



# BIBLE FLUENCY

*Sing it, See it, Study it*

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## New Testament Fluency in 12 Weeks

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***Teaching Curriculum***

**New Testament Fluency in 12 Weeks**  
**Complete Teaching Curriculum**  
**For Bible Fluency Teachers and Leaders**

List of Lessons:

1. Who is Jesus? What are we expecting? (Gospels 1)
2. What's so important about Jesus' death and resurrection? (Gospels 2)
3. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? (Gospels 3)
4. Are we ashamed of the gospel? (Acts and Romans)
5. What is Christian community? (1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians)
6. Is the dividing wall really broken down? (Galatians and Ephesians)
7. How do we live it out? (Philippians and Colossians)
8. What does genuine ministry look like? (Thessalonians and Pastorals)
9. What is the evidence that our faith is real? (Hebrews, James, 1 John)
10. Where will the pressure come from? (1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude)
11. Will Jesus win? (Revelation)
12. New Testament Fluency Exam

## New Testament Fluency

### Day 1

#### Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Gospels song)
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [pass around for people to sign in; in later classes you will leave it by the door with pen for people to sign in as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [save at front to hand out; in later classes you will leave them by the door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 1 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 1 NT Syllabus [save at front to hand out later]
- Day 1 NT Gospels Lyrics small for class [save at front to hand out later]
- Day 1 NT Matching Activity Gospels [save at front to hand out toward the end of class]
- Day 1 NT Matching Activity Gospels (answer key) [for reference...don't hand out]
- Computer (with data projector if possible) with internet access to show how to access things from website

#### Class Layout:

- Welcome. Distribute Day 1 NT Student Notes—including layout of day and notes for lesson. Get a couple people to help you hand out papers on this first day.
- Introduction of teacher [teacher, tell your life story briefly so your students can get to know you a bit]
- Pre-quiz (over entire New Testament).
  - Hand out the NT Fluency quiz template
  - Read: “I want to pre-quiz you to help you see how much you are going to learn. I don't want this to discourage you, just to help you see how much you will learn in this class. Our quizzes will be taken orally. This is an example. I will read each question two times only. I will not go over the questions again at the end of the quiz. Write the New Testament book in which the following event, person, or theme occurs. You don't have to write your name on the quiz unless you want to. If you don't know very many answers, don't be discouraged. That's why we're having this class...to help

you. But I need to know what you do know before we start. [Note to teacher: These are questions from the whole New Testament.]

1. Jesus is tempted by the devil [Synoptics—Matthew, Mark, Luke]
  2. The parable of the Prodigal Son [Luke alone]
  3. Paul says that those who tell you that you must be circumcised are preaching a false gospel [Galatians]
  4. This book says that Jesus Christ is better than the angels, Moses, and the old testament priests [Hebrews]
  5. This letter is addressed to the “12 tribes who are dispersed abroad.” [James]
  6. The feeding of the four thousand (not the five thousand) [Matthew and Mark]
  7. Paul compares humans to jars of clay [2 Corinthians]
  8. “Test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” [1 John]
  9. Paul spends two years in prison in Palestine [Acts]
  10. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah [All four Gospels]
- Grade the quiz immediately after finishing it. Just read through the questions again and then give the answer. Everyone should grade their own quiz. Have them turn them in when finished.
  - Ask right after the quiz: “By the way, why is there no Mark alone verse?” Answer: Because almost everything found in Mark is paralleled in one of the other Gospels.
  - Hand out syllabus and go through it. The syllabus will include how to access everything—also permissions for using the songs and the need to get 80% on the final test to get a certificate at the end. Show them how to access the material from the website on the computer if you have access to a computer and data projector for this class.
  - Hand out the Attendance Sheet. Explain that everyone should put their name down, but that the second and third columns are voluntary—they’re only for people who want some kind of accountability. [Some people will want accountability and some won’t.]
  - Explain the class layout. Here is a typical day:

- Start with a song.
  - Do some sort of warm-up before the quiz.
  - Quiz.
  - Self-grade the quiz.
  - Questions and answers on our workbook.
  - An instructional time about a key them in the books we're studying.  
[Either live or with video...you the leader will decide.]
  - Follow-up activity.
- Hand out the Day 1 NT Gospels Lyrics.
  - Listen to the Gospels song.
  - Instructional Section for Day 1: Who is Jesus? What are we expecting?  
(Gospels 1) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions by Ken Berding.]
  - Day 1 NT Gospels Matching Activity. ““Look at the Gospels song lyrics and match as quickly as you can the correct idea with the book or books in which it is found. There are 25. Let's see who can get them all first.”
  - ASK: “Do you have any questions about anything we've said or done today?”
  - SAY: “Before you leave, please find a few people you don't know in the room and introduce yourself.”

Instructional Section for Day 1  
Who is Jesus? What are we expecting?  
Gospels 1

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Open with a story of a situation where you were expecting one thing, but something else that you didn’t expect to happen happened instead. It would be better if what you were expecting was something negative, and it turned out to be something positive. But it also could be something that you were expecting to be positive that ended up being much more positive or simply different than you expected—but probably not negative for this opener. An excellent example would be someone that you expected to not be a nice person who ended up being really nice after you got to know that person.]

Today we’re going to **talk about who Jesus is**. Our **expectations** of Jesus are often **off the mark** and not big enough for him. Here are some of **our faulty expectations** we often bring to a study of Jesus and the Gospels.

1. We expect Jesus to make us happy.
2. We expect that everything will be simple to understand and easy to live out.
3. We expect that Jesus will always answer our prayers.
4. We expect to come to the Bible and find specific guidance for every decision that we have to make.
5. In short, we bring our own expectations to the Bible and to a study of who Jesus is rather than letting the Bible tell us what to expect.

In some ways, our inadequate expectations are not so different from the expectations of people during the time of Jesus.

**The Jewish people at the time of Jesus** were waiting for a **Messiah** to come—a deliverer of some sort. But they had **various expectations**, not all of them in agreement with one another, and *none of them* actually corresponded fully to who Jesus was.

1. Some people expected a priestly Messiah. The temple establishment during the time of Jesus was corrupt, the chief priests were taking advantage of the people, they were working in tandem with the Romans, and some people were **expecting a Messiah who would come and clean up the worship in the temple**. This group was expecting a priestly Messiah.
2. Some people expected a heavenly Messiah. These were the more **mystical types** who were seeing visions and relating the events on earth to things going on in heaven. They were all about the spiritual aspect of things, so this group was expecting a heavenly Messiah.
3. Some people expected a military Messiah, like King David in the Old Testament. This seems to have **been the most common expectation** among the people in Jesus' day. They expected a military ruler to rise up who would **defeat and kick the Romans out** of the country and set up a just kingdom. This group was expecting a military Messiah.

Then Jesus shows up on the scene, and they don't know what to do with him.

Look at the verses printed in your notes from Matthew 16:13-16. This is the section where Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, which occurs in all four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You'll know that by the quiz next week.

**Matthew 16:13-16** Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The people **didn't know what to do with Jesus**. Who was he?

“Christ” or *Christos* in Greek, is just the Greek version of Messiah. Simon Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah whom everyone was expecting, but probably still reading it through his assumption that he would be a Davidic-like Messiah who would kick the Romans out of Palestine.

**The Gospels were written to answer one question** more than any other: The question is: **Who is this Jesus?**

What is the answer to this question?

**God** in his infinite wisdom **decided to answer** this question **in four different ways**. If you want to know who Jesus really is, God’s response to you is: “**Ask 1) Matthew, 2) Mark, 3) Luke, and 4) John!**”

God chose not to give us only one record of Jesus’ life, teaching, and passion; he decided to give us four. These four Gospels are **four complementary perspectives** on the same events. Each Gospel emphasizes certain things about Jesus that the others do not emphasize.

Illustration: It is not so different from the **French impressionist artist Claude Monet** who did **series paintings**. He would paint the same landscape or bridge from different perspectives—say four different perspectives—in different seasons, with different lighting. Each painting is unique, but the landscape is the same in each instance. **Now imagine that he did a series of portraits of a person.** Actually, I think **Picasso** may have done **four self-portraits** (though Picasso was something else altogether!).

The Gospel writers are similar. They **select and emphasize certain events and teachings** from the life of Jesus to help us to see Jesus more clearly while at the same time representing what actually happened correctly. *All* of the Gospel writers were interested in demonstrating that Jesus was the Messiah that the Jewish people had been waiting for. But they also emphasize certain things that give us a much clearer picture of Jesus than we ever could have gotten if we had had only one Gospel instead of four. **The different emphases of the four Gospel writers** is a huge topic in and of itself that could take all 12 weeks of our New Testament Fluency class, but let me use the **chorus of our Gospels song** to lead us through just a few thoughts about what the Gospel writers emphasize.

**Our first portrait: Matthew: “In Matthew, Jesus is the King.”**



Matthew is the **most Jewish** of the four Gospels, and you probably would do well every time you see “Christ” written in Matthew to retranslate it as Messiah in your mind. Matthew wanted to demonstrate that Jesus was the promised King of Israel who came in the line of David.

For example, Jesus is referred to as “**Son of David**” 3 times in Mark, 4 times in Luke, but a whopping **9 times in Matthew**. This shows how important it was for him to connect with the expectations that one like David would come and set up a kingdom.

Most of the **parables** in Matthew focus on the **nature of the kingdom, of which Jesus is the king**.

### **Our second portrait: Mark: “In Mark, the servant, sacrifice.”**

Mark, like Matthew, also cared to communicate that Jesus was the Messiah, but since he was writing to a **Gentile, that is non-Jewish audience**—probably a Roman audience—he emphasizes some things about Jesus that the others don’t.

The **two things** that particularly **stand out** are **Jesus as *servant***, and **Jesus as *sacrifice***.

And actually this is a pretty good outline for the whole book of Mark:

Roughly the **book divides up into two parts**:

- Chapters 1 to the end of chapter 8 is Jesus’ public ministry. That is, it is Jesus as servant.
- The end of chapter 8 up through the end of the book is Jesus’ suffering and death. That is, it is Jesus as sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

### **Our third portrait: Luke: “In Luke the perfect Son of Man.”**

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<sup>1</sup> (Prologue: 1:1-15)

Part 1: Public ministry (Jesus as servant) 1:16-8:26

Part 2: Suffering and Death (Jesus as sacrifice) 8:27-16:8

Luke also cared about emphasizing that Jesus was the Messiah who came in fulfillment of God's promises through the prophets. But Luke is also somewhat **more of an earthy Gospel** and shows Jesus' relationship to that.

He writes more about the **birth of Christ**, and all the characters involved in it than any of the other Gospel writers.

He **names people** more than the other authors. He names more women (13 that aren't found in the other 3 gospels!), and mentions more children than any of the other authors.

He has a special emphasis on people who are **poor**.

And he has a special emphasis on **prayer**.

Luke shows very much the humanity of Jesus and how he intersected with those who are human.

#### **Our fourth portrait: John: "In John he is the Son of God."**

John's portrait of Jesus is **high and exalted**. He lifts Jesus up to a higher place than any other of the authors.

The book is full of **"I am" statements** of Jesus.

- I am the bread of life (6:35)
- I am the light of the world (8:12)
- I am the door (10:7)
- I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14)
- I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
- I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
- I am the true vine (15:1).

And there is even **one place**—in John 8:52-59—where Jesus refers to himself simply as **"I AM,"** which was the name that God gave to himself when Moses encountered him at the **burning bush**, and the expression God uses for himself so often in the **latter chapters of Isaiah**.

In fact, if you were showing someone that Jesus was **God himself**, the best book in the Bible to do it from is probably the book of John (8:52-59; 5:17-

18; 10:29-31). He starts the book with **John 1:1**: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

### **So, who is Jesus? And what are we expecting?**

The answer to the first questions is that:

Jesus is the Messiah (according to all four gospels!), who is the King of Israel in the line of David (Matthew),  
The Servant who is the Sacrifice for our sins (Mark),  
The Son of Man (Luke), who is also  
The Son of God (John).

The answer to the **second question** is that **the expectations of the people of the first century of a coming Messiah were all wrong**. It doesn't seem like anyone really understood that God would send his Messiah in **two stages**, not in one. At his **first coming**, Messiah would come and **suffer** for the sins of the people of the whole world. (They didn't understand this despite the predictions of the prophets like Isaiah!) And they didn't understand that there would be a **second coming** when he would come to **reign in glory** upon the earth.

I wonder **how similar** we are to the people of the New Testament period. **How short** do our expectations of Jesus fall? And we have the benefit of being able to see after the first stage of the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. Jesus has come, suffered on our behalf on the cross, been resurrected from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. What are our expectations of who Jesus is?

**May we come to know Jesus in all his fullness!** We will only get that as we study the Gospels and come to know the Jesus that God has revealed **in the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**.

Let's bow our heads together. I will pray a prayer, and you pray it after me:

“Heavenly Father.

Thank you for sending Jesus into the world.

Thank you that he is the expected Messiah.

Thank you that he is the servant of the world

Thank you that he is the sacrifice for our sins

Thank you that he lived fully as a man

Thank you that he is fully God.  
And thank you that he will come again.  
We submit our expectations to you  
We affirm that the Jesus we find in your Word  
Is the one and only Messiah  
The one and only savior of the world.

And in his name we pray.  
Amen.

New Testament Fluency  
Day 2

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Gospels song)
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign in as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 2 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 2 NT Writing Activity [save at front to hand out toward the end of class]
- A few extra copies of the Syllabus from Day 1 for late-comers

Class Layout:

- Open with Gospels song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes for a few minutes in preparation for the quiz. “Get into pairs or threes and quiz each other on whether something is found in All Gospels, or just in the Synoptic Gospels.”
- Quiz over All Gospels and Synoptic Gospels. SAY: “Take your quiz template and draw a line under ‘Synoptic Gospels.’ The only possible answers are ‘All Gospels’—which means Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—or the ‘Synoptic Gospels’—which means Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but *not* John. These are the only two possible answers for each question. I will read each question two times only and will not repeat the questions at the end.”
  1. Does Judas betray Jesus in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [All Gospels]
  2. Does Jesus tell a rich young man to sell his possessions and give them to the poor in All Gospels or the Synoptic Gospels? [Synoptic Gospels]

3. Are the twelve disciples sent out on a short term mission trip in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [Synoptic Gospels]
  4. Do women arrive at an empty tomb after the resurrection of Jesus in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [All Gospels]
  5. Does Peter confess that Jesus is the Christ in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [All Gospels]
  6. Does Jesus select twelve men to be his closest disciples in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [Synoptic Gospels]
  7. Does Jesus speak woes to the scribes and Pharisees in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [Synoptic Gospels]
  8. Is the feeding of five thousand in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [All Gospels]
  9. Does Jesus tell a parable about a farmer who went out and sowed seed on different kinds of soils in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [Synoptic Gospels]
  10. Is Jesus buried in a tomb after his crucifixion in All Gospels or in the Synoptic Gospels? [All Gospels]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.] “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from your homework in the events that take place in all four of the gospels and only in the Synoptic Gospels: SAY: “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the events that came up while you were doing your homework on the events that take place in all four Gospels and in the Synoptic Gospels. Is there anything that you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 2: What’s so important about Jesus’ death and resurrection? (Gospels 2) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Day 2 NT Writing Activity  
 Instructions: Write a paragraph about the events that appear in *all four of the Gospels*. Ignore the Synoptic Gospels for this exercise. (If you have to peek at your song, you can.) Summarize the events that all four authors (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) decided to include when they wrote their Gospels. Suppose that you are writing this for someone who has never read the Bible before. Use regular words that people who aren’t Christians can

understand, and try not to use the words of the songs themselves, unless there is no other way to write it down. [Give one minute warning rather than just stopping them at the end of the five minutes.]

- Follow-up: “Is there someone who would be willing to read what you wrote about All Four Gospels? Is there someone who would be willing to read what you wrote about the Synoptic Gospels?”
- End with the Gospels song one more time if there’s time. [Otherwise, ignore.]

Instructional Section for Day 2  
What's so important about Jesus' death and resurrection?  
Gospels 2

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won't have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Talk about biographies. If you like to read biographies yourself, you can mention it or talk about one biography that impacted you. Otherwise, simply talk in general about biographies.]

But have you ever noticed that **biographies rarely spend that much time on a person's death?** Even people whose deaths were very important, like **John F. Kennedy or Martin Luther King, Jr.**, rarely have more than 10% of books about them devoted to the events surrounding their deaths.

That's what makes the Gospels so interesting. **One-third of the total pages** of the Gospels are devoted to the events surrounding the death of Jesus.

And we don't just have one Gospel, either. **We have four Gospels!** I'm convinced that **one of the reasons that God has given us four Gospels** is so that we will time and again be reminded of how important the death of Jesus really is. If you read through the Bible every year, you will read about the events leading up to the crucifixion four times that year, far more than any other event you will read about.

In this session together, I'd like to answer **two key questions about the death of Jesus** and **two key questions about Jesus' resurrection from the dead.**



Question 1: Who sent Jesus to his death?

Options:

Did the Roman soldiers?

**Yes**, but they were **simply following the orders** given to them from above. They were the ones who scourged him and put him on the cross, but they were not the ones who ultimately sent Jesus to his death.

Did the crowds of people?

**Yes**, without their **rioting potential**, Pilate would not have sent him to his death.

Did the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate?

**Yes**. The gospels make it clear that **Pontius Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent**. But he felt that he was in a really hard situation. There were **political issues going on in Rome** that made his situation as a governor precarious. **He did not want to risk another revolt** in Jerusalem. Many such riots had happened before, and he dearly wanted to avoid them.

Did the Jewish religious leaders?

**Yes**. At some level they were also responsible for sending Jesus to his death. **Certainly it is wrong to lay the blame** for the death of Jesus **upon the Jewish people as a whole**—**Luke 23:27** records that a great multitude of the people [that is, *Jewish* people] were wailing and lamenting the fact that Jesus was being led to the cross.

But **the Jewish leadership of this time**—even in later Jewish writings—were remembered as **selfish, greedy, and brutal**.<sup>2</sup> The **chief priests** were **corrupt**, working together with the Romans, and cared little about true worship.

But ultimately, they are not the ones who sent Jesus to his death.

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<sup>2</sup> Babylonian Talmud. Pesahim 57a.

Did we?

**Yes**, in a true sense, we sent Jesus to his death. The Bible makes it clear that **Jesus could have come down off of the cross**. He could have called an army of angels to help him if he had wanted. He went there **willingly** because he knew that he was **dying in our place**. The Bible says that **the wages of sin is death** (Romans 6:23). Each one of us should have been on that cross. Jesus took our blame upon himself. **He died in our place**. In a very real sense, it is our sin that sent Jesus to the cross.

Did God?

**Yes. Ultimately God sent** his son Jesus to the cross. There is an **amazing verse in one of Peter's early sermons** a couple months after the resurrection of Jesus in which he makes an amazing statement.

**Acts 4:27-28** For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your purpose predestined to occur.

Notice that **Peter mentions the groups** we are talking about. But whether it is Jews or Gentiles, whether leaders or not, at the end of the day, he says that **ultimately God had decided beforehand that this would occur**.

It was because God is perfectly holy that Jesus went to the cross. God will not just wave his hand and forgive sins. **My Muslim friends always ask me that**—why can't God simply forgive these sins? The reason is that **God has committed himself always to be holy and not to violate his perfect character**. Muslims don't believe that God is bound to his own character; they believe he can simply do whatever he wants to do.

This is **the brilliance of the cross**. God remains perfectly holy, perfectly fair, and still is able to forgive us our sins.

Ultimately, God sent Jesus to the cross to pay the price for our sins that we never could pay ourselves.

Question 2: What three spiritual truths are communicated by Jesus' death on the cross?

1. Our sin must be extremely horrible.

The biblical story brings out these sins clearly.

Think of the characters in the story:

Judas: Greedy, impatient, treacherous

Jewish leaders: Jealous, unjust

Pilate: Cowardly

Peter: Fearful, blaspheming, breaking promises.

And if we do not find ourselves identifying with these sins, we are not thereby off-the-hook.

Illustration: **James Kennedy** used **to use an illustration** to help us understand how truly we are sinners. He said: Suppose that you were a really good person and you only sinned **three sins a day**. You 1) cut someone off on the highway, you 2) said something that was unkind to someone, and 3) you didn't do one thing that you should have done. If you sinned three times a day, you would have sinned more than a thousand times in a year, and more than 70,000 times in your lifetime. Imagine going into traffic court and telling the judge that you had 70,000 traffic violations!

But most of us have to deal with a lot more sin than these simple three sins a day. How will we stand before a perfectly righteous judge who refuses to violate his justice and think we will get off the hook? We cannot. That's why Jesus had to die!

2. God's love must be wonderful beyond comprehension.

Romans 5:8 says: "But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

3. Christ's salvation must be a free gift.

Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Illustration: This is perhaps illustrated best by the **thief on the cross**. His salvation shows that **salvation is all by grace through faith and not through works**. He had no time to build up good works and think somehow he would get saved by them. No, he threw himself on God’s mercy by faith, and Jesus said that he would be with him that very day in Paradise.

Question 3: What’s so important about God raising Jesus from the dead?

**[Read exactly]** Answer: The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that God possesses both the power and the right to forgive us our sins and to resurrect us in the final, future resurrection.

Actually, the apostle Paul says that the **Christian faith crumbles** without the resurrection.

**1 Corinthians 15:14-17** ...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

But what’s amazing is that it actually did happen.

**[Read]**

The disciples didn’t steal the body of Jesus and make up the story of him rising from the dead.

The disciples didn’t have some sort of spiritual experience that they interpreted as a resurrection of Jesus.

They actually believed that Jesus really rose from the dead.

Question 4: How do we know that Jesus really rose from the dead?

Answer: There are **a number of lines of evidence** that we could go down. But let me today **just give you three**:

1. There was an incredible change from fear to boldness in the disciples.

They were **terrified and fled** before the authorities when Jesus was arrested. But **a couple months later** they were **boldly proclaiming** that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. If they had made up the story, they would not have had such boldness.

**And in history**, there have been **millions** who have testified that their lives have been changed by Jesus Christ who **they really believe is presently alive**.

2. There were 500 eyewitnesses who saw Jesus after he was resurrected.

**1 Corinthians 15:3-6** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [that is, Peter], then to the twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep [that is, died].

**Historians know** when the apostle Paul wrote this letter. He **wrote it around 20 years** after the resurrection. (Even in these verses he says some have died who saw Jesus but most are still alive.)

Illustration: Can you **imagine a court case** in which you brought **500 people into court** one after another testifying about something had happened 20 years before—even something as dramatic as a resurrection? If each only took **10 minutes** to give his or her testimony, **it would take 84 hours to hear their testimony**, more than **two full weeks at 40 hours a week!**

3. Some of these eyewitnesses were willing to die for their belief in a resurrected Savior.

including **James** the brother of John who was put to death with a **sword** (Acts 12:2),

**Peter and Paul** who were killed during the persecution of Christians by **Nero** in Rome—Peter probably crucified upside down and Paul beheaded, and

**James the half-brother of Jesus** who was thrown from the **pinnacle of the temple and stoned**.<sup>3</sup> And **James** definitely **did not believe** in Jesus **before** the resurrection. He died because he believed he had seen the resurrected Christ.

**People don't usually die for something that they know is not true.**

Jesus rose from the dead, and through his death and resurrection has proven that he has the right to forgive sins, and raise up those who believe in him on the last day.

Let's bow our heads and pray together. I'll pray a line and then you pray after me:

Dear Lord,  
Thank you that you made a way to forgive my sins.  
Thank you that Jesus died in my place.  
I know my sins sent him to the cross.  
Thank you that you are both righteous and merciful.  
This could only have happened at the cross.  
Then you raised Jesus from the dead!  
You proved that you have the right  
To forgive us our sins  
And raise us up on the last day.  
Thank you, Father!

In the name of Jesus,  
Who died in our place.  
Amen

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<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.

New Testament Fluency  
Day 3

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Gospels song)
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 3 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Jeopardy set up (either with computer or draw on a white board)

Class Layout:

- Open with Gospels song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- Quick review: SAY: “In pairs, take 30 seconds and try to say through all the events that are in the All Gospels verse.” [wait 30 seconds] “Now, in 30 seconds again just speak out all of the events that are in the Synoptic Gospels verse.” “Now, in 30 seconds again speak out everything that is found in Matthew alone.” (Ignore the two gospels verse for this one.)
- Quiz over the first four verses of the Gospels song. Quizzed orally, giving questions twice—no repeats. SAY: “Draw a line underneath ‘Matthew alone’ on your quiz template. Your possible answers are all above the line. In other words, the only options for this quiz are All Four Gospels, The Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark, Mark and Luke, Matthew and Luke, and Matthew alone. I will read each question two times only and will not repeat the questions at the end.”
  1. The parable of the sheep and goats [Matthew alone]
  2. Jesus chooses twelve disciples [Synoptic Gospels]
  3. Pilate sentences Jesus to death [All four Gospels]
  4. The death of John the Baptist [Matthew and Mark]

5. Jesus tells a parable of servants who are given 5 talents, 2 talents, and 1 talent to invest while their master is gone [Matthew and Luke]
  6. Guards are posted at the tomb of Jesus [Matthew alone]
  7. Jesus raises Jairus's daughter from the dead [Synoptic Gospels]
  8. Jesus speaks these words: "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." [Matthew alone]
  9. These two Gospels include a lot of the same sayings of Jesus in the sermons of Jesus they record [Matthew and Luke]
  10. Women arrive at an empty tomb [All four Gospels]
- Quiz Grading: "Let's see how you did. Grade your own paper." [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.] "Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me."
  - Questions and Answers on homework. SAY: "Let's spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the events that came up while you were doing your homework for this week. Is there anything you would like to discuss?"
  - Instructional Section for Day 3: What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? (Gospels 3) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Play Jeopardy: Use computer with data projector or hand-write a chart on a white board.

If you are handwriting the game on a board, this is what it should look like:

Places	People	Predicaments	Perspectives
100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500

Instructions for Jeopardy:

- I will count you off into [four] groups. [Note: Just count people off "1" "2" "3" "4", or however many groups you decide to have. You can do this with as few as two groups or as many as you want.



Perhaps have four, five, or six people in the group. After you have counted them off, have them move to sit with the other people who received the same group number.]

- Please choose one person from your group who doesn't mind doing addition and subtraction to keep track of the score for your group.
- Each of you will have a turn. When you are the next person in your group, please stand up.
- You must take your turn when it comes.
- I will allow the team that won the previous round to choose the next category and point amount.
- I will read the question/display it on the screen. As soon as you know the answer, clap. [If I'm reading it, I will stop reading and you can answer the question. If I'm displaying it on the screen, you will already be able to see it all.] If you are correct in your answer, you will receive the number of points available. If you are incorrect, you will *lose* that same number of points.
- You have five seconds to answer after you have clapped.
- Your team members can help you.
- As soon as you have said your answer, if it is *incorrect*, you will lose the point value.
- Also, as soon as you have said your answer, if it is incorrect, another person standing from another team can clap and answer correctly and gain the points.
- The correct answer will *always* be a book of the Bible (or a category of books like Synoptic Gospels or Pastoral Letters).
- While we play the game, test yourself to see if you know the answer to the question we are asking.

Jeopardy Questions for Day 3: The first four books of the Gospels song [Note: There are no questions today for Luke or John because we haven't done our homework for those verses yet.]

(Places for 100) Women arrive at an empty tomb [All four Gospels]

(Places for 200) Jesus gives a discourse on the Mount of Olives (also called The Olivet Discourse) [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Places for 300) At the synagogue, Jesus healed a man who had been afflicted by a demon [Mark and Luke]

(Places for 400) Joseph, Mary, and Jesus flee from Herod to Egypt  
[Matthew]

(Places for 500) Jesus curses a fig tree and it wilts [Matthew and Mark]

(People for 100) John the Baptist speaks in the wilderness [All four Gospels]

(People for 200) “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(People for 300) John the Baptist is put to death by Herod Antipas  
[Matthew and Mark]

(People for 400) Peter denies that he knows Jesus [All four Gospels]

(People for 500) Jesus told a story about a farmer who sowed his seed onto four different kinds of soils [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Perspectives for 100) Jesus’ appearance is gloriously transfigured  
[Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Perspectives for 200) The Lord’s Prayer [Matthew and Luke]

(Perspectives for 300) Jesus taught a parable about being ready for his return by talking about ten young virgins who were waiting with their oil lamps for the coming of the bridegroom [Matthew]

(Perspectives for 400) “Go and make disciples of all the nations”  
[Matthew]

(Perspectives for 500) Jesus speaks strong words against the scribes and the Pharisees [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Predicaments for 100) The wise men search for the newborn king  
[Matthew]

(Predicaments for 200) Jesus is buried in a tomb [All four Gospels]

(Predicaments for 300) A rich young man went away sad because Jesus had told him to sell his possessions and give them to the poor [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Predicaments for 400) Jesus tells a story of a shepherd who went in search of one of his sheep that was lost [Matthew and Luke]

(Predicaments for 500) Jesus says that the woman who secretly put in a very small gift into the temple treasury gave more than the one who put in much [Mark and Luke]

- At the end, SAY: “This is the time in the course when you are probably starting to realize that it’s going to take some work to do this. Let me encourage you with the incredible benefit this will be to you! This coming week would be a good week to pull it all together—even put some extra time into it and learn the Gospels really well. For most people it takes about two to three hours a week to get the learning plus worksheets done. Keep going! You can do this!” (Encourage them....)

Instructional Section for Day 3  
What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?  
Gospels 3

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: Have you ever heard the expression “**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**”?

A few years ago, the **Lilly Endowment** funded a group of researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who were doing a research project called the “National Study of Youth and Religion.” These researchers did face-to-face interviews with more than **3,000 Christian teenagers**. After the study, Christian Smith and Melinda Denton wrote up the results of the study in their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*.<sup>4</sup>

After surveying 3,000 Christian teenagers, they concluded that the way Christian young people viewed the world was not distinctively Christian at all; it was—as they dubbed it—“moralistic,” “therapeutic,” and “deistic.”

In other words, the basic beliefs of most Christian teenagers are:

- That people need to be nice and fair to each other (moralistic).
- That the aim of life is to be happy (therapeutic).
- That you only need to bring God into life when you have problems (deistic).

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<sup>4</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also Christian Smith, with Patrick Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

**If Jesus were to stand here** and address this trend directly, he would have some **very strong words indeed to say about it.**

Obviously one of the reasons **we are doing Bible Fluency is to combat this move.**

**One of the main themes in the Gospels** is the theme of **discipleship.**

So today, we want to talk about what Jesus teaches about discipleship. We will look at how 1) one becomes a disciple, 2) the cost of discipleship, the 3) marks of a disciple, and 4) how to live it out.

### Becoming a Disciple

**How** does one become a disciple of Jesus in the Gospels?

- A disciple is **summoned** by Jesus:

**Mark 1:16-17** As he was going along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

Comment: And **Simon**, who is known to us as Peter, **left his nets** and followed Jesus. But **Jesus summoned him** to follow.

**Matthew 9:9** As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and he said to him, “Follow me!”

Comment: And **Matthew** got up, and **became a follower** of Jesus. But **he was called** by Jesus to do so.

**Mark 3:13-15** And he [Jesus] went up on the mountain and summoned those whom he himself wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, so that they would be with him and that he could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.

Comment: From this time onward in the ministry of Jesus, these **twelve were the inner disciples** of Jesus, though the book of Mark is clear that

there were also other disciples who were following Jesus besides these twelve.

**Matthew 11:28-29a** “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...”

Comment: This “**learn from me**” is a verb in Greek with the same root as the word for “**disciple**.” Jesus is saying more here than just to learn stuff from him; he is saying that they should become disciples of Jesus. But the initiative is with Jesus.

- A disciple **responds in repentance and faith**:

**Luke 5:30-32** The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Comment: The first thing people need is to **recognize their need and repent**, that is, they turn from their sins and turn to Jesus.

**John 9:35-38a** Jesus heard that they had put him out [that is, the man he had healed of blindness], and finding him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have both seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you.” And he said, “Lord, I believe.”

Recap: So how does one become a disciple of Jesus? He is summoned by Jesus and responds in repentance and faith.

### The Cost of Discipleship

A person who is a **Moralistic Therapeutic Deist** won’t like this next section. That’s because **Jesus** is going to **tell** people that **it’s not about them**—it’s about him. And his intention is that their entire lives get transformed.

**What does it cost** to become a disciple of Jesus? The answer is pretty straightforward: **It costs everything** to become a disciple of Jesus.

**Matthew 13:44-46** “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Illustration: It’s like the **young man** who is **so in love** with a young woman that in order **to buy the engagement** ring he wants to give **her he sells** his motorcycle, his baseball card collection, his Taylor guitar, and his little brother (!) to pay for the ring. She is more valuable to him than everything else he cherishes in the world.

So we are called upon to completely transfer our allegiance to Jesus himself and seek first his kingdom.

**Matthew 8:19-21** Then a scribe came and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

Comment: By the way, **Jesus is addressing the problem of comfort and possessions** in these comments. When Jesus becomes our Master, he **becomes master of everything**, including our **possessions**. We can’t be his disciples and put these things above him.

Comment: When the disciple asked to first **bury his father**, it isn’t clear what is going on. It has been suggested that he wasn’t asking to attend a funeral of his father who had just died. He wanted **to stay** around home **until his father died** so he could inherit his stuff. Whether this is the correct interpretation or not, the main idea of the passage is clear: You should have no family commitment above your commitment to Jesus himself. And you will see this in the next verses even more strongly.

**Luke 14:26-27** “If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

Illustration: When my wife and I used to live in the Middle East, people who were considering Jesus would sometimes comment to me: “But if I become a Jesus-follower, it will mean the **death of my mother**. She used to always tell me when I was growing up that I could do anything I wanted with my life, but that if I ever became a Christian, she could not tolerate it and would die.

The **opposition of family** has always been **one of the great stumbling-blocks** in people accepting Christ. But this is the cost of discipleship.

You are **part of a new family**. Your primary family allegiance has been transferred to someone else. This does not mean that you don’t care for your earthly family. You do. But **allegiance to Christ has to come first** for a true disciple.

**Luke 14:28-30** “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”

**The point** of these verses is simple: ***Count the cost!*** The expression “count the cost” in English probably comes from this verse. It costs you everything to be a disciple of Christ. Don’t enter into a discipleship relationship with Jesus unless you have first counted the cost.

Recap: So what is the cost of discipleship? It will cost you everything—so you’d better count the cost if you really want to be a disciple.

### Marks of a Disciple

How can you recognize a disciple of Jesus? What characterizes one of Jesus’ disciples?

The **short answer** is that you **recognize disciples by the fruit** that they produce—by the way that they live.

Illustration: I recently was introduced to **Korean pears**. They are kind of a cross between the mushy pears I’m used to and an apple. They are really good! But I could never recognize a Korean pear tree by looking at the tree. I would have to



see, feel, and especially taste the fruit. In the same way, a disciple can be recognized as a disciple by what he or she does.

**Matthew 7:15-20** “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

Note: In the passage, all five times that it says “bear fruit” or “produces fruit” the word for “bear” or “produce” is the same common verb for *doing* in the rest of the Bible. Here, literally, you “**do fruit**.”

The evidence of true discipleship is in what you do!

The passage we just read comes from the end of Jesus’ **Sermon on the Mount**. (By the way, the Sermon on the Mount is found where? Right, in Matthew—in particular chapters 5-7).

There is probably **no better place** in the Gospels to go **than the Sermon on the Mount** to talk about the marks of a disciple. What does Jesus expect of us? Here’s a quick walk-through the Sermon on the Mount: [Don’t look up the Scriptures]

1. Jesus’ disciples are peacemakers who work for reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24).
2. Jesus’ disciples speak the truth (Matthew 5:37).
3. Jesus’ disciples turn the other cheek and go the extra mile (Matthew 5:39-42).
4. Jesus’ disciples show love to their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Matthew 5:44).
5. Jesus’ disciples give to the poor, pray, and fast in secret (Matthew 6:3-4, 6, 17-18), not for public acclaim.
6. Jesus’ disciples store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matthew 6:19-20).
7. Jesus’ disciples seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

8. Jesus' disciples take the log out of their own eye before taking the speck out of a brother or sister's eye (Matthew 7:5).
9. Jesus' disciples trustingly pray to their heavenly Father (Matthew 7:7-11; 6:9-13).
10. In summary, Jesus' disciples obey the teachings of Jesus and teach others to do so (Matthew 28:18-20).

**Matthew's Gospel ends** with Jesus speaking **the Great Commission** to his disciples. Let's read it:

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

**In Greek** the only **main verb** in the sentence, that is, the only command in the sentence is to "**make disciples.**" This is what we are called to do. But how do we do it? Jesus says we do it by "teaching them to observe all that I've commanded them." That is the part of the Great Commission we often forget about. Our calling as disciples of Jesus is to make other disciples by teaching them to obey everything that he has commanded.

Application: So, we've been talking about the marks of being a disciple. **Suppose that you were on trial for being a disciple** of Jesus. Would there be **enough evidence** to convict you? If witnesses were brought forward who knew you but didn't know that you went to church, would they be able to identify things in your life that mark you as a disciple of Christ?

### Living as a Disciple

But **let's not**—at the end of this talk—**become moralists** like the "Moralistic Therapeutic Deists." We cannot simply determine to do these things because we know they are the right thing to do. We do not have strength in ourselves to live this way.

**But how are you to live it out?**

There are **two things** you have to remember.

1. Life as a disciple is grounded in what Jesus did in his death and resurrection.

This is the time to remember what we talked about last week. It is on the **basis of Jesus' own death and resurrection** on our behalf that we have the ability to do what he commands us to do. He has **broken the power of death and sin and Satan by his death** on the cross and proven that he has through his resurrection from the dead. If we have come to him through repentance and faith, he has broken the power of sin in our lives and provided the basis for us to live as he wants us to live.

2. Life as a disciple is enabled by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to send in his name.

**John 7:37-39** Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this he spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

**John 16:7** "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

And I think today he once again summons us to follow.

Please close your eyes and let me read to you again Jesus' summons that I read at the beginning of this talk:

**Matthew 11:28-30** "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Keep your eyes closed.

I will read a responsive prayer based upon these verses. I will pray a line and you pray it after me if it communicates what is on your own heart.

Precious Master and Savior Jesus

You've invited me to come  
I come to you today  
I am weary and burdened  
You have offered to give me rest  
I receive the rest you give to me  
You have told me to put on a yoke  
I accept your yoke  
Please place it upon me  
I submit myself to you  
As your disciple  
I want to learn from you  
I want to sit at your feet  
I want to walk with you  
I want to take up my cross  
And follow you  
Thank you for your gentleness  
Thank you for the rest that you give  
I am and forever will be  
Your disciple

I pray in your very own name  
In the name of Jesus,  
Amen

## New Testament Fluency

### Day 4

#### Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Gospels song and the Acts & Letters of Paul Song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 4 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 4 NT Acts & Letters of Paul Lyrics small for class
- Day 4 NT Matching Activity Acts & Letters of Paul
- Day 4 NT Matching Activity Acts & Letters of Paul (answer key) [for reference...don't hand out]

#### Class Layout:

- Open with Gospels song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes for a few minutes in preparation for the quiz.
- Quiz over the entire Gospels Song. Quizzed orally, giving questions twice—no repeats. SAY: “Draw a line underneath ‘John alone’ on your quiz template. Your possible answers are all above the line. In other words, the only options for this quiz are All Four Gospels, The Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark, Mark and Luke, Matthew and Luke, Matthew alone, Mark alone, Luke alone, and John alone.”
  1. Where is the account of the *birth* of John the Baptist? [Luke]
  2. In which book or books does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead? [John]
  3. Where is the Parable of the Sheep and Goats? [Matthew]
  4. In which book or books does Jesus heal a demonized man at a synagogue? [Mark and Luke]

5. Where is the feeding of the 5,000? [All four Gospels]
  6. Where does Jesus say to Peter: “Feed my sheep”? [John]
  7. Where does Jesus raise Jairus’s daughter from the dead? [Synoptic Gospels]
  8. Where is the Parable of the Prodigal Son? [Luke]
  9. Where is the transfiguration of Jesus? [Synoptic Gospels]
  10. Where do we learn about the burial of Jesus after the crucifixion? [All four Gospels]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.] “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Reminder: This week we are going to be starting on Acts & Letters of Paul. But you will still be quizzed on what we’ve learned in our Gospels song. So keep reviewing!
  - Questions and Answers from your reading in the books of Luke and John. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of Luke and John that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything that you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 4: Are we ashamed of the gospel? (Acts & Romans) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Hand out the Day 4 NT Acts & Letters of Paul lyrics.
  - Play the new song—Acts & Letters of Paul—for them to listen to.
  - Day 4 NT Acts & Letters of Paul Matching Activity. “Look at the Acts & Letters of Paul song and match as quickly as you can the correct idea with the book or books in which it is found. There are 25. Let’s see who can get them all first.”

Instructional Section for Day 4  
Are we ashamed of the gospel?  
Acts & Romans

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Tell a story about a time where you were ashamed of the gospel, or that someone else was ashamed of the gospel. Or, conversely, open with a story about you or someone else you know who started out timid about sharing your faith in Jesus with someone else, but after doing it, it turned about to be a really good thing.]

Transition: Today **we’re moving into Acts & the Letters of Paul section**, but **focusing upon Acts and Romans**. Both Acts and Romans **focus on the good news** about Jesus Christ, that is, **the Gospel**. **Acts** is a **historical account**—written by Luke—of the spread of the gospel after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. **Romans** is a **letter** written by Paul to the Christians living in Rome. So the two books are written by two different people, in two different literary styles, for two completely different purposes. But what they share is an emphasis on the gospel.

Let’s begin with the book of Acts. Your new song lays out what happens in the book. Let’s look at each line and see what we learn about the gospel.

“Acts continues Luke’s account”

Acts is **Part 2 of the book of Luke**. Luke describes Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. At the beginning of the book of Acts, Jesus ascends into

heaven. **You can think of Luke** as the acts of Jesus Christ on the earth before his ascension, **and the book of Acts** as the **acts of Jesus Christ on the earth through his disciples** after he ascends into heaven.

“The Spirit comes at Pentecost”

Jesus had **promised** that he would **send the Holy Spirit**. On the day of Pentecost **he filled his disciples** with the Holy Spirit and they spoke about the death and resurrection of Jesus with courage and boldness.

**Acts 2:4** says: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...”

Question: **What do we learn** about the gospel from the account of Pentecost in the book of Acts? We learn that **the power** for **proclaiming** the good news is **the power of the Holy Spirit**.

Note that there **also is an emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Romans**—in **chapter 8**, though I will not mention it when I talk about Romans today.

“Peter in prison, Stephen stoned”

**Persecution** against the church started by the **religious community** in Jerusalem, the same ones who put Jesus to death.

**Peter** is in and out of **prison** in the book of Acts and in **chapter 7 Stephen**, a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian, speaks out boldly in the name of Christ and is **stoned to death** by the Sanhedrin.

Question: **What do we learn** about the gospel from what happened to Peter and Stephen in the book of Acts?

We learn that **the gospel is so valuable that it is worth suffering and dying for**.

“Saul and Cornelius called”

**Saul**, who is also called Paul in the book of Acts and in our song, **is a young Jewish zealot** who decides to try to stop the new Christians—the followers of the Way, as they were called. He’s **on his way to Damascus** to try to find Christians there when he encounters the resurrected Jesus. He’s struck



blind and so he has to be led by the hand into the city of Damascus. A few days later a Christian named Ananias is sent by God to heal him and baptize him as a Christian. He also tells him that he is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. So Paul—or Saul as he’s still called at this point in the story—starts publicly telling everyone he knows about Jesus.

Question: **What do we learn about the Gospel from the story of Saul’s conversion?** We learn that **no one is unreachable by God**. Not even a persecutor of Christians is outside of the realm of those whom God can reach.

**Cornelius** was a **Roman centurion** who feared God. He wasn’t partially Jewish at all; he was **100% and completely Gentile** like most of us in this room. God showed Peter in a vision that **he shouldn’t make distinctions between Jews and Gentiles** and that the gospel was for everyone.

Question: **What do we learn about the gospel** from the stories of Saul and Cornelius in the book of Acts?

We learn that **the gospel is for everyone who believes**, whether Jew or Gentile.

“Paul embarks on three journeys. Stops at Corinth and Ephesus. Imprisonment in Palestine. Waiting for trial in Rome.”

**The second half**—the largest half of the book of Acts—is primarily the **story of the apostle Paul**. Although Paul was a former Pharisee and persecutor of the church, he was saved on the Damascus Road when the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to him. He became the most famous missionary of the early church, traveling on **three missionary journeys** and eventually being imprisoned and later killed for his faith.

Question: **What do we learn** about the gospel from Paul’s life as described in the book of Acts?

We learn that **the message** needs to be **taken to everyone on the face of the earth**, that is, that **missions matters** immensely.

**In summary:** From the book of Acts, we learn that

- we get boldness for proclaiming the gospel from the Holy Spirit,

- it is important enough to suffer and die for
- it crosses ethnic and social barriers
- and it needs to be taken to the ends of the world—that world missions matters.

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OK, let's turn our attention to the book of Romans.

The thesis verse of the book of Romans is Romans 1:16-17. Let's look at it.

**Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous shall live by faith."

He says here:

- that he is not ashamed of the gospel,
- that the gospel is the power of God that brings people to salvation,
- that getting right with God is by faith, and
- that the gospel is both for Jews and Gentiles.

Now, let's suppose that you wanted to **define "gospel."** We've been talking about it a lot already, but **what exactly is the gospel? What if you want to share it** with someone else? What will you share? **What if you want to become a Christian?** What do you believe?

The **best place to go in the Bible** to answer this question is the **book of Romans.**

Our song lays out the structure of Romans:

"In Romans all of us have sinned  
 The gospel shows God's righteousness  
 God will justify in Christ  
 Everyone who believes  
 We died and rose and live in Christ  
 The Spirit helps us overcome  
 The Gentiles also grafted in  
 Let us build each other up"

An old way of talking about the elements of the gospel is by talking about “**the Romans Road.**”

The Romans Road is simply walking through the book of Romans in order to answer the question: What is the Gospel?

So what is the Gospel? Let’s take a walk on the Romans Road and see what it says about the Gospel:

### **First, the bad news**

#### **SIN.**

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Everyone has sinned—no exceptions.

#### **WRATH.**

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness

**Romans 2:5** But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God

What this means is that **God is a holy God who must punish sin.** If he were not to punish sin, he would no longer be holy and he would no longer be righteous. He *must* punish sin.

#### **DEATH.** Rom 6:23a

**Romans 6:23a** For the wages of sin is death...

**The solution** That is, God’s solution!

#### **THE CROSS.**

**Romans 6:23** ...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

**The only way** that God could continue to be completely holy and righteous and still forgive us our sins was **Jesus dying in our place**. He took all of the punishment that should have been ours upon himself and offers eternal life to us as a gift.

## **THE RESURRECTION.**

**Romans 4:23-25** Now not for his [Abraham's] sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, he who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

The **resurrection proved that Jesus has the right** to release us from the requirement that we be put to death for our sin.

## **JUSTIFICATION.**

**Romans 3:24** being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus

**Romans 5:9** Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

The main thing to remember is that “justified” or “justification” is a **legal term**. We are **acquitted**. The verdict rendered against us “Guilty!” turns to a verdict of “Innocent!” because of Jesus.

## **ATONEMENT.**

**Romans 3:24-25** being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption<sup>5</sup> which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation<sup>6</sup> in his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed

I know that the words “redemption” and “propitiation” are big theological sounding words, but they’re not difficult to understand. **Redemption** means that **Jesus has bought us out of slavery** to our sin, and **propitiation** means that **Jesus Christ is the sacrifice who has taken the wrath and judgment that we deserved upon himself as our substitute.**

## **FAITH.**

**Romans 3:26-28** for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

**Romans 10:9-10** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

You **enter through the door of faith.** There is no other way to receive God’s gift of salvation apart from believing in Jesus Christ.

**[READ]: In summary,** we learn that the Gospel includes the bad news, that we are all sinners, deserving of God’s wrath and death for our sin. And the good news, that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again from the dead on our behalf, taking God’s wrath upon himself so that we didn’t have to, declaring us “not guilty” in the court of law, and buying us out of slavery to sin. It is offered to us as a gift and received by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the gospel.

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<sup>5</sup> “Redemption” means that Jesus has paid the price to buy us out of slavery to sin.

<sup>6</sup> “Propitiation” means that Jesus Christ is the sacrifice who has taken the wrath and judgment that we deserved upon himself as our substitute. He is the “wrath-bearer.”

Now, back to our **original question**. **Are we ashamed of the gospel?**

Illustration: [Tell another example of a time when you failed to share the gospel when you should have or when you did share the gospel even though you were afraid.]

**Let me say one more thing** before I'm done. There is **one perspective** that can be very helpful to you if you want to share your faith with others. **That perspective is that you cannot possibly save anyone yourself**. Only **God opens up people's hearts** to believe.

In **Romans 1** it says that **God has revealed himself** through **what he has made**, even if people don't want to see it. He has created a whole beautiful world to try to tell people that he is there.

In **Romans 2** it says that **God has revealed himself** to people **through their consciences**, though they don't listen to this testimony.

And in **Acts**, we see time and again that **God is the one who is drawing people to himself**. He appears to **Paul on the road to Damascus** and calls him; he makes a way for **Cornelius**, a God-fearing Gentile to come to faith. And a woman named **Lydia**, after whom my oldest daughter is named, comes to faith in Acts 16:14 because God drew her to himself.

**Acts 16:14** A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

**I am so helped by this perspective**. God is actively at work showing evidence of his existence and **drawing people to a place of openness to the Gospel**. Even though people sometimes reject you when you share with them like my neighbor did once again, we need to be attuned to the ones that God is drawing and **look for those open hearts**.

**It may be** that we decide **not to be ashamed of the Gospel**, open our mouths to share it with a friend, a relative, a neighbor, or even a stranger, and we **find out that God had already been preparing** that person, or even that that person at that moment was praying that God would show him that he was really there!

As we have been doing weekly, let us close with a responsive prayer to the things we have been discussing.

Righteous and holy God  
You are fully justified in punishing sin  
You are holy and righteous  
So we thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus  
who died in our place  
so that we might be redeemed,  
justified in your court,  
and raised with Christ on the final day.  
We confess that we are timid,  
afraid to share the good news  
sometimes even ashamed of the gospel  
But we do not want to be  
Grant us grace to share it  
with Jew and Gentile alike,  
empowered by your Spirit,  
and transformed by the gospel that we share

In the name of Jesus our Savior,  
Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 5

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Acts & Letters of Paul Song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 5 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 5 NT Writing Activity [keep at front to hand out at the end of class]

Class Layout:

- Open with Acts & Letters of Paul song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes for a few minutes in preparation for the quiz.
- Quiz over All four Gospels-Romans. “Draw a line under ‘Romans’ on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line.”
  1. Where do we learn that Paul went on three missionary journeys? [Acts]
  2. Where does Jesus wash the feet of his disciples? [John alone]
  3. Where does Jesus choose twelve disciples? [Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke]
  4. Where do we learn that we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ? [Romans]
  5. Where is the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? [Luke alone]
  6. Which two Gospels share a lot of the same sayings of Jesus in the sermons of Jesus that they record? [Matthew and Luke]
  7. Where does Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a donkey as people shout “Hosanna”? [All four Gospels]



8. Where is Jesus tempted by the devil in the desert? [Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke]
9. Where is the Sermon on the Mount? [Matthew alone]
10. Where does it describe the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost? [Acts]

- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.] “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
- Questions and Answers from your homework and reading in the books of Acts and Romans. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of Acts and Romans that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything that you would like to discuss?”
- Instructional Section for Day 5: What is Christian community? (1 & 2 Corinthians) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
- Day 5 NT Writing Activity  
Instructions: Write one paragraph out of your head for each of these two books: Acts and Romans. (If you have to peek, you can.) These are to be summaries of the contents of these books. Suppose that you are writing an introduction to the Bible for someone who has never read the Bible before. Explain what each book is about. Use regular words that people who aren’t Christians can understand, and try not to use the words of the songs themselves, unless you are writing down someone’s name. You’ll have about 5 minutes for each book; 10 minutes total. [Note to teacher: Have half of the people in the room start with Acts, and half of the people start with Romans in case we don’t get it all done.]
- Follow-up: “Is there someone who would be willing to read what you wrote about Acts? Is there someone who would be willing to read what you wrote about Romans?”

Instructional Section for Day 5  
What is Christian community?  
1 & 2 Corinthians

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Explain the process by which you became convinced that being part of a church—a community of believers in Jesus—was a really important part of your spiritual life. Or, simply tell a story about a church that shows how important it is.]

**Today I want to focus on ten marks** of a Christian community from Paul’s first and second letters to the Corinthians and three dangers to a Christian community from those same letters.

You will discover quickly that **I do not believe that “going to church” is important**, if it simply means showing up for a church service on a Sunday morning. **What really matters is being an active and involved** member of a Christian community.

First let’s talk about the **backgrounds** to the letters Paul wrote to the Corinthians. We learn in the book of **Acts** that Paul went on three missionary journeys. On his second journey, he spent most of his time in what is now modern-day Greece. The place he **stayed the longest on the second journey**—a year and a half it says in the book of Acts (18:11)—was in the city of **Corinth**. Along with a couple named Priscilla and Aquila and two co-workers, Timothy and Silas, a congregation of Christians got going in that city.

But after Paul left the city and headed out on his **third missionary journey**, he **kept praying** for the believers there and **kept sending them letters**. He was really **concerned** because there were **lots of problems** in the developing congregation in Corinth. Our **song** lays out some of the main topics he covers in these letters:

“1 Corinthians records problems and divisions  
Lawsuits, immoralities, then to questions moves  
Marriage issues, idol meat, covered heads, the Bread and Wine  
Gifts and roles, the greatest love, resurrection, too.”

“2 Corinthians records many of Paul’s sufferings  
We are only jars of clay, the covenant is new  
Collections for Jerusalem, defending Paul’s apostleship  
The thorn in Paul reminds him that the power is from God.”

But in between all of the problems Paul addressed in these letters, **we learn** a lot about the **marks of a Christian community**.

Let’s look through the list below. What makes this list interesting to me is that these are **the types of things I learned** about living as a Christian community in the **extremely unreached area of the Middle East** where my wife and I lived.

[Note: Move through these very quickly—don’t linger. Just give the point, make one remark, then move on!]

#### Ten Marks of a Christian Community in the Corinthian Letters:

“The first mark of a Christian community is...” [follow this pattern throughout]

1. Adherence to and proclamation of the Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-15; 1 Corinthians 1-2).

**1 Corinthians 15:1-5** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve.

There is **no such thing as *Christian* community** without adherence to and proclamation of the gospel.

“The second mark of a Christian community is...

2. Baptism & the Lord’s Supper (Acts 18:8 in Corinth; 1 Cor 1:13-15; 1 Cor 11:23-26, cf. 17-34)

For example, one of the people who came to the Lord during Paul’s time in Corinth was a man named Crispus, who was the leader of the synagogue. Both Acts and 1 Corinthians mention his baptism.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul wrote about the Lord’s Supper, that is, the sharing of the bread and wine that Jesus instituted before his death. But unfortunately he was **writing about it because the richer members** of the congregation were **not sharing their food** with the poorer members.

“The third mark of a Christian community is...

3. Teaching & mentoring (1 Corinthians 3)

Again, this is written in the context of a problem...

**1 Corinthians 3:1-2** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly.

The rest of the chapter **builds on the comments he makes in these two verses**.

“The fourth mark of a Christian community is...

4. Church discipline & restoration (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2)

**1 Corinthians 5** is all about **the need for putting a professing believer out of the congregation** because he is living an **openly immoral lifestyle** which is ruining the testimony of the Christian congregation. He is unwilling to repent and so Paul says that he should not be treated as a brother anymore.

**2 Corinthians 2**—probably a different case than 1 Corinthians 5—is about **restoring** someone who has repented after being disciplined.

“The fifth mark of a Christian community is...

5. The church as family (marriage & singleness) (1 Corinthians 7)

1 Corinthians 7 has a long discussion about **singleness, marriage, and what he refers to as “the present crisis,”** all within the assumption that the church is a new family. Paul’s **favorite designation for believers** in the Corinthian letters and in his other letters is **“brothers and sisters”** (cf. 1 Cor 7:15).

“The sixth mark of a Christian community is...

6. Body life & love (1 Corinthians 12-13)

**1 Corinthians 12** talks about how God has **placed** each person as a member of a body and that each member has a **role** to play in **building up** that body.

Illustration: If God has made you an **“eye,”** Paul says, don’t look down on someone that God has made an **“ear”** or a **“hand”**!

And 1 Corinthians 13 is the incredible **poem of love** that extols love above everything else. It’s probably Paul’s most famous writing.

“The seventh mark of a Christian community is...

7. Corporate worship (1 Corinthians 14)

1 Corinthians 14 talks about the importance of **each person bringing something** to the corporate worship of the church.

“The eighth mark of a Christian community is...

8. Shared suffering (2 Corinthians 1, 4, 6, 7)

**2 Corinthians** tells us **a lot about Paul’s sufferings** and how that relates to the Christian community in Corinth. Here is **one** of many **examples**:

**2 Corinthians 4:7-11** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being

delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

“The ninth mark of a Christian community is...

9. Generous giving & service (2 Corinthians 8-9)

**2 Corinthians 8-9** is all about Paul **collecting money** from some of the churches he has planted to take to the brothers and sisters living in **Jerusalem** who are extremely poor. He mentions a group of believers in **Macedonia** who are **very generous** even though they themselves are **poor**.

“The tenth mark of a Christian community is...

10. God-appointed leadership (2 Corinthians 10-13)

In **2 Corinthians 10-13** Paul has to deal with people who are into **power, prestige, and presentation**. They are challenging his claim to be an apostle while **claiming to be apostles themselves**, even though he was the one who planted the church and still had spiritual oversight for the church from a distance.

**[Read]:** “What are the marks of a true Christian community? A true Christian community is firmly committed to the truth of the gospel, follows the Lord’s teaching and example in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, teaches and trains people to follow Christ, lives as a family, disciplines sin, emphasizes the importance of each person’s role to the health of a body, demonstrates love, worships together, suffers together, gives generously together, and graciously supports and follows the leadership God has put in place.”

Illustration: [Transition by telling about a church or Christian group you have been a part of where you saw these ten marks displayed. Or tell of one where you didn’t see these ten marks displayed. Then move onto the three dangers.]

There are **a few dangers** that are quite pronounced and extremely dangerous for a small community like the emerging community we were part of starting in the Middle East or like the small community of believers founded by Paul in Corinth. **Here are three dangers to a Christian community** in the Corinthian Letters. These are also **warnings to us...**

Three Dangers to a Christian Community in the Corinthian Letters:

1. The first danger to a Christian community is...DIVISIONS

The Corinthian community **divided into groups** and some of them were having trouble with their founder, Paul.

**1 Corinthians 1:11-13** For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul" and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Illustration: I have heard of Christians **dividing** over everything from **styles of worship music, to the color of the carpet** in the main meeting room.

Illustration: In 1 Corinthians 6, we learn that Christians were opening **lawsuits** against other Christians in secular court. It was hurting the community and it was hurting their testimony in the world.

Illustration: We will burn brightly if we burn together. **A fire** stays hot and burning when all the logs and sticks are close together. **If you remove one of the logs** from the fire, it will burn out—or start a forest fire somewhere else!

Divisions among Christians are one of the **biggest dangers** to a Christian community that should be marked by love.

2. The second danger to a Christian community is...TOLERATING SIN

A Christian community that is **unwilling to confront sin** and even go to the level of discipline when necessary **will eventually cease to be a group worth calling a Christian community**.

Illustration: In **1 Corinthians 5** we learn about **a man who is living with his father's wife** and yet still wanting to be a part of the Christian community. Paul says that **if the Corinthians continue to tolerate** such unconfessed sin, eventually **sin will infect the entire community**.

Illustration: Paul uses the **analogy of the influence that a little bit of yeast** has on a lump of dough. It only takes a little bit of yeast, but eventually it

goes into the entire lump of dough and changes the character of the dough. So you cannot tolerate it.

This is a difficult but important word in **a generation that wants to tolerate everything**. Paul would say that if a church wants to truly be a Christian community, it cannot tolerate sin.

3. The third danger to a Christian community is...**UNDERMINING GOD-APPOINTED LEADERSHIP**.

**2 Corinthians 10-13** describes people who were **trying to undermine Paul** in every way that they can. They were claiming that Paul wasn't a real apostle; and that they were the true apostles of Christ.

It is **not that a church's leadership always makes the right decisions**. They don't. But they have been entrusted by God with this responsibility and if you have committed yourself to being a part of a Christian community, you must **be very careful to try to support your leadership** in every way that you can.

Illustration: Let me give you an **action-point** on this one. If someone comes to you and starts **gossiping** about something one of your church leaders has done, **don't assume** that what that person is saying is correct. **I recently overheard** a conversation where someone started speaking very negatively about his church's leadership to a friend. Fortunately **the person listening told** the first person that **he did not want to assume the worst** of his leaders, and would continue to support them unless he became certain that his leaders had acted in a way that was not pleasing to the Lord.

We **actually often do not know what is going on behind the scenes** because the **church's leaders are being careful not to say too much** so that they can **protect** people. Again, this doesn't mean that they're always right; but it does mean that you need to do everything you can to support them unless your Bible-informed conscience will not allow you to do so.

**In closing**, let me say that a true **Christian community** is one of the most important things in **drawing people to Christ**.

Illustration: [You could cycle back to one of the stories about Christian community you have already talk earlier in your talk. It would be especially



good if you have ever been part of a Christian community where people are drawn to Jesus Christ simply because of seeing the way that Christians live with one another in love and unity.]

As we do each week, let's close with a prayer. I'll pray the first line and you follow by praying after me.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for our Christian community  
Thank you for the love that we share  
Thank you that we are a body  
Each with different roles  
Thank you that we are not identical  
But that we are all part of one body.  
Thank you that we are a family  
Brothers and sisters indeed  
Brought together by Jesus  
We want to show the world  
The truth of the good news  
By being united  
By loving one another  
By sharing your Supper  
In teaching and mentoring  
In marriage and singleness  
In discipline and restoration  
In worship and suffering  
In generosity and service  
And in the way that we love one another.

In the name of Jesus our Lord,  
Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 6

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Acts & Letters of Paul Song and Gospels Song). Note: If you normally use recorded music for the opening song—which works quite well—this would be a good day to bring a guitar for review of the Gospels Song at the end of the period if you know someone who can play the song.
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 6 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]

Class Layout:

- Open with Acts & Letters of Paul song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer
- Quizzing with one another for a few minutes in preparation for the quiz.  
SAY: “Call out a book or section, like ‘synoptic gospels’ and quickly say everything you can think that is in it”
- Quiz over All four Gospels-2 Corinthians. “Draw a line under ‘2 Corinthians’ on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line.”
  1. Paul had to address the problem of divisions among Christians in this letter [1 Corinthians]
  2. Jesus tells the Parable of the Lost Sheep [Matthew and Luke]
  3. Jesus tells the Parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus [Luke]
  4. Paul is under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome before the emperor [Acts]
  5. Paul’s thorn-in-the-flesh [2 Corinthians]
  6. Jesus says, “I am the bread of life” [John]

7. Wise men from the east bring gifts to the baby Jesus [Matthew]
  8. Jesus tells a parable about a farmer who sowed seed that fell onto different kinds of soils [Synoptic Gospels]
  9. Paul addresses the problem of believers opening lawsuits against other believers before non-believing judges [1 Corinthians]
  10. The Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost [Acts]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.]
  - “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from homework and reading in the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 6: Is the dividing wall really broken down? (Galatians & Ephesians) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Sing through the Gospels Song before we are done, either with a guitar or with the recorded music.

Instructional Section for Day 6  
Is the dividing wall really broken down?  
Galatians & Ephesians

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Talk about the Berlin Wall.] The Berlin Wall was a **12 foot high concrete** wall built around the entire western side of Berlin by communist East Germany to keep the citizens of communist East Berlin separated from their capitalist counterparts in West Berlin. The wall was 140 kilometers long (**87 miles**)—all the way around the city. There was **another fence** on the East side of the wall and a **wide open area** that was **patrolled by guards and dogs**, which itself was watched over by **116 guard towers manned by guards with machine guns**. The wall was a very imposing structure and represented all the strength of the Eastern Block countries during the Cold War Era. Many people tried to flee East Berlin into West Berlin by climbing over the wall or by digging tunnels under the “death strip”—as that middle area was called. It’s estimated that more than **200 people died** trying to cross from East Berlin into West Berlin during the years the wall was up. In 1989, the East German government opened up the gates and let their people travel to West Berlin, and in the euphoria that followed, the German people started breaking down the Berlin Wall—piece by piece—and East and West Germany were soon re-united.

Transition: **Today** we’re going to talk about **a much more important wall** that has been broken down than the Berlin Wall. We’re going to talk about **the wall between Jews and Gentiles** that has been broken down in Jesus. And we’re going to **focus** on Paul’s letters known to us today as the books of **Galatians and Ephesians**.

Today's theme, that of breaking down the wall between Jews and Gentiles, comes from **Ephesians 2:14**: *"For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall."*

In **week 2 and week 4** in our teaching time **we focused on another wall**, although we didn't mention the metaphor of a wall at all. But we talked about **the separation** that was created between God and us **because of our sin**. That separation—or wall—was broken down by Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection on our behalf. We received it by faith and were joined to Christ.

In other words, **during those weeks** we focused upon our **vertical relationship** with God.

And **Paul in Galatians and Ephesians** as well **refers** to this vertical relationship with God. Paul could hardly do otherwise since he was so focused on the gospel! **Galatians 3:26** says, *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* And **Ephesians 2:4-5** says, *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."*

**But what about the horizontal?** The horizontal theme **is just as strong in the books of Galatians and Ephesians**. In other words, Jesus broke down the wall that divided Jew from Gentile. And that's what I want to focus on today.

Jesus has broken down the dividing wall

Let's begin by looking at Ephesians 2:11-14

**Ephesians 2:11-14** Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall...

**Look once again at that last sentence:** “For he himself is our peace, who made both groups (that is, both Jews and Gentiles) into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall...”

Illustration: There is a Jewish historian named **Josephus** who wrote about the temple in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. He tells us that Gentiles could go into the temple courtyard, but only into the outer courtyard. Only Jews were allowed into the inner courtyard of the temple. And to make sure that only Jews went into the inner courtyard, **a four and a half foot high wall** was constructed between the inner and outer courtyard with **thirteen inscriptions** warning Gentiles to stay out. **Archeologists have actually dug up two** of these original inscriptions. Here’s a translation of what it says:

[**Read aloud**] “No foreigner is to enter within the forecourt and the balustrade around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his subsequent death.”<sup>7</sup>

Don’t forget that there were **13 of these signs!**

When Paul wrote about the “dividing wall” in Ephesians 2:14, he probably had that wall in the middle of the court of the temple in his mind.

And what’s amazing is that his big point is that Jesus has broken down the wall and that Gentiles along with Jews have equal access to God through Jesus Christ.

Paul continues the thought in verse 18:

**Ephesians 2:18-22** ...for through him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The dividing wall has been broken down! There is to be no more separation between Jews and Gentiles!

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<sup>7</sup> English translation from Barrett, *Background*, 53, cited in Clinton E. Arnold, “Ephesians,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 3: *Romans to Philemon*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 317. A photograph of the inscription is on 316.

And Galatians says the same thing:

**Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The issue of separation between people is **not just about Jew and Greek**, it **extends** to other things that separate us like **race, social class, or denominations**. That is, *in Christ* it is overcome. Those who believe in Christ are brothers and sisters of one another: We are one *in Christ*.

### Paul's Own Calling

We learn something else from Galatians and Ephesians. We learn that **one of the most important parts of the mission** God had **given to Paul** was to **announce** that Jesus had broken down the wall between Jews and Gentiles!

**Galatians 1:13-16** For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood...

He continues further in Galatians 2:9:

**Galatians 2:9** ...and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas [Peter] and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

He explains even more about his ministry-calling to the Gentiles in Ephesians 3.

**Ephesians 3:1-3, 6-8** For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief...to be specific,

that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of his power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ...

God put the apostle Paul into a very important point in history, to announce the breaking down of the walls between Jews and Gentiles!

Problem: Some were living like the wall wasn't broken down

But **although** God had broken down the dividing wall and had commissioned Paul to tell all the Gentiles that they were now included with the Jews in what God was doing, **there were problems working this out in the early church**. Here are **two of this biggest**, both found in the book of Galatians:

**Issue #1:** Some people who called themselves Christians **told the Gentiles that they had to get circumcised and live like Jews** if they wanted to be good Christians.

Paul's response is swift and strong: **he calls it a false gospel!**

**Galatians 5:1-2, 6-7** It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you...For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? (note also 1:6-9)

**Issue #2:** **Some of the early leaders**, including **Peter** himself, weren't always living like the dividing wall had been broken down. **Paul publicly** had to **challenge** Peter about this.

**Galatians 2:11-14** But when Cephas [that is, Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they



were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas [Peter] in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

This is a very **intense scene**. Why would Paul publicly rebuke Peter? Peter was the most important leader in the early church. Was Paul right in this?

Yes, the reason **Paul did right** in this instance is **because divisions among Christians is extremely serious**. Christ has broken down the dividing wall! **We shouldn’t have divisions among us**. We need to live like the dividing wall has been broken down. Peter wasn’t living like the dividing wall had been broken down. He needed to be corrected.

Applications:

**Returning** to our opening illustration about the **Berlin Wall**...can you imagine how silly of a situation it would have been **if the East Germans had opened up access** to the West for all of their citizens, **but then everyone decided to leave the Berlin Wall standing and keep living separate existences**? That’s outrageous! One of the most important events of the twentieth century took place the day those gates were opened. They *had* to begin to dismantle the wall.

Our **opening question** for today was: “**Is the dividing wall really broken down?**” The answer is: “**Yes!** Absolutely! Jesus Christ has broken it down. We are one in Christ. There is no division between people on the basis of race, social class, denomination, or anything else! If you believe in Christ, then you are not only joined to Christ, you are joined to one another.

And like the people on the streets of Berlin, we need to systematically dismantle any remnant of the wall that lingers within us.

- We **cannot tolerate** people calling themselves Christians and yet harboring any sort of **superiority toward people of differing ethnicities**. The dividing wall has been broken down by Christ! Let’s make sure no dividing wall is remaining in our hearts.
- We must **not divide over economic standing**. People who are better-to-do don’t often like hanging out with people who don’t have as much. Christians *must* not allow such things to continue.

- And though we have many different Christian **denominations and traditions**, those of us who truly know Christ are one with each other and we need to work for unity in prayer, purpose, and mission.

The dividing wall has been broken down! Now, we just need to live like it...

Let's bow our heads and pray this prayer aloud after me:

"Dear Lord

Thank you for breaking down the wall

Thank you that access has been opened

Thank you that we have one Father

Thank you that we are united in Christ

Thank you that we share one Spirit

Grant us your grace

To break up divisions

To live in unity

And to demonstrate oneness in Christ

In the name of Jesus Christ

Who broke down the dividing wall

Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 7

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Acts & Letters of Paul Song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 7 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 7 NT Recognition of Quotations Activity [keep in front to hand out later in the class session]

Class Layout:

- Review song. SAY: “Today instead of starting with the Acts & Letters of Paul song, let’s review the Gospels song at the beginning.”
- Lead in prayer.
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes for a few minutes in preparation for the quiz.
- Quiz over All four Gospels-Ephesians. “Draw a line under ‘Ephesians’ on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line.”
  1. In this letter, Paul lists out lots of the sufferings he and his co-workers endured for spreading the gospel [2 Corinthians]
  2. Angels announce the birth of the Messiah to shepherds [Luke alone]
  3. “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” [Ephesians]
  4. Jesus speaks “woes” to the scribes and the Pharisees [Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke]
  5. Paul addresses specific issues related to marriage and singleness [1 Corinthians]
  6. Jesus speaks the Upper Room Discourse [John alone]
  7. Cornelius believes [Acts]

8. In this letter, Paul goes into some of his personal history to defend the message he is preaching. He says he got the message he is preaching directly from Christ [Galatians]
  9. Judas betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver [All four Gospels]
  10. Peter is imprisoned for preaching a resurrected Jesus [Acts]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.]
  - “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from their homework in Galatians and Ephesians. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of Galatians and Ephesians that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 7: How do we live it out? (Philippians & Colossians) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Day 7 NT Recognition of Quotations Activity. “We have an activity to do together to help us make *real connections* to what’s actually found in the Bible.” [Hand out the photocopied activity to everyone.] “Put yourselves into groups of 4 or 5. *Don’t look at the answers on the third page.* Read the directions at the top of the page and go from there.

Instructional Section for Day 7  
How do we live it out?  
Philippians & Colossians

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

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Opener: [Explain the background to Philippians and Colossians.]

**After** the Apostle Paul went on his **third missionary journey**, he traveled to **Jerusalem**, taking a **money gift** from the churches he had started among the Gentiles to the Jewish believers who were extremely poor. Not too long after arriving in Jerusalem, he was **thrown into prison on false charges**, and then **transferred to Caesarea** where he sat in **prison for two years**. After two years, he **appealed to Caesar**, which meant that he as a Roman citizen could request to be tried by Caesar himself. The ship he traveled on to Rome was **shipwrecked** along the way, but they eventually made it there. When he arrived **in Rome**, he was put under **house arrest** with a guard attached to him day and night while he waited for his trial. He didn’t have freedom of movement, but he could receive people into the place he was kept and **was able to preach and teach** to whoever came during this time. He also was **free to write letters**. **Many New Testament scholars** think that the letters we know of as **Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians** were written during this time. Last week we talked about Ephesians, so this week we won’t talk about it; rather **we will focus upon Philippians and Colossians**.

**Philippians** is a warm, friendly letter. It has often been described as a “**friendship letter**.” Paul has a number of **reasons for writing it**, including:

- 1) to tell them **not to worry** about him while he is imprisoned—the **gospel is getting out** anyway,
- 2) to send back a brother from their congregation named **Epaphroditus** who had gotten sick,
- 3) to **commend Timothy** to them since he was going to visit them, and
- 4) to **thank them for a money gift** they had sent, among other things.

In the midst of this, he **teaches about and models** for the Philippians how to live out their Christian faith.

**Colossians** was written to a congregation that **Paul didn't know personally**. But it was probably started as an extension of the ministry he had on his third journey while he had been ministering in Ephesus. Paul apparently had **heard** that some of the new believers in Colossae were **mixing their faith in Christ both with Jewish practices**, and **with non-Christian folk religious and magical practices**. So he wrote them a letter to **warn them not to combine** their faith with non-Christian ideas, but in the midst of it **offered a lot of practical advice** for living out their **Christian faith**. So that is the theme we will focus on today.

In these two precious letters, Paul offers five key perspectives on how to live out one's faith in Christ. We really want to not just believe it, but to live it. **So, how do we live it out?**

1. We live with a heavenly perspective.

Let's look at a few passages in Philippians and Colossians that focus our attention upon living with a heavenly perspective.

First, the Apostle Paul says that we need to be **constantly thinking** about the **things above**.

**Colossians 3:1-2** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

He also describes us as having a **different citizenship** that is from somewhere else.

**Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body

of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself.

Illustration: Think of **an ambassador** sent by his president **to another country**. Though he is living in the other country, he is living as though he belongs to the country from where he has been sent. It would be totally inappropriate if he started living for the primary benefit of the country to which he had been sent; his allegiance is entirely to the country from which he had been sent.

And Paul was **so focused on heaven**, you can see him *longing to go there*. He doesn't know how the trial will turn out, but he is OK with that because he will either get to leave the world and be with Christ, or he will get to do more "fruitful labor" by bringing more people to Christ.

**Philippians 1:21-25** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith...

Paul's Christ-centeredness in this life largely stemmed from his desire to live eternally with Christ.

So, how do we live it out? We live with an eternal perspective.

2. We don't focus on our past; we focus on knowing Christ more and more.

In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul wrote some about his background. He said that he was:

- Circumcised as a Jew on the eighth day
- From the tribe of Benjamin
- A "Hebrew of Hebrews"
- A Pharisee who followed the law
- So zealous that he persecuted the church
- "As to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless"

But what does Paul say about all of this?

**3:7** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss

**3:8** More than that, I count all things to be loss

**3:8** I have suffered the loss of all things

**3:8** and count them but rubbish

**3:13** forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead

What does he consider so much better that he would count them in comparison as rubbish?

**3:7** for the sake of Christ

**3:8** in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord

**3:8** so that I may gain Christ

**3:10** that I may know him

**3:12** so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

**3:14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

How do we live it out? We live it out *not* by focusing on our past, but by focusing on knowing Christ Jesus more and more every day.

### 3. We live out of what Christ has already done.

There we **lots of moralists in Paul's day** who would have been happy to tell you what you ought to do. They drew up lists of **virtues and list of vices**. Paul is like them in that he draws up lists of virtues and vices in his letters. But there's a huge **difference between him and everyone else**. Paul **grounds his ethics in what Christ has already done**. He says that the way to live a virtuous life by living according to the truths of what God has already brought about through Christ.

So, how *do* you live it out? Paul response is that you should **“become what you are”!**

New Testament scholars refer to this phenomenon in Paul as ***the indicative and the imperative***. What they mean is that Paul didn't just tell people what



they needed to do (the imperative); he grounded his instructions in the *truths* of what God had brought about through Jesus Christ (the indicative).

The easiest way to understand this is to see it in practice.

Let's look at Colossians 3:1-5. Notice that the statements of what Christ had already done are mixed in with the things he is telling them to do. In other words, he is not just instructing them in *what* to do, he is giving the *basis* for what they are to do.

### **Colossians 3:1-5**

*Indicative:* Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ,

Imperative: keep seeking the things above,

*Indicative:* where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Imperative: Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

*Indicative:* For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

*Indicative:* When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Imperative: Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

So, how do we live it out? **We do not simply try really hard** to do what is right. Because of what Christ Jesus has already done for us and in us, we are in a position to be able to live it out. We become what we already are. **We live out of what Christ has already done.**

4. We live it out by loving each other in community.

As we continue the same passage, Paul gives us two lists that should characterize Christians living in community with one another.

Illustration: He **compares** it to **taking off** certain types of clothes and **putting on** certain types of clothes.

Illustration: [Tell a story of a time when you got absolutely filthy and had to change into clean clothes.]

Paul calls us to take off the dirty clothes and put on new clothes:

The old clothes: Col 3:8-9—What you need to take off:

- Anger
- Wrath
- Malice
- Slander
- Abusive speech
- Lying to each other

The new clothes: Col 3:12-14—What you need to put on

- Compassion
- Kindness
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Bearing with one another
- Forgiving each other
- Love

Philippians 2:2-5 adds a few more items:

- Being of the same mind
- Maintaining the same love
- United in spirit
- Intent on one purpose
- Do nothing from selfishness
- Do nothing from empty conceit
- Be humble toward one another
- Don't just look out for your own interests
- Look out for the interests of others

Illustration: In fact, in Philippians 4, we learn about two Christian sisters, **Euodia and Syntyche**, who were not getting along very well. Paul urges them to live in harmony with each other and even asks another friend, Clement, to help them to get along.

So, how do we live it out? We take off—and burn!—the dirty clothes and put on the clean.

## 5. We depend upon the Spirit<sup>8</sup>

This theme is far **less pronounced in Philippians and Colossians** than in many of Paul's letters. But I wanted to **include** it on this list because it is **one of the central issues** in living out the life that God has called us to live, and was very important to Paul.

If you want to spend more time on this, read especially what Paul has written about life in the Holy Spirit in Romans 8 and in Galatians 5. For now, just look at this one verse, not from Philippians or Colossians, but from Galatians:

**Galatians 5:16** But I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

This verse says that one of the key ways to live out the life of holiness that God has called you to live is simply to “walk” in the Spirit. Then you *will not* carry out the desires of the flesh.

This theme is very prominent in Paul. Living out the life that God has called us to is learning how to walk in the Spirit.

So, how do we live out the life God has called us to?

1. We live with a heavenly perspective.
2. We don't focus on our past; we focus on knowing Christ more and more.
3. We live out of what Christ has already done.
4. We live it out by loving each other in community.
5. We depend upon the Spirit.

Let's close our time in the Word by focusing a prayer using the themes of Philippians 3.

Dear Lord,

Whatever was gain to us

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<sup>8</sup> This theme is less pronounced in Philippians and Colossians than most places in Paul, though note Phil 1:19; 3:3; and Col 1:8. For personal study, look at Romans 8 and Galatians 5 for central descriptions of life lived in the Holy Spirit. For more on this topic, see Kenneth Berding, *Walking in the Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

We have counted as loss for your sake  
We count it all to be loss  
In view of the surpassing value  
Of knowing you, Lord Jesus  
We have suffered the loss of all things  
We count them as rubbish  
That we may know you, Christ Jesus  
And the power of your resurrection  
And the fellowship of your sufferings  
Being conformed to your death  
Until the final resurrection of the dead  
We haven't reached it yet  
It isn't completed yet  
But we press on to lay hold  
That for which you took hold of us  
We haven't laid hold of it yet  
But we forget what lies behind  
We reach forward to what lies ahead  
We press on toward the goal  
For the prize of the upward call of God  
In Christ Jesus

In whose name we pray  
Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 8

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Acts & Letters of Paul Song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 8 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Jeopardy set up (either with computer or draw on a white board)

Class Layout:

- Open with Acts & Letters of Paul song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- “Take some time with the person next to you (or the people at your table) and talk about which are the hardest things to keep straight in the Letters of Paul. Ask each other for suggestions on how to remember the ones you’re having the hardest time keeping straight.”
- Quiz over All four Gospels-Colossians/Philemon. “Draw a line under ‘Philemon’ on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line.”
  1. Paul writes strong words against those who are telling the Gentile Christians to get circumcised. He calls such teaching a false gospel [Galatians]
  2. Where do we learn about the stoning of Stephen? [Acts]
  3. Pilate sentences Jesus to death [All four Gospels]
  4. Jesus says to Peter, “Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep.” [John alone]
  5. Paul writes that he has counted everything to be loss so that he might know Christ [Philippians]

6. Paul writes: “Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” [Ephesians]
  7. Jesus speaks these words after his resurrection: “Go and make disciples of all the nations.” [Matthew alone]
  8. In this book, Jesus is portrayed by the author both as a servant and as a sacrifice [Mark]
  9. In this book Paul writes about the question of whether they can eat meat that has first been sacrificed to idols [1 Corinthians]
  10. Jesus turns water into wine [John alone]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.]
  - “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from their homework in Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 8: What does genuine ministry look like? (1&2 Thessalonians, Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Play Jeopardy: Use computer with data projector or hand-write a chart on a white board.

If you are handwriting the game on a board, this is what it should look like:

Places	People	Predicaments	Perspectives	Epistles
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500

Instructions for Jeopardy:

- I will count you off into [four] groups. [Note: Just count people off “1” “2” “3” “4”, or however many groups you decide to have. You can do this with as few as two groups or as many as you want. Perhaps have four, five, or six people in the group. After you have counted them off, have them move to sit with the other people who received the same group number.]
- Please choose one person from your group who doesn’t mind doing addition and subtraction to keep track of the score for your group.
- Each of you will have a turn. When you are the next person in your group, please stand up.
- You must take your turn when it comes.
- I will allow the team that won the previous round to choose the next category and point amount.
- I will read the question/display it on the screen. As soon as you know the answer, clap. [If I’m reading it, I will stop reading and you can answer the question. If I’m displaying it on the screen, you will already be able to see it all.] If you are correct in your answer, you will receive the number of points available. If you are incorrect, you will *lose* that same number of points.
- You have five seconds to answer after you have clapped.
- Your team members can help you.
- As soon as you have said your answer, if it is *incorrect*, you will lose the point value.
- Also, as soon as you have said your answer, if it is incorrect, another person standing from another team can clap and answer correctly and gain the points.
- The correct answer will *always* be a book of the Bible (or a category of books like Synoptic Gospels or Pastoral Letters).
- While we play the game, test yourself to see if you know the answer to the question we are asking.

Jeopardy Questions for Day 8: This day includes the Gospels song and the Acts & Letters of Paul song (Note: There are no questions today for Thessalonians or the Pastoral Letters since we haven’t done homework for them yet.)

(Places for 100) Jesus speaks to the storm and it becomes quiet [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Places for 200) Paul travels on three missionary journeys [Acts]

(Places for 300) Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman beside a well [John]

(Places for 400) Paul writes two chapters about the money gift he is collecting to take to the poorer brothers and sisters in Jerusalem [2 Corinthians]

(Places for 500) This letter says that Christ is over and before everything [Colossians]

(People for 100) Angels announce the birth of Jesus [Luke]

(People for 200) Jairus's daughter is raised from the dead [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(People for 300) Onesimus [Philemon]

(People for 400) Jesus tells the parable of the Two Sons (not the Prodigal Son) [Matthew]

(People for 500) Some people were going to the places Paul had visited and were telling the Gentile Christians that they had to get circumcised [Galatians]

(Perspectives for 100) Paul writes about the Lord's Supper [1 Corinthians]

(Perspectives for 200) Although Paul is in prison, he is writing about joy! [Philippians]

(Perspectives for 300) Jesus taught a parable about a rich man and his relationship to a poor man named Lazarus [Luke]

(Perspectives for 400) The Gentiles have been grafted in among the Jews and also share in God's plan of salvation [Romans]

(Perspectives for 500) Paul lists out the "fruit of the Spirit" [Galatians]

(Predicaments for 100) This letter was written to a church that had lots of problems, divisions, and questions [1 Corinthians]



(Predicaments for 200) Jesus was mocked by Herod before he was sent to the cross [Luke]

(Predicaments for 300) Jesus curses a fig tree; it withers [Matthew and Mark]

(Predicaments for 400) “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” [Romans]

(Predicaments for 500) In this letter, Paul says that God chose us before he laid the foundation of the world [Ephesians]

(Epistles for 100) Paul writes that the Christians were opening lawsuits against each other in secular courts [1 Corinthians]

(Epistles for 200) “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” [Philippians]

(Epistles for 300) “But be filled with the Spirit” [Ephesians]

(Epistles for 400) Paul writes that the gospel he was preaching was revealed directly to him by Christ [Galatians]

(Epistles for 500) Paul writes about the differences between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant [2 Corinthians]

Instructional Section for Day 8  
What does genuine ministry look like?  
1&2 Thessalonians,  
Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won't have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Talk about the background to the Thessalonian letters and the Pastoral letters.] On Paul's **second missionary journey** he went to **Thessalonica**, spent a short time there and helped get a church started. After he left **they started accusing** him of

- Teaching error
- Impure intentions
- Trickery & deceit
- Flattery
- Tricking people to get their money
- Seeking praise

Paul also deals with **misunderstandings about the future resurrection** in the Thessalonian letters, but that comes toward the end of 1 Thessalonians.

Now **fast-forward** at least **10 years**. Paul is in **prison in Rome** and is writing letters to two of **his closest co-workers, to Timothy and Titus**. He is giving them **advice about how to do ministry** and about how to conduct themselves as they do ministry.

So **what ties these two letters together?** **One set** of letters—1 & 2 Thessalonians—is to a **congregation**, and the **second set**—The Pastoral Letters—is written to **individuals**. **One set** of letters is written **earlier** in Paul’s public ministry and the **other set toward the end** of his ministry. What connects them?

The **theme that finds its way into all of these five letters**, both the earlier two and the later three is the theme of **genuine ministry**. Paul is passionate about a ministry that is God-honoring. And he uses his own ministry as an example in all five of these letters.

But since there are so many dozens of pieces of instruction spread throughout these letters, **I’m going to focus** on one passage that seems to pull together most of the central ideas. That passage is **1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Paul shows us **six ways to really mess up the ministry** God has called us to and **five ways to have a God-honoring ministry**.

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-8** For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

Background info:

Before coming to Thessalonica, Paul had **just come from Philippi** where he and Silas had been beaten with rods and put in prison with their feet in stocks, stripped of their clothes and humiliated (Acts 16:22-24) Despite all this, Paul says in verse 2 that he had come out of Philippi ready to boldly preach in Thessalonica.

[Acts 17:1-9—describe it out of your head] He started out by going into the **synagogue** for three Sabbaths, and telling the local Jews and God-fearing Greeks that Jesus was the Messiah. Some of the Jews were persuaded and quite a few God-fearing Greeks and a some of the leading women. But some of the local Jews got jealous, formed a mob, and dragged a new believer named Jason and some of the other new believers in front of the city authorities, yelling: “These men who have upset the world have come here also!” The city authorities then took a pledge or bond from Jason and the others—making sure that if there was any more disturbance of the peace, it would hurt them financially. So they sent Paul and Silas away by night.

Now, all of that is from Acts 16 and 17. But **after Paul was gone**, you can tell pretty well from 1 Thessalonians what happened to the local believers. People from the community started **bad-mouthing Paul and accusing** him of all sorts of **wrong motivations**.

Just **by looking at our passage** you can figure out what they were saying about him pretty accurately by the kind of response he gives. [Go through it fast.]

1. They probably said that what he was teaching was in **error** (v. 3).
2. They probably accused him of **impure intentions**; that is, to **take advantage of them sexually**. The word in v. 3 is often, though not always used of sexual impropriety.
3. They probably said that he was using **trickery and deceit**. v. 3.
4. They probably accused him of using **flattery**. v. 5.
5. They accused him of doing it for **greed**. v. 5
6. They accused him of doing it for **praise from people**. v. 6.

So the **main thrust** of this passage is **Paul describing the sincerity of his ministry** among the Thessalonians.

Interestingly, **the people who were accusing Paul were right on one thing**. They knew **how a person could mess up a ministry**. The six things that they were accusing him of are sure-fire ways to royally mess up the ministry that God has called you to do.

So I want to spend the rest of our time together looking at **6 ways to mess up the ministry** that God has called you to do and **5 ways to have a really effective ministry**. Of course, I’m assuming in this that God has given each person areas of ministry to build up the church and extend his work in the world.

Six ways to mess up the ministry God has called you to do:

1. Teach something that is wrong. “Error” (v. 3).

Illustration: I often hear people **denigrate theology**. But everyone who says anything about the Bible is doing theology. It seems far better to do it well than to do it poorly.

2. Allow yourself to be led astray by sexual temptation. “Impurity” (v. 3).

This was a common sin among **traveling preachers** (Christian or otherwise) then and now.

Illustration: [If you can find an appropriate story to tell from your life or someone else’s life that reminds people of the importance of sexual purity, it would be good to use one here. Be discrete, though, in the way you tell it.]

3. Use deceit in your ministry (v. 3).

Illustration: There is a **well-known preacher**, whose name many of you would know, who was once asked about his sermon illustrations. He admitted that many of the stories he tells about his own life have been **embellished**, or that he even uses **stories that happened to other people** that he applies to himself. And he defends it as an acceptable practice!

Illustration: **Personal testimonies** of how God has worked through your life are one of the best ways to encourage and strengthen people through ministry. But it is crucial that the story we tell is what **actually happened**.

When we allow elements of deceit to enter one area of ministry, there is a good chance that it will enter other areas of the ministry.

4. Flatter people (v. 5).

**Flattery is the sneaky saying of nice things to gain influence over others or get them to further your agenda.**

The **ironic thing** is that **flattery** will **get you into places of influence** and maybe even seem on the outside to expand your ministry. But the issue is

that all effective ministry is done by *God* and you have to allow him to do his work through you.

Illustration: Maybe **you need someone to help you set up** something for an upcoming program you are planning. You don't like the person and only say nice things to them to get them to help you. You think, "The first chance I get, I'll *get rid of* them."

This is **very different than offering a genuine compliment**. Actually, I think that we need more genuine compliments and words of affirmation going around. But the motive is different. With a sincere compliment, you are saying it to strengthen, encourage and edify the other person; with flattery you are using it to somehow get ahead.

5. Use your ministry as a way to make money. (v. 5)

Illustration: There is a particular **worship leader** that goes around doing worship "concerts" who refuses to come and lead unless he is guaranteed 10,000 per show plus a ryder of 3-5,000 dollars. And this is nothing near what well-known Christian groups charge per show—sometimes upward toward 50,000.

You need plan and carefully pray through how to keep money from affecting your ministry.

6. Try to get other people to praise you. Seek glory from people. (v. 6).

Paul actually says in v. 6, "even though as apostles of Christ we could have been 'heavy' with you." He said he didn't seek that.

**Honor** was a really **big thing in the first century world**. It was similar to the way it is in the Middle East today.

Illustration: This one is so insidious. **I'm going to face it today after I teach this class**. I'm going to be tempted to ask people how I did on this message.

But look how **emphatic Paul** is about this! "I did not seek glory from men, or from you, or from anyone else!"

Paul was pretty hard on himself about this. **He only wanted to please God.**

Five ways to have a really effective ministry:

1. Do ministry as people approved of God (v. 4).

Paul said that he and his co-workers were “approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel...”

It doesn't really say here how it was that God “tested” and “approved” Paul. But the **theme of God testing people's hearts is pretty common in the Old Testament**, especially in the Psalms and Jeremiah.

**Psalms 7:9** the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.

**Psalms 17:3** You have tried my heart; You have visited *me* by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

**Jeremiah 11:20** But, You O LORD of hosts, [are he] who judges righteously, who tries the feelings and the heart...

**Jeremiah 12:3** But You know me, O LORD; You see me; And You examine my heart toward You.

Paul had been approved by God, but more...he had been entrusted with the gospel.

2. Aim to please the God who examines our hearts (v. 4).

**Galatians 1:10** For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

**Colossians 1:10** so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...

**2 Corinthians 5:9** Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

Some people think it's somehow a wrong motivation to try to please God, but apparently Paul thinks that it is a proper motivation for how to live our lives since he mentions it repeatedly.

3. Be gentle among those whom you minister to (v. 7).

This does *not* mean that you have to be a mealy-mouth milk-toasty type of person. Someone once describe biblical gentleness as strength under control.

4. Love them! (v. 8).

“Having so fond an affection for you...”  
“Because you had become very dear to us...”

Illustration: [Give an example of someone who had an impact on your spiritual life because of the way that he or she showed genuine love to you. Depending on the situation, it might be appropriate to name the person.]

**Biblical love is gutsy, willing-to-confront, passionate love.** 1 Cor 13 type of love! The last thing we need is people to become passive. But love, as Paul says in Rom 12 “must be sincere”.

Illustration: **Think of the people** who've had the **greatest impact on your spiritual life** (not people you've watched from afar—people you actually know). I can almost guarantee that **those people have truly loved you.**

5. Don't just carry a message; share your very souls (v. 8).

Illustration: Biblical ministry is not sitting at a desk, receiving appointments and charging 100 dollars an hour for your counseling. Biblical ministry is sharing your very own life with them.

Illustration: [Share about a time where you had to make some sort of sacrifice to minister to someone else.]



Illustration: **Boundaries and lack of boundaries is a hard thing.** You must set boundaries so that **people who need to carry their own load** (as Galatians 6 says) **will carry their own load** and not distract you from doing the ministry that God has called you to do. But, **each of us is called to extend ourselves** for the sake of others and the gospel, sacrificing comfort and time and money and “our very selves”!

Closing Illustration: [Give an extended illustration of someone that you know who positively is an example of the types of things found in the list above. After you’ve told about this person’s life, you could say something like: Until today, you may never have heard of \_\_\_\_\_. But she is a great example of what we are talking about today. Why? Because she understood that there was a right way and a wrong way to do ministry. She:

- Aimed to please God, not people
- Was gentle among those she ministered to.
- She loved people, and it showed!
- She didn’t just carry a message, she shared her very soul.

And she avoided the things that mess up ministries:

- She avoided false teaching.
- She avoided immorality.
- She avoided deceit.
- She certainly didn’t flatter people.
- She avoided using ministry to make money.
- She sought God’s glory, not praise from people.

Let’s respond by praying about the things we have talked about today. I’ll pray a line, and then if you agree with it, you pray it after me.

Righteous Lord,  
Thank you for the ministries you have given each of us.  
We want to honor you in them.  
We want to please you in what we do  
We want to be gentle among those we serve  
We want to love them as you have loved us  
We want to share our very souls with them  
Grant us your grace to do this  
Keep us from error, Lord  
We want to teach what is true

Guard our hearts from impurity  
We want no deceit in our lives  
We want to stay far from flattery  
We want to serve you, not money  
And we don't want to serve for praise of others  
But we do desire your praise  
And we long to do what pleases you.

In the name of Jesus, the Servant King,  
Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 9

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the Acts & Letters of Paul Song and the General Letters & Revelation song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 9 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 9 NT General Letters & Revelation Lyrics small for class [keep at front to hand out later in the class]
- Day 9 NT Matching Activity General Letters & Revelation
- Day 9 NT Matching Activity General Letters & Revelation (answers) [for reference...don't hand out]

Class Layout:

- Open with Acts & Letters of Paul song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes for a few minutes in preparation for the quiz.
- Quiz over All Four Gospels-Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus.  
“Draw a line under ‘Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line.”
  1. Paul says that the accusation that he is preaching for wealth and fame is false. He really cares for them. [1&2 Thessalonians]
  2. Paul’s thorn-in-the-flesh [2 Corinthians]
  3. Mary and Joseph flee with the baby Jesus to Egypt [Matthew]
  4. The parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke]
  5. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” [Romans]

6. The body of Jesus is placed in an empty tomb [All Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John]
  7. A list known as “the fruit of the Spirit” [Galatians]
  8. Jesus raises Jairus’s daughter from the dead [Synoptic Gospels]
  9. Paul goes on three missionary journeys [Acts]
  10. These letters were written to younger ministers and contain a lot of practical guidance about leadership and church responsibilities [Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.]
  - “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from their homework in 1&2 Thessalonians and Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of 1&2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 9: What is the evidence that our faith is real? (Hebrews, James, 1 John) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Hand out Day 9 NT General Letters & Revelation Lyrics.
  - Play the new song—General Letters & Revelation—for them to listen to.
  - Day 9 NT Matching Activity General Letters & Revelation: “Look at the General Letters & Revelation song and match as quickly as you can the correct idea with the book or books in which it is found. There are 25. Let’s see who can get them all first.”

Instructional Section for Day 9  
What is the evidence that our faith is real?  
Hebrews, James, 1 John

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [Adjust this list to fit your situation] Let me start by asking you a few questions:

- How can someone know that I play the guitar? I mean, I could tell someone 10 times a day that I play the guitar, but that person still might not be sure. Is there a way someone could know for sure? [Don’t answer...just go on]
- How do my neighbors know that I want to take care of my home? Is the best way to convince them by telling them over and over that I really do care about it? ...despite not having mowed the lawn for three weeks?! ...or painted the house for thirty years...or replaced my roof for fifty?
- How does my dog know that she’s going to get something to eat tonight? (Besides the fact that my wife is going to feed her!)
- How does my boss *know* that I’m doing my job?
- How does my wife *know* that I love her?

**How can I—or anybody else—know that my faith is *true faith*?**

**The answer** is that there is *evidence*. I know it—and they know it—because **it shows up *in the way that I live***.

[Adjust as necessary] Just as my wife knows that I love her by observing the caring things that I do for her—spending quality time with her, showing affection

to her, being faithful to her, sending her notes, so also true faith will show itself to be true in what I do.

Illustration: **Suppose that you were arrested and taken to trial** for being a Christian. Is there enough evidence to convict you of really being a Christian? If they brought forward witnesses who knew you, would they testify that they were confident that you were a real live Christian, not just someone who talks about it?

There is a theme that closely ties together three of the books from the General Letters—Hebrews, James, and 1 John. That theme is: **True faith shows itself to be true in what we do.** Each of these books has other significant themes of their own, but this theme is strong in all three of them, so I want to focus on those three books today.

By the way, you are only responsible for Hebrews and James for next week. **I have included 1 John** here because the theme I wanted to focus on today in Hebrews and James is also really strong in 1 John. This also allows me to do the book of Revelation on the second to last day.

Perhaps we can remember the central idea of today with this little memory hook—and ultra-simplistic poem:

### **Memory hook/poem**

I think that there's a way  
To show our faith is true  
It's less in what we say  
And more in what we do

Can you said it out loud with me once?

**But let me review** something first that is very important. **We are saved entirely through God's grace** that was offered to us as a gift. **We receive it by faith.** Everything we have studied up until now makes this point strongly. The **Gospels** emphasize that it is through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah that we are saved. The **Apostle Paul and the book of Acts** are emphatic that we receive the gift offered to us by faith. That is, we do not come into a right relationship with God by the things that we do; we enter through the gate of faith.

The **authors of the three books** we'll be looking at would **agree with this wholeheartedly**. But they want to be sure that your faith is real. And so **they focus on the *evidence*** that your faith is real.

Let's take **one key emphasis from each of the three books** and unpack them using the ideas that are in our new song, the General Letters & Revelation song. And I'll illustrate them by mentioning three friends from my past who embody the concerns of these books.

Here are the three main points:

In Hebrews: People with true faith *continue* to believe

In James: People with true faith show it in *what they do*

In 1 John: People with true faith *live it out* in community

Now, let's unpack these, beginning with Hebrews:

What does Hebrews say about this?

The Hebrews song lyrics read:

Hebrews exalts the Son  
Over angels, over Moses  
A better priest and sacrifice  
A new covenant  
Warnings not to fall away  
The heroes of the faith examples  
A 'word of exhortation'  
By an unknown author  
In...Hebrews...

**Hebrews** has quite a few **warning passages**. Let's read an example warning passage from Hebrews to show you the types of things written about in this book.

**Hebrews 3:14-19** For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked me." For who provoked him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he angry for forty

years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

So, **here's the summary statement** of what the book of Hebrews teaches about this. It's the first of our three big ideas today—one from each book:

**1. Hebrews teaches that *people with true faith continue to believe***

And what do they believe in?

...in Jesus, who is greater than angels (Hebrews 1-2), Moses (Hebrews 3), the priests and the sacrifices (Hebrews 4-5, 7-10), the old covenant (Hebrews 8-10)

And what do they do?

...and don't fall into unbelief and disobedience (Hebrews 3, 6, 10, 12-13, the warnings passages)

...and faithfully face adversity like they did in ages past (Hebrews 11, the faith chapter)

Illustration: [Without using a name, tell about someone you have known from the past who negatively embodies the concerns of the book of Hebrews described above. Follow it with a summary of what the author of Hebrews would say to him or her.]

The author of the book of Hebrews would say that the evidence that he is a believer would have to be in his continuing to believe.

Remember our memory hook?

I think that there's a way  
To show our faith is true  
It's less in what we say  
And more in what we do



## What does James say about this?

The James song lyrics read:

James, to the scattered tribes  
Count as joy your many trials  
Become doers of the word,  
No partiality  
Faith apart from works is dead  
Tame your tongue, and learn true wisdom  
Judgment on the unjust rich  
Anoint and pray in faith  
In...James...

There is a key section in James that displays our theme. Here are **some key verses** from that important section (chapter 2:14-26):

### **James 2:14, 20, 26**

What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works?  
Can that faith save him?

But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

So, **here's a summary statement of what James teaches on this.** It's the second of our three big ideas today:

2. **James says that *people with true faith show it in what they do*** (James 2:14-26). How do they do that?

...by counting their trials as joy (James 1:2-4)

...by doing the word, not just hearing it (James 1:22-27)

...by showing no partiality to rich people over poor (James 2:1-13)

...by controlling their tongues (James 3:1-12)

...by seeking true wisdom (James 3:13-18)

...by avoiding unrighteous use of money (James 5:1-6)

...by praying in faith (James 5:15-18)

Illustration: [Without using a name, tell about someone you have known from the past who negatively embodies the concerns of the

book of James described above. Follow it with a summary of what James would say to him or her.]

We are not in the position to know exactly her eternal state, but we do know from the book of James that the genuineness of her faith is in question because it doesn't show up in what she does.

What was our memory hook?

I think that there's a way  
To show our faith is true  
It's less in what we say  
And more in what we do

What does 1 John say about this?

The Letters of John (1 John) lyrics read:

First John; some have gone  
Out from us, but were not of us  
Walk in light and you can know  
You have eternal life  
Love your brother, not the world  
Test the spirits; God is love  
Following are two short notes  
Called Second and Third John  
Letters of John...

And here is a **key verse** in 1 John that shows the problem John was addressing in the Christian community he was writing to:

**1 John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

So, here's **the summary statement of what John teaches about this** in his first letter. It's the third of our three big ideas today:

3. **1 John says that *people with true faith live it out in community*** (1 John 2:19)

...walking in the light, that is, in truth and purity (1 John 1:6-7; 2:9-11)

...loving their brothers and sisters (1 John 2:9-11; 3:11-15)

...not loving the world (1 John 2:15-17)

...testing the spirits to be sure they are from God (1 John 4:1-6)

Illustration: [Without using a name, tell about someone you have known from the past who negatively embodies the concerns of the book of 1 John described above. Follow it with a summary of what John would say to him or her.]

Remember our memory hook?

I think that there's a way  
To show our faith is true  
It's less in what we say  
And more in what we do

So, **what if you were taken before a court for being a Christian**, and they were trying to find evidence that the faith you claimed to have was genuine? Would they have enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? Would they see it in you?

I am not saying that you will be perfect in the way you live out your faith—not at all. The Christian life is a journey, and all three of the NT authors we have read today would agree with that. But I can confidently say that a Christian is recognizable because,

- that person continues to believe, as the book of Hebrews says,
- that person shows his faith in what he does, as the book of James says, and
- that person lives it out in Christian community, as the book of 1 John says.

Let's bow our heads in response:

Dear Lord,

We remember now that we were saved by your grace  
It is only by your grace, and not by our works  
You showed your mercy and we accepted it  
You demonstrated love and we received it  
You shared the message and we believed it  
Now grant us grace, dear Lord  
To live by faith  
Continuing to believe  
Living it out in what we do  
And committed to the community of faith

In the name of Jesus the Messiah,  
Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 10

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the General Letters & Revelation song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 10 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 10 NT Writing Activity [keep at front to hand out later in the class]

Class Layout:

- Open with General Letters & Revelation song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes in preparation for quiz: “Take a few minutes and quiz with the person next to you. Focus especially on recent sections.”
- Quiz over All Four Gospels-James. “Draw a line under ‘James’ on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line.”
  1. This book says that Jesus is a better priest than the Old Testament priests and a better sacrifice than the Old Testament sacrifices. [Hebrews]
  2. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all the nations.” [Matthew]
  3. “Become doers of the Word, and not merely hearers...” [James]
  4. This book says that God chose us long before he made the world. There are other books that say this, too, but this is the one from the song. [Ephesians]
  5. In this book, Jesus speaks many “I AMs,” such “I am the bread of life,” or “I am the light of the world.” [John]

6. The Roman authorities let Paul sit in prison for two years in Caesarea, one of the cities of Palestine [Acts]
  7. The transfiguration of Jesus [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]
  8. Paul gives instructions for how to minister to widows in the church [Pastoral Letters: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. Note that his instructions about widows are specifically in 1 Timothy.]
  9. This book is full of warnings not to fall away [Hebrews]
  10. The feeding of the five thousand [All Gospels]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.]
  - “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from your reading in the books of Hebrews and James. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of Hebrews and James that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything that you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 10: Where will the pressure come from? (1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.]
  - Day 10 NT Writing Activity

Instructions: Write one paragraphs out of your head for each of these two books: Hebrews and James. (If you have to peek, you can.) These are to be summaries of the contents of these books. Suppose that you are writing an introduction to the Bible for someone who has never read the Bible before. Explain what each book is about. Use regular words that people who aren’t Christians can understand, and try not to use the words of the songs themselves, unless you are writing down someone’s name. You’ll have about 5 minutes for each book; 10 minutes total.

- Afterward, have one or two people read what they wrote for each book.

Instructional Section for Day 10  
Where will the pressure come from?  
1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: [On the video, the opener is a story about a kid seeing a sign that said “NO TRESPASSING. VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED” and thinking that “prosecuted” meant “persecuted.” You might be able to work with this for your opener if you wanted.]

Christians face **many different kinds of pressures**. Today we’re going to look at 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude to see the types of pressures Christians face. **Pressures** can come either **from the outside of the Christian community or from the inside**. **1 Peter** focuses upon the pressures coming **from the outside**; **Jude and 2 Peter** focus on the pressures coming **from the inside** of the Christian community.

Pressure coming from the Outside (1 Peter).

The main theme of 1 Peter is following in Christ’s steps when you suffer. Look at the words of the song:

1 Peter, praising God for our hope despite our trials  
Be ye holy, living stones, with Christ the cornerstone  
Servants, wives, and husbands, elders, younger men instructed  
When you’re suffering for Christ, you follow in his steps  
1 Peter...

**One of the key questions** in studying the book of 1 Peter is: **what kinds of sufferings were they experiencing?** Look at some of the key verses that might help us figure it out and see if you can figure it out yourself.

“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that *in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers*, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” (2:12)

“...not returning evil *for evil*, or insult *for insult*...” (3:9)

“...and keep a good conscience so that *in the thing in which you are slandered*, those who *revile your good behavior in Christ* may be put to shame.” (3:16)

“And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and *they malign you*...” (4:4)

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the *fiery ordeal* among you...” (4:12)

“By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, *let him not feel ashamed*, but in that name let him glorify God.” (4:16)

Now it's possible that the expression “**fiery ordeal**” might point toward more **physical persecution**, but in light of all the other expressions, I think it is more likely a metaphor for how difficult they were finding the pressure to be. **The rest of the expressions focus upon the societal pressure** being put on them to conform, and this seems to be **the main kind of suffering** they were experiencing.

They had become Christians and so began to realize that:

- they could not go along with many of the activities that their unbelieving neighbors were involved in.

As a result their neighbors:

- attempted to shame them,
- slandered their good name,
- accused them of wrongdoing,
- directly insulted them and
- were involved in various ways of trying to pressure them to stop their socially disrupting activities and be *normal* again!

And this kind of pressure is experienced by many Christians around the world, including to some degree in the United States.



Illustration: [Find an example of you, or someone else you know, who has been mocked for being a Christian.]

But I knew in that moment what Peter was talking about. This is the kind of suffering Peter was addressing.

Illustration: Let me give you one more example. [This is the example used on the video.] I once heard about a group of students at a particularly tough middle school decided to participate in the “**See you at the Pole**” day. This is a day when Christian junior high and high school kids join together to be public about their faith in Jesus Christ at their schools. Only a handful of students were there. They gathered at the pole early before school and were talking and praying with each other as the other students were coming into school. A large group of 30 or 40 students from the school surrounded them and started mocking them, and even throwing pieces of food from their lunch at them.

What should a Christian do when facing social pressure for being a Christian? 1 Peter is a great place to go for the answer. What does Peter say?

1. When slandered, you must keep your behavior excellent toward those who slander you. Your hope is that this will eventually lead them to glorify God (2:12). If it doesn't lead to that, at the very least this may silence them (2:15), or put them to shame for what they are doing (3:16).

**1 Peter 2:12** Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

**1 Peter 2:15** For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

**1 Peter 3:16** and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Review: The first thing you need to do is keep your behavior excellent even under the pressure.

2. You need to bear up under sorrows—that is, endure patiently—when you are treated unjustly (2:19-20). God *likes* it when we respond this way (“this finds favor with God”).

**1 Peter 2:19-20** For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

Twice in this passage it mentions that “this finds favor with God.” So *bear up* under trials.

3. When you are reviled (bad-mouthed) or suffer at the hands of someone, you are not to respond in the same way they have treated you (2:23; 3:9). This is simply following the example of Christ.

**1 Peter 2:23** and while being reviled, he did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously

**1 Peter 3:9** not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

So, don’t respond in the same way they have treated you.

4. Don’t feel ashamed for suffering as a Christian—instead glorify God in it (4:16).

**1 Peter 4:16** but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

5. Entrust your soul to your faithful Creator (that is, put your soul into his care), by doing what is right even as you suffer (4:19).

**1 Peter 4:19** Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Comment: This is **one of the hardest things you'll have to do**. Are you suffering in some way? This is a true principle not only for the kind of suffering found in 1 Peter. **One of the best ways to deal with your own suffering** is to **continue to serve and minister to others**. One of the best ways to deal with your own grief is to minister to others.

Let me recap 1 Peter. [Go back through the five points.]

Transition: In 1 Peter, the pressure came from the outside. **But in Jude and 2 Peter, the pressure comes from the inside**. It comes from **false teachers and false prophets**.

Look at the words of the song:

Jude and second Peter, speaking out against false teachers  
Citing ancient punishments of angels and of men  
But second Peter teaches more, prophetic Scripture's source the Spirit  
A list of Christian qualities, a day like a thousand years.  
2 Peter...

**Jude and 2 Peter are really similar to one another**, though 2 Peter is much longer than Jude. 19 out of 25 verses in the book of Jude parallel verses in 2 Peter very closely. The wording is somewhat different, but the content of what they are saying is almost identical.

Of course 2 Peter has a lot of things that Jude does not have—for example WHAT from our song? “But second Peter teaches more...

- 1) Prophetic Scripture's source the Spirit,
- 2) A list of Christian qualities,
- 3) A day like a thousand years.

**This means that either**

- Jude was familiar with 2 Peter when he wrote his letter, or that
- 2 Peter was familiar with Jude when he wrote, or
- both were familiar with some other writing that dealt with the same themes and that they both drew upon.

- I tend to think that Jude was written first, and that 2 Peter was written after Jude and incorporated his ideas into his writing, but I don't have a strong opinion about it.<sup>9</sup>

But the material that they share is that they are both “speaking out against false teachers,” and “citing ancient punishments of angels and of men” as our song verse for Jude and 2 Peter says.

I could draw from either 2 Peter or Jude, but today let's look at a few example verses of what is going on **in Jude**:

**Jude verses 3-4** Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

We are warned that **from the *inside* of our fellowships** there can be people who put pressure on us. This is not the direct kind of pressure like the outside pressure, but is the gentle **pressure to compromise** on what we believe, to shift our understanding of biblical morality just a little bit, and to drift away from our commitment to Jesus Christ.

**What does Jude say at the end** of his letter after he has described the kinds of judgments reserved for these false teachers?

**Jude verses 17-23** But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on

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<sup>9</sup> The main reason for this is that if Jude copied from 2 Peter, he wrote almost nothing original and cut out a lot of what Peter wrote. But if Peter wrote second, it makes more sense, since he then adds a lot to what he borrowed and used from Jude. Still, the other direction seems possible to me. What is interesting (if I am correct) is that Peter was one of the original twelve apostles whereas Jude was not. But Jude calls himself the brother of James, which would have made him a half-brother of Jesus, like James was. Therefore Jude was apparently also an important member along with his brother James of the early Jerusalem church and may have seen the resurrected Christ like James had.

your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

**Are we willing to stand against false teachers?** People in our culture value tolerance so much that they often don't want to stand for the truth. But we certainly should be discerning and need to be willing to call a false teacher a false teacher. If someone is teaching false doctrine, we need to point it out. We need to emphasize it if it is really important and be less emphatic if it is not super important. And most of all, we need to know and understand what we believe so that we will be able to point out what is wrong.

Illustration: [Tell a story of a situation where someone who is part of a Christian church begins believing and/or teaching something that is contrary to the Word of God. If you don't personally know a situation like that, ask a pastor; most pastors have had to deal with something like this at some point in their lives.]

Illustration: [You can mention the attempts of cults to pull people away from the faith while claiming themselves to be Christians.]

There will be people in our midst like this from time to time. **Will we know it when we see it?** Do we know the Word of God well enough to be able to discern when false teaching is being taught?

**Pressures** against Christians **will come both from the outside and from the inside.** We need God's grace in the midst of these pressures. But we need to bear up under these trials to the glory of God.

Let's bow our heads and pray together. I'll pray a line and you pray after me.

"Dear Lord  
Thank you for your calling  
To glorify your name  
We're called to follow in your steps  
Though sometimes put to shame  
When we're mocked and ridiculed  
For the things we do

We want to praise and elevate  
Not ourselves, but you  
We entrust our very souls  
To you, Lord of all  
In doing what is right  
And keep true to your call  
Help us see the truth  
And know the thing that's wrong  
Help us see the error  
And know where we belong.

In the name of Jesus  
In whose steps we walk  
Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 11

Bring:

- Recorded or live music (some way to play the music for the General Letters & Revelation song).
- Bible
- Attendance Sheets [put by door with pen for people to sign as they come in]
- Quiz Templates [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- Day 11 NT Student Notes [put by door for people to pick up as they come in]
- A white board or something to draw on to illustrate the three approaches to interpreting Revelation during the teaching time (if you're teaching the instructional section yourself)
- Jeopardy set up (either with computer or draw on a white board)

Class Layout:

- Open with General Letters & Revelation song. [Just play the pre-recorded song and allow people to sing along as they wish. Tell them that they can look at their lyrics if they need to. If you prefer to use a live instrument like a guitar, that can work as well.]
- Lead in prayer.
- Quizzing with one another in pairs and threes in preparation for quiz: "Take a few minutes and quiz with the person next to you. Focus especially on recent sections."
- Quiz over All Four Gospels-Both Jude and 2 Peter. "Draw a line under 'Both Jude and 2 Peter' on the quiz template. All the answers to the quiz questions will be above the line."
  1. Paul replies to the question of whether Christians can eat meat that has first been sacrificed to idols [1 Corinthians]
  2. Punishments against angels and against ancient human teachers of false doctrine are described [Both Jude and 2 Peter]
  3. The Parable of the Lost Sheep [Matthew and Luke]

4. Paul writes a lot about the Holy Spirit in one chapter of this book. For this question, the correct answer is not Galatians or Ephesians [Romans]
  5. When Christians meet together, they are not to show partiality for rich people over poor people [James]
  6. “But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.” [2 Peter alone]
  7. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead [John]
  8. The Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost [Acts]
  9. This book tells us that when we suffer for Christ, we follow in the steps of Christ [1 Peter]
  10. Jesus’ disciple Peter makes this confession to Jesus: “You are the Christ.” [All Gospels]
- Quiz Grading: “Let’s see how you did. Grade your own paper.” [Read back through each question and then give them the answers.]
  - “Put the correct number out of ten on the top of the page and hand it in to me.”
  - Questions and Answers from your reading in the books of 1 & 2 Peter and Jude. “Let’s spend a few minutes discussing any questions you have about the books of 1 & 2 Peter and Jude that came up while you were doing your homework. Is there anything that you would like to discuss?”
  - Instructional Section for Day 11: Will Jesus Win? (Revelation) [Either teach it yourself using the outline below or show the video sessions.] [Note that 1 John was already discussed with Hebrews and James because the themes worked well together.]
  - Play Jeopardy: Use computer with data projector or hand-write a chart on a white board.

If you are handwriting the game on a board, this is what it should look like:

Places	People	Predicaments	Perspectives	Epistles
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300



400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500

#### Instructions for Jeopardy:

- I will count you off into [four] groups. [Note: Just count people off “1” “2” “3” “4”, or however many groups you decide to have. You can do this with as few as two groups or as many as you want. Perhaps have four, five, or six people in the group. After you have counted them off, have them move to sit with the other people who received the same group number.]
- Please choose one person from your group who doesn’t mind doing addition and subtraction to keep track of the score for your group.
- Each of you will have a turn. When you are the next person in your group, please stand up.
- You must take your turn when it comes.
- I will allow the team that won the previous round to choose the next category and point amount.
- I will read the question/display it on the screen. As soon as you know the answer, clap. [If I’m reading it, I will stop reading and you can answer the question. If I’m displaying it on the screen, you will already be able to see it all.] If you are correct in your answer, you will receive the number of points available. If you are incorrect, you will *lose* that same number of points.
- You have five seconds to answer after you have clapped.
- Your team members can help you.
- As soon as you have said your answer, if it is *incorrect*, you will lose the point value.
- Also, as soon as you have said your answer, if it is incorrect, another person standing from another team can clap and answer correctly and gain the points.
- The correct answer will *always* be a book of the Bible (or a category of books like Synoptic Gospels or Pastoral Letters).
- While we play the game, test yourself to see if you know the answer to the question we are asking.

Jeopardy Questions for Day 11: This day includes the Gospels song and the Acts & Letters of Paul song and the General Letters & Revelation song [Note: There will only be questions from Revelation that were mentioned during the lesson, and there won’t be any questions from Letters of John since that verse hasn’t been learned yet.]

(Places for 100) Jesus sits upon a donkey and rides triumphantly into Jerusalem [All Gospels]

(Places for 200) Jesus goes up onto a high mountain and is transfigured in front of three of his disciples [Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke]

(Places for 300) Paul is in prison as he writes this letter that focuses a lot on joy [Philippians]

(Places for 400) The New Heavens and the New Earth [Revelation]

(Places for 500) Guards are placed at Jesus' tomb so his body won't get stolen [Matthew]

(People for 100) Paul teaches younger ministers about leadership [Pastoral Letters: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus]

(People for 200) Jesus speaks to a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus [John]

(People for 300) Stephen is stoned to death [Acts]

(People for 400) In the letter this person wrote, people are told to be doers of the word, and not just hearers [James]

(People for 500) Shepherds come to see the baby Jesus [Luke]

(Perspectives for 100) Paul writes that the new covenant is written on tablets of human hearts [2 Corinthians]

(Perspectives for 200) "If you have been raised with Christ, set your mind on things above" [Colossians]

(Perspectives for 300) This letter compares people in the faith community to "living stones" and says that Christ himself is the "cornerstone" [1 Peter]

(Perspectives for 400) "But the greatest of these is love" [1 Corinthians]

(Perspectives for 500) “Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” [Matthew]

(Predicaments for 100) A beast comes up out of the sea [Revelation]

(Predicaments for 200) At the end of this book (not written by Paul) Paul is waiting for his trial in Rome [Acts]

(Predicaments for 300) Some people thought that the second coming of Christ had already happened. Paul corrected this idea [Thessalonians]

(Predicaments for 400) Paul had to write about divisions taking place in this church between different leaders [1 Corinthians]

(Predicaments for 500) Jesus is brought before Herod who mocks him during his trial [Luke]

(Epistles for 100) Tame your tongue [James]

(Epistles for 200) Paul asserts that he doesn’t preach for money or fame [Thessalonians]

(Epistles for 300) The author of this letter describes his writing as a “word of exhortation” [Hebrews]

(Epistles for 400) “Rejoice in the Lord always” [Philippians]

(Epistles for 500) The gospel is a demonstration of the righteousness of God [Romans]

- Announce at the end: “The next time we meet [either one or two weeks away, depending on the schedule] we will only have an exam. There will be 50 questions on the exam; it will be set up exactly like the quizzes you have been taking except that the questions will be written rather than given orally. I need a show of hands of how many of you are planning to take the test so I have an idea of how many tests I need to print. There will be a NT Fluency certificate to anyone who gets 40 out of 50 questions correct—that is 80% on the test.”

Instructional Section for Day 11  
Will Jesus Win?  
Revelation

[Note to speaker: You are welcome to make adjustments to this message in any way you think is necessary or helpful in your setting as long as you stay rooted in the Bible. You are free to use the message exactly as it presently stands—except to insert personal stories and illustrations when needed—or you can draw upon parts of it and bring in any other issues you think need to be included that are not included here. The goal of this instructional section of each class is to introduce key themes that are important both for the biblical books under discussion and for understanding the overall message of the Bible.]

[Note: Some words have been **bolded** to aid you in speaking. If you familiarize yourself with your message before you speak it—even practice it ahead of time—you won’t have to just read it. This will help your listeners. The **bolded** words will help you achieve this aim.]

Opener: I once heard a story about a man who was living somewhere in **India**. He came back to his house, and when he opened the door discovered that there was an **enormous snake** in his house. He borrowed a gun and shot the snake a couple times. What would you do if you had shot a huge snake? Right. He shut the door and waited for it to die. But in the meantime, apparently, that snake as it was dying thrashed around so much that it destroyed lots of furniture, dishes, and pretty much made a mess of the house.

**Will Jesus win?** The answer is that **he already has won on the cross**. His death on the cross defeated Satan and all of his powers. He dealt them a **mortal blow**. Satan knows he is defeated, but in the meantime he is thrashing about destroying everything that he can before he is eliminated. The book of Revelation shows us this struggle and brings us to the climax. That is, **Jesus has already won, and he will finally and fully win**.

**This is the big message of Revelation** and is clear to everyone who reads the book. It has **functioned as encouragement to people who have suffered** all throughout the world for their faith in Christ, and it should function that way for us.

Having said all that, **Revelation is still difficult to interpret** because it is full of **symbols**. I want to walk you through **three main approaches** to the book of

Revelation that people use to interpret this book. There is a fourth approach, the historicist approach, that has been popular at different times in history, but few today are willing to champion it. So I will focus on the three main approaches used by interpreters today. Chances are good that you have been exposed primarily to one of these, so **one of the goals of this session** is to help you see some **significant differences** among true followers of Jesus in how to interpret this book. We will **need to have some grace with one another**. Although sincere Christians differ on the interpretation of this book, some people have very decided opinions about the right way to interpret these passages. So let's aim right now to understand the different approaches.

To get you there, **let's read through two well-known passages from Revelation**. If you want to **doodle a picture** of these scenes as you go, this might help you to picture it better.

Who or what are the locusts in Revelation 9:1-11?

**Revelation 9:1-11** Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Who or what is the Beast from the Sea in Revelation 13:1-18?

**Revelation 13:1b-9** Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and

authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

To be able to answer the question of who or what are the locusts, or who or what is the beast from the sea, you need to understand the **three basic approaches to interpretation of Revelation found among interpreters**. Then we'll apply this approach to these two sections.

Three Main Approaches to Interpreting the Revelation:<sup>10</sup>

[They will fill in the blanks that are underlined in the notes.]

1. The Futurist Approach: Revelation points to events that will happen in the future at the end of the age. It is especially concerned with judgments and wars at the end of time.

[Draw on the board a timeline with a cross at the left representing the time of Christ and an arrow pointing down on the right side of the line representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. Then draw a small circle toward the *right* around the section that represents the end of the age.]

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<sup>10</sup> There is also a fourth approach that has been popular at some times in history called the historicist approach. But since few modern biblical scholars support it, it will be ignored in this introductory discussion. For an introduction to the four main approaches to interpreting Revelation, see C. Marvin Pate in ch. 1 of *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998). Of course you can read the entire book if you are really interested. To understand how a particular interpreter might interpret a given passage in Revelation, refer to *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*, edited by Steve Gregg (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997).

2. The Preterist Approach: Revelation points to events that are happening (usually) in the first century—i.e. during the time that John is writing.<sup>11</sup> It is especially concerned with persecution from the Roman government.

[Draw on the board a timeline with a cross at the left representing the time of Christ and an arrow pointing down on the right side of the line representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. Then draw a small circle toward the *left* around the section that represents the period of the first century just after the cross.]

3. The Idealist Approach: Revelation points toward timeless spiritual principles or theological ideas. There is no specific time or connection with any particular event. It uses symbols to focus on issues like persecution of Christians, spiritual warfare, or worship that are important issues for all Christians at all times in history.

[Draw on the board a timeline with a cross at the left representing the time of Christ and an arrow pointing down on the right side of the line representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. Then draw a curly line above the timeline but spanning the whole length of Christian history but not touching the timeline.]

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<sup>11</sup> There are two types of preterist interpretations. One says that the interpretation relates to the first century and the Fall of Jerusalem, the other says that Revelation is fulfilled in the first century *and* in the fifth century when Rome fell.



Now: According to each approach to interpretation, how do you think they would interpret the locusts of Revelation 9 and the beast of Revelation 13? <sup>12</sup>

### Locusts in Revelation 9

Futurist:

- **Some** futurists are **very particular** in their interpretations. For example, I have heard people suggest that **locusts** could be a **military attack by helicopters** and the tail could be chemical weapons. They would say that John just didn't have language to describe attack helicopters.
- **Some** futurists are **less specific**. For example, some futurists would suggest that this is some future judgment that God allows to be unleashed on the earth directly through terrible demonic creatures taking on some physical form.

Preterist:

- **Locusts** could be the **Roman Army**, or **Nero** (mid-60's), or **Domitian** (mid-90's), who thought of himself as the incarnation of the Roman god Apollo and apparently accepted emperor worship. The Roman god Apollo is sometimes symbolically represented by a locust. <sup>13</sup>
- Another suggestion by preterists who hold an early reference (i.e. Nero's time) is that this is a description of demonic armies that influenced the people living in Jerusalem during the **siege of Jerusalem** to do completely insane and horrible things even as their city was being attacked.

Idealist:

- **Locusts** are representative of **satanic and demonic attack, or spiritual warfare in general**.

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<sup>12</sup> Please be aware that I will only give you a *possible* interpretation from a particular perspective at this point. All preterists, for example, will not agree with the specific examples that I give in class since there is significant disagreement among preterists concerning referents to various symbols.

<sup>13</sup> Some toward the end of the first century may have thought of Domitian as Nero-redivivus.

## The Beast from the Sea in Revelation 13

### Futurist:

- The Beast is a **future world-leader**, who is called the “**antichrist**” in 1 John 2:18 and the “**man of lawlessness**” in 2 Thessalonians 2.
- **Some** futurists have talked about a future **political revival of the Roman Empire**.
- A couple generations ago, some futurists said that the **10 crowns would be 10 European nations**, and people were really anticipating the day when 10 nations joined what was then called the Common Market, and is now called the European Economic Community.<sup>14</sup> There was a lot of disappointment among futurist interpreters when they reached 10 and then passed up 10. At last count there were 27 members and more in the wings.<sup>15</sup>
- Or, some futurists are **less specific** and say that this could simply be some **alliance of 10 countries** in the future led by an Antichrist figure.

### Preterist:

- Preterists who see *Domitian* as the beast would say that the **7 crowns are the 7 kings of Rome** (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus—then you have Domitian who is the Beast.)
- Preterists who see *Nero* as the wounded head of the Beast would point to the **chaos that came after Nero was killed**, and that there were 3 different emperors during that one year. If Vespasian hadn’t taken over, it could have been the end of the empire. So, one head of the empire was wounded but still the empire survived.
- **All** preterist interpreters would point out that **Rome was founded on seven hills**, and that we have to see Rome in this somehow. Actually, all the schools tie into Rome in some way

### Idealist:

- **Any sort of opposition against God**, but especially any sort of socio-political force that has anti-God purposes. [If appropriate, add some examples... But be careful about specific geopolitical examples you might suggest.]

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<sup>14</sup> Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany (now Germany) were the first six nations in the 1950s when the Common Market was started.

<sup>15</sup> See [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm) for most recent list.

[You can feel free to share your own approach at this point if it seems appropriate to you. If you are still trying to figure out what you think about this, don't hesitate to tell them that you are still trying to figure it out! But be sure to remind the people in your class to be charitable toward people who disagree with them on how to interpret the book of Revelation.]

In history the book of Revelation has had a significant impact on Christians worldwide who have been suffering for the sake of Christ. Sometimes they feel as if they are all alone, and that all the forces in the world are against them. Revelation clearly teaches that despite all the suffering that Christians endure throughout the world, Christ has already purchased the victory through his death on the cross, **and that he will finally make everything right.**

Let's finish our lesson together simply responding to some verses from Revelation chapters 20 and 21,<sup>16</sup> the vision of the coming New Heaven and New Earth. Close your eyes while we do this. I will read a line, and you repeat it after me.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth  
For the first heaven and the first earth passed away  
And there is no longer any sea  
And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem  
Coming down out of heaven from God  
Made ready as a bride adorned for her husband  
And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying,  
"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men,  
And he will dwell among them,  
And they shall be his people,  
And God himself will be among them,  
And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes;  
And there will no longer be any death  
There will no longer be any mourning  
Or crying or pain  
The first things have passed away  
And he who sits on the throne said,  
"Behold, I am making all things new."  
He who testifies to these things says,  
"Yes, I am coming quickly."

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<sup>16</sup> Revelation 21:1-5a and 22:20.

Yes, come Lord Jesus.  
Come Lord Jesus.

Amen

New Testament Fluency  
Day 12

New Testament Fluency Exam

Are you a teacher or leader of an Old Testament Fluency Class or a New Testament Fluency Class or self-studying Bible Fluency outside of a class setting? If yes, keep reading. If no, skip.

To access final exams (both the questions, easy-to-grade answer sheets, and answers to the questions) click on the tab "lead a class" at the biblefluency.com site, then click on the tab "exams and certificates." There you will find what you need. Feel free to create your own exam if you prefer.

You will also find a certificate that you can print and sign for people who receive 80%, that is 40/50, on the exam.

Scroll down this sheet for the password to unlock the page.

The Password is: **Fluency**