Aroer, south of the town in the gorge, and then went through Gad and on to Jazer. 6They went to Gilead and the region of Tahtim Hodshi, and on to Dan Jaan and around toward Sidon. 7Then they went toward the fortress of Tyre and all the towns of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went on to Beersheba in the Negev of Judah.

8After they had gone through the entire land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

9Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.

10David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."

Verse 4-10: The sin that David committed was to be punished. He was to choose his own punishment. Sadly, his sin was to affect the entire nation.



2 Samuel 24:11-17

11Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: 12"Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.' "

13So Gad went to David and said to him, "Shall there come upon you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me."

14David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

15So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. 16When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

17When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, "I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family."

Verse 11-17: Many people died due to the sin of David. Sin devastates those around us. Worship, however, changes the people around us.

2 Samuel 24:18-24

18On that day Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad. 20When Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

21Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" "To buy your threshing floor," David answered, "so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped."

22Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. 23O king, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you."

24But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing

floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.



Verse 18-25: David's worship stopped the plague. But the only worship that God would have accepted is one that cost David something. If he had accepted all of Araunah's things for the sacrifice, then worship would have never happened. It would have been a staged ritual. But this king had the wisdom to know what true worship is.

On a daily basis, we are faced with the opportunity to worship. It costs us. Worship may cost our time, our resources, our energy, and even our dignity.

2 Samuel 24:25

25David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

Verse 25: The king of all of Israel builds an altar. This was a humble act. Before all of his men and before Araunah, David was admitting his sin. Before people who usually served him, David was laboring to build the altar and offer sacrifices upon it.

David paid a price physically, emotionally, and spiritually to worship. Worship costs us. However, like anything of value, there is a benefit to worship. David saw the benefit derived from worship: a plague was stopped. Our worship, too, will prove itself valuable not only to our lives but also to the lives around us. The benefits much outweigh the cost, but we need to know that there is a cost.



DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to understand the cost of worship in your life. Plead that He help you make the necessary sacrifices to become more of a man or woman after God's own heart.

What has worshipped cost you?

How does the cost of worship make it more meaningful in our lives?

What benefits have you or your family experienced by your choice to worship God?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 12:8-9, 4:4-5; Leviticus 17:11; 1 Peter 1:18- 21; Revelation 5:11-14

Worship in itself does not have to be an elaborate event. Some people believe that the music has to be just right, room temperature needs to be correct, the lighting must be just so on the choir director, the outfits should look good, and then all of these elements combined can create worship. But the Scripture does not support these absurdities. Worship is just a person's heart toward God.

Genesis 12:8-9

8From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. 9Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Verse 8-9: On his journey, Abram stopped to worship God. He set up an altar, probably built from wood and rocks in the area. Then, he just called upon the name of the Lord. Abraham was not a "trained minister". He just was a child of God. He did not have an elaborate ritual. He just built an altar and prayed.

An altar served a specific purpose. It was elevated above the ground so that an animal sacrifice could be easily made. In fact the word altar means, "a place of slaughter or sacrifice." (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary). Abraham would have made a sacrifice upon the altar and then worshipped God.

The history of an altar sacrifice stems back to Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 4:4-5

4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Verse 4-5: Abel's offering was accepted because it involved a blood sacrifice. Worship is based on a blood sacrifice. The blood represented atonement of sins. We need to be cleansed from our sin so that we can approach a holy God. The washing away of sin leads to worship. We praise the Lord who has taken away our guilt. He has saved us from our evil ways.



Leviticus 17:11

11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

But what about today? You do not see us building a stone altar and sacrificing an animal in the middle of the church service. Yet, we know from Scripture that our approach to God is based on a blood sacrifice. We can approach God based on the blood of Jesus. He is the Lamb. Abraham and Abel, along with others, sacrificed animals as a symbol of the Sacrifice to come. The animals' blood did not atone their sins, but it was an act of faith for the blood of Jesus that could wash them clean.

1 Peter 1:18-21

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Verse 18-21: Jesus is the Lamb. He was sacrificed on an elevated place, the hill called Calvary. The wood for the altar was the cross to which He was nailed. The blood that flowed from His veins was of the Son of God. This is the altar that we come to in order to worship.

If you have believed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, then His blood has cleansed you from your sins. His sacrifice has given you the ability to have a relationship with a Holy God. We can approach the Lord in worship at any time, and at any place, because the altar is permanent. This altar changes our lives. This altar gives us everlasting life. This altar gives us eternal reasons to worship Him forever.

Revelation 5:11-14

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.



DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Think about the Sacrificial Lamb. Let these thoughts lead you to worship.

How does worship change when we always approach it through the sacrifice of Christ?

Write down some of the reasons to worship based upon the fact that Jesus laid down His life for you.

Birthday Bash

RESONATE



Birthday Bash: Invitations

In preparing for a party, one must send out invitations so friends are aware of the time and place of the occasion. You have to make an intentional effort to get the word out about your celebration. Food, drinks, music, and games will not be enough to bring people to your house. They must be aware of the opportunity. Are we making an intentional effort to invite people to Christ?

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Revelation 19:6-9; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:13-15

Have you ever looked forward to a special event? Did you count down the days until it happened? Time is counting down as well. All of time looks forward to one moment. It will be the event of the ages. People from every tribe and nation will be in attendance. It will be a glorious.

Revelation 19:6-9

6Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) 9Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Verse 6-9: To be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb is the ultimate blessing; it means that you will spend eternity in heaven. The invitations to this event are unique to every person. The King, Jesus Christ, decides who to invite yet He allows people to be the deliverer of the invitations. If you are a believer in Christ, then someone handed you an invitation to the marriage supper. Now, you are to be intentional in delivering invitations yourself.

Matthew 28:18-20

18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Verse 18-20: You are to "go" and hand the invitation of eternal life to others. Does this make you bear the responsibility of people's eternal destination? No. You are like the postman. He only delivers the letter come rain, snow, or shine. The person who receives the letter has the responsibility to choose whether to accept the invitation or not. But if the invitation is never given, how can the person deny or accept it?



Romans 10:13-15

13for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Verse 13-15: The invitations need to be passed out. The marriage supper of the Lamb will take place. People will only know about it if you let people know how to get there.



DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Thank the Lord for the person or people in your life who were instrumental in handing you the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

How does it feel that God has chosen you to pass out invitations for the marriage of the Lamb?

What keeps us from passing out the invitation to others?

Why do you think God chose us to give out invitations for eternity?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 4:35-38

The invitations we are to extend are of a spiritual matter. In order to see the importance of them we must see life with an eternal viewpoint.

John 4:35

35Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Verse 35: You can look around at this world and see it for it is. Or you can look beyond the present and see the eternal. Jesus wanted us to see people with the viewpoint of their eternal destiny. People are all around us in need of hearing the gospel message. But we must decide to do the work.

John 4:36

36Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

Verse 36: True joy is experienced by those who see the salvation of people. Often we believe that joy is found in circumstances or vacations or material possessions. However, this goes against the Word of God. Joy is felt by those who labor in order to bring others to Christ.

John 4:37

37Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true.

There are many ways to reach people for Christ. Not everyone plays the same role. Some sow the gospel while others reap. But the fact is that everyone has a part to play. God has created each one of us with our own individual personalities. In our own way, we can be a part of leading others to Christ.

John 4:38

38I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Verse 38: Much labor has taken place over the years. Others have labored. Old Testament prophets labored. Disciples labored. Believers through the centuries have labored. Many have worked and continue to work all over the world. But God placed you here at this time in history. Are you laboring faithfully for Him? The harvest is ready. What are you doing to bring the harvest in?



DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Ask God to help you be a part of the work of the harvest.

How can we view people with an eternal perspective?

When have you experienced the joy of experiencing someone coming to salvation?

How are you laboring on behalf of the harvest?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 6:18-22

Billy Graham is known throughout the world as someone who has shared the gospel faithfully to millions of people. Two thousand years before Graham, there was an evangelist named Paul. He, too, had a similar ministry to bring people to Christ. Paul, the foremost evangelist of all time, recognized the role that other believers played in his ministry.

Ephesians 6:18-20

18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

19Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Verse 18-20: Paul wanted others to pray for him. He knew that it was vital for others to lift him up in prayer in order that Paul could witness to others. Prayer is powerful. It is where the natural meets the supernatural. The enemy of our souls wants to keep people in spiritual darkness. He does not want the Light of the world invading their souls. But we can fight him through prayer. Do you pray for people who do not know Christ? Do you pray for people who present the gospel to others? Prayer is beyond a quick “bless him, Lord” but involves knowing the details of the lives of others.

Ephesians 6:21-22

21Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

Verse 21-22: Paul wanted Tychicus to share the details of his life with the people of Ephesus. He wanted people to pray for him in all aspects of his life. We must be willing to pray for others in a specific manner. These were not random people but friends of Paul. He had lived among these people for three years. Now he was writing back to them requesting their prayers.

Reaching others with the gospel is not done alone. Prayers of others are needed. Ask others to pray for you. Make every effort to pray for others.



DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Spend time in prayer for the people who share the gospel.

Why is prayer vital in leading people to Christ?

Why would praying for others in detail be important?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Jonah 1:1-3, 3:1-10; Matthew 5:44; 1John 1:3; Galatians 1:10

To extend the invitation of Christ, we must be willing to step outside of our comfort zone. A classic example of someone who did this is Jonah.

Jonah 1:1-2

1The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Verse 1-2: Jonah was asked to go to his sworn enemies on behalf of God. Have you ever disliked someone? Are your thoughts usually "Lord, let me be a witness to that person who hates me?" or are your thoughts more like this: "Strike my enemy, Lord!" If we do try to think nice thoughts, it involves someone else reaching out to our enemy. We do not want to let down our guard long enough to extend the invitation of Christ. That is exactly how Jonah felt.

Jonah 1:3

3But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Verse 3: Jonah went the opposite way from Nineveh. Tarshish was the other way. I have done the same thing. I have avoided people that I did not get along with. If I saw them coming down the hall, I would choose to go another way. I may not have sailed in the opposite direction but my heart was like Jonah's. I stayed away from the "enemies" instead of reaching out to them. God convicted me, just as He did Jonah. Thankfully, I did not experience a fierce storm at sea, or being thrown overboard, or having to be in the belly of a great fish for three days and nights. After everything Jonah went through, he repented and then received the grace of God.

Jonah 3:1-10

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. 4 On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." 5 The Ninevites

believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Verse 1-10: Jonah, who was way outside of his comfort zone, saw an entire city repent before God. What comfort zone do you need to step out of? Do you need to reach out to someone whom you do not like?

Matthew 5:44

44But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Maybe your comfort zone is not necessarily other people, but your fear. You may not think you are equipped to tell others about Christ. Yet, all we need to do is to tell others what we have experienced in Jesus.

1 John 1:3

3We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 3: What do you know about Jesus? Share that with others. You do not need a seminary degree to tell others what Jesus means to you.

Maybe your comfort zone is not about what to say but instead how people will respond. Are you concerned that people will laugh at you, ignore you, exclude you, or hurt you? Others have felt the weight of this burden as well. But you must choose who to live for.

Galatians 1:10

10Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Verse 10: We need to break out of our comfort zones so that we can see the people in this city turn to Christ.



DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Ask God to help you break out of your comfort zone into the freedom of living for Christ.

Name some other comfort zones that prevent us from telling people about Jesus.

How does your “comfort zone” keep you from reaching others for Christ?

How would your life be different if you had no “comfort zones”?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:20-27

I am going to write something that seems obvious: to extend the invitation of Christ to others, you must know people who are not Christians. The paradox in the Christian community is that we know we are to tell others about Jesus yet more often than not, everyone we know are Christians as well.

The church needs to have fellowship with one another. However, Christians are to actively pursue relationships with nonbelievers in order to be in a place to share the gospel with Christ. This involves work on our part.

1 Corinthians 9:20-22

20To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

Verse 20-22: Paul wrote the previous verses. He witnessed to both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). He made an effort to meet them, build a relationship with them, and present Christ to them. He understood their backgrounds (the Jews had the Law while the Gentiles did not). His main purpose was to reach them for Christ. He made an effort with all people, knowing that only some would be saved.

With whom are you making an effort? Is there anyone in your circle of influence who does not know Christ? How are you building a relationship with that person? If you only know other Christians, then how can you carry out the call of God to tell the world about Jesus? It is time for us to evaluate our actions.

1 Corinthians 9:23-27

23I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

24Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

25Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.



Verse 23-27: Are you living your life for the sake of the gospel? In order to reach others for Christ, we must have discipline on our part. An athlete trains for the game so that he might win. This requires strenuous effort on his part. We are to strain as well. We must make intentional effort to live for Christ. The athlete makes many sacrifices in order to be in physical shape. He may turn down fun things to do in order to spend time training. As believers, we will make sacrifices to reach others for Christ. We may have to give up our pleasures and time for others. An athlete has a plan for how to train for the game. We are in need of a plan of how to reach someone with the good news of Jesus. This plan would include how and when to spend time with someone who does not know Jesus. If you do not know an unbeliever, the plan needs to begin with how to meet someone who needs Jesus in his or her life.



DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the Lord to help you to live for the gospel of Christ.

Name the unbelievers that you know.

If you do not know any unbelievers, write a plan on how to meet people who need the gospel.

How can you build a relationship with the people you named?

What sacrifices need to be made in order to reach others for Christ?

Who will you ask to pray for you as you work for the gospel of Christ?

BIBLE STUDY

Birthday Bash

RESONATE



Birthday Bash: Make a Wish

At most birthday parties, there is a moment when everyone gathers around the cake. Friends, family, neighbors come together to watch the guest of honor make a wish and blow out the candles. As we celebrate the church's "birthday", we have a wish to make as well. We wish for more people to come together to celebrate the church of Christ!

[DAY 1](#) / [DAY 2](#) / [DAY 3](#) / [DAY 4](#) / [DAY 5](#)



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 2:7, 2:15-17; 3:8-10, 3:21, Ecclesiastes 12:13; 1 John 4:7-12

Next time you blow out the candles to celebrate another year of life, remember that God blew life into the first person.

Genesis 2:7

7 the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Verse 7: Life was breathed into people by God Himself. He made dirt into something alive. He formed us for the purpose of relationship. He life of people was different from plants, animals, water, land, or light. We were created to know God and live for Him.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Verse 13: To fear God does not mean to be so afraid of Him that you hide from Him. Adam made this mistake after he and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden food.

Genesis 3:8-10

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Verse 8-10: Adam did not understand his relationship with God. Because he had sinned, he felt that he should run from God. He forgot that God created him for a relationship, not for rules. (Of course we cannot be too hard on Adam since he and Eve were the first two to ever sin. Of course, they messed it up for the rest of us!) The rules that God gave Adam were to protect their relationship. What rule was Adam supposed to follow?



Genesis 2:15-17

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Verse 15-17: When Adam broke the rules, He believed that the relationship was broken as well. If the relationship had depended solely on him, it might have been over. However, Adam was in a relationship with the God who created relationships. While Adam and Eve hid, God came looking for them. He was more concerned about the people than the rules.

Does this mean it does not matter if I break commands? No! It just means that when the rules are broken, the relationship is not over. However, there is a price to sin.

Genesis 3:21

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Verse 21: This is the first blood shed in the Bible. To make a garment of skins, God would have had to have killed animals. The shedding of blood led to the covering of Adam and Eve's sin. This, of course, was symbolic of the ultimate shedding of blood by Christ to cover our sin.

God, who breathed life into you, wants a relationship with you. He does not overlook broken rules but instead will show mercy by the blood of Christ.

God is the model of relationships that we must follow. As we come into contact with others, we are going to break rules, hurt feelings, cause hardships, and so much more. When we are on the receiving end of people sinning against us, remember to be like our Lord. We need to look at others through the cross of Christ. The blood that was shed for us was shed for the person who hurt us as well. We must show mercy to others. In a culture that throws away relationships, we must make an effort to foster ours.

1 John 4:7-12

7Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.



DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Confess any tendency you have to break off relationships with family or friends instead of showing mercy.

What did it cost God in order to have a relationship with us?

Who needs you to show mercy instead of anger?

What would it cost you to show mercy?

In what ways do relationships require effort?

When is it easy to throw away a relationship?

How do we become people who like God shows love to others?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 2:23-25, 15:15; Matthew 16:13-16; 1 Peter 2:12

There are levels to our relationships. There are some people with whom we talk sports or weather while others hear our deepest concerns. Christ Himself showed this same hierarchy in relationship.

John 2:23-25

23Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

Verse 23-25: The crowds claimed a relationship with Jesus but it was not authentic. Jesus recognized that the people were just using Him for His miraculous powers. The Lord knew that He needed to have boundaries with these people.

There are going to be people in our lives who try to use us for an assortment of things. It is alright to set a limit with these people. Jesus is our example for this. The boundaries, however, were in the fact that Jesus was willing to help but not willing to trust them. We can help others but we are not required to trust them. For example, I can help someone by buying groceries that are needed. But I do not have to trust them with money for I may not trust how it will be spent.

While some relationships have a distance to them, there are others which are much closer.

John 15:15

15I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Verse 15: Jesus had friends while He was on earth. He was not far removed from His disciples. He did not look down on them or have an attitude of superiority. He did not even remind them that He was Lord and they were not. In fact, it was in the context of relationship that they came to know Him as Lord. He never told them. Jesus allowed them to discover it on their own.



Matthew 16:13-16

13When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Verse 13-16: Through the context of a relationship, these twelve men came to know Jesus. The Lord did not tell them right away, "I am the Son of God. Worship me." Instead, He lived His life in front of them and they could not help but discover who He is.

The same is true for our relationships. We are to allow Jesus to live His life through us in our day to day contact with people. Through His life in us, they will discover who the Lord is. Some will accept Him and others will not, but everyone will know Who we are in a relationship with.

Our relationship with Jesus flows into our relationship with others. This is the concept of evangelism. It does not have to be a man preaching to a crowd. It can be people at work, at school, at community events building relationships with others. Through these friendships, opportunities to showcase the life of Christ become available.

1 Peter 2:12

12Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Verse 1-12: Our relationship could lead to someone coming to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. We need to have wisdom in our relationship, when and where to have boundaries. But no matter how close or distant we are to others, we must live out the live for Christ in all of our relationships. life of Christ. We never know when the person will be eternal changed by our choice to



DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord for His help to see all your relationships as an opportunity to showcase Christ.

Why is it important to understand that boundaries are alright to have in our relationships?

How can our relationships lead others to faith in the Lord Jesus?

How can you showcase Jesus in the relationships you have now?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:9-18; Acts 16:1-5; Titus 2:1-5

I have heard that the loneliest job is to be a preacher. I think this statement reflects a false view of what a preacher should be. Often he will feel like he cannot be real before the people because he will be ostracized for being less than “spiritual”. Sadly, many people in the congregation support this view because they expect a minister to be “above” them and without reproach. This is all false. Preachers are human and are in need of relationships. Paul, the preacher of preachers, knew the importance of this. Read the words to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:9-13, 19-22

9Do your best to come to me quickly, 10for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 12I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

19Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. 20Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. 21Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

22The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Verse 9-13, 19-22: These are just a few names of people that Paul knew and love. This minister had true friends. Some of his friends, like Demas, broke his heart. Other relationships were an encouragement to him. In this letter to Timothy, Paul is honest. He lets him know what hurts and he lets him know what he needs. He was close enough to be transparent.

2 Timothy 4:14-18

14Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

16At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. 17But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. 18The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack

and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Verse 14-18: Do you have friends with whom you can share both good and difficult times? This friendship was built over years. The development of this relationship was the preacher becoming a mentor.

Acts 16:1-5

1He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. 2The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Verse 1-5: Timothy was a young man. Paul was a seasoned missionary. Yet, Paul asked Timothy to join him. He saw in Timothy a man to carry on his work after he was gone. He mentored this young man. This took time and energy. He invested his life into this man.

The art of mentoring is desperately lost in this culture. In days gone by, every profession had a time of mentoring. You taught a skill to someone. Often that person would be mentored for years. Today, colleges have replaced mentoring. Sadly, the art of mentoring has been lost in churches as well. Yet, by God's Word, we are called to mentor others.

Titus 2:1-5

1You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. 2Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

3Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Verse 1-5: Titus was to teach men and women how to live a godly life. In turn, they could teach others. Mentoring is choosing to develop a focused relationship that teaches someone else the ways of God. This is not a lecture format but showing him what a spiritual life looks like by allowing him to observe your life in a day to day context. It is allowing this person access into your life, the good and bad, so he or she can learn how to live for God as well.



DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to show you a person to whom you could mentor. Or if you feel that you need to learn more yourself, ask the Lord who to ask to be your mentor.

How would mentoring a new believer help mature him in Christ?

How is Sunday morning preaching different from mentoring?

How does a mentoring relationship differ from other relationships?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8; Genesis 1:18, 21-25; 1 John 3:1, Ephesians 6:4

I believe that one of the most difficult contexts for being a witness of Christ is with family. We have been hurt by family members and some of us harbor the pain for years. Or, we recall how we treated our family in times past and they are unwilling to accept the fact that we have changed. I know that for me personally, I have many family members who are not Christians. They have mocked things I have said and done. They get mad for what I believe. I know that I struggle with reaching out to them for the sake of Christ. Yet, we are called to be an example of our Lord in our families, whether they accept it or not.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

12To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Verse 12-16: These verses deal specifically with husband and wives. We are to live with unbelievers and be an example to them. The way we showcase Christ in our relationships could bring our spouse to repentance. But this goes beyond just married couples. Other family members also need to experience our faith working its way into our relationships.

1 Timothy 5:3-4

3Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. 4But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

Verse 3-4: The church was taking care of widows. Sadly, some of the widows on the list had children and grandchildren who could care for them. But for whatever reason, the family was



ignoring the need of a family member. We do not know the reason behind this neglect but we know what these people were told to do they were commanded “to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family...”

Some of us today may need to hear this same lesson. I do not know your family or what you have experienced. But I know by God’s Word that we are called to care for those in our family. Our actions may lead them to Christ. But even if it doesn’t, our actions will please God.

But if we choose to not provide for our families, we are hindering the witness of Christ to those around us.

1 Timothy 5:8

8If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Verse 8: As believers, when we do not live a life in line with Jesus Christ, we are worse than someone who is an unbeliever. An unbeliever is not going to act within God’s law because they do not have the Spirit with them. But since we do have the Spirit within us, to not act in accordance with the Spirit is to act as if we do not know Him. For the Spirit, families are extremely important. God Himself created the family.

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, ' for she was taken out of man."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Verse 25: Focus again on verse 25, Adam and Eve were called man and wife. This was the beginning of family life. The family institution was created by God and is used in Scripture to symbolize the family of God.



1 John 3:1

1How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Verse 1: The physical father of creation was Adam. The spiritual Father of creation is God. Adam had physical children. God has spiritual children. The physical family symbolizes the spiritual family. As believers, when we do not treat our family as God intended, we are destroying the symbolism God intended in the family. This causes our witness in our family to be non-existent. Fathers are especially warned about this.

Ephesians 6:4

4Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Verse 4: Parents have the honor to be the “physical presence” of God in the family. Children get their ideas about what God is like from their parents, especially from the father. Our actions and attitudes either draw our children closer to God or could cause them to run away from Him.

Godly relationships are vital within the family. We are called to be a witness to our relatives. Would our family members say that we point them to God or away from Him?



DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Confess any sin that you have committed against your family. Ask God to help you deal with any resentment within you.

What family ties need to be strengthened by you?

How does it feel to know that you are called to be a witness to your family?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:11-15; Jude 23; Romans 10:1; Acts 17:1-4

All of our relationships have eternal value. Each person in our life whether family, friends, or acquaintances may spend eternity with us in heaven. To know the eternal destination of someone can give us comfort.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Verse 13-18: When a loved one departs from earth, we can have hope of his resurrection from the dead. This brings comfort to our sorrow. We know that the relationship has not ended but will continue onto eternity.

However, when we know that someone does not know Christ as Savior and Lord, we feel grief over the eternal separation that has taken place.

Revelation 20:11-15

11Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.



Verse 11-15: We usually avoid discussing the judgment of those who do not accept Jesus Christ. We do not mind talking about heaven. That feels nice. But to ignore the reality of hell keeps us from our mission: to witness to others so they may choose eternal life instead of eternal death.

Jude 23

23snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Verse 23: We need to be aware of the future so that we can live a life today that makes a difference. We must desire for those around us to come to know Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul had this passion for his people, the Jews.

Romans 10:1

1Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Verse 1: His zeal was for an entire nation. This zeal was not only in his heart but was enacted upon in every city he entered.

Acts 17:1-4

1When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. 4Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

Verse 1: A synagogue is a Jewish house of worship. Paul would always proclaim to his people the good news of Jesus. He knew that his people were lost and he did all he could to reach them with the message of Christ. We, too, need to be aware of the spiritual lives of the people around us. We must probe to find out who is a believer and who is not. For those who are not Christians, we must share the message of salvation. That way, our relationships can truly last forever.



DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Pray for unbelievers whom you know. Ask God to empower you to share the gospel with them.

In your circle of influence, do you know who is a believer and who is not?

How often do you discuss spiritual topics with those you know?

Have you ever considered that God led you to an unbeliever for the sole purpose of presenting the gospel to that person? What are your thoughts on that idea?

How can we begin to think of relationships from an eternal standpoint?

BIBLE STUDY

Birthday Bash

RESONATE



Birthday Bash: Party Favors

When leaving a birthday party, the host of the party will give you party favors. It is a bag of trinkets that express a “thank you” for coming to celebrate. The staff of church has some party favors as well. We invite you to come each week to celebrate our God. But we never want you to leave the service empty handed. Our job is to make sure of that!

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-26

There is no hierarchy in a church. Often we look up as pastors as “better than” us. This simply is not true. However, there are different functions of the people who make up the church. These roles first and foremost should be based upon unity.

Ephesians 4:4-6

4There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Verse 4-6: In the Lord, we are one. We may have different gifts, talents, personalities, or experiences. But these differences are brought together in Christ. Often our differences lead to division. But in the Lord, our differences actually should bond us.

1 Corinthians 12:4-14

4There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

12The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Verse 4-14: Our differences are unifying. Collectively, we are the body of Christ. I alone do not make up the body of Christ. Instead, I am one small part of the whole. I need the other parts, or people, in order to see the totality of Christ on earth. Thus, I have an incomplete picture of the body without others. I need other believers in my life.



1 Corinthians 12:21-26

21The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Verse 21-26: We need one another. We need the differences in one another. All the parts make up the body of Christ. Just as we would not cut off our hand because we dislike it, we cannot cut out other members of the body of Christ. We are one in Christ.

The understanding of unity is vital before discussing the roles of the body. The different functions of people in the body of Christ are not to be lorded over one another. Instead their purpose is to serve one another.

Mark 10:42-45

42Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Verse 42-45: There is no hierarchy in church, only service. The way we serve one another may be different, but that is the way Jesus arranged the body. As we discuss the role the church staff plays in the body, remember, we are all united in Christ. Our role of service may just look different from yours. But we all need one another.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

14Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

Verse 14-19: We are all part of the body. We will be discussing the staff's role in the body and how we should be serving you.



DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Praise God for the body of Christ. Thank Him for allowing you to be a part of it.

How does the analogy of a “body” help you to understand the church?

Why should differences actually unite us instead of divide us?

What is the danger of placing people in a hierarchy?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12; 2:10; 1 Corinthians 14:3

The body of Christ has many parts. These parts are arranged by Jesus Himself.

Ephesians 4:7-8

7But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

Verse 7-8: Jesus has given everyone a gift. However, there is a difference in the gifts. He decides who will get what gift or gifts. We need to understand that God chooses, not us. To long for a gift that is not ours, will lead to us not living out our purpose on earth. But to understand our giftedness, frees us to live out God's will for our lives.

Ephesians 2:10

10For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Verse 10: Each of us was made to perform certain good works through the use of our gifts. In the book of Ephesians a few of the gifts are specified. These gifts are designed by God to build up the church in a unique way.

Ephesians 4:11

11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

Verse 11: I stated yesterday that there is no hierarchy in the church. However, there are different responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities have authority attached to them. But this authority is specified.

Ephesians 4:12

12to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Verse 12: Those responsible in leading a church should be preparing "God's people for works of service." In other words, their good works are too lead the rest of the body to perform the good works that God prepared for them to do.



But how do they motivate people toward these good works? The overriding responsibility of church leadership is to build up the body toward unity in faith and knowledge. This leads to maturity.

One of the ways that they lead the church to growth is through the proclamation of the Word.

1 Corinthians 14:3

3But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

Verse 3: Often people think “prophesy” means telling the future. In previous days, some of the words of the Lord involved telling people what would take place in the future. But prophesy as a whole involves speaking the words of the Lord. When the Word of God is taught, prophesy is taking place. A responsibility of the church staff is to ensure that the Word of God is being proclaimed.

When the body of Christ gathers together, the Word of God should be presented. The people presenting the Word should do so in a manner that will edify the body, encouraging them to grow in Christ. The Word should never be presented in a left-over fashion. I knew a minister who would rehash sermons that he had used at previous churches. He was not taking time to give the people a fresh Word. He was failing to share the Word that this specific group of people needed to hear. The needs of one congregation are not the same as another. I knew another minister who would throw something together at the last minute because he was too busy the rest of the week. He was failing to understand the importance of his role in presenting the Word of God. For as a church staff, we are called to “prepare God’s people for works of service.” If the minister is not prepared to share the Word of God, how can the people be prepared to live the Word of God?

It is important for you to understand the calling of those who proclaim the Word. If you are at a church that does not value the Word, get out of it. That means that the church staff is failing in their calling, which is a sin against God. You cannot be led by someone who is not being led of God. Do not be afraid to evaluate the leaders of your church. They are not going to be perfect. However, they must be striving toward living out their calling. Only then you can grow from their teaching.



DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the staff of your church. Ask the Lord to help them to complete the good works that He has set before them to do.

How have some church leaders ignored the calling of God to preach the Word?

Why is it important to evaluate if the church leaders are living out their calling?

Why should the Word of God be a central part of a weekly service?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16

Ministers cannot make you grow in the Lord. What do I mean by that? I mean that you are responsible for maturing in your knowledge of God. They are willing to teach you but you must be willing to learn.

Often people are content with a weekly sermon that has three points all beginning with the same letter. They congratulate themselves for coming to the service and believe they have done their part in the kingdom of God. This is a far cry from the spiritual reality of growth in the Lord. We are to be learning more and more about God so that we become full in Christ!

Ephesians 4:11-13

11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Verse 11-13: The church staff is responsible in encouraging you to grow. But you must be growing. Think back on this past year. Has your faith increased? Has your knowledge of Jesus grown? Are you maturing spiritually? If not, then you are missing out on the life that the church staff should be encouraging you to live!

The purpose of the church leadership is not to let you know how much they know. It is not to teach you interesting facts or statistics. Their role is to encourage you to strive in Christ. Growing in God takes effort. You do not grow by letting someone else do all the work for you. If you think spiritual maturity is attained by just listening to a preacher speak each Sunday then you are missing out on growth. Your growth is dependent upon outside action. Three categories of actions:

1. Works of service- you are called to serve. You need to be serving in some way that builds the body of Christ. If you are not serving, then you are not growing.
2. Faith Together- you must be growing in unity in faith. To be unified in faith with others means there must be others to be unified with! You should be an active part of a body of believers. In your relationships with believers, the name of Christ should be edified above your own. In other words, your desire to be unified with other Christians takes priority over your "rights" or "thoughts". You should focus on what you can agree on than the things you disagree about.



You are thinking more about eternal matters than about present difficulties with other believers. 3. Knowledge-your knowledge of Jesus should increase. This is only possible by getting into the Word. It is beyond listening to the Word on a weekly basis. Instead, it is taking time on your own to read, study, meditate, and memorize the Word.

By serving, believing, and learning you will mature in the Lord. This maturity will protect you from harm.

Ephesians 4:14

14Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

Verse 14: Some of you have grown up in the church and yet you are still infants. You have not applied what you have learned. Infants are helpless. They constantly need someone else to do everything for them. The church staff is not meant to carry you for the rest of your life. They are to help you grow in the Lord. Are you an infant in Christ? It is time to grow up! You are missing out on the blessing of maturity.

Ephesians 4:15-16

15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Verse 15-16: The heart of maturity is love. Works of service are meaningless without love. Faith is nothing without love. Knowledge is harsh without love. Together, we grow up in Christ in a loving environment. Our growth helps others grow and their growth matures us. We are a support system that constantly builds and expands upon the heart of one another.

You can choose to be a part of the system that is building others up. When you choose to grow and mature in Christ, you will be helping the rest of the body grow as well. But if you decide to ignore opportunities for growth that are presented in the Word, you actually harm the body of Christ. Maturity or decline: the choice is yours.



DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to grow in Him. Confess anything that keeps you from becoming mature in the Lord.

What responsibility is the church staff's in helping you grow in the Lord?

What is your responsibility in growing in the Lord?

In what area of growth do you need to grow: service, faith or knowledge? What changes need to be made in your life to promote growth?

In what ways can an immature believer be "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men...?"



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Peter 5:2-3; Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Timothy 4:15-16

The heart of the church staff should be for you. It should never be “just a job” or a paycheck. Instead, their lives should reflect their love towards God and you.

1 Peter 5:2-3

2Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Verse 2-3: The church staff, who are the leaders, are also the servants. They should be serving each member of the body of Christ. They understand that the purpose of their job is to care for you. When you care for someone, you want what is best for them. As an overseer, they watch over your life. This does not mean that they stalk you. It just refers to the fact that they are willing to congratulate you on areas of your life that are going well and are also willing to rebuke you for failures. It is like a parent with children. They love their children enough to remark on both the good and the bad. The focus on the good is to encourage progress. The focus on the bad is to encourage change. The church leaders should love you enough to do this. They desire for your growth in Christ.

Colossians 1:28-29

28We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Verse 28-29: The purpose of every sermon, every lesson, and every thing else the church staff does is to lead you closer to Christ. Our heart should be of one that would go to any lengths to see our congregation grow in the Lord. We should not settle for mediocrity in the lives of fellow believers. Instead, we want to encourage you to grow toward perfection!

Of course, for us to encourage you toward maturity, we must be growing ourselves. Read the passage from 1 Peter again. We are to be examples to you. If our lives leave much to be questioned or desired, then we are failing you. Please be willing to evaluate us and share any concerns you may have. For we never want anyone to fall away from God because of the lives we live. Instead, we want to spurn you on in growth in Christ.



1 Corinthians 11:1

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Verse 1: We are not perfect. Yet, we are to present a life that shows others how to mature in Christ. If your church leadership does not do this, get out of the church. How can you learn maturity from those who refuse to mature? Our lives are to be an example for others to follow. This is a frightening calling, accepted with fear and reverence. We would never want to lead anyone astray. We must daily watch our lives so that we have the authority to watch over yours.

1 Timothy 4:15-16

15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Verse 15-16: We know that you are watching our lives. We hope you see our progress. We desire to see your progress as well.



DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the church staff’s continued growth in the Lord.

In what ways have you witnessed the destructiveness of a minister who did not watch over his own personal life and doctrine?

How does a church staff oversee the body of Christ?

When is it acceptable for someone to say “follow me as I follow the example of Christ?”



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 1:15-21, 3:14-19; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

One of the most important duties of a church staff is to pray for the body of Christ. We need to pray for you on a variety of levels: spiritually, emotionally, and physically. We may not always know the details of your life, but we are still called to pray.

Paul is an example of praying over believers. He cared for his people went to the Lord in prayer for them. The following verses highlight his prayers for the believers.

Ephesians 1:15-21

15For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Ephesians 3:14-19

14For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.



Philippians 1:9-11

9And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:9-12

9For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

2Thessalonians 1:11-12

11With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. 12We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your church staff should be people of prayer. This is the greatest way they take care of you.



DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the protection of the church staff's time in prayer.

Why would prayer be a vital part of a church staff's responsibilities?

How are you able to discern if the church leaders are people of prayer?

Why should you be concerned over the time your church leaders spend in prayer?

What other "good distractions" can keep a minister from devoted times in prayer?

How can you help your church staff increase their time in prayer?
