



the **GOSPEL** PROJECT
FOR STUDENTS

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS
DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

VOLUME 5

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OF BIBLE READING

How does this passage prompt me to pray?

DAY ONE

1 SAMUEL 8:10-22

This week, we studied about the importance of listening to the right voices, when Belshammi became king, he ignored voices of wisdom, instead, he listened to those that put up with his not so selfish desires. From there, things started to crumble. As a result, Israel got into two separate kingdoms: Israel and Judah, but let's backtrack a little. Did you ever expect to be Israel's King, but the people looked at the pagan nations surrounding them and desired that they had an earthly king. They were persistent in begging for one. Through the prophet Samuel, God revealed that their desire for an earthly king wouldn't benefit them. In this passage, Samuel shared that an earthly king would take so much from them— their life, their time and daughters, their food, their freedom. Imagine Samuels warning, Israel realized that making someone their king, Sir, God rebuked and gave them what they asked for and with it came trouble, as no one played that in our passage this way or that. God's people were told some kings who would take from them (other than serving only Yahweh, a King who gives to them and who reward relationship with him).

All of the points on a few things, first, we're prone to desiring what the people around us desire, and while conflicts with God's intention for us, we should lay down these desires. Second, God plans for us far better than our own selfish plans. Half of it is what we agree with him, but when we're in a position to choose his way or our way, we often choose the latter. This is why the reason we need to listen is to better grasp. Listening is gently understanding when it goes against what we want, helps us live according to the Lord's will.

DAY THREE

JAMES 3:13-18

Did you ever struggle with knowing who to turn to when you need advice? I'm sure you've ever struggle with this, but in reality, we might be hearing the desire to listen to the wrong voices, we're told a lot about which Bible, but sometimes, listening is all we need to help us in difficult situations. Imagine how disappointed you are when you're told "just" and "gently advice" by us. How can we not be the difference?

Isaiah is not a King. This passage describes how godly children don't let duty, but, but should be able to share the way others live and our "good conduct." According to these verses, you people make decisions. They aren't selfish, like, or selfish, and they're not selfish, unless they're to get what they want. James says this is a "worldly, ungodly, demonic," (v. 15). Instead, wisdom from above prompts them to use gentle and peace. They show mercy to others and fulfill the will of the Spirit (See 3:16-17). If we want to use people who will give us gently, please, then, our strategy would be to listen for people who live and God's word in their daily lives. We need to look for people who listen, justice and mercy to us. We see how advice that we want with Israhel— children— children— which speak upon words which the words give to us, not us, then, when it

able to get several
get with what we're
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the "biggest" and
the faith. You should
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WHEN HAVE YOU IGNORED WISE ADVICE BECAUSE IT DIDN'T LINE UP WITH WHAT YOU WANTED TO REACH?

WHICH ADVICE DO YOU NEED TO STOP LISTENING TO BECAUSE IT LEADS YOU AWAY FROM GOD?

LOVE, HELP ME TO TRUST THAT WHAT YOU WANT FOR ME IS BETTER THAN WHAT I WANT FOR MYSELF. HELP ME TO LISTEN TO YOUR ADVICE OVER ADVICE THAT JUSTIFIES MY OWN DESIRES.

PRAY

GOD, I CONFESS THAT SOMETIMES I STOP ASKING FOR ADVICE THAT AGREES WITH ME, I WANT HELP TO SEEK ADVICE FROM PEOPLE WHO WILL POINT ME TO YOU.

PRAY

GOD, I WANT WISDOM FROM GOD AND INSTEAD OF THIS WORLDLY VOICES, I KNOW YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, WHICH GIVES THE GUIDANCE I NEED TO WALK IN OBEDIENCE.

IN WHAT AREA OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU LEANING TOWARD "COLD" ADVICE INSTEAD OF GODLY WISDOM?

DOES YOUR OWN LIFE EXHIBIT COLD TOWARD GOD CAN PEOPLE YOUR VOICE ADVICE TO POINT THEM TOWARD THE LIGHT?

PRAY

GOD, I WANT WISDOM FROM GOD AND INSTEAD OF THIS WORLDLY VOICES, I KNOW YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, WHICH GIVES THE GUIDANCE I NEED TO WALK IN OBEDIENCE.

VOLUME 5 | CSB

DIVISION AND DEFIANCE



13.1 THE KING DID NOT LISTEN

13.2 EVIL IN THE LORD'S SIGHT

13.3 HOW LONG WILL YOU WAVER?

13.4 HE HAS HUMBLLED HIMSELF

14.1 TWO SHARES OF YOUR SPIRIT

14.2 SO GOD RELENATED

14.3 COME, LET'S RETURN TO THE LORD

14.4 WORTHLESS IDOLS

15.1 FAITHFUL TO THE LORD

15.2 THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA

15.3 WRITE IT ON THEIR HEARTS

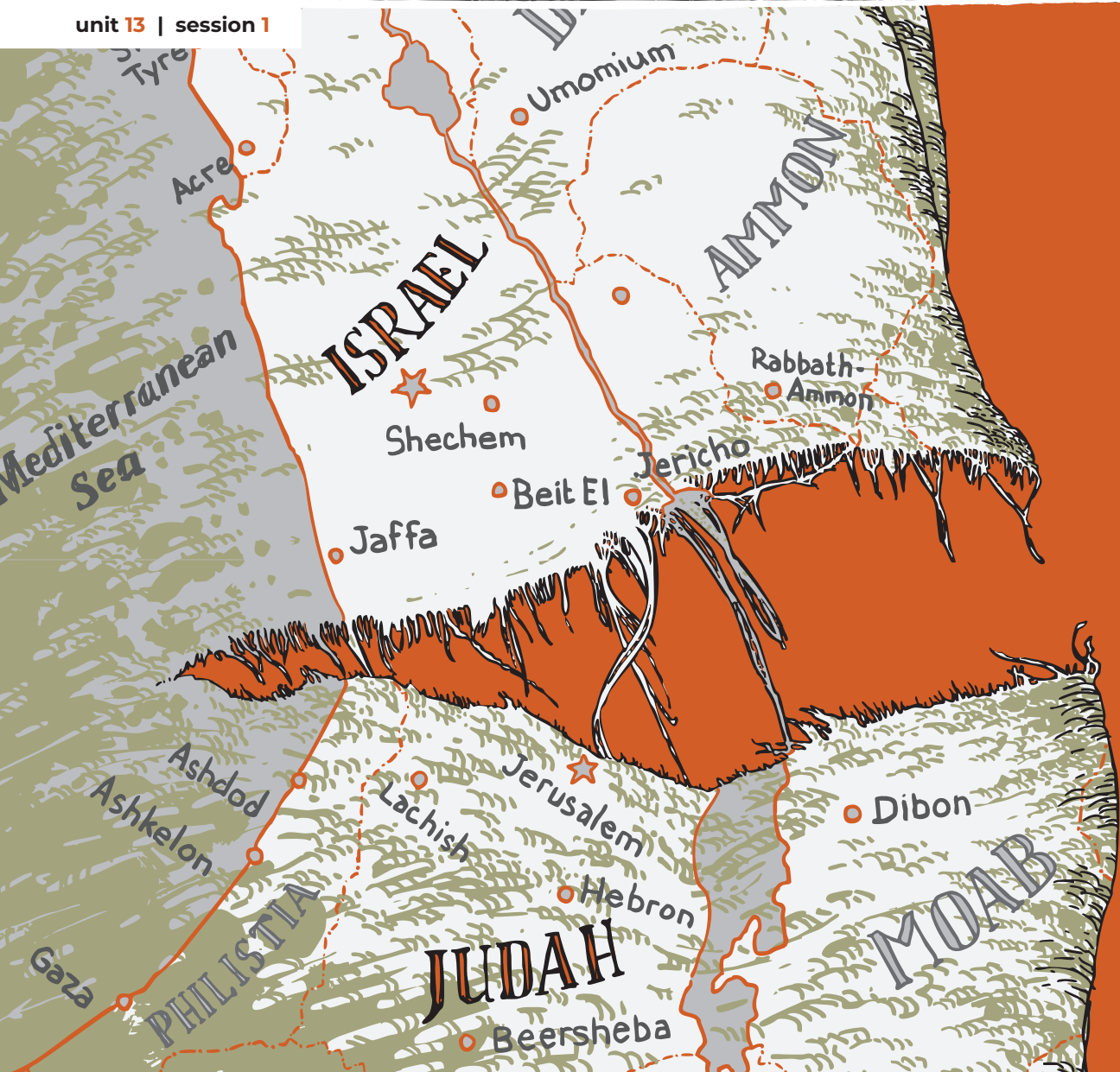
15.4 TO BABYLON

15.5 CAN THESE BONES LIVE?



THE KING DID *NOT LISTEN*

unit 13 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

While God's people became divided because of selfishness and sin, Christ came to restore God's kingdom. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus united people from every tribe and nation into one family.

TO THE RIGHT VOICES

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

1 Kings 12

PRIDE LEADS US TO REJECT WISDOM

1 KINGS 12:1-9

1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. 2 And as soon as Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. 3 And they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, 4 “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.” 5 He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away. 6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, “How do you advise me to answer this people?” 7 And they said to him, “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” 8 But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. 9 And he said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us’?”

REJECTING WISDOM LEADS TO DIVISION

1 KINGS 12:10-19

10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,’ thus shall you say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. 11 And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’” 12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, “Come to me again the third day.” 13 And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, 14 he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” 15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 16 And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.” So Israel went to their tents. 17 But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah. 18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

MAIN POINT.

The advice we choose to follow can make a lasting impact on us and on those around us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to affect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something that requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).

DISCUSSION

PRIDE LEADS US TO REJECT WISDOM

1 KINGS 12:1-9



- Why does it matter who we go to for advice?
- ♥ • What happens when you get advice that doesn't support what you want to do?
- Why do you think Rehoboam rejected the elders' advice?

REJECTING WISDOM LEADS TO DIVISION

1 KINGS 12:10-19



- Read 1 Kings 11:9-13. Did Rehoboam have a choice in today's passage? What do these verses help you understand about God's sovereignty?
- What happened as a result of Rehoboam's rejecting wise advice?



- Do we see division caused by leaders today? How is Jesus a different type of leader?



WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN NEGATIVELY AFFECTED BY SOMEONE'S UNWISE CHOICES? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE SURE YOUR CHOICES ARE WISE?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever needed advice but didn't know where to turn to get it? Or maybe several people gave you conflicting advice, and you wrestled with which opinion to follow? The truth is that on our own, it can be really difficult to wade through all the advice that comes our way. We're constantly hit with opinions about what's right and wrong from social media, friends, family members, and entertainment. Whether we realize it or not in the moment, the opinions we listen to help mold us into the people we're becoming. We must make sure we're surrounding ourselves with people who will push us toward God's will and not away from it. God hasn't left you on your own to sift through all the advice you're given. He has given you everything you need to live a godly lifestyle (2 Pet. 1:3). You have His Word and the Holy Spirit to guide you in all things.



DAY ONE

1 SAMUEL 8:10-22

This week, we studied about the importance of listening to the right voices. When Rehoboam became king, he ignored voices of wisdom. Instead, he listened to voices that lined up with his own selfish desires. From there, things started to crumble. As a result, Israel split into two separate kingdoms: Israel and Judah. But let's backtrack a little. God was supposed to be Israel's King, but the people looked at the pagan nations surrounding them and desired what they had—an earthly king. They were persistent in begging for one. Through the prophet Samuel, God warned Israel that their desire for an earthly king wouldn't benefit them. In this passage, Samuel shared that an earthly king would take so much from them—their land, their sons and daughters, their food, their freedom. Despite Samuel's warning, Israel insisted he make someone their king. So, God relented and gave them what they asked for, and with it came trouble, as we saw played out in our passage this week. God's people would now serve kings who would take from them rather than serving only Yahweh, a King who gave to them and who wanted relationship with them.

All of this points us to a few truths. First, we're prone to desiring what the people around us desire, and when this conflicts with God's intentions for us, we should lay down those desires. Second, God's plans for us are better than our own selfish plans. Many of us would say we agree with this, but when we're in a position to choose His way or our way, we often choose the latter. This is why the voices we rely on and listen to matter greatly. Listening to godly wisdom, even when it goes against what we want, helps us live according to the Lord's will.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU IGNORED WISE ADVICE BECAUSE IT DIDN'T LINE UP WITH WHAT YOU WANTED TO HEAR?**
- **WHOSE ADVICE DO YOU NEED TO STOP LISTENING TO BECAUSE IT LEADS YOU AWAY FROM GOD?**

PRAY

LORD, HELP ME TO TRUST THAT WHAT YOU WANT FOR ME IS BETTER THAN WHAT I MAY WANT FOR MYSELF. HELP ME TO LISTEN TO GODLY ADVICE OVER ADVICE THAT JUSTIFIES MY OWN DESIRES.



DAY TWO

2 TIMOTHY 4:3-5

Think of something you want to buy with your own money. Maybe you'd want a pair of shoes, a skateboard, a guitar, or a car. Would you shop around for the best price or purchase the first one you find? When we're spending our own money, we usually want to make sure we're getting the best deal. So, we check websites and stores to make sure we aren't wasting our money, right?

Sometimes, we do the same thing with advice. We talk to different people to get several opinions; in a sense, we shop around for the opinion which agrees most with what we've already decided. We're simply looking for someone else to agree with us because it makes us feel better about our decision. This is a harmful habit that spills over into our relationship with the Lord. For example, maybe you're struggling with a sinful desire. You "shop around" and choose advice that encourages you to act on that desire, and it softens the guilt. You doubt the Holy Spirit's warnings because everyone you talked to saw nothing wrong with the decision. Here's the truth though: The people you should listen to are the ones pointing you to God's Word. They'll help you make godly choices, and they won't agree with your sin just to appease you. Instead of searching for approval in someone's advice, we must seek wisdom from God's Word. Rather than looking for advice that justifies your sin, search for truth, even when it opposes what you want to do.

- **WHO DO YOU GO TO FOR ADVICE WHEN YOU WANT APPROVAL FOR SINFUL CHOICES? HOW IS THIS UNWISE?**
- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE LISTENING TO "SOUND DOCTRINE" AND TRUTH?**

PRAY

GOD, I CONFESS THAT SOMETIMES I SHOP AROUND FOR ADVICE THAT AGREES WITH MY SIN. HELP ME TO SEEK ADVICE FROM PEOPLE WHO WILL POINT ME TO YOU.



DAY THREE

JAMES 3:13-18

Do you ever struggle with knowing who to turn to when you need advice? We may say we struggle with this, but in reality, we might be battling the desire to listen to the wrong voices. We've talked a lot about wisdom this week, but sometimes, being able to tell who is truly wise is difficult. Sometimes, even distinguishing between "good" and godly advice is tough. So, how can we tell the difference?

Scripture is our guide. This passage describes how godly wisdom looks in our daily lives. We should be able to observe the way others live and see their "good conduct." According to these verses, wise people exude gentleness. They aren't boastful, bitter, or jealous, and they don't make selfish choices to get what they want. In fact, James says this type of wisdom is "earthly, unspiritual, demonic" (v. 15). Instead, wisdom from above prompts them to seek purity and peace. They show mercy to others and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). If we want to seek people who will give us godly, wise advice, then we simply need to look for people who live out God's Word in their daily lives. We need to look for people who imitate Jesus and encourage us to do the same. We need advice that lines up with Scripture—wisdom which stands apart from worldly advice that sounds good to our ears.

- **IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU LEANING TOWARD "GOOD" ADVICE INSTEAD OF GODLY WISDOM?**
- **DOES YOUR OWN LIFE EXHIBIT GODLY WISDOM? CAN PEOPLE TRUST YOUR ADVICE TO POINT THEM TOWARD THE LORD?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT WISDOM FROM ABOVE INSTEAD OF WHAT THIS WORLD OFFERS. I KNOW YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, GIVING ME THE GUIDANCE I NEED TO WALK IN WISDOM.



DAY FOUR

EPHESIANS 5:6-10

Have you ever fallen for a false advertisement? Maybe you saw an ad on TV or on social media, but when the product came in, it was nothing like you imagined. The advertisement turned out to be full of lies. It made the item seem way more appealing than it was in reality.

Sin works a lot like this. We fall for it because it's appealing. Sinful desires are dressed in lies, full of empty promises. Satan lies to us and tries to convince us that giving in to our sinful desires will make us happy. We fall for the lie that we'll finally have worth once we're popular or once we have a boyfriend or girlfriend. We buy in to believing that substances like drugs or alcohol will help us deal with anxiety or depression. We are deceived into chasing the world's impossible standards for beauty. We think using profane language like everyone else in the locker room will make us tough. But if we test these thoughts against God's Word, we'll see that none of them are true. Sin is deceptive. It makes promises it can never keep. It appeals to desires God has given us, desires which are designed to be filled by Him. This passage encourages us to "walk as children of the light" and not to be fooled by "empty words." But we can't do that—we can't recognize and battle lies—if we aren't armed with the truth of God's Word. God's Word is like a lamp, shining light on truth and exposing lies.

- **WHAT IS A SIN YOU'VE BEEN STRUGGLING WITH? WHAT EMPTY PROMISE DOES THIS SIN MAKE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU LOOK TO GOD TO MEET YOUR NEED INSTEAD?**

PRAY

GOD, I CONFESS THAT I'VE ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE DECEIVED BY SIN'S EMPTY PROMISES. HELP ME TO KNOW YOUR TRUTH SO THAT I CAN RECOGNIZE SATAN'S LIES.



DAY FIVE

COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

This week, we studied about Israel splitting into two separate kingdoms. Because of their leaders' selfish desires over the years, the entire nation suffered. Everyone was affected by Rehoboam's choice to reject the elders' advice. We can look back in history and see how nations paid dearly for their leaders' choices. We've even seen it on a smaller scale—in our cities, our towns, our schools, our churches, our families. We've felt the effects in our own lives, some of us very deeply, when decisions were made for us that only led to chaos, uncertainty, or pain. And it can sometimes feel like God isn't in control. In the wake of other people's bad decisions, it can feel like God is absent.

An internal war is happening between our sinful desires and God's desires for us. But this passage reminds us that the war has already been won. God is sovereign. He isn't absent or unaware. He hasn't lost control. In fact, everything was created through Christ, and He holds everything together. Everything. The news tells us that things are falling apart, that the state of our world is in jeopardy. Now, sin's impact on our world is very real, just like its impact on Israel was very real. But our God is still sovereign over it all. He still has a good plan for us, a plan which is held together perfectly by Him. This week, be reminded that while sin's effects are real and painful, they're temporary for believers. Be reminded that the Lord is completely aware and that He has complete authority. God will bring about His good and perfect will for His glory and for our good.

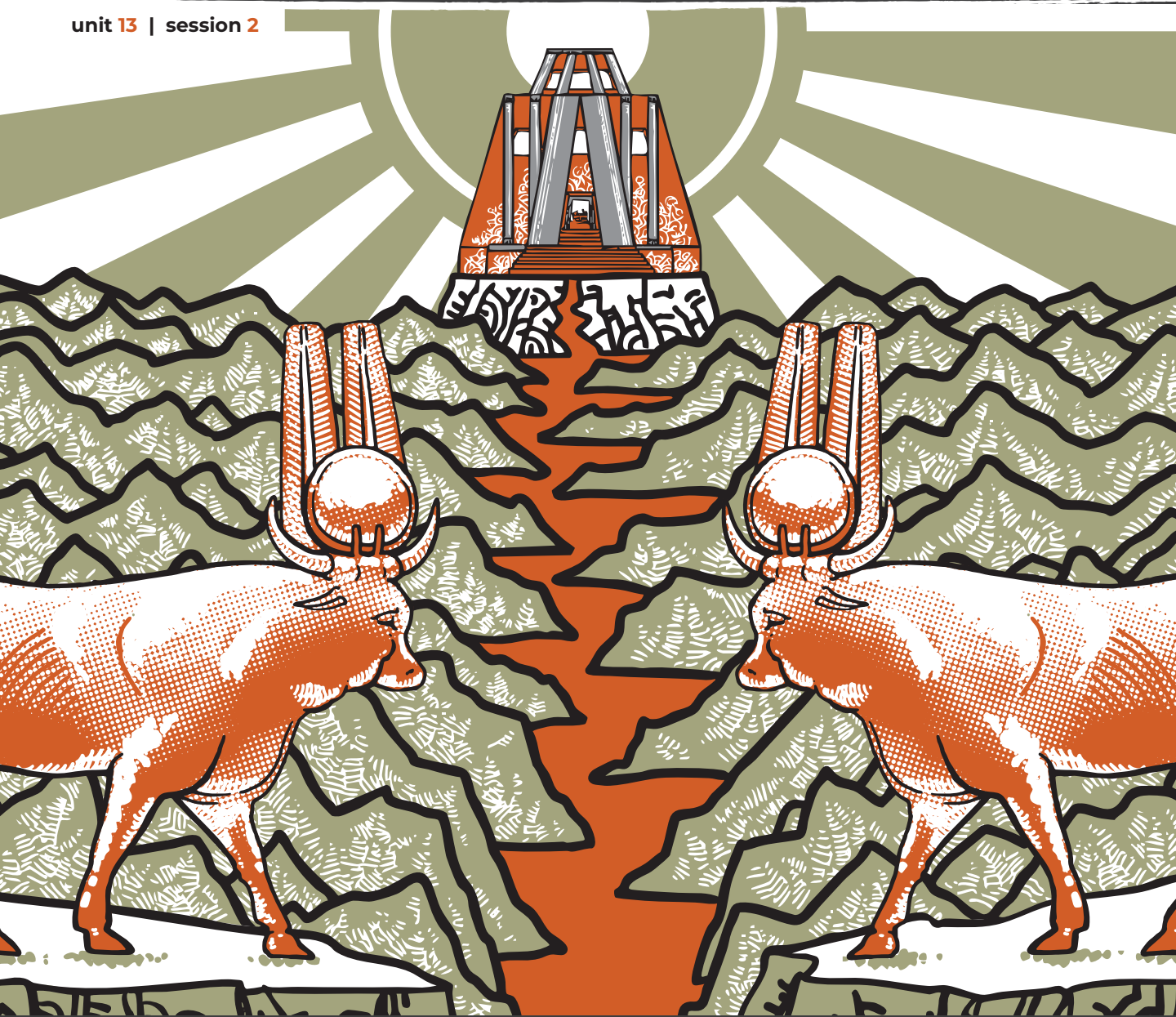
- **RIGHT NOW, WHAT ABOUT YOUR LIFE OR THIS WORLD FEELS CHAOTIC OR UNCERTAIN?**
- **HOW CAN REMEMBERING GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GIVE YOU HOPE?**

PRAY

GOD, SITUATIONS IN MY LIFE AND IN THIS WORLD SOMETIMES MAKE ME FEEL UNSTEADY, LIKE YOU DON'T SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING. THANK YOU FOR THE TRUTH THAT YOU'RE SOVEREIGN. HELP ME TO TRUST THAT YOU HOLD EVERYTHING TOGETHER.

EVIL IN THE *LORD'S SIGHT*

unit 13 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

The kings of Israel led the people astray. Under their leadership, Israel fell into idol worship and did what was evil in God's eyes. Christ is the King of kings, and He perfectly leads us to worship the Father.

BECOMING CANAANITE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

1 Kings 12–15

OUR IDOLATRY LEADS OTHERS ASTRAY

1 KINGS 12:25-33

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. 31 He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. 32 And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

IDOLATRY ROBS US OF OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

1 KINGS 14:21-26

21 Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. 22 And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. 23 For they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 24 and there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 25 In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. 26 He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made.

MAIN POINT.

Idolatry leads us to imitate the world around us instead of Christ.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN'S EFFECTS IN THE WORLD

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

DISCUSSION

OUR IDOLATRY LEADS OTHERS ASTRAY

1 KINGS 12:25-33

- Read verses 26-27. What was Jeroboam's motive for setting up the golden calves?
- ♥ • What is idolatry? How can being self-focused lead us to idolatry?
- Why do you think an entire nation followed Jeroboam's command to worship golden calves? What are the "golden calves" in our culture—things that steal our worship?

IDOLATRY ROBS US OF OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

1 KINGS 14:21-26

- ✝ • Why is it important to think carefully about who you're following?
- 📖 • What did imitating pagan nations cost God's people? What does it cost us to follow the world?
- 🧠 • How does God feel about the nation's actions (v. 22)? What does this help you see about Him?



WHO ARE YOU IMITATING: CHRIST OR THE WORLD?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Do you ever think about who you're becoming? Maybe you do, and you're proud of what you see. Maybe you're growing spiritually and making godly choices. Maybe you've walked away from sin that used to hold you hostage. You look back and see how much knowing Jesus has transformed your daily life. On the other hand, maybe you're ashamed of who you're becoming. Maybe right now, you can't believe the choices you're making. You can't believe how far you've fallen. You've chosen to imitate the world, and in doing so, you've become just like the world. And you may not know how to get back. But the truth is that God hasn't left you. You can repent and return to Him. You're not too far gone because if you're His child—if you've placed your faith in Christ for salvation—then you're still His child. You're still becoming who God has designed you to be. And because of God's loving kindness and mercy, you can choose to become like His Son.



DAY ONE

EXODUS 20:1-6

Have you ever thought about why certain rules exist? What happened for someone to decide that a rule needed to be put in place? Well, rules usually stem from previous actions. For instance, maybe your parents left you at home for a night while they went out of town. Their first rule was probably that you weren't allowed to have anyone over. They likely made the rule because you had done this previously, they had done it before when they were young, or someone they knew did it—and it only led to trouble. The point is that most rules usually reflect harmful, unwise decisions we would likely make or ones we've made in the past.

Because God created us, He knows us—so well, in fact, that He knows what we're capable of doing. The Lord knows what is in our heart because He knows us intimately. When God delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, He knew what His people were capable of and what was in their hearts too. When we look at the first and second commandments, we can see God's awareness of our propensity to wander away from Him. It points to how easily we put things before God and how quickly we bow to worldly idols. And from this heart issue all other issues flow. The commands to have no other gods besides the one true God and to have no idols in our lives are crucial to following any other command God gave us. Following the Lord begins with the commitment to honor these two commandments. How good and gracious is God that He knows us so deeply and gives us the guidance we need to enjoy relationship with Him? His commands are for our good, and they come from God's love for us—from how intimately He knows us.

- **HOW DO YOU VIEW GOD'S COMMANDS—AS RULES OR AS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS LOVE AND CARE? EXPLAIN.**
- **IN WHAT WAYS DO ALL OTHER COMMANDS FLOW FROM THESE FIRST TWO?**

PRAY

LORD, I'VE BEEN CONDITIONED TO VIEW RULES AS BURDENSOME, BUT YOUR COMMANDS AREN'T A BURDEN. I TRUST THAT YOUR COMMANDS ARE FOR MY GOOD, AND THEY COME FROM YOUR GREAT LOVE FOR ME.



DAY TWO

EXODUS 32:1-6

Have you ever had the feeling that a situation you were experiencing was one you had already experienced before, in the exact same way? People call it *déjà vu*. If you've had this happen to you, then you know it can feel really strange! This week, we studied about Jeroboam making two golden calves for the people to bow before in worship. Jeroboam's motives were rooted in a self-centered desire to maintain the people's loyalty. This story probably felt very familiar to a lot of us—maybe a little like *déjà vu*—because this wasn't the first time God's people did this.

In today's passage, we read about a similar situation. While Moses was on Mount Sinai meeting with the Lord and receiving the Ten Commandments, God's people were committing idolatry. They had been surrounded by pagan worship in Egypt for so long that it had become part of their identity as well. They hadn't yet grasped the idea that they were supposed to follow only Yahweh, the one true God. They hadn't yet understood that anything earthly or manmade could never represent God accurately, and that bowing before anything else was idolatry. Why? Because attempting to represent God with anything on earth only cheapens His worth. Sure, we struggle with putting activities, people, and material possessions before God. But sometimes, we even bow to things which, in a way, represent God—things like church activity and good works. Many of us who are walking faithfully with the Lord are no longer attracted to worldly idols. But we can make idols out of good things too—out of things which represent God but are not God.

- **WHAT DOES THE SITUATION IN TODAY'S PASSAGE SHOW YOU ABOUT THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY?**
- **DO YOU HAVE AN IDOL IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU KEEP RETURNING TO?**

PRAY

GOD, I NEVER WANT TO CHEAPEN YOUR GREATNESS AND YOUR WORTH. HELP ME TO STOP THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY IN MY OWN LIFE, AND HELP ME TO RECOGNIZE EVEN THE GOOD THINGS THAT ARE STEALING MY AFFECTION AND MY DEVOTION.



DAY THREE

PSALM 115:4-8

Have you ever known someone who was really afraid of dolls? Maybe seeing one even sent them into a panicked state. Did you know an actual name exists for a condition in which a person is afraid of dolls? It's called pediophobia! And it's very real. Pediophobia is an irrational fear of dolls even though they don't pose a real threat. People who suffer with pediophobia are often most bothered by the fact that dolls look real but aren't—they look alive but aren't.

Today's passage presents a similar idea concerning idols, specifically the golden calf the Israelites worshiped in Exodus 32. It was life-like. It had eyes and ears and a mouth, yet it was lifeless. It didn't have the abilities to see, hear, and speak. It was powerless to help those bowing before it. But what's really important is the way the psalmist described those who bow before idols: "Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them" (v. 8). In other words, when we trust in idols—things like money, popularity, beauty, sports—we become spiritually lifeless too. We become like the thing we worship. We may look spiritually alive on the outside by doing all the right things, like attending church, praying out loud, or singing worship songs. We present ourselves as if we're spiritually thriving, when on the inside, we're far from God. What idols are you trusting in? Take a good look at them. Consider how you're becoming like them. These worldly idols promise freedom, fun, and happiness. But they're powerless to keep these promises. They're powerless to do anything at all.

- **EXAMINE THE IDOLS IN YOUR OWN LIFE: CAN THEY REALLY OFFER YOU ANYTHING THAT LASTS?**
- **WHY ARE WE SO EASILY SWAYED INTO BELIEVING WORLDLY IDOLS ARE GOOD FOR US?**

PRAY

LORD, I'M DONE WITH THE LIE THAT IDOLS OF THIS WORLD CAN DO ANYTHING FOR ME. I KNOW THEY'RE POWERLESS TO SAVE ME. THEY CAN'T GIVE ME A FULFILLING LIFE. I REFUSE TO BOW BEFORE THEM.



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 1:18-25

Think of a time when you mentally knew what was wise but chose to do the opposite. For example, maybe you did a crazy trick on your skateboard or bike even though you knew you'd likely get hurt because you wanted to impress your friends. Or maybe you drove faster than the speed limit, though you knew it was against the law and dangerous to do so. Maybe you went to a party even though you knew the situation there was going to be sinful. We can know the right course and still choose the wrong one.

In today's passage, Paul explained that we often exchange the truth for a lie. Though we know God and can even see His power through creation, we make choices that go against His commands. We accept lies taught by culture, and our hearts darken to truth. We know God is the only One worthy of worship, but we turn to lesser things and devote our time and attention to them. We worship created things rather than our Creator. We know better, but we choose to allow other things and other people to take God's place in our lives. We knowingly embrace a lie because in the moment, these created things are appealing to our flesh. They appeal to our sinful desires and give us instant satisfaction. Here's what you can do when you're tempted to put created things in God's place: Look around you. Look at God's majesty in creation. Look at the way He designed everything you see. Then, live to glorify Him rather than anything else. Let everything else be secondary to Him because He is the only One worthy of worship. Choose to act on what you know is godly truth rather than acting on what you feel in the moment.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU CHOSEN WHAT FELT GOOD IN THE MOMENT RATHER THAN FOLLOWING WHAT YOU KNOW IS TRUE?**
- **WHAT "CREATED THINGS" ARE STEALING YOUR DEVOTION AND ATTENTION FROM GOD?**

PRAY

GOD, I CONFESS THAT I'VE CHOSEN TO IGNORE YOUR TRUTH AT TIMES. I'VE ALLOWED CREATED THINGS TO STEAL MY DEVOTION, AND I'VE ALLOWED THEM TO TAKE YOUR PLACE. FORGIVE ME AND HELP ME TO FIX MY EYES ON YOU.



DAY FIVE

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

How does it feel to be separated from the crowd? Do you feel anxious if you're singled out in front of other people? For many of us, the thought of being separated from everyone else is terrifying. We'd rather blend in and go unnoticed instead of feeling vulnerable and exposed. We don't want to stand out, especially for going against the flow of what everyone else is doing. We say we want to be an individual, but really, we just want to be like everyone else. We want to fit in with the crowd.

Can we just get real for a minute? We enjoy learning about God's love and forgiveness. We want to think about His mercy and His compassion. But we don't want to talk about how God calls us to be separate from the world—to holiness. By its very definition, holiness means to be set apart. In this passage, Paul warned the Christians in Corinth about being “yoked” with nonbelievers. A yoke is a wooden beam attached to harnesses that are placed around two animals' necks (like oxen), connecting them for plowing or pulling heavy loads. The yoke forces the animals to remain close to one another and to move in the same direction. To be yoked together with someone means you're working toward a common goal; it implies that you're traveling in the same direction, that you want the same things. And though we are called to love others, God specifically commands us to “go out from their midst” in the way we live—in our words, our actions, our motives. We aren't called to look like the world. We're called to move in another direction, toward righteousness. And when we do this, we shine like lights in the darkness. Paul isn't saying we should remove ourselves from the world or not interact with nonbelievers. He is urging us to actively imitate Jesus.

- **WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE “YOKED” WITH THIS WORLD? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**
- **WHY ARE WE SO AFRAID OF BEING SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD—OF SEEKING HOLINESS?**

PRAY

GOD, I KNOW YOU'VE CALLED ME TO HOLINESS. I CONFESS THAT THIS MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE. HELP ME TO DESIRE TO IMITATE JESUS MORE THAN DESIRING TO IMITATE THE WORLD. HELP ME PUT ASIDE MY OWN COMFORT.

HOW LONG WILL *YOU WAVE?*

unit 13 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ, like Elijah, confronted the religious leaders who were leading people astray. He boldly proclaimed the truth of the gospel and called people to repentance. Christ is the only way to the Father and the only way to salvation.

WORSHIP

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

1 Kings 18–19

WE MUST CHOOSE THE LORD

1 KINGS 18:20-26

20 So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. 23 Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. 24 And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken." 25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it." 26 And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made.

ONLY GOD IS POWERFUL TO SAVE

1 KINGS 18:30-39

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. 31 Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name," 32 and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." 34 And he said, "Do it a second time." And they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time." And they did it a third time. 35 And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water. 36 And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."

MAIN POINT.

When we confront our idols, we'll see they are powerless to save us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

FAITH

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

DISCUSSION

WE MUST CHOOSE THE LORD

1 KINGS 18:20-26

- What does it mean to waver? Why do we struggle with wavering between God and the world?
- Why do you think the people were silent in response to Elijah's question (v. 21)?
- Why didn't Baal answer (v. 26)? What does this show you about putting faith in the wrong things?

ONLY GOD IS POWERFUL TO SAVE

1 KINGS 18:30-39

- Why do you think Elijah used so much water?
- Did Elijah seem worried that God wouldn't answer him? How does Christ give us the same security?
- What did the people realize when the fire fell? What did it cause them to do?



ELIJAH STOOD AGAINST 850 FALSE PROPHETS. WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM STANDING FOR GOD?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever worked really hard to get someone's attention? Maybe it was a guy or a girl you liked, or maybe it was a coach. For some of us, it may have even been a parent whom we felt didn't notice us. It's tiring, though—striving to make someone notice you. Sometimes, we even do the same thing with God. We may think we need to check all the right boxes—like attending church, praying, reading our Bibles, or making godly decisions—for God to notice us or for Him to care about us. Now, are all of these wise decisions? Yes! They're spiritual disciplines which position us to know God and to hear God's voice. If we love God, then we will desire to do these things and more. But they don't earn His attention. His attention is already on you and has been since before He created you (Ps. 139:1-16). He knows you. He even knows your heart and your motives. The God of heaven and earth sees you, and you don't have to strive for His attention.



DAY ONE

1 KINGS 18:40; ROMANS 8:12-13

This week, we learned about one of the greatest prophets in the Bible, Elijah. He stood against King Ahab and the prophets of Baal, but we stopped short of what happened next. Remember those 850 prophets of Baal? They fled! Maybe they feared for their lives since everyone knew Baal was a powerless false god. They helped lead an entire nation away from the one true God. Today, we read that these prophets were put to death for their part in Israel's idolatry. But why was this necessary?

Elijah carried out the command in Deuteronomy 13:12-15: Anyone who led God's people into idolatry was to be put to death. Why? God took idolatry seriously. His plan to save the world from sin and death involved using Israel to bring about the Messiah—Jesus. And idolatry was a threat to Israel's very existence. God so loved the world that He wouldn't allow idolatry to deter His plan for salvation. Allowing these prophets to live would allow them to continue turning the people away from God and toward Baal. Even small traces of idolatry could grow and come back stronger than it was before (Spoiler alert: This is exactly what happened because traces still remained in the people's hearts). What does this mean for us? Well, first we must understand that this example isn't a call for us; we're not called to put anyone to death, but rather we're called to put to death the sin and the idols in our lives. Why is this necessary? Because sin separates us from God; it leads to death, and God sent Jesus to give us life! When we allow traces of sin and idolatry to remain, we leave the potential to return. You know that sin you keep going back to? You likely left the door open; you didn't completely walk away from it. Doing this often reveals that we're hesitant to let go of our sinful habits. Listen, let them go. Walk away from the sin that hurts your walk with God. And close the door.

- **WHAT SINS DO YOU KEEP RETURNING TO? WHAT STEPS DO YOU NEED TO TAKE TO CLOSE THE DOOR?**
- **WHY DO WE OFTEN LEAVE TRACES OF OUR SIN AND IDOLS?**

PRAY

GOD, SOME OF MY SINFUL HABITS STILL APPEAL TO ME. IT'S HARD FOR ME TO LET THEM GO COMPLETELY. I WANT TO WALK AWAY FROM THEM BECAUSE I KNOW IT'S THE BETTER WAY. HELP ME TO WALK IN THE FREEDOM CHRIST GAVE ME.



DAY TWO

PSALM 121:3-4

Have you ever tried to get a friend's attention in class? Maybe you threw a piece of paper at them or coughed to make them look up. Maybe you waved your hands in the air or whispered their name. In this week's lesson, Baal's prophets went to extremes to get his attention. In Ancient Eastern cultures, followers of pagan gods believed that their gods could fall asleep. Because of this, they also believed it was necessary sometimes to take drastic measures to wake up the gods. This sometimes involved dancing, screaming, and even self-mutilating—all to get their god's attention.

How different is the one true God? He is unlike all false gods for many reasons. Today's passage is a reminder that, unlike false gods, God never sleeps. He is never unaware of what is happening to you or to the world. He is always awake, and the psalmist called Him Protector. And you don't have to do anything to get His attention. You don't have to put on a performance or go to extremes for Him to look your way; you don't have to be perfect for Him to notice you. God's eye is on you at all times. In a way we can't comprehend, God is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere all at once. So, He sees you and is with you even when you feel incredibly alone, even when you feel forgotten, even when you feel abandoned by others.

- **WHEN HAS IT FELT LIKE GOD WAS ASLEEP OR UNAWARE ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE?**
- **HOW HAVE YOU TRIED TO IMPRESS GOD OR GAIN HIS ATTENTION? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE CHANGE THINGS?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR NEVER SLEEPING AND FOR BEING WITH ME AT ALL TIMES. HELP ME TO REST IN THE TRUTH THAT I DON'T HAVE TO GAIN YOUR ATTENTION. I CAN SIMPLY ENJOY YOUR PRESENCE.



DAY THREE

MATTHEW 6:6-8

What's the loudest environment you've ever been in? Maybe it was a football game, a concert, or a construction site. You may have felt like you needed to scream to be heard! And even then, your words may have been drowned out by the noise.

Yesterday, we read about how God never sleeps. Not only did ancient pagan cultures believe that their gods fell asleep, but they also believed that these false gods couldn't always hear their prayers. In a similar way to how pagan worshipers danced and even harmed themselves to get their gods to wake up, they would also scream and repeat themselves to be heard; in other words, they would "babble." Today, we use this word to describe someone who keeps talking and talking and can't bring their words to a point, right? But in today's passage, Jesus addressed people who "babbled" in prayer, like the Gentiles, or pagans. Think back to Baal's prophets and Elijah's prayers; they were opposite of one another. Baal's prophets loudly called on him from morning until noon, but he never answered. On the other hand, Elijah prayed a simple, direct prayer: "You are Lord. Answer me so that the people will know You!" He didn't need to babble or use fancy, impressive language. And Jesus made this point in today's passage. Religious leaders in Jesus's time would often pray loudly to impress others. They'd repeat certain phrases instead of speaking from their hearts; they were simply going through the motions. They were near to God with their words but not their hearts (Isa. 29:13), and if we aren't careful, we can fall into the same trap. Jesus reminded His followers that not only does God hear us, but He doesn't require or desire impressive prayers. He wants our honesty, our authenticity, and our respect. When we pray in faith and in Jesus's name, the Father hears us.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE GOD WASN'T HEARING YOUR PRAYERS? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE GIVE YOU ASSURANCE?**
- **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN AFRAID TO PRAY OUT LOUD BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T PRAY "GOOD ENOUGH"?**

PRAY

LORD, THANK YOU FOR HEARING ME. I REST IN THE TRUTH THAT I CAN TALK TO YOU AS MY FATHER. HELP ME TO PRAY IN FAITH WITH A SINCERE HEART THAT IS READY TO SUBMIT TO YOUR WILL.



DAY FOUR

PSALM 86:11-12

Have you ever felt divided over something? Maybe a part of you felt one way, but another part of you felt the opposite. For example, maybe two of your friends were in a disagreement, but you could see both sides. Or maybe it concerned something not so serious, like two of your favorite teams playing each other. You found it impossible to choose which team you wanted to win. In both of these examples, you had a divided heart. You couldn't give yourself fully to either side.

Think of the ways this applies to your walk with God. How often do you feel torn over following His Word and following your own sinful desires? How often are you put in the position to take a stand for your faith, yet you struggle to do so because you're torn over what you may lose in the process—friends, popularity, someone's respect? How often are you divided in how you should spend your time as your conflicting priorities pull you in two different directions—away from God and toward God? And you find yourself somewhere in the middle. In today's passage, David prayed something many of us need to pray: "God, I'm torn. Help me know Your will, and help me to do it." Did you catch that? We can ask God to teach us His ways, but we must also make the choice to walk in that direction. We can pray for our mind and our heart to be united, but we must choose to love and fear God in our daily lives. The simple truth is that we can't live for God fully if we have divided minds and hearts. We can't live for the world and for God. His Word says that friendship with the world makes us enemies of God (James 4:4). Today, pray the words in Psalm 86:11-12. Make the choice to follow only the Lord.

- **BE SPECIFIC: IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU FEEL TORN BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD?**
- **WHAT STEPS DO YOU NEED TO TAKE TO CHOOSE GOD?**

PRAY

GOD, I HAVE BATTLED BEING TORN BETWEEN MY FLESH AND YOUR SPIRIT LIVING INSIDE OF ME. HELP ME TO BE UNDIVIDED IN MY MIND AND IN MY HEART SO THAT I CAN WALK ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.





DAY FIVE

1 KINGS 19:1-18

Have you ever heard of a runner's high? It's a phenomenon that happens to long-distance runners or others who exercise intensely. Their bodies release a chemical called endorphins, and they experience a spike in adrenaline, leaving them with a feeling of bliss or euphoria. Some people even chase this high because of how good it makes them feel. But it doesn't last. The body eventually calms to a normal state.

Think about how Elijah may have felt after God's amazing, intense display of power on Mount Carmel. Surely he was ecstatic! Maybe so, but he didn't have much time to celebrate. King Ahab's wife, Jezebel, was a devoted Baal worshiper, and she was furious with Elijah's actions. She vowed that Elijah would pay with his own death. And Elijah, the bold prophet who stood against Baal and his 850 prophets, ran away. He feared for his life. He even wished for death. He stopped eating. He ran even farther away and hid in a cave. This probably wasn't what many of us expected from Elijah. But he was human, wasn't he? He struggled with fear and depression because he, like us, struggled with sin. He wasn't perfect. God's reaction? He didn't yell at Elijah and tell him how disappointed He was in him. Instead, God sent an angel to feed him. He let Elijah rest. And in a whisper, God called Elijah out of hiding and gave him encouragement and purpose: "You're not alone. Others are standing with you. Go back the way you came." Do you see God's character in this passage? Do you see how He cares for us, how He encourages us when we need it, and how He gives us purpose? This is our kind and loving God, who meets us where we are!

- **WHAT SITUATION IN YOUR LIFE MAKES YOU FEARFUL? ARE YOU RESPONDING BY RUNNING AWAY?**
- **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE HELP YOU BETTER UNDERSTAND GOD'S CHARACTER?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR REMINDING ME THAT YOU CARE FOR ME WHEN I'M TIRED AND AFRAID. YOU REMIND ME THAT I'M NEVER ALONE. YOU GIVE ME HOPE AND PURPOSE.

HE HAS *HUMBL*ED HIMSELF

unit 13 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Every word Jesus spoke pointed to the truth. Only through accepting Jesus’s words as truth can we experience a restored relationship with God the Father.

BEFORE RESTORATION

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

1 Kings 20–2 Kings 1

THE TRUTH IS SOMETIMES OFFENSIVE

1 KINGS 21:17-24

17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. 19 And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Have you killed and also taken possession?”’ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.”’” 20 Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” He answered, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. 21 Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. 22 And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin. 23 And of Jezebel the LORD also said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’ 24 Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.”

THE TRUTH HUMBLER US

1 KINGS 21:25-29

25 (There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. 26 He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the people of Israel.) 27 And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son’s days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”

MAIN POINT.

Humility is an important step in restoring a broken relationship with God.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

REPENTANCE

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

DISCUSSION

THE TRUTH IS SOMETIMES OFFENSIVE

1 KINGS 21:17-24

- ♥ • Ahab didn't seem to change after the experience at Mount Carmel. How is that possible?
- 🧠 • Have you ever struggled to speak truth to someone? How do you think Elijah felt?
- Why do you think Ahab called Elijah his enemy? Why are we threatened by people who speak truth to us?

THE TRUTH HUMBLER US

1 KINGS 21:25-29

- ✝ • What does it mean to be humbled? How does truth often humble us?
- 📖 • What does repentance look like?
- What does it show about God that He held off on punishing Ahab, who was "evil in the sight of the LORD"?



ARE THERE SITUATIONS WHERE YOU NEED TO SPEAK BOLD TRUTH? WHY DON'T YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Does God punish us for the sins of people who came before us? In today's passage, we see God postpone consequences for someone's sin until the next generation. But is this the case with us? First, we have to keep in mind the context for today's passage. We're dealing with the king of Israel and with a nation God had set apart for Himself to bring about the Messiah. He wouldn't allow their sin to stop His plan for bringing a Savior. What we read here isn't prescriptive—it isn't a decision for all people for all time. It applied for God's purpose at that point in history. However, all sin has consequences, and our sins do affect those coming after us. We are held accountable if we continue previous generations' sins. Our sin has a ripple effect we may never see. So here's the deal: You aren't responsible for your parents' sins. But the consequences of their sinful choices may spill over into your life. Is that always fair? No way. But sin isn't concerned with fairness. It leads to death. And it's all the more reason for us to choose the better way. God holds us accountable for our choice to continue generational sin. God's heart isn't punishment; His heart is redemption from sin and death.



DAY ONE

JOHN 14:6

This week, we read about the prophet Elijah returning with a strong message from God for King Ahab. The message? God was going to destroy everything Ahab had built; He would wipe out his descendants, and Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, would die brutal deaths and be eaten by dogs and birds of prey. Why? Because Ahab had disobeyed God and committed all kinds of evil. This isn't news many of us would want to deliver, even to our enemies, but hearing the truth moved Ahab to repent. And because of Ahab's response, God postponed the disaster (1 Kings 21:17-24).

Sometimes, hearing the truth is difficult. It stings. It points out our flaws. It reminds us that we're imperfect humans. Some of us would rather not hear it because doing so makes us accountable, right? Once we hear truth, we have two options: We either accept it and commit to change, or we ignore it and continue doing what we want to do. In today's verse, Jesus didn't just say that He speaks truth; He explained that He is truth. Jesus also explained that He is "the way" and "the life." Jesus is the only way to the Father, and He is life because through His death, we have eternal life. Apart from Him, we are dead in our sin. But before we can experience the life Jesus offers us, we have to embrace the truth. We have to confront our sin and repent. Then, as we continue to walk with the Lord, He continues to reveal truth to us when we sin. When we rebel against truth—when we ignore it and run from it—we're rebelling against God. When we become angry at another person for speaking difficult truth to us, we're angry with truth itself. Today, consider how important truth is to you; on your own and without truth leading you, you couldn't realize Jesus is the "way" to "life."

- **WHAT ROLE DOES TRUTH PLAY IN RECOGNIZING JESUS AS THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE?**
- **WHAT TRUTHS ARE YOU RUNNING FROM OR ATTEMPTING TO IGNORE? HOW CAN YOU FACE TRUTH INSTEAD?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR LEADING ME IN YOUR TRUTH.
HELP ME TO ACCEPT IT INSTEAD OF RUNNING FROM
IT OR BEING OFFENDED BY IT.**



DAY TWO

JAMES 4:4-5

In the lesson this week, Elijah spoke boldly and shared a difficult truth with Ahab. In response, Ahab called Elijah his “enemy.” Ahab’s mentality was that anyone who spoke against him or didn’t agree with his actions was an enemy. Many times, we adopt this same mentality. Instead of welcoming truth from parents, friends, or mentors, we think they’re trying to hurt us and view ourselves as a victim. We choose to be offended and often retaliate. Surely we can find a better way.

Ahab’s enemy wasn’t Elijah; Elijah was only the messenger. Ahab’s enemy was God. Why? Ahab had chosen “friendship with the world” (v. 4) by imitating pagan nations and embracing idolatry. In today’s passage, James explained that those who are friends of this world are enemies of God. What does this mean for us to be friends with the world? It means we embrace worldly ideas; we follow along with what culture says is good, normal, or popular even when it contradicts biblical truth. We prioritize activities, even ones that aren’t inherently sinful, at the expense of our time with God. In other words, our lives here on earth matter more to us than investing in what lasts—in our relationship with the Lord and in helping others know Him. When we choose friendship with the world over friendship with God, we make ourselves His enemy because we embrace and walk in sin. And God is always opposed to sin. So, we have the choice: Are we friends with the world or with God? Are we willing to hear and accept truth or will we respond in anger and choose to be offended by it? The truth is that friendship with this world is choosing friendship with things that will one day fade away. It’s choosing what’s temporary instead of what’s eternal. Friendship with the world robs us of abundant life here and now.

- **THINK ABOUT YOUR DAILY LIFE. DOES IT REVEAL THAT YOU’RE FRIENDS WITH THE WORLD OR WITH GOD? HOW?**
- **WHY DO WE CHOOSE TO BE OFFENDED WHEN WE HEAR TRUTH? HOW CAN YOU VIEW IT AS KINDNESS INSTEAD?**

PRAY

**GOD, I WANT TO LOVE OTHERS WITHOUT EMBRACING
FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD. I WANT TO POINT
OTHERS TO YOU INSTEAD OF CLINGING TO WORLDLY
IDEAS. HELP ME TO HEAR AND ACCEPT YOUR TRUTH.**



DAY THREE

MATTHEW 5:17-20

Has someone ever given you bad directions? Maybe you were in a theme park and asked someone for the quickest route to a certain ride, but the directions took you the long way instead. Or maybe you followed a maps app, but it led you the wrong direction. Sometimes, we don't realize we've been given bad directions until we're lost. And sometimes, it's much more serious than not finding a ride at a theme park.

Today's passage comes from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. He spoke to a large crowd and explained that His teachings didn't cancel the Old Testament law; instead, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law. He showed us how the law works in our daily lives. Jesus also explained the importance of leading others. Now, you may think that no one is following you or that you're not a leader. But you're wrong. Sure, maybe you don't have a big platform on social media, and maybe you are quiet in class. But other people are watching the way you live, and they're following your example. Your words and actions show them what you believe about God and often help them form their own opinion of God. And like a bad map, you could lead others astray. That's a pretty big responsibility, isn't it? We often hold pastors and ministers to a higher standard than everyone else, but Jesus was pretty clear: Whoever lives in a way that leads others astray will be called least in His kingdom. In other words, we're responsible for how our words and actions affect others. But the good news is that when we lead others to Jesus, we're called great in His kingdom!

- **WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE COULD LEAD OTHERS AWAY FROM GOD? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**
- **DO YOU NEED TO APOLOGIZE TO ANYONE FOR LEADING THEM ASTRAY BY YOUR UNGODLY CHOICES? WILL YOU BE BOLD ENOUGH TO DO THIS?**

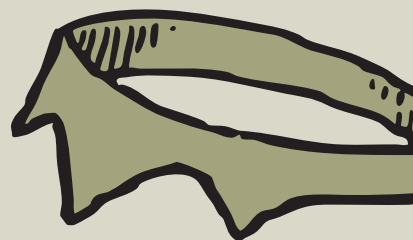
PRAY

LORD, I CONFESS THAT MY WORDS AND ACTIONS DON'T ALWAYS POINT OTHERS TO YOU. HELP ME TO BE AWARE OF THE WAYS I MAY BE LEADING OTHERS AWAY FROM YOU. I WANT MY LIFE TO REVEAL THAT YOU'RE MY LORD.



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4



Think about your daily choices. Who do they mostly benefit: you or others? If we're honest, most of us look out for ourselves. We care about other people, but if it comes down to a choice, we normally choose what's best for us. Putting others second is part of our human nature.

Humility means that we consider others more important than ourselves, and it goes against our sinful nature. Paul urged believers in Philippi to imitate Jesus, who was the ultimate example of humility. Think about it: Jesus—the Son of God, the One who was before all things, who created all things, and who sustains all things—stepped down from His throne in heaven. He lowered Himself to come here and to take on human form. He served the weak, the poor, the sick. He washed feet and served others, when He was the One worthy of being served. He died a humiliating death because He humbly submitted to the Father for our salvation. Christ is our humble Savior King. He showed us what it looks like to lower ourselves and to put the needs of others first. Is it easy? Will it always be the popular choice? Will it benefit us in a worldly sense? No. Definitely not. But it's the way of our King. What would it look like for you to walk in humility? Maybe it could look like you sitting at a different lunch table. Maybe it means you look for ways to befriend people everyone else makes fun of or ignores. Maybe it looks like helping your parents around the house. Maybe it looks like serving at a shelter for the homeless. Maybe it looks like not posting every brag on your social media account. It can look different for all of us. When we choose humility, we choose to be like Jesus, and the reward is far greater than the temporary satisfaction that comes with choosing selfishness.

- **WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE HUMILITY IN OUR CULTURE? HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING HUMILITY MORE CHALLENGING?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN PUT OTHERS FIRST THIS WEEK?**

PRAY

LORD, I'M MORE INCLINED TO THINK OF MYSELF INSTEAD OF THINKING ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR OTHERS. IT GOES AGAINST MY NATURE, BUT I SURRENDER MY NATURE TO YOU. I WANT TO LIVE WITH HUMILITY AND IMITATE YOUR SON.



DAY FIVE

1 KINGS 22:29-38,51-53

Have you ever been caught doing something wrong, but the person who caught you delayed your punishment? Maybe it was a sibling who didn't tell on you right away or a coach who wanted you to think about what needed to happen next. Time went by, and since nothing happened, you thought you escaped punishment, until finally, it came out of nowhere and caught you off guard.

Remember Ahab, Israel's evil king, who repented after hearing Elijah's message from God (1 Kings 21:27)? God explained that He would postpone his punishment, but we have to wonder if Ahab made any inward changes after he cried out in repentance. Was it an outward display only? We might question if he sincerely turned to the Lord. We don't see evidence that he did, so it's possible that his reaction was more about his punishment rather than his realization of his own evil actions against the Lord. He continued to disobey God and made alliances that God commanded him not to make. In today's passage, we read that Ahab's consequences caught up to him in the middle of a battle. Ahab went into battle wearing a disguise, but it didn't matter because the day God spoke of through Elijah had come—the day Ahab would lose his life. Regardless, God was true to His promise. After Ahab's death, his son, Ahaziah, took the throne. He imitated his father and mother. Their example trickled down through the generations and left lasting consequences. What can we learn from this? God is merciful when we repent. He knows our true intentions and reads our heart. And He will keep His Word. If we're walking with Him, then these truths are comforting, but if we're walking in rebellion, they're frightening.

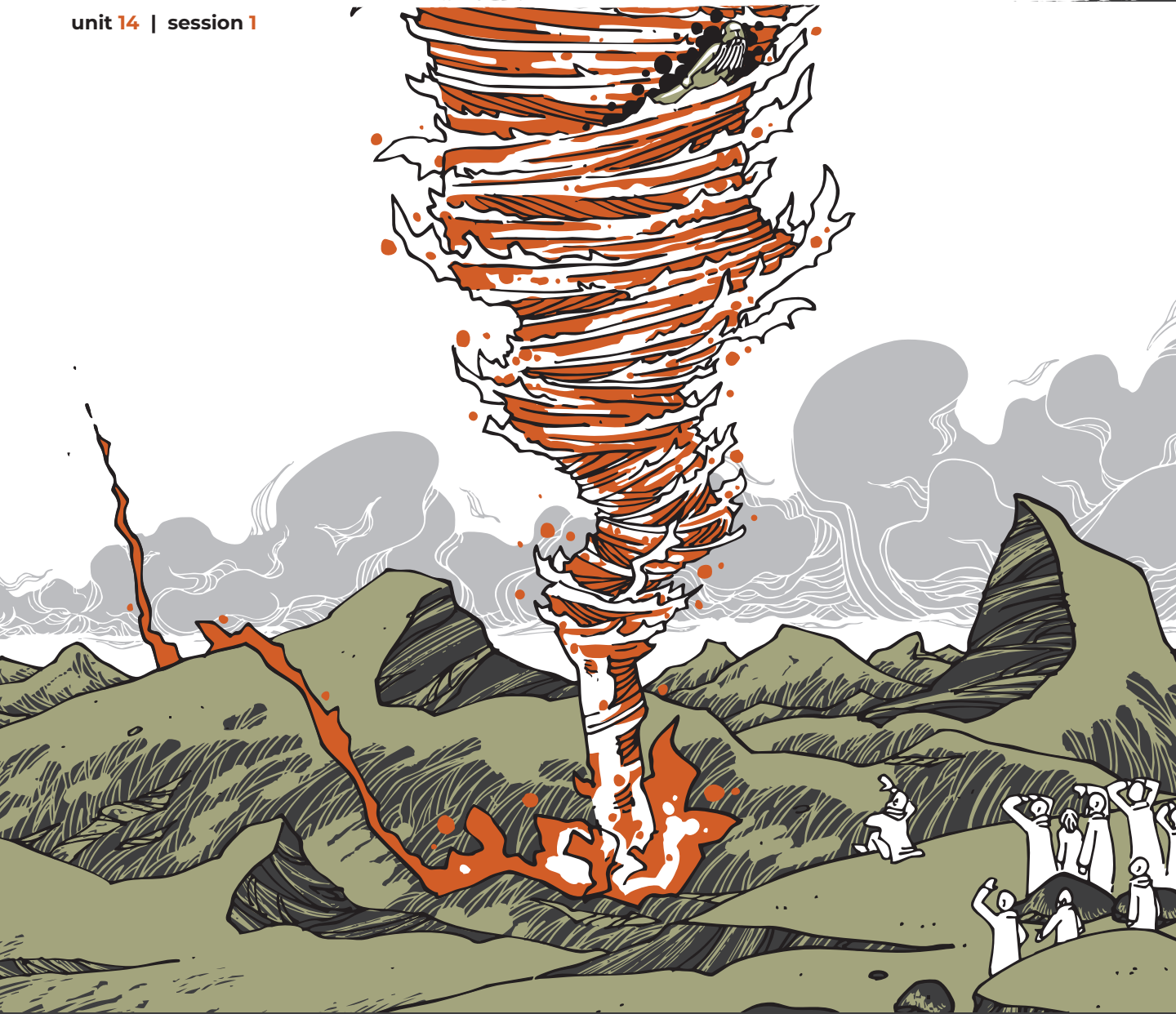
- **WHEN HAVE YOU REPENTED OUTWARDLY BUT NOT CHANGED INWARDLY? IS THIS REAL CHANGE? EXPLAIN.**
- **IS GOD KNOWING YOUR HEART COMFORTING TO YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

PRAY

**GOD, MY OUTWARD SIGNS OF REPENTANCE ARE
MEANINGLESS IF I DON'T REPENT IN MY HEART.
SHOW ME WHERE I'VE SINNED. HELP ME TO REPENT.**

TWO SHARES OF *YOUR SPIRIT*

unit 14 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

Before Christ ascended into heaven, He commissioned the disciples to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, and He promised to be with them—and us—until the very end of the age (Matt. 28:16-20). We carry the gospel everywhere we go with the power of the Holy Spirit living within us.

FOLLOWING AND BECOMING

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

2 Kings 2–6

WE LEARN FROM THE PEOPLE WE FOLLOW

2 KINGS 2:1-6

1 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 3 And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." 4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. 5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." 6 Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

WE CARRY WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

2 KINGS 2:7-14

7 Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. 9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." 10 And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." 11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. 13 And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

MAIN POINT.

The people we follow help shape us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION EVANGELISM

The duty and privilege of every Christian and of every church is to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of one's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort flows from a changed life, and in His teachings, Jesus specifically and repeatedly commanded preaching the gospel to all nations. Every child of God has the duty to share the gospel verbally and through a Christian lifestyle.

DISCUSSION

WE LEARN FROM THE PEOPLE WE FOLLOW 2 KINGS 2:1-6

- Why do you think Elijah led Elisha through several towns? Why was Elisha determined to stay with him?
- Why do we need spiritual mentors? Do you have one?
- Who is following you? Why is it important to think about where you're leading them and how you're shaping them?

WE CARRY WHAT WE'VE LEARNED 2 KINGS 2:7-14

- What did Elisha do after Elijah was carried away? How could this help us navigate grief?
- Read 1 Kings 19:19. What significance was there in Elisha picking up Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:14)?
- How can we carry what we've learned from Jesus?



WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT IT REFLECTS A LOVE OF CHRIST?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

A lot of us like to think we're independent. Our culture values individualism. We want to believe that we're who we are regardless of who we're around—that we're our own person. But the truth is that as believers, we're not our own (1 Cor. 6:19); we belong to Christ. And part of this truth is that we're also accountable to other people. What does this mean? Well, culture would say that we're free to live our own lives without worrying how we could affect others; it teaches us to do what makes us happy or what feels right and that what's right for us may not be right for others. Scripture teaches something very different: Our lives are intertwined with others. We are the "body of Christ," and each part of the body affects the rest of the body (1 Cor. 12:26-27). So, did God create us as unique individuals? Of course! But we can't buy into the mindset that other people don't help shape us or that we don't help shape other people.



DAY ONE

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

A worldly belief has worked its way into the church, but it's a lie that circulated in the early church too—the lie that our actions are detached from other people, that we can live like islands. Believing this lie causes us to view our sin as personal. Believing it encourages us to compartmentalize our lives; for example, we have a worldly side and a church side. When we believe our actions don't affect others, we more easily allow ourselves to sin, thinking it won't impact anyone else. As long as we keep that sin private. As long as we put on our church face when we're around other believers. As long as we play the right role in the right places.

We've gotten things all wrong in an effort to justify our sin and our apathy. The idea certainly didn't come from Jesus; He didn't approve of this behavior anywhere in Scripture. In fact, He repeatedly called out religious leaders for looking clean on the outside while remaining dirty on the inside—for being hypocrites (Matt. 23:25-28). Jesus taught us to live authentically—to live fully for the Lord no matter where we are or who we're with. He taught us to consider others as more important than ourselves. He explained the truth that our sin is harmful to others and that we'll be held accountable (Matt. 5:19). In today's passage, Paul supported Jesus's teachings. He compared all believers to a physical body. When one part of the body doesn't work properly, the entire body suffers. One part of our body can't detach and go out on its own; where one part goes, the rest follows. We don't exist separately from one another, even when we live thousands of miles apart. So, what does all of this mean? It means that you're an important part of the body of Christ—the church. Your choice to sin or not to sin and your choice to be involved or not impacts the whole church. You're valued. You're not an island.

- **IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU LIVED LIKE AN ISLAND INSTEAD OF LIKE YOU'RE CONNECTED TO OTHER BELIEVERS?**
- **HOW DOES VIEWING YOUR SIN AS A PERSONAL ISSUE CONTRIBUTE TO YOU STAYING TRAPPED IN IT?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE REMINDER THAT I'M
CONNECTED TO ALL BELIEVERS. THANK YOU FOR
REMINDING ME THAT MY SIN IMPACTS OTHERS. HELP
ME TO LIVE IN A WAY WHICH ENCOURAGES OTHER
PEOPLE TO FOLLOW JESUS.**



DAY TWO

MATTHEW 28:16-20

Think of someone who has taught you something valuable. Maybe your grandfather taught you how to change a tire, or your dad taught you how to save money. Maybe your mom taught you how to cook or play guitar. Maybe a sibling taught you how to throw a baseball. You'll carry it with you for the rest of your life. You'll likely teach someone else to do what you do one day.

The disciples spent several years walking with Jesus. We get to see so many of their moments with Him, but countless moments are a mystery to us. Think about it: The disciples spent roughly three years with Jesus—talking to Him, watching Him interact with others, listening to Him, watching Him perform miracles. They got to joke and laugh with Him, and they also had the honor of crying and grieving with Him. They prayed with Him. Can you imagine having the privilege of doing all this with the Son of God? In all of these moments, Jesus was preparing the disciples to do what He did; He was teaching them what was most valuable so that they could carry it on after He ascended to heaven. Today's passage clearly expresses Jesus's hope for His followers; He said, "Go, go into the world and tell them everything. Teach them what I taught you. Baptize them. And know I'm with you." This command is for us too. As believers, we have God's Spirit living inside of us. He teaches us, guides us in truth, and prompts us to share the gospel. You never have to question what God wants you to do because these verses make it clear. Our callings may look different, but our purpose is the same—to make disciples and to share with others what God has shared with us through His Word, through His Son, and through His Spirit.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU WONDERED WHAT YOUR PURPOSE IS? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE MAKE IT SIMPLE AND CLEAR?**
- **HOW CAN YOU DO WHAT JESUS SAID IN THIS PASSAGE?**

PRAY

GOD, WHAT A PRIVILEGE IT IS TO CARRY YOUR MESSAGE TO THE WORLD. WHAT AN HONOR IT IS TO OBEY YOUR COMMANDS AND TO TEACH OTHERS TO AS WELL. HELP ME TO LIVE OUT MY PURPOSE.



DAY THREE

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-17

Once you know something, can you unknow it? For instance, once you know how to work through a simple math problem, like $2 + 2$, are you likely to forget the answer? Probably not. Sure, tougher problems would require you to work them out, but even then, once you know how to work addition problems, you're set. You have the knowledge to approach any addition problem. You just have to apply the knowledge you've already attained.

Paul instructed the believers in Philippi to "hold true" to what they had already learned about God (v. 16). Paul explained that he hadn't yet reached perfection. He would fight against sin until reaching heaven (v. 12). We're in the same fight, and one way we fight is by living up to what we've already learned. We do this in school, in sports, in other activities. We learn a skill and keep applying it as we improve and learn more. But how does this play out in our walk with God? Well, we learn about the Lord. We learn about what pleases Him and what doesn't. And instead of living up to what we've learned, we circle back and commit the sin we've already repented of and walked away from. We slip back into harmful habits. It's like we forget what we've learned. But here's the truth: We can't unknow truth God revealed to us. Sure, we may wrestle with understanding it for a time. But we're accountable for the knowledge we have when it comes to sin and when it comes to the things God wants us to do too. Paul had his eyes so fixed on Jesus that he encouraged others to imitate him as he walked with God. Can we say the same to the people watching us? Can we encourage them to imitate us? Or would that only cause them to wander in circles, going back to the sin they had already surrendered? If so, press on. Stop circling back to the sin you know will harm you. Strain toward heaven, toward walking in freedom from sin through the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of you!

- **WHY DON'T WE HOLD TRUE TO WHAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US?**
- **IF OTHERS IMITATED YOUR WALK WITH JESUS, HOW WOULD THEY LIVE?**

PRAY

GOD, I CONFESS THAT I OFTEN CIRCLE BACK TO SIN I'VE ALREADY SURRENDERED. I KNOW TRUTH, BUT I DON'T LIVE UP TO IT. HELP ME TO FIX MY EYES ON YOU AND TO LIVE OUT WHAT YOU'VE SHOWN ME.



DAY FOUR

2 KINGS 4:8-24,32-37

This week, we read about Elisha watching as Elijah was carried away by a chariot of fire in a whirlwind. Just before this happened, Elisha begged for two shares of Elijah's spirit, meaning that he wanted to continue Elijah's legacy as a prophet. And God certainly responded by giving Elisha what he desired.

Almost immediately, Elisha began to prophesy and perform great acts. One of his greatest miracles involved prophesying that the Shunammite woman would have a son and then restoring the boy to life when he suddenly died several years later. The situation was very similar to one in which Elijah also restored a widow's son to life (1 Kings 17:17-24). Elisha spent six years under Elijah's mentorship. He witnessed Elijah's boldness and faithfulness when so many prophets were cowardly and spoke falsely. He learned how to listen to the Lord and how to call on Him for power. But still, Elijah being carried away to heaven devastated him. Who is your Elijah? Many of us are being mentored by someone, like a parent, a coach, a teacher, or a minister. We learn from them what it looks like to walk faithfully with Jesus. But many of us have also experienced losing this person—to a move or change in circumstances or even to death. If we aren't careful, we can become so dependent on our mentor that we don't know how to keep going without them. Now, grieving is normal. Elisha grieved, but then, he kept going. He continued Elijah's legacy and did even greater things! He carried what he learned with him because his faith was his own. Walking with a mentor is a great blessing, but we must make sure we're growing in our own faith so that we can carry on when they can no longer be with us.

- **DO YOU HAVE A SPIRITUAL MENTOR? WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THIS PERSON? IF NOT, HOW CAN YOU SEEK ONE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU MAKE SURE YOU'RE GROWING IN YOUR OWN WALK WITH GOD AND NOT DEPENDING ON SOMEONE ELSE'S?**

PRAY

LORD, I'M THANKFUL FOR THE PEOPLE YOU'VE PLACED IN MY LIFE WHO MENTOR ME. HELP ME TO GROW IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU AND TO CARRY WHAT I'VE LEARNED.





DAY FIVE

2 KINGS 5:1-19

Today's passage is about another of Elisha's miracles. Let's take a closer look at Naaman—a non-Israelite. In fact, Naaman was the commander for the army of Aram, or Syria—an enemy to Israel. Though extremely powerful, Naaman suffered from leprosy—an incurable, highly contagious skin disease. People with leprosy were often kept away from others and treated as outcasts. In Jewish culture, people with leprosy were labeled unclean and banned from going to the temple. It was like a life sentence and a barrier to God and community. So, why do we study Naaman today? We're more like him than we may realize. Naaman humbled himself and sought healing from the Lord. At first, Naaman expected a spectacular show of power from Elisha; he even seemed to assume he shouldn't have to do anything himself to be healed. Naaman didn't want to obey Elisha's instructions to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River because it was dirty compared to the rivers in Syria. But when Naaman obeyed, he came out of the water with healed skin. This healing changed his entire perspective: He called God the only true God (v. 15)! Jesus used Naaman as an example of God's willingness to heal Gentiles because Jews had rejected truth (Luke 4:27). In fact, Naaman is the only recorded healing of someone with leprosy until Jesus healed a leper. So, what can we learn from this situation? First, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6), and we see this displayed clearly here. We have no room for pride because anything good in us comes from God. Next, we can see God's love for all people. He healed a Gentile, an enemy of Israel. But Naaman's healing required his obedience, and so does ours. All of us were once enemies of God; we were outcasts, our sin like a disease, a barrier between us and God. But we were brought close by the blood of Jesus—by obediently calling on Him for salvation and repenting of our sin (Eph. 2:12-13). Do you see the similarities? Do you see where humility and obedience lead? Do you see God's love and mercy extended to all who have faith?

- **WHY CAN'T WE APPROACH GOD PRIDEFULLY?**
- **WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST TAKEAWAY FROM THIS PASSAGE?**

PRAY

**GOD, I'M HUMBLLED BY YOUR KINDNESS. MY SIN WAS
ONCE A BARRIER THAT SEPARATED ME FROM YOUR
PRESENCE. THANK YOU FOR HUMBLING ME AND FOR
HEALING ME WHEN I CALLED ON YOU FOR HELP.**

SO GOD *RELENTED*

unit 14 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jonah was a prophet who rejected God's call, ran from his enemies, and eventually obeyed grudgingly. Jesus followed God's call, loved His enemies, and obeyed joyfully (Heb. 12:2). While we were still sinners, Christ willingly died for us.

SALVATION FOR ALL

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Jonah

GOD IS FORGIVING

JONAH 3:1-10

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. 6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." 10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

GOD IS PATIENT

JONAH 4:1-11

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. 3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4 And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?" 5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. 6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." 9 But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." 10 And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

MAIN POINT.

No one is outside of God's reach.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS GRACIOUS

God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). However, instead of leaving people in their sins, God has demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

DISCUSSION

GOD IS FORGIVING

JONAH 3:1-10

- What are some reasons we feel uncomfortable sharing our faith?
- Why must we understand the bad news (Our sin separates us from God forever) before we can truly understand the gospel?
- What does it mean to show someone grace? How do we receive God's grace?

GOD IS PATIENT

JONAH 4:1-11

- Why was Jonah angry? What do you see about God through His interaction with Jonah?
- What lesson do you think God wanted to teach Jonah (and us)?
- Have you ever assumed that some people aren't able to be forgiven? Why isn't this biblical?



JONAH'S OBEDIENCE LED TO NINEVEH'S FORGIVENESS. SO, WHAT COULD YOUR DISOBEDIENCE COST OTHERS?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Some of us have unspoken limits when it comes to loving others. Though most of us would agree that God loves everyone, if we're honest, we don't love everyone. We don't even like everyone! So, we place conditions on sharing God's love. We're more willing to share it with people we like being around; we'll talk to people who don't make us too uncomfortable; we'll gravitate toward those who are like us or who don't offend us with their lifestyles. And this conditional attitude couldn't be further from Jesus's example. Not only did He claim with His words that God loves everyone (look no further than John 3:16), but Jesus's actions proved this to be true. Jesus—God in flesh—went to the outcasts, to the sinners, to the tax collectors, to the sick. Though He never condoned their sin, Jesus loved those culture (and religion) called unlovable and unworthy. His love was unconditional. Jesus imitated the Father's great love for us, and He calls us to do the same.



DAY ONE

2 PETER 3:8-9

Have you ever felt like time passed too quickly? Maybe your vacation flew by or the time you spent with a loved one felt too short. Time is weird in that way: It seems to pass either too quickly or too slowly. Most of us hardly ever feel like we had just the right amount of time.

Time is out of our control, but God exists above and beyond it; time's limitations don't apply to Him. Instead, time bends to His will. He is sovereign over it. Peter explained that a thousand years must feel like a single day to God. God has always been; He wasn't created; He has no beginning. These truths can be difficult for us to wrap our minds around, right? But it should bring us comfort. God is so very patient with us. Sometimes, it may feel as if God is slow in keeping His promises, like He is late. But Peter explained that God wants everyone to come to repentance. Because of God's love and compassion, He has delayed the coming of the new heaven and new earth. This week, we studied about Jonah's delayed obedience in going to Nineveh, a major Assyrian city. Although the Ninevites were pagan enemies of Israel, God desired to show them mercy. He postponed their punishment to give them time—time to hear Jonah's message of repentance and time to respond. Throughout the Old Testament, we read story after story of God delaying punishment so that people had an opportunity to turn to Him. Our current time is no different. We don't know when God will return to usher in His kingdom here on earth. But we do know that every day is an opportunity to share the gospel with people. We do know that God desires for everyone to be saved. He isn't slow in keeping His promises; rather, He is patient.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE GOD WAS TOO SLOW IN KEEPING HIS PROMISES?**
- **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE CHANGE YOUR UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE PASSING OF TIME?**

PRAY

GOD, I STRUGGLE WITH PATIENCE. I SOMETIMES FEEL
LIKE YOU'RE SLOW IN KEEPING YOUR PROMISES.
I COMMIT TO TRUSTING YOUR TIMING AND TO
SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS.





DAY TWO

2 CHRONICLES 7:12-14

Think of a situation in which you might need to make a good argument to change someone's mind. For example, let's say that your parents make the decision to move to a new area. You don't want to move and change schools, so you beg them to stay. You make a good argument for why moving would be a bad idea. You plead with them to reconsider.

In today's passage, we read a message from God to Solomon. Solomon had just finished building and dedicating the Lord's temple. God explained that He had heard Solomon's prayers. He explained that one day, even if He punished Israel by sending a drought, an infestation, or sickness, His heart could still be moved. What would move God's heart to show mercy to sinful Israel? Israel would need to humble themselves, pray and seek the Lord, and turn from their evil ways. If they did these things, God would forgive them and heal their land. Sometimes, we may struggle with wondering if God hears us; we may struggle with wondering whether or not our prayers matter or if we can ask God for another outcome. This passage shows us God's character; He is a merciful Father, poised and ready to forgive us when we humble ourselves, when we pray and seek Him, and when we repent of our sin. As we saw this week with the people of Nineveh, God hears us. We don't have to convince Him with a well-planned argument. Instead, God responds to humble, repentant hearts.

- **HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU NEEDED TO PRESENT YOUR CASE TO GOD?**
- **WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD THAT HE IS MOVED BY OUR HUMBLE REPENTANCE AND NOT OUR PERFECTION?**

PRAY

GOD, I KNOW YOU HEAR ME. I KNOW YOU DESIRE HUMILITY AND REPENTANCE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO FORGIVE ME AND HEAL ME FROM MY SIN.



DAY THREE

LUKE 11:29-32

Sometimes we refuse to see our own faults. Even when someone confronts us about something we did that was wrong, we lean toward arguing our innocence. We may struggle to face the truth. In the lesson this week, the people in Nineveh seemed ready to admit their sin! They didn't argue for their innocence or ignore Jonah's warnings. They didn't ask for a sign that God was the one true God. They immediately confessed and repented.

In today's passage, Jesus pointed out the people's resistance to truth. They had heard rumors about Jesus, and many of them had witnessed His works, like healings and the feeding of five thousand (Luke 9:10-17). But they wanted more miracles and signs; they wanted proof that Jesus was the Messiah because they struggled with believing in faith. Jesus contrasted their stubborn refusal to repent with Nineveh's willingness to repent. The Ninevites, who were evil enemies of Israel, responded immediately to Jonah's message; they repented without asking for signs and miracles. But the people listening to Jesus couldn't see that One greater than Jonah stood before them—that Truth stood before them (John 14:6). How do you respond to truth, especially when it sheds light on your sin? It may be your habit to ignore it, to point to someone else's faults, or to argue your own innocence. But God forgives you when you respond in faith with repentance, and you won't stand condemned with those who reject truth. You'll find freedom in confession.

- **DOES STUBBORNLY REFUSING TO REPENT BENEFIT US? WHY DO WE DO THIS?**
- **WHY DOES GOD WANT US TO HAVE FAITH RATHER THAN ASKING FOR SIGNS AND MIRACLES?**

PRAY

**GOD, I WANT TO HAVE A HEART THAT RESPONDS
TO TRUTH WITH CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE.
I KNOW THAT CONFESSION LEADS TO FREEDOM.
THANK YOU FOR SHEDDING LIGHT ON MY SIN.**



DAY FOUR

EPHESIANS 6:19-20

What is boldness? Is it never being scared or always having courage? Is it always having the right words to say? You may not think of yourself as a bold person. You may think that boldness describes only people who can stand in front of large groups and speak with confidence. But bold people still experience fear; they don't always know what to say. So then, boldness is sometimes more like having a willingness to speak, stand, or act even in the absence of confidence. This means any of us can be bold.

Paul asked the believers in Ephesus to pray for him. Paul—a man who was well-known, respected, and at one point, feared by many—asked believers to pray for him to have boldness in sharing the gospel. He needed prayers to speak correctly about the mystery of the gospel. Paul explained that he was chained to this call; in other words, as someone who represented Jesus, Paul felt obligated to share the gospel with others. Like Paul, we know the hope of the gospel. We've experienced salvation because of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. But unlike Paul, many of us don't feel compelled to share this hope with other people; we don't feel chained to the call. More like Jonah, we often run from God's command to tell others. We'd rather be disobedient than risk others making fun of us. We care about what people think of us; we fear not fitting in. And sometimes we blame our refusal to share the gospel on not being bold. But boldness is simply a willingness. Paul prayed for boldness, but he was chained to sharing the gospel regardless. It wasn't optional for him, and it can't be optional for us.

- **DO YOU FEEL LIKE “AN AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS” WHEN IT COMES TO SHARING THE GOSPEL? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **HOW DOES IT ENCOURAGE YOU TO KNOW THAT BOLDNESS IS OFTEN JUST HAVING THE WILLINGNESS TO DO SOMETHING?**

PRAY

GOD, I PRAY FOR BOLDNESS IN SHARING THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS. I WANT TO BE WILLING TO SPEAK EVEN WHEN I'M FEARFUL. I WANT TO BE CHRIST'S AMBASSADOR.



DAY FIVE

1 CORINTHIANS 1:30-31

This week, we read about Jonah's initial refusal to go to Nineveh. At the heart of Jonah's disobedience was his hatred and distrust of the Ninevites. Jonah didn't think they were worthy enough to hear a message of repentance because they were enemies of God's chosen people—of Israel. Because he knew the Lord's character, Jonah realized God would forgive the Ninevites if they repented (Jonah 4:1-2). And Jonah didn't want that.

How often do we look at people in the same way Jonah looked at the Ninevites? We hear about their reputation, and we make judgments about them without even knowing them. We determine their worth based on their actions, and we don't stop to consider why they do what they do—that their behavior likely stems from not knowing Christ. We don't stop and consider that, like the 120,000 people in Nineveh, they desperately need God, and that because we know Jesus, we know the way to the Father. Instead of being willing to share the hope of salvation with as many people as possible, we reserve it for people we are comfortable with, for people we like. We somehow adopt a mindset that we have a right to decide who is worthy of God's forgiveness. But really, none of us have anything to boast in but in Christ. None of us were worthy of the gospel—of the free gift of salvation. We didn't earn it. And like the Ninevites, we were once enemies of God when we were dead in our sin (Rom. 5:10-11). May we represent Christ to other people and share the message of hope we know to be true. May we remember that Christ bled for the world because He loved the world (John 3:16). These are the truths we boast in!

- **WHY DO YOU THINK GOD OFFERED SALVATION AS A GIFT RATHER THAN AS SOMETHING WE CAN EARN ON OUR OWN?**
- **WHO ARE YOU STRUGGLING TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH BECAUSE OF A JUDGMENTAL MINDSET? WHY DOESN'T THIS REFLECT THE HEART OF CHRIST?**

PRAY

LORD, FORGIVE ME FOR BELIEVING ONLY CERTAIN PEOPLE ARE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL. HELP ME TO REMEMBER IT IS A GIFT YOU FREELY OFFER TO EVERYONE. HELP ME TO LOVE OTHERS LIKE YOU LOVE THEM.

COME, LET'S RETURN TO *THE LORD*

unit 14 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Hosea's relationship with Gomer reminds us of God's relationship with the people of Israel and with us. Even though we are unfaithful and love many other things more than Him, God still loves us. God's love sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin to bring us back to Him.

UNWAVERING LOVE OF GOD

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Hosea 1–14

GOD'S LOVE IS CONSTANT

HOSEA 1:1-3

1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. 2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." 3 So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

HOSEA 3:1-5

1 And the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. 3 And I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you." 4 For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

GOD'S LOVE IS SURE

HOSEA 6:1-6

1 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. 3 Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth." 4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. 6 For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings

HOSEA 14:1-4

1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 2 Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy." 4 I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

MAIN POINT.

God pursues us even when we're unfaithful.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION



BRIDE OF CHRIST

The church is described as the bride of Christ, faithfully waiting for the day when Christ will return and heaven and earth will be one. Made up of all believers from all languages and nations, the church is the bride that Christ redeemed. The picture of a bride also speaks to the permanence of Christ's relationship with the church, for marriage was intended by God to be a lasting covenant between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

DISCUSSION



GOD'S LOVE IS CONSTANT

HOSEA 1:1-3; 3:1-5

- Are you shocked to read God's command to Hosea (1:2)? What could God's purpose be in this?
-  • How has Israel been like an unfaithful wife? How are we?
-  • How does Hosea's purchasing Gomer back (3:2) mirror what Christ has done for us? What was her responsibility (3:3)—and ours?

GOD'S LOVE IS SURE

HOSEA 6:1-6; 14:1-4

- How does not being able to depend on someone you love make you feel?
-  • How is God's love (6:3) contrasted with Israel's love (6:4)? Honestly examine your love for God. How would you describe it?
-  • Based on these passages, what did God want from Israel? What could Israel be sure of in return?



WHY DO WE SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE WE CAN'T RETURN TO THE LORD WHEN WE STRAY? HOW CAN YOU TAKE STEPS TO RETURN TO HIM NOW?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Think about it: Would we really want to serve a God who didn't care if we're unfaithful to Him? What would it show about God's character if He was okay with us saying we love Him yet not living like it? What would it say about His own love for us? We wouldn't be okay with a spouse being unfaithful to us, yet we make excuses to justify our unfaithfulness to the Lord. It simply doesn't make sense that we hold a spouse to a high standard of faithfulness and then justify lowering expectations for our faithfulness to the Lord. The truth that God demands our faithfulness is proof of His own faithfulness. God is love (1 John 4:8). His very nature is to love us perfectly. And because of this, God wants us to love Him in the same way. Even though we can't ever be perfect, we can be faithful. God keeps all of His promises to us, and He desires for us to keep our vows to Him. This is only proof of God's absolute goodness.



DAY ONE

LUKE 15:11-24

Have you ever had a horrible day and treated others unkindly because of it? They didn't do anything to deserve it, but they became the target of your bad mood. We've all been there, and we usually do this to the people we love the most. Maybe this is because deep down we realize they'll still love us afterwards; we know they'll forgive us even after they see our worst moments. In a way, we take for granted their kindness and love.

Jesus told a parable—a relatable story that teaches a truth—about a father and his sons. The passage is typically titled something like, “The Parable of the Lost Son.” Many of us probably identify with this lost son. He was careless; he wanted his inheritance in advance and then wasted it with reckless living. He got offtrack for a while; he lost his way and wasn't sure if his father would ever let him come home. In his shame, the son formed an argument ahead of time to convince his father to take him back. But maybe the parable should be titled, “The Parable of the Forgiving Father,” because it revealed so much about our Father in heaven. The son approached his home shamefully, but the father stood watching for the son's return, straining his eyes to watch for him. And when the son “was still a long way off” (v. 20), the father ran toward him and embraced him. This is the heart of God. When we get offtrack and stray from Him—like Israel did so often—we can return in repentance. When we approach God with repentant hearts, He embraces us. As His children, we can't do anything not to be His children. His love for us is secure, and through the blood of Christ, our salvation and identity are secure.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU ACTED LIKE THE LOST SON?**
- **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE SHAPE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S CHARACTER AS A FATHER?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CALLING ME BACK TO
YOUR HEART WHEN I STRAY FROM YOU. THANK
YOU FOR LOVING ME WITH A LOVE THAT IS SECURE.
THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME A PART OF YOUR
FAMILY THROUGH YOUR SON'S SACRIFICE.**



DAY TWO

JOEL 2:12-13

Have you ever realized someone's apology wasn't sincere? Or maybe you made an apology that wasn't sincere. Apologizing with our words but not our hearts is easy. We might even do all the things that come with sincerely being sorry, like crying. But if change doesn't accompany the apology, then it's only an outward show.

The prophet Joel urged the people of Israel to apologize sincerely. Sure, it might have been easy to appear sorry. An outward expression of repentance in ancient Jewish culture was the act of tearing, or rending, one's garment; doing so conveyed a sense of grief and sorrow over sin. But Joel made an important point for Israel: God, who sees the heart, isn't impressed by outward shows of repentance. Instead of directing the people to tear, or rend, their clothes, Joel urged them to tear their hearts. In other words, Joel explained the necessity of heart change that must take place when we repent. Here's the truth: We can't trick God into thinking we're sorry. He sees past our outward expression and into our heart; He knows if we're sincere. And though we may convince other people that we're sorry for our sin, our inward brokenness matters to the Lord—our broken and humbled heart (Ps. 51:17). Notice what Joel said, "Yet even now"—even now, when you've strayed so far; even now, when you've bowed before idols; even now, when you've trusted in false gods; even now, when you've not kept your promises—"return to me with all your heart." God's plea to Israel is the same plea He makes to us to return to Him with all of our heart.

- **HOW CAN YOU TELL WHEN SOMEONE IS TRULY SORRY?**
- **WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO "REND YOUR HEART" WHEN IT COMES TO REPENTANCE?**

PRAY

GOD, I'VE BEEN GUILTY OF REPENTING WITH MY ACTIONS AND NOT MY HEART. I PRAY THAT MY HEART WOULD BREAK OVER MY SIN. CHANGE ME FROM THE INSIDE OUT.



DAY THREE

1 JOHN 4:8-10

Love is a word we hear constantly. Pay attention next time you're scrolling on social media or watching television. In our culture, we claim to love a lot of different things. We love certain movies and songs; we love teams and athletes; we love specific brands and foods. Honestly, we love to use the word love. And because we overuse it, we often misuse it. In movies and television shows, characters fall in love after only a few days. And though this might be entertaining, it also contributes to our cheapened understanding of love.

God's love is richer than any love we experience here. We can't adequately compare it to human love. Even thinking of God's love as similar to parents' love for their children doesn't quite capture it; though our parents' love for us is deep, it's still imperfect. It still comes short of God's perfect love for us. John described God's love as this: He sent His Son to be a sacrifice for our sin (v. 10). God sent His Son to take our place. He loved us before we could love Him in return—despite the fact that many of us would reject Him. He loved us when we were still living in rebellion. He loved us though it was for our sin that Jesus bled, suffered, and died. John put it this way: God is love. We've cheapened it to mean so many other things. We've reduced it to an emotional response or to a strong like for something. But love is God Himself. It's sacrificial. To be sure, we're blessed to experience love from people here. It's an imperfect glimpse though. Love here points us to a greater love—the love of God, which we can see reflected in Jesus.

- **HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE "LOVE"?**
- **WHY DOES JOHN DESCRIBE GOD AS LOVE? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR SHOWING ME WHAT
PERFECT LOVE LOOKS LIKE THROUGH THE LIFE
AND DEATH OF YOUR SON. THANK YOU FOR BEING
PERFECT LOVE.**



DAY FOUR

1 JOHN 4:15-19

Let's think about something that is reality for many of us but something we don't want to think about: People who say they love us sometimes leave. Sometimes, parents choose something else over their children. Sometimes, friends betray us. Sometimes, people who love us make hurtful decisions. If you've experienced anything like this—and maybe almost everyone does—then it can alter the way you understand love. It can even make you feel hesitant or distrusting. Worse than that, being hurt by someone we love can cause us to fear that God's love may fail us one day too.

In this passage, John continued to paint an accurate view of God's love for us. Yesterday, we read about how God is love—perfect love. He loved us before we could love Him in return. But we must understand what His perfect love is like. In today's passage, John explained that God's love remains with us. It stays. God's love never, ever leaves. John also explained that God's love gives us confidence because it's not rooted in judgment. In fact, because Christ took the punishment we deserved on Himself, we get to enjoy freedom from condemnation. John also pointed to the truth that God's love casts out fear. Fear has no room in our lives because God's love is so sure, so kind, so sacrificial. We don't have to fear that His love for us will run out or lessen if we mess up. Instead, being loved by Love Himself motivates us even more to love Him in return. We love because He loved us first. When we look at love in this light, we see the ways human love pales in comparison. We see that God's love for us is dependable, like the rising of the sun. Next time you're hit with the reminder that love here on earth sometimes hurts, be also reminded that your Father in heaven loves you perfectly.

- **HOW HAS LOVE HERE AFFECTED YOUR VIEW OF GOD'S LOVE, POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY?**
- **WHAT DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S LOVE IN THIS PASSAGE AFFECTS YOU THE MOST? WHY?**

PRAY

GOD, KNOWING THAT YOU LOVE ME WITH A LOVE THAT IS DEPENDABLE GIVES ME SECURITY AND PEACE. I PRAISE YOU THAT I CAN LOVE YOU IN RETURN. I CAN REST KNOWING YOUR LOVE WILL NEVER LESSEN OR LEAVE.



DAY FIVE

2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

Have you ever done something that wasn't in your normal character? For instance, maybe you're really shy, but you sang in front of a huge crowd. Or maybe you're normally terrified of roller coasters, but you rode the tallest, wildest one at a theme park. Maybe you normally have integrity, but you cheated on a test in a moment of panic. Sometimes, we do things that don't match up with who we are on most days, and like these examples, this can be good or bad.

Our character shifts sometimes, meaning we don't always stay true to who we are. Our character traits are not absolutes; they aren't certain or without fail. For instance, we may be mostly honest, but even if we have one moment of dishonesty, then we're not absolutely honest. We may be mostly kind, but even if we're unkind only once, then we're not absolutely kind. We let circumstances and the people we're around affect our decisions. Even those of us who try really hard to be authentic still sometimes shift. We make mistakes and slip up. But God's character is absolute, meaning He never shifts or changes. He is absolutely loving, absolutely kind, absolutely righteous. And in the passage today, we read that God is absolutely faithful. As believers, we still fall into sinful behaviors. While we may try to be faithful, we will be unfaithful at times. But God is faithful in a way that is perfect. Even when we are unfaithful to Him—even when Israel was unfaithful to Him—He simply cannot be unfaithful because it's not even a possibility for Him. His faithfulness is sure and steady; we can count on it in the same way we can count on His love. God will be faithful to His own character and to us.

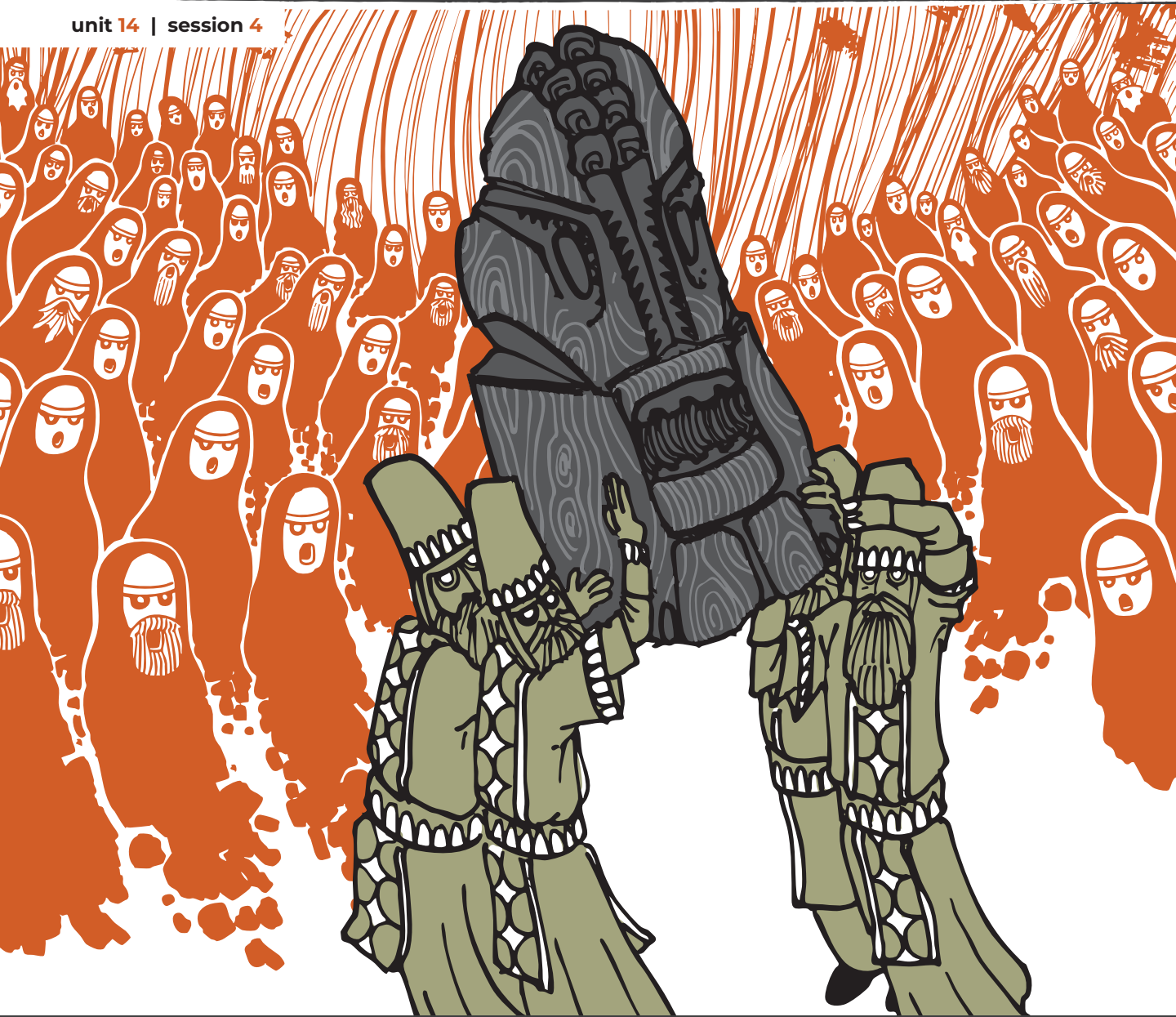
- **WHEN HAVE YOU ACTED AGAINST YOUR TYPICAL CHARACTER, MAYBE IN A GOOD OR BAD WAY?**
- **WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT GOD'S CHARACTER IS ABSOLUTE? WHAT WOULD IT SAY ABOUT HIM IF IT WASN'T?**

PRAY

**GOD, IT'S DIFFICULT TO EVEN WRAP MY MIND
AROUND THE TRUTH THAT YOU NEVER SHIFT; YOUR
CHARACTER NEVER CHANGES. I TAKE COMFORT IN
KNOWING THAT YOU'RE ALWAYS FAITHFUL EVEN
WHEN I'M UNFAITHFUL.**

WORTHLESS *IDOLS*

unit 14 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Because Jesus has revealed Himself to us as our greatest treasure and source of true joy, we seek to identify and put away the various idols in our lives to show others the goodness of God.

IGNORING THE SIGNS

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

2 Kings 17

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO SIN

2 KINGS 17:6-17

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 7 And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods 8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. 9 And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 11 and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, 12 and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this." 13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets." 14 But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them. 16 And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. 17 And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

2 KINGS 17:18-20

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. 19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. 20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

MAIN POINT.

Hearing and responding to God's voice spares us from painful consequences.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS JUST

God establishes standards for us that are in accordance with His righteousness, and we will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both the Judge and the Justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

DISCUSSION

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO SIN

2 KINGS 17:6-17

- How does knowing Israel's disobedience continued for hundreds of years affect the way you see their consequences?
- What surprises you the most about Israel's actions (vv. 7-17)? How could they fall so far?
- Why do we ignore God's voice? What happens the longer we do?

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

2 KINGS 17:18-20

- Why do we view consequences as unfair or cruel?
- What does it mean to be just? How is God just?
- What was Israel's punishment? Can it happen to us?



ONE OF ISRAEL'S GREATEST SINS WAS DESIRING TO BE LIKE THE NATIONS AROUND THEM. WHY DO WE FALL INTO THIS TRAP? HOW CAN WE CHOOSE DIFFERENTLY?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Why do we often roll our eyes when others try to warn us? Maybe a family member, teacher, or mentor cautions us to go another way—to make a different choice—because they see us headed toward a harmful path. We hear them out; we nod and acknowledge their words. But we often think the consequences won't happen to us; we believe we are the exception. Those warnings are for other people. When it comes to sin, we often react the same way to the warnings in God's Word and from His Spirit living within us. We read them; we hear them. We nod and acknowledge the truth in them, but we think we're stronger than we really are. We tell ourselves that we can handle the pressure and the temptation better than other people who failed before us. The truth is that God's warnings and instructions are for every one of us. We're weaker than we think, and to stay strong, we must cling to Christ. God's warnings flow from His great love and care. Ignoring them will only harm us.



DAY ONE

JOHN 10:1-10

Did you know that most parents can pick out their child's voice in a crowd of other children? The same goes for children too. In a crowded room, they recognize their own parent's voice. Voices make strong impressions on us. They're each unique, and we pick up on small details, like accent, inflection, and pronunciation. Though we might be able to mimic someone else's voice almost perfectly, there would still be differences.

Jesus called Himself a Shepherd. Sheep were accustomed to their specific shepherd's voice. In fact, shepherds spent so much time with their sheep that they often named them. They spent almost every waking minute with them, teaching the sheep to recognize their voice. Why? Because the shepherd's voice kept them safe. The shepherd's voice led them out of danger and to food and water. Once sheep learned their shepherd's voice, they wouldn't follow another. Like Jesus pointed out, sheep would even run from other voices. They trusted only the true shepherd's voice because other voices might endanger them. Like sheep, we are led astray so easily. Why? We often haven't learned God's voice. We haven't spent enough time with the Lord to detect His voice apart from other voices. We live in a loud culture, and the noise drowns out God's voice. Simply put: We listen to many other voices instead of listening to the Lord's voice. Listening to Him requires us to be still, to sit with His Word, to pray, to listen for the Holy Spirit. But instead of doing these things, we make decisions and just hope they'll turn out okay. We act first, then we pray for God's blessing. What if we were more like sheep? What if we spent time with our Shepherd? What if we learned His voice and could detect it from strangers' voices? What if we ran from voices trying to lead us away, even when it's our own?

- **HOW ARE YOU INVESTING IN LEARNING GOD'S VOICE?**
- **WHAT OTHER VOICES KEEP YOU FROM HEARING AND OBEYING GOD'S VOICE?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT TO KNOW YOUR VOICE. I WANT TO HEAR YOU SPEAK. HELP ME POSITION MYSELF TO HEAR YOU IN THIS LOUD WORLD. HELP ME RESPOND TO YOUR VOICE AND TO RUN FROM ALL OTHERS.





DAY TWO

PSALM 78:1-8

Can you think of a lesson you've learned from someone else's experience? Maybe you watched someone do something that led to them getting hurt, so you learned not to attempt it. Or maybe it was even something silly, like not walking through a wet area in the school cafeteria because you watched someone else slip and fall. We can often watch other people and learn from their mistakes. In fact, your parents, grandparents, or other family members probably hope you'll learn from some of their mistakes instead of repeating them.

Psalms 78 is a basic overview of the highs and lows in Israel's history. Asaph, whom David appointed as a worship leader in the tabernacle choir, reflected on stories that were passed down from his ancestors. He recalled God's command to know the law and to pass it down to future generations so that they could follow it as well—so they could know God's faithfulness and put their confidence in Him. Isn't this command for us too? We don't often think about what kind of legacy we're leaving now—not just our legacy but God's. Do you ever wonder how people after us will view God because of the way we lived? What will an account of our history show mattered most to us? What we say and do now impacts what future generations will know and believe about the Lord. As believers, we have a tremendous responsibility to know God's Word and to pass it on. We have the honor of holding His Word in our hands and committing it to our hearts and minds. When we don't, we risk forgetting (v. 7). We risk leaving a legacy that says God's commands don't matter in our culture—that they aren't applicable for us. We have so much to learn from the history recorded for us in the pages of our Bibles. We can't neglect it. The people coming after us need to know God's story, and we get to tell them.

- **WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT YOUR LIFE REFLECTS THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING AND LIVING OUT GOD'S COMMANDS?**
- **HOW ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SHARE GOD'S STORY WITH OTHERS? IF YOU'RE NOT DOING SO, WHY?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE HONOR OF GETTING TO BE A PART OF YOUR STORY. THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF YOUR WORD. HELP ME TO LIVE IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS ITS IMPORTANCE. I WANT MY LIFE TO SHOW YOUR COMMANDS ARE GOOD.



DAY THREE

PSALM 78:10-64

What are some important lessons history has taught us? Certainly, our world has learned that humans are resilient; we fight to bounce back after disaster and war. We've learned that hatred and racism reveal the ugly side of humanity; they cause destruction and devastation. We've learned that small acts of goodness and kindness can make lasting impacts. We've learned that history often repeats itself because we forget to remember these lessons and more.

The passage today is longer, but dig in. Psalm 78 is more evidence that we are prone to forgetting. A common thread weaves throughout Israel's history, the pattern of forgetting God's works, His law, His kindness, His compassion, His wrath. Though God freed them from slavery and performed mighty wonders on their behalf, the Israelites forgot and complained against Him in the wilderness. Though He fed them with manna, they longed to return to Egypt. Though God made a covenant, a promise, to be Israel's God and to care for them, the people forgot their covenant with the Lord, turned to false gods, and bowed to idols. But woven throughout this passage are words like "but" and "yet." These words signal this idea: Even though the people forgot, God remembered His promise. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God showed compassion, atoned for their sin, and preserved them (v. 38). These threads weave throughout our stories too. We're prone to forgetting, to being unfaithful, and to wandering. But. Yet. God remembers. God sees His Son's blood covering us, atoning for our sin. He shows us compassion. Through the Holy Spirit, God calls us back to His heart and shows us forgiveness. He beckons us to remember—not to forget His commands and His faithfulness. May the stories that we remember help us long to be faithful to Him in return.

- **WHERE ARE THREADS OF FORGETFULNESS IN YOUR LIFE? HOW CAN YOU COMMIT TO REMEMBER INSTEAD?**
- **WHAT DOES THIS PSALM SHOW ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER? LIST OUT WORDS TO DESCRIBE HIM.**

PRAY

**GOD, I COMMIT TO REMEMBER. I WON'T FORGET
YOUR WORKS AND YOUR FAITHFULNESS. THANK YOU
FOR SHOWING ME COMPASSION WHEN I WANDER
AND FOR DRAWING ME BACK TO YOU.**



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 2:5-11

How do you know a storm is coming? Nature gives us signs, right? The sky grows dark, the wind begins to blow, thunder booms, lightening lights up the sky. Then the rain comes. If we're paying attention, we notice the signs and get to safety. If we ignore the signs, then we may get in a dangerous, or at least annoying, situation.

In the lesson this week, we read about Assyria invading the Northern Kingdom and deporting God's people. They were exiled, most of them enslaved. But this didn't happen suddenly. For hundreds of years, God warned His people. God was clear from the start that if the people followed Him and kept His commands, He would bless them out of all the nations. He was clear that they were to worship only Him and not follow the gods in the land He was giving them. God warned them that these false gods would be a snare to them—a trap. Through the prophets, God warned Israel that consequences were coming. He urged them to turn back and repent. Prophet after prophet spoke the same message: God is compassionate, but He is just; disaster is coming. But Israel ignored God's voice; they ignored the warning signs. The storm came, and it carried them away. As believers, we are safe from final judgment; our salvation is secure in Christ. But we interact with people every day who either can't see the warnings or ignore them. We have a message of hope that we must share with the world. A different kind of disaster is coming, when Jesus will return to judge every person, and He will say to those who never trusted in Him, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). So, point others to Him. Engage people in conversation. Love people the way God loves them so they'll ask why you're different. Then, tell them.

- **HAVE YOU CALLED ON CHRIST FOR SALVATION? DO YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM?**
- **WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHER PEOPLE? HOW CAN YOU TAKE ONE BOLD STEP TO DO SO?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME FROM SIN AND DEATH. HELP ME LOVINGLY POINT PEOPLE TO YOU. HELP ME TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH BOLDNESS. HELP ME TO LOVE LIKE YOU LOVE.



DAY FIVE

2 KINGS 17:24-41

Have you ever heard the phrase, “You can’t have your cake and eat it too”? In other words, you can’t simultaneously save the cake and eat it. Once you eat it, it’s gone. It’s sort of a strange way of saying that we can’t have both options when given a choice. For example, if you have a dollar, you can’t both save it and spend it. You either save it, or you spend it. Make sense?

After the king of Assyria deported the Israelites, he planted deportees from other nations to live in Israel. This was a common practice during this time period. So, Israel was then home to people from all cultural and religious backgrounds. They brought their beliefs with them—their idols and their “gods.” In His fury, God sent lions to attack them! So, they appealed to the king of Assyria to send back a priest of Israel to help them understand “the god of the land.” But the people continued to worship their false gods—the gods of their home region. They wanted their gods and the only God. Hear this truth: This is never a possibility. It wasn’t for them. It isn’t for us. Following God means we follow only God. Worshiping God means we worship only God. Now, it’s safe to say that in our current culture, we aren’t tempted to bow before gods of storms, fertility, agriculture, and so on, like ancient cultures did. But our culture certainly worships its own “gods”—fame, money, power, social media, physical beauty, material possessions, physical pleasure, harmful substances. Do we need to keep going? Our “gods” reflect what’s important to our culture. Today, God’s voice echoes the same warning: “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, but you shall fear the LORD” (vv. 35-36). We can’t have both. Why would we even want both?

- **IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU POTENTIALLY TRYING TO SERVE BOTH AN IDOL AND GOD?**
- **WHY DO YOU THINK GOD REPEATEDLY SAID, “YOU SHALL NOT FEAR OTHER GODS”? WHAT DO YOU FEAR WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DON’T BOW TO THESE CULTURAL “GODS”?**

PRAY

GOD, I FALL INTO THE TRAP OF BELIEVING I CAN WORSHIP THE “GODS” OF THIS WORLD AND WORSHIP YOU. I KNOW I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR WHEN I WORSHIP YOU ALONE. TURN MY HEART AWAY FROM IDOLS AND WORLDLY AFFECTIONS.

FAITHFUL TO *THE LORD*

unit 15 | session 1



CHRIST CONNECTION

God used Hezekiah and Josiah to lead the people back to Him, but they were not perfect kings. Jesus is the righteous King of kings who brings us to God by paying our sin penalty and giving us His righteousness.

BREAKING PATTERNS

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

2 Kings 18–24

RETURN TO WORSHIP

2 KINGS 18:1-6

1 In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. 3 And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan). 5 He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.

RETURN TO TRUTH

2 KINGS 22:1-2,8-11

1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. 2 And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. . . . 8 And Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9 And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD." 10 Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.

2 KINGS 23:1-3,21-23

1 Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. 2 And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. 3 And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant. . . . 21 And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." 22 For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah. 23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

MAIN POINT.

We don't have to walk in the sinful paths of those who walked before us.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, God's special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity's source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

DISCUSSION

RETURN TO WORSHIP

2 KINGS 18:1-6

- Do you think we have a right to blame some of our mistakes on the bad examples who came before us?
- Why do you think Hezekiah destroyed everything connected to idolatry? When do we need to do this too?
- How do we give our worship to the wrong things (v. 4)—even good things?

RETURN TO TRUTH

2 KINGS 22:1-2,8-11; 23:1-3,21-23

- What was Josiah's reaction to hearing the Word? How did it spark change?
- Why do you think we're able to read and hear God's Word and not be changed?
- Read John 1:1-4. What connections can you make between John calling Jesus "the Word" and the passage in 2 Kings?



BOTH KINGS STOPPED A GENERATIONAL CYCLE OF EVIL DISOBEDIENCE. IS THERE A CYCLE YOU NEED TO STOP? HOW CAN YOU?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

It can be difficult to break free from the bad examples you've watched in your family or in your friend group. Sometimes, culture feeds this idea that we're simply products of our environments. To some degree, this is true. Our environments do help shape a lot about us, like our personalities and our passions. They can even shape how we view the world. But they don't define us. We aren't stuck in them. Many people use their background as a crutch. Instead of trying to make a change, they settle for what they've seen displayed in front of them, even leading to a type of victim mentality—a feeling that they're helpless. But really, God's power living within you transforms you and makes you an entirely new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). So, if you've ever felt hopeless because of how you've grown up, rest in that truth. God has a purpose for you. He can use your background, whether it has been good or bad. He isn't limited by it one bit.



DAY ONE

JOHN 8:34-36

A slave is held captive and forced to work for and obey someone else. A slave is treated like property rather than being treated as a family member; a slave has no inheritance. In most cases, a slave has no voice and no ability to choose. A slave isn't free. And Jesus explained that anyone who has sinned even once is a slave to it.

Let's consider what this means for all of us. First, we've all sinned (Rom. 3:23). In our fallen state, we're drawn to sin. It enslaves us. The more we sin, the stronger our sinful desires grow; it's like an addiction. Sin isn't concerned with our freedom; it deprives us of choice. It lies to us. Our only inheritance from sin is death. We are all caught in humanity's cycle of sin. Even if we want to, we can't break the cycle on our own. We're not strong enough or good enough to stop sinning. It's why, without Christ, we keep returning to sinful behavior even when we know it's wrong—even when we know it hurts us and hurts others. But this passage reveals our greatest hope: Jesus sets us free. His death and resurrection broke sin's chains. When we call on Christ in faith and accept His gift of salvation, we then have the freedom to choose life instead of death. We have the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, who helps us when we're tempted by sinful desires. He convicts us, or helps us to see our sin, and He leads us to turn away from it. He gives us the power—a voice—to say “no” to sin and to choose a better way. Because of Jesus, we're no longer slaves but sons and daughters in God's family! We're coheirs with Jesus, meaning He shares His inheritance with us!

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE YOU COULDN'T STOP COMMITTING A CERTAIN SIN?**
- **HOW DOES IT FREE YOU TO KNOW YOU CAN'T BE GOOD ENOUGH OR STRONG ENOUGH TO BREAK SIN'S CYCLE?**

PRAY

GOD, I WAS ONCE A SLAVE TO SIN, BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR SON'S DEATH, I'M FREE. I'M FREE TO CHOOSE GODLINESS AND LIFE. THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME A PART OF YOUR FAMILY.



DAY TWO

EPHESIANS 2:10

Many of our parents and teachers encourage us to dream; they tell us we can do anything we put our minds to—that anything is possible if we work hard enough. Some of us figure out what we want to do at a young age. For example, maybe you already know that you want to be a doctor or a teacher. Maybe you're certain that you want to be an artist or own your own business. Maybe you want to work in construction or feel God calling you to ministry. But the reality for some of us is that no one encouraged us to dream; instead, some of us have been told we'll never amount to anything—that we're not smart enough or wealthy enough or good enough. We have no clue what we want to do; we believe we're incapable of doing anything that matters. And thinking about the future only gives us anxiety because we don't know why God created us.

What if we're overcomplicating things a bit? We feel pressure to figure out what we want to do for the rest of our lives when we're only in middle school or high school. But God simplifies it for us: We are His workmanship, and He created us for good works before we could even begin to make plans of our own. It all boils down to this simple truth! If we're God's workmanship, then we are like clay in His hands. God molds us and forms us over time. And what He created us to do is good: He created all of us to know Him, to make Him known, and to give Him glory. And we can do this in a million ways—as doctors and teachers and artists and stay-at-home moms and dads. We can fulfill God's purpose for us now, even while we're in middle school or high school. And the best part is that we aren't confined to other people's plans for us or by limitations they place on us. When we walk with the Lord and seek His will, He'll show us the way. And we can know with certainty it's going to be for our good and for His glory.

- **HOW DOES KNOWING GOD CREATED YOU FOR GOOD WORKS HELP SETTLE ANY ANXIETY YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FUTURE?**
- **WHAT ARE WAYS YOU CAN LIVE OUT GOD'S PURPOSE NOW?**

PRAY

**LORD, THANK YOU FOR HOLDING ME IN YOUR HANDS
AND FOR MOLDING ME. THANK YOU FOR CREATING
ME FOR GOOD WORKS. I WANT TO LIVE OUT MY
PURPOSE NOW.**



DAY THREE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Can you think of something you had to replace because it couldn't be repaired? Maybe you used the same ball glove for years but had to buy a new one when it became too worn. Maybe after having a wreck, your car was damaged so badly that it had to be replaced. Maybe your family's home caught on fire, and because nothing was salvageable, you had to start over. Sometimes replacing something is fun and exciting, but sometimes, it's painful, right? Especially when you weren't ready to let go of the old.

This week, we studied about the cycle of disobedience and idolatry in Israel. King after king fell into the same pattern of leading God's people away from the Lord. Despite a few kings who attempted to fix the situation, the nation was broken. In a way, it was beyond repair; God promised to make it new one day when Jesus returns. Like Israel, we were trapped in a cycle of sin. We were badly broken and beyond repair. So, God makes us new. He doesn't fix only parts of us that are bad; He recreates us! Then, God continues to sanctify us, or make us holy, as we walk with Him. The truth is that there is a major difference in fixing something and replacing it. God comes to live within us through the Holy Spirit. He walks with us, ridding us of the sinful remnants of who we were before knowing Him. This process of sanctification can be painful because letting go of some of our sinful habits is difficult. We may not feel ready to let go of the old. But we can trust God's hand when He molds us and shapes us. He is making something better in us than that which we leave behind. He is making us brand new.

- **WHAT PARTS OF YOUR OLD, SINFUL LIFESTYLE HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO SURRENDER?**
- **WHY DOES GOD MAKE US NEW RATHER THAN ONLY FIXING CERTAIN PARTS OF US?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME NEW. I KNOW
I CAN'T FIX MYSELF; I'M TOO BROKEN IN MY SIN.
WHAT A GIFT THAT YOU'VE MADE ME A NEW
CREATION! THANK YOU FOR SANCTIFYING ME AS I
WALK WITH YOU.**



DAY FOUR

HEBREWS 12:28

Kingdoms here on earth crumble so easily. Look back at human history. Think about all the major world powers that eventually fell. Have you heard the saying, “Rome wasn’t built in a day”? What people mean when they say this is that it takes years and years to build something successful; it takes patience, determination, sacrifice, and consistency to build something that lasts. Except, Rome didn’t last. Though Rome was the major world power during Jesus’s lifetime, it eventually fell. Worldly kingdoms fall—even ones which seem invincible, even the ones we work so hard to build.

As believers, we are part of a kingdom which can never be shaken. Just think about that for a minute. The worldly kingdom you may be working so hard to build—kingdoms of success, popularity, athletic ability, even your family—won’t last forever. God’s kingdom will never crumble and fall. It will stand forever—for all eternity. Citizenship in God’s kingdom is a gift He freely gives us when we confess Christ as our Lord. But like those who build worldly kingdoms—actually, even more so—we’re called to build the kingdom of God. We’re called to invest in it and to sacrifice our own desires for it. We’re called to live as citizens of heaven here on earth so that others will see our lives and desire the hope we have in Christ. So, “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe”—with holy respect and wonder—because you’re a part of an unshakable kingdom!

- **HONESTLY ASSESS YOUR LIFE: ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR OWN WORLDLY KINGDOM OR INVESTING IN GOD’S KINGDOM?**
- **HOW HAVE YOU SEEN YOUR OWN WORLDLY KINGDOM SHAKE OR CRUMBLE? HOW CAN YOU INVEST IN GOD’S KINGDOM?**

PRAY

GOD, I’VE WATCHED WORLDLY KINGDOMS CRUMBLE TO THE GROUND. I’VE BUILT KINGDOMS OF MY OWN WHICH DIDN’T LAST. HELP ME TO POINT OTHERS TO THE HOPE I HAVE IN YOUR UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM.



DAY FIVE

MATTHEW 18:8-9

Do you know your own weaknesses? For instance, maybe you strive to make healthy choices, but you're not able to resist a bowl of ice cream. Or maybe you need to save money, but you can't resist splurging on coffee each morning. The point is that we all have weaknesses. Even when we are strong in some areas, we are weak in others.

If you're honest, you probably know where you're weak when it comes to sin too. You know what keeps causing you to stumble in your walk with God. Let's take it a step further: You know which apps and websites open doors to other sites you shouldn't look at. You likely know which friendships tend to drag you down. You know the music that puts sinful thoughts and profanity into your mind. Yet, you keep going back. Jesus explained that we must cut off the things that keep causing us to sin. Imagine hearing Jesus speak this at the time; it was probably very alarming. And while Jesus wasn't suggesting we physically cut off our hands and feet or gouge out our eyes, He was making a radical point that applies to us today: Sin is serious, so serious that we must do whatever it takes to refuse it. We learned this week that the people in Israel kept going back to the same idols and false gods. They were caught in a cycle because they never stopped the cycle completely. They made efforts and improvements, but they didn't turn their hearts toward the Lord; they never cut off the path which led to idolatry. How often do we do the same thing? We make efforts, but we never cut off the way back to our sin. Jesus explained that we must. Those websites or apps—block them; turn over your phone. Those friendships—put boundaries in place and seek godly friendships. That music—quit listening to it and replace it with worship music. Cut off the way, and walk in a better direction.

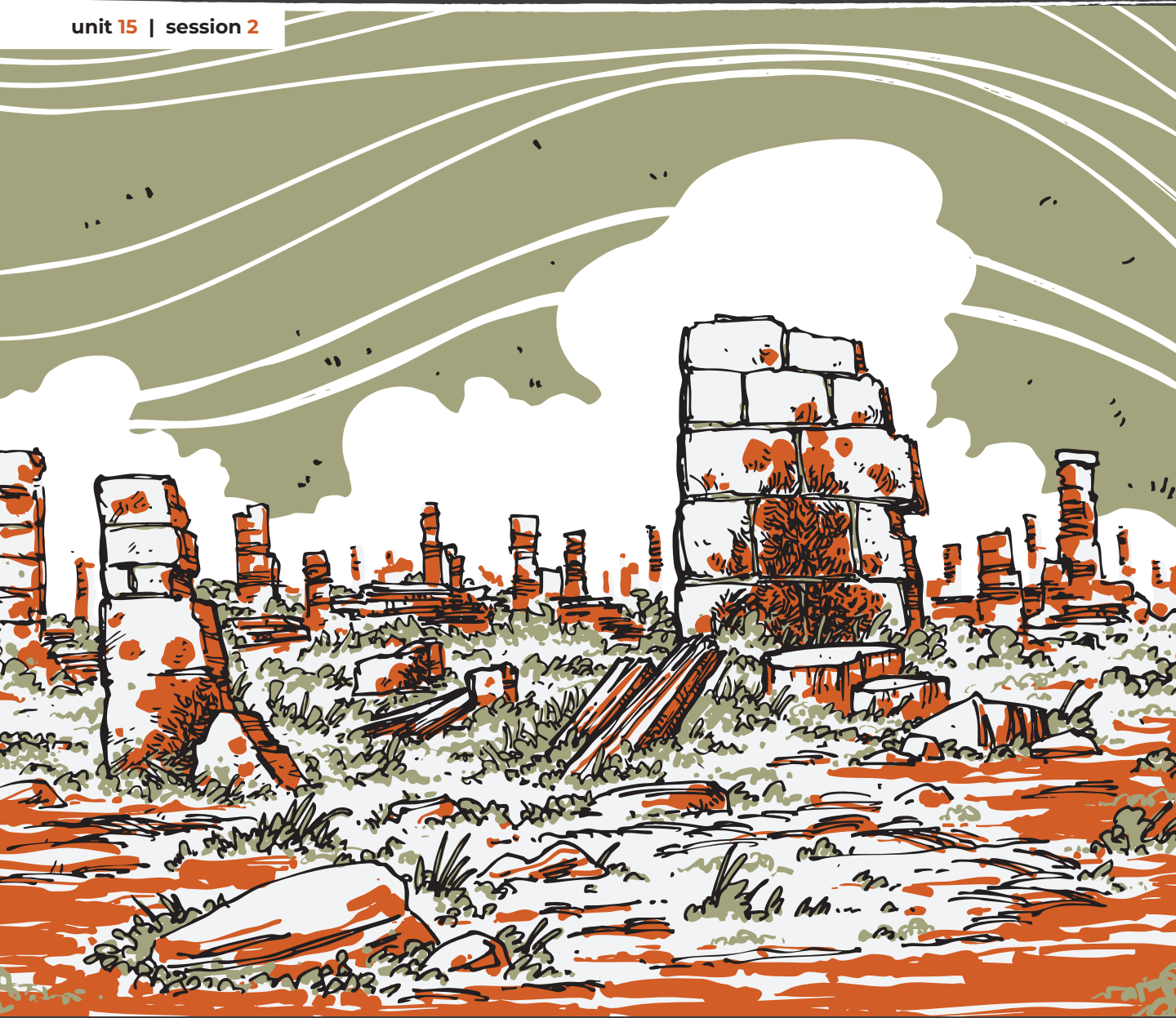
- **WHAT KEEPS LEADING YOU AWAY? WHY DO YOU KEEP RETURNING TO IT?**
- **HOW CAN YOU TAKE REAL STEPS TO CUT OFF THE WAY TO THESE SINFUL HABITS?**

PRAY

GOD, I KNOW I HAVE WEAK AREAS. HELP ME TO SEE THEM. HELP ME TO CUT OFF THE WAY TO THE SINFUL DESIRES THAT KEEP DRAWING ME IN. I WANT TO WALK IN FREEDOM AND POINT OTHERS TO FREEDOM TOO.

THE DEPTHS OF *THE SEA*

unit 15 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ's birth, death, and resurrection fulfilled prophecy, but we wait for the day when He will return and fulfill God's promise of a King who will reign over the new heaven and new earth forever.

DOOM AND DELIVERANCE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Micah 1-7

GOD DESIRES AUTHENTICITY FROM HIS PEOPLE

MICAH 3:9-12

9 Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, 10 who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11 Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." 12 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

GOD PROMISES TO RESTORE HIS PEOPLE

MICAH 5:1-4

1 Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. 2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

MICAH 7:18-20

18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. 19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. 20 You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

MAIN POINT.

Judgment is certain,
but repentance
brings restoration.






THEOLOGY CONNECTION

THE CHRISTIAN AND SOCIAL ORDER


In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and corruption, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and fight for the worth of all human life from conception to death.

DISCUSSION

GOD DESIRES AUTHENTICITY FROM HIS PEOPLE MICAH 3:9-12

-  • How did the leaders justify not reflecting God's character?
-  • Do you think leaders have a higher responsibility? Why or why not?
-  • What is the difference between ignorance and rebellion? Could Israel claim ignorance? Can we?

GOD PROMISES TO RESTORE HIS PEOPLE MICAH 5:1-4; 7:18-20

-  • What promises do you see in Micah 5:2-4? How are they already and not yet fulfilled?
- What is a remnant? In what ways are believers today like a remnant?
- What does God do with our sin when we repent (7:19)? How does this shape your view of God?



MICAH'S MESSAGE WAS WILDLY UNPOPULAR. HOW CAN WE BE COURAGEOUS WHEN GOD CALLS US TO TAKE AN UNPOPULAR STAND?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

It's funny—many of us say that we don't like fakeness. Some of us might even feel like the church is made up of frauds or hypocrites. In fact, many of us may have leaned on this idea as an excuse for not going to church or for not consistently and actively participating. Here's the truth: Many of us pose as something we're not. We put on a good face to hide what's in our hearts. Israel's leaders did this too; they looked the part, but they didn't look anything like the God they were supposed to be imitating. God had given them the Ten Commandments (and the rest of the law), which is basically split between two ideas—love God and love people. The law showed them (and us) how to do that. But the evidence revealed that the leaders in Israel weren't loving God or people. God calls us to authenticity. He calls us to really follow Him, to really love Him, to really love others. He calls us and equips us for so much more than simply pretending and posing.



DAY ONE

MICAH 3:8

Have you ever felt like you should speak up about something that was wrong, but you felt intimidated? Maybe you speaking up would offend people or put a target on your back in some way. This week, we learned about Micah's message to Israel. Part of the message was full of hope, but a lot of his message was brutally honest. In fact, much of what God gave Micah to say was directed at Israel's leaders, calling out their hypocrisy. He announced coming judgment. How did he do it? How did Micah have the boldness to speak against such powerful people, along with the rest of the nation?

Today's verse tells us exactly how Micah stood boldly in such a difficult situation. During the Old Testament, people were filled with the Holy Spirit for specific times and purposes. The Spirit would "rest" on people and empower them; we see this with people like Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and the prophets. Today, things are different. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit living within us at all times. He doesn't fill us or "rest" on us for a time or for certain tasks only, but He dwells within us permanently. And this means we have the same power that raised Jesus from the grave with us at all times, enabling us to stand and to speak boldly when He calls us to do so. This doesn't mean we'll never feel fear. Obedience to God often requires us to stand up anyway—whether we feel courageous or not, whether we feel qualified or not. You may still feel shaky or worry about how others react. But God is with you, and He will strengthen you to do what He has called you to do. He will teach you what it means to lean on Him instead of relying on your own strength. He is with you in the moments you shake with fear, in the moments you feel courageous, and in all the moments in between.

- **WHY DOES GOD CALL US TO DO THINGS THAT MAY SCARE US?**
- **WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING YOU TO DO NOW WHICH WOULD REQUIRE YOU TO LEAN ON HIM FOR STRENGTH?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME YOUR SPIRIT.
I KNOW THAT YOUR SPIRIT LIVING WITHIN ME
ENABLES ME TO DO MORE THAN I COULD EVER DO IN
MY OWN STRENGTH. HELP ME TO RELY ON YOU FOR
COURAGE AND BOLDNESS.



DAY TWO

MICAH 6:8

Do you know someone who has a really unique way of walking? If they were walking in a crowd of other people, you could pick them out because of their mannerisms. Maybe it's the way they swing their arms, or maybe it's because they walk really fast. Maybe they walk with a bounce in their step. Honestly, a lot of us probably have our own quirks when it comes to the way we walk, talk, and act—quirks that make us unique or recognizable to the people who know us.

As a believer, do you ever find yourself wondering how you're supposed to act in certain situations? How you're supposed to live? In other words, how you're supposed to walk? We're surrounded by a lot of opinions, not just from this world, but from our parents, our friends, our teammates. Sometimes, it can feel like everyone has an opinion on how we should live our lives. It's easy to complicate, but Micah put it very simply: Act justly, love faithfulness, and walk humbly. To act justly means that we choose what's fair; we don't show favoritism; we uphold God's commands. Think about what Micah meant when he said to love faithfulness: God is our ultimate example of faithfulness, and we strive to be faithful to Him and to His Word—to honoring Him at all times. No matter where we are and no matter who is around us, we're simply faithful to Jesus. Walking humbly means that we model Christ, who made Himself a servant (Phil. 2:7); we choose to put others first and to seek their good over our own. Is it really this simple? Yes and no. It's difficult to choose fairness, to keep God's commands, to be faithful no matter what and no matter who we're with, to lower ourselves. But we have the help of God's Spirit! When we walk closely with God and draw near to Him, He draws near to us (James 4:8). We can't act justly, love faithfulness, or walk humbly on our own, and we won't do it perfectly. But if we seek to honor God with our lives, He will show us how to live.

- **WHICH ONE OF THESE THREE COMMANDS IS THE TOUGHEST FOR YOU TO LIVE OUT? WHY?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH KNOWING HOW TO LIVE? HOW COULD THESE THREE COMMANDS GUIDE YOU?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR GUIDING ME AND FOR SHOWING ME HOW TO LIVE. HELP ME TO ACT JUSTLY, TO LOVE FAITHFULNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY. HELP ME TO IMITATE JESUS.



DAY THREE

ROMANS 6:1-11

Have you ever have a bad day and wished you could toss it out? Maybe something terrible happened, and you wished to undo it. Maybe you made a horrible decision or did something embarrassing, and you wanted to erase all of it. It would be nice to have the ability to throw out the bad and keep the good, but life doesn't work that way at all.

This week, we studied about what God does with our sin. When Micah prophesied to Israel, he said God will “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (7:19). In a sense, God does with our sin what we wish we could do with our bad days and our bad moments: He throws them out. He lets them sink all the way down to the bottom of the ocean floor. How? Through the death of His Son. Christ's death and resurrection defeated sin. When Jesus was buried, sin's power was buried forever. When He was raised, He gave us the ability to rise with Him one day and to live an entirely new life now! In this passage, Paul explained that our old self is crucified with Christ, and because we share in His crucifixion, we'll share in His resurrection too. Baptism expresses this on a symbolic level. When we confess Christ and obey Him in baptism, we're showing that our old self is gone. It's buried, and we're being raised up to a new way of life—a life that is freed from sin—a life that is dead to sin and alive to God (v. 11). Does this mean we'll never sin? Of course not. As long as we're on earth, we'll fall short and need to repent; we'll need God to refine us and make us new each day. We'll feel the consequences of our sinful choices, but we'll never have to pay the penalty—spiritual death and separation from God—because Jesus paid it fully. Maybe we can't throw out our bad choices; we can't toss our sin into the depths of the sea. But Jesus already has. We now have the freedom to live new lives.

- **WHAT SPECIFIC SIN DO YOU WISH YOU COULD THROW INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE COMFORT YOU?**
- **DOES YOUR LIFE SHOW YOU'VE BEEN BURIED WITH CHRIST AND RAISED TO WALK A NEW WAY? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, WHY?**

PRAY

**GOD, I PRAISE YOU FOR BURYING SIN AND DEATH
FOREVER AND FOR GIVING ME A NEW LIFE IN
CHRIST. HELP ME TO LIVE WITH GRATITUDE AND TO
HONOR YOU IN ALL I DO.**



DAY FOUR

MATTHEW 22:34-38

How can you tell if someone loves you? Really think about it. What proves it? Is it their words? Their actions? The way they take care of you? It's probably all of this and more. Someone who loves you proves it with more than words. If that isn't the case, then you may question if their love is real. And you should. Because if someone loves you, their words and actions line up.

The Old Testament is full of God's commands for His people. God gave Israel laws to teach them how to live as His people. Some scholars have counted 613 laws in the Old Testament. Religious leaders in Jesus's day followed them obsessively—at least on the outside. Inwardly, many of them were far from God. Some of them took part in an inquiry with Jesus; they asked a series of questions to trap Him into saying something blasphemous, or against God's law. When some of them asked Jesus about the most important law, Jesus answered with one of the most important verses (Deut. 6:5) and a daily prayer in Judaism, the Shema: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (v. 37). Are you noticing a pattern this week? Both Micah and Jesus gave fairly simple answers. But what did Jesus mean? He explained that we must love God with everything, with every part of who we are—our emotions, our motives, our devotion, our will, our knowledge. Any of these without the others leads to issues like legalism—obsessive rule following—and emotionalism—letting feelings matter more than God's commands. Our love for Him isn't just knowledge about Him, and it isn't just feeling a certain way during worship songs. So, how can others tell we love God? Because we love Him with everything—with every part of us. Knowing God leads us to love God and obey God—our love in action.

- **WHAT PARTS OF YOU MAY NOT REFLECT A LOVE OF GOD?**
- **WHY DOES GOD WANT US TO LOVE HIM WITH EVERY PART OF WHO WE ARE? HOW HAS HE LOVED US?**

PRAY

**GOD, I WANT MY LIFE AND EVERYTHING I AM TO
SHOW THAT I LOVE YOU. HELP ME TO KNOW YOU, TO
LOVE YOU, AND TO OBEY YOU.**



DAY FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

Think of an exciting promise someone made you. Maybe your parents promised an awesome trip when you graduate high school. Maybe your friend promised to get concert tickets. Maybe your teachers promised no homework for the last month of school. Promises give us something to hold on to while we wait. They give us something to strive for. Promises are good as long as they're not broken.

God's Word is full of promises to us. Some of His promises have already been fulfilled in Christ, and some are coming. One of the greatest promises God made was that one day, He will make all things new. One day, He will dwell with us in a new heaven and new earth. These promises are coming, but in a way, they're here now. Many of us think about God's kingdom as being something that's coming, something in the future. And it is. But God's kingdom is now. How? Through you. Through believers. We're already citizens of God's kingdom, and while we're here on earth, we live as representatives of His kingdom. Here and now. What does this mean for us? It means that we live in a way that shows others what God is like—what our King is like. We live in a way that reflects His heart and His character. Let this sink in: We get to give others a glimpse into who God is. But many of us have rooted ourselves too deeply here. We live as if this is the only place that matters; we live as if we're citizens of earth only—citizens of our culture. But Paul explained that we're citizens of somewhere far greater, of somewhere that lasts. And we eagerly await the day God returns to bring His kingdom with Him fully. Until then, represent it to the world. Show them how beautiful it will be. Root yourself in God's kingdom and live an even fuller life here because you did so!

- **IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU ROOTING YOURSELF HERE MORE THAN IN ETERNITY? HOW CAN YOU MAKE A SHIFT?**
- **WHAT'S AT STAKE IF WE DON'T LIVE AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN HERE AND NOW?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR MY LIFE HERE. HELP ME TO LIVE FULLY BY LIVING AS A CITIZEN OF YOUR KINGDOM—AS A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN. I WANT TO REPRESENT YOU TO THE WORLD. HELP MY LIFE POINT TO MY REAL HOME WITH YOU.

WRITE IT ON *THEIR HEARTS*

unit 15 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jeremiah prophesied about a coming day when God would write His law on His people's hearts and provide lasting forgiveness of sin. This prophecy points to God's provision of Jesus. Through Jesus, God offers us forgiveness, and through the Holy Spirit, God enables us to obey His commands.

ON YOUR HEART

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Jeremiah 29–31

GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR TRUST

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

5 Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. 7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

GOD PUTS HIS WORD WITHIN US

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

MAIN POINT.

God transforms us from the inside out.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

ILLUMINATION OF SCRIPTURE

Because of the vast difference between God's wisdom and ours and because of humanity's sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without being aided by the Holy Spirit through the process of illumination. When it comes to understanding the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not rely ultimately on human reason in the process of interpretation, nor do we rely solely on organizations' or scholars' interpretations. Instead, a Christian's ultimate reliance is upon the work of the Spirit of God, who illuminates the Scriptures in the heart and mind (John 14:15-18; 16:7-15).

DISCUSSION

GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR TRUST

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

- Which is easier: Depending on people or on God? Explain.
- What threatens the tree (v. 8)? How is this like life for us?
- What is the result of the tree being planted by the water? Where are you planted?

GOD PUTS HIS WORD WITHIN US

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

- What do you think it looks like for God's Word to be written on your heart?
- What is the difference in heart change and behavior change? What does this passage reveal about what God wants for us?
- How do these verses point to the gospel? How has God kept His Word?



**WHAT "HEAT" OR "DROUGHT" ARE YOU FACING NOW?
HOW CAN GOD'S WORD WRITTEN ON YOUR HEART
HELP YOU TO ENDURE?**

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever needed a fresh start with someone, like a friend, a parent, or a teacher? Maybe you lost trust with one another because one of you didn't keep your word. Maybe one of you betrayed the other person. If you've ever been through something like this, then you know that a fresh start feels good—like a weight lifting off of you. You can simply start over and try to do better. We often need a fresh start in our walk with the Lord, don't we? Like Israel, we often fail to keep our word; we fall into sin; we fall into idolatry; we wander away and seek worldly pleasures. God gives us mercy every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). When we repent of our sin, God forgives us. He writes His Word on our heart so that we can change and grow. But it's hard to be changed by the Word if we don't commit to knowing it. You want a fresh start with the Lord? Get into His Word. Seek Him in prayer. Deepen your relationship with Him. He'll change you from the inside out.



DAY ONE

PSALM 1

Have you ever driven through a desert? Or even seen one on television? If so, then you probably noticed that the trees look more like shrubs, and in some places, there may not be any at all. Trees can grow tall only when their roots grow deeply. Roots help them to stand and not be blown over by the wind. The problem with trees growing in the desert is that their roots can't grow very deep due to poor soil conditions. Sand can't provide what a tree needs to thrive. Of course, the lack of water plays a major role too. The bottom line: Trees grow and thrive only in the right conditions for them to do so.

As odd as it sounds, we're a lot like trees. We'll only grow and thrive in the right conditions. This psalm echoes the same idea. Spiritually, we'll grow strong roots when we're planted in places that fuel growth—places that can sustain and nourish us. Here's the truth: You're as close to God as you want to be. If you're not growing spiritually, then look at where you're planted. You may be planted in desert places—in places that will stunt your growth and with people who can't help you grow. Verse 1 explains what starves us: Walking with people who carelessly sin, taking advice from people who make ungodly choices, making those who don't know God our closest people. We will starve spiritually if we plant ourselves in these situations—in sand. But the psalmist says those who plant themselves by a stream bear fruit and remain green. What does that look like for us? We plant ourselves in God's Word because it's our daily bread; it gives us spiritual nourishment. We commit to other spiritual disciplines, like prayer, worship, fasting, and service. We surround ourselves with godly influences—with other people who are spiritually growing. We can't grow if we're planted in the sand, and we'll never survive the wind with shallow roots. Instead, plant yourself in good soil and thrive.

- **HONESTLY ASSESS YOUR LIFE: WHERE ARE YOU PLANTED?**
- **ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT TO GROW SPIRITUALLY. SOMETIMES, IT FEELS LIKE I'M STARVING. HELP ME TO PLANT MYSELF IN THE RIGHT PLACES AND WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE SO I CAN THRIVE.



DAY TWO

MATTHEW 7:24-29

When you're building a sandcastle, you have to remember a few things. First, you need to build it outside of the waves' reach. Next, you need to create a flat, packed sand base to build on. Finally, you need to use water to help pack the sand in a bucket so it will keep its shape. Now, once you do all this, the sandcastle will stand forever, right? Well, if you've gone to the beach and built one, then you know that most sandcastles are gone by morning. Either the tide comes in and washes it away, or someone destroys it. Castles in the sand don't last.

In this passage, Jesus explained that our foundation matters. Why? Because no matter where we build—no matter who we are—wind and rain will come. It's certain. As we saw in the lesson this week, we can expect seasons of heat and drought too. No matter how much we try to avoid difficult seasons, we will walk through them. We'll likely experience loss, sorrow, betrayal, poverty, sickness, or loneliness. The way we stand during those seasons is by standing on a firm foundation. That foundation—that rock—is Jesus. He is the One who never moves and is never shaken by wind and rain. He sustains us in the drought and in the heat. And when we stand on Him by placing our faith in Him and by rooting ourselves in God's Word, we won't crumble when life hurts. We'll feel it—the wind, the rain, the heat. But our faith won't crumble because our salvation is secure and our hope is certain. We'll collapse if we place our hope and faith in anything else. And relying on anyone else won't be enough because people will fail us. We are designed to depend on God—to stand on the Rock. All other places are shifting sand.

- **WHAT ELSE OR WHO ELSE BESIDES GOD ARE YOU TEMPTED TO TRUST IN? HOW WILL THESE FOUNDATIONS FAIL YOU?**
- **WHAT SEASON ARE YOU CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STAND FIRM ON CHRIST?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE MY FIRM FOUNDATION. I KNOW ALL OTHER FOUNDATIONS SHIFT AND FAIL. THANK YOU FOR BEING MY SALVATION AND FOR STEADYING ME DURING DIFFICULT SEASONS. I DEPEND ON YOU.



DAY THREE

EZEKIEL 36:24-27

What does it mean when we say someone is cold-hearted? Usually, we mean that this person doesn't seem to have feelings or care about other people. We mean that their heart is more like stone—hardened, stubborn, and cruel.

God promised through multiple prophets that He would change His people's hearts. Notice, He didn't say He would change their actions. Why? Because change starts on the inside. This week, we read about God's promise to write His Word on our hearts; He promised to put His Word within us so that we would know Him (Jer. 31:33-34). In today's passage, Ezekiel shared a similar message. God promised to replace hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. In this context, heart is closely connected to our will—to our desires. It's connected to our emotions and our actions. God promised to put His Spirit within the people. Think about that: God shares His Spirit with us! When we call on Jesus for salvation and commit to following Him, God gives us a new heart. In other words, He gives us His Spirit, altering who we are from the inside out. Our will submits to God; our emotions are rooted in the truth of His Word; our actions flow from inward change. When God gives us a new heart, everything about the way we live changes. Everything about the way we respond to God changes. The way we treat others, how we talk, and what we desire all changes because God dwells within us. We don't change out of our own doing or because of our own determination but out of God transforming us. This is a truth we can rest in. None of us are incapable of change because the Lord is the One who changes us. We receive a new heart. We receive His Spirit. And as we continue to know God, He changes us from the inside out.

- **WHY DO WE NEED A NEW HEART?**
- **DESCRIBE THE CHANGE THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE INSIDE OF YOU. HOW HAS IT AFFECTED THE OUTSIDE?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME A NEW HEART AND
FOR SHARING YOUR SPIRIT WITH ME. I COULD NEVER
CHANGE ON MY OWN, BUT YOU MADE ME NEW.
CONTINUE TO TRANSFORM ME FROM THE INSIDE
OUT, AND MAKE ME MORE LIKE YOUR SON.**



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 8:1-5



We fall into one of these two categories: We're either rule followers or rule breakers. Middle ground doesn't really exist. We either follow rules perfectly, or by breaking just one rule, we break them all. If we are being honest, we'd admit that we're all rule breakers. Even breaking a rule like not chewing gum in class or walking in single-file line makes us guilty. In reality, none of us can claim that we've followed rules perfectly.

God's law demanded total obedience. His commands are for our good, and they help us reflect His character. But, no one has ever been able to follow it perfectly, except for Jesus. Think about this quote from preacher and writer, Charles Spurgeon: "Things required by the law are bestowed [gifted] by the gospel. God demands obedience under the law: God works obedience under the gospel. Holiness is asked of us by the law: holiness is wrought [worked] in us by the gospel."¹ What is Spurgeon saying? The law requires perfect obedience—total obedience—in order to claim we've kept the law. It requires holiness. And that's not all. The law requires faithfulness, purity, truthfulness, and so on—at all times, in all cases. But none of us have ever been able to do it. All of us stand condemned as law breakers. The gospel is that God does in us what we couldn't do ourselves. Jesus did what the law couldn't do for us—provide salvation. He fulfilled the law perfectly, and when He gave His life in our place, His righteousness became our righteousness. Now, God's Spirit within us works obedience into us; He works holiness into us; He helps us be faithful, pure, and truthful. And though we still mess up and sin, Christ's righteousness always covers us. Now, instead of being condemned as law breakers, we are justified and freed because Christ kept the law when we couldn't. This is the gospel: What we couldn't do, Jesus did. Sin is condemned, and we're free to live by the Spirit.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU TRIED TO BE GOOD OR RIGHTEOUS ON YOUR OWN? WHY DOES THIS FAIL?**
- **HOW HAS THE GOSPEL GIVEN YOU WHAT THE LAW DEMANDS?**

PRAY

LORD, I PRAISE YOU FOR FREEING ME FROM THE LAW. I COULDN'T KEEP IT PERFECTLY, NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRIED. THANK YOU FOR SENDING YOUR SON TO DO WHAT I WASN'T CAPABLE OF DOING AND FOR MAKING ME RIGHTEOUS.



DAY FIVE

ROMANS 8:5-11

If you were to keep track of what you think about each day, what would it reveal about you? It'd likely reveal what matters most to you, what makes you happy, what makes you sad. It'd show your priorities, your dreams. It'd reveal what you're passionate about or what you hate. And, it'd reveal your real motives and your sinful desires. The truth is that what we think about impacts how we live. So, our minds matter.

A major shift happens in our minds when we surrender our lives to the Lord. We go from living according to our flesh—our sinful desires—to living according to God's Spirit who lives in us. Paul explained that if the Spirit lives in us, then our mindset changes; it focuses on the things of God, on life and peace. Our old mindset before knowing Jesus was focused on self, and it led to death instead of life. That old mindset was even hostile toward God because nothing in our flesh wants to submit to Him. As believers, we're no longer controlled by a mind that only desires to satisfy sinful desires. We walk in freedom from it! We walk by the Spirit, showing that we belong to God. Our mind desires to submit to God's authority instead. Here's the truth: What we think impacts how we live. Our mind matters greatly. Scripture even teaches that we must take our thoughts captive (2 Cor. 10:5). This means we hold every thought and idea as prisoner; we examine it to see if it lines up with the truth of God's Word. If not, we demolish it; we throw it out. This process of renewing our mind is continual and happens as we walk with the Lord (Rom. 12:2). Take some time to consider your mind. Where are your thoughts? Do you dwell on the things of God or on the things of this world and on self?

- **WHAT ARE MAJOR CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR THINKING SINCE COMING TO KNOW JESUS?**
- **ARE PARTS OF YOUR MIND STILL HOSTILE TO GOD? HOW CAN YOU SURRENDER THEM?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR TRANSFORMING MY MIND.
THANK YOU FOR THE FREEDOM THAT COMES WITH
KNOWING YOU. HELP ME TO TAKE MY THOUGHTS
CAPTIVE SO THAT MY MIND IS FULL OF TRUTH.**

TO BABYLON

unit 15 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

God righteously punished His people for their sin, but He remained faithful to them and kept the promise He had made to David to preserve a remnant and provide a king. Ultimately, God punished sin through His Son, Jesus, and made Him our King forever.

HEART

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

2 Chronicles 36

A STUBBORN HEART IGNORES GOD'S WARNINGS

2 CHRONICLES 36:11-14

11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. 13 He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. 14 All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD that he had made holy in Jerusalem.

GOD LOVES US EVEN IN OUR REBELLION

2 CHRONICLES 36:15-23

15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. 17 Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. 20 He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: 23 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

MAIN POINT.

Rebellion will carry us to places we never wanted to go.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN AS REBELLION

Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, called to respond in faith and obedience to God's revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me." Seen in this light, sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a clenched fist toward the One who made us.

DISCUSSION

A STUBBORN HEART IGNORES GOD'S WARNINGS 2 CHRONICLES 36:11-14

- ♥ • Why do we harden our hearts toward people? What does this look like spiritually?
- 🧠 • When have you been thankful for someone warning you? How can you tell when God is warning you?
- Can you remember the first time you rebelled against someone? How do you think spiritual rebellion begins?

GOD LOVES US EVEN IN OUR REBELLION 2 CHRONICLES 36:15-23

- ✝ • What do you notice about the exile (v. 21)? How do we see that God hadn't forgotten His promises to Israel?
- 📖 • What does Judah's fall show you about rebellion?
- What motivated God's warnings (v. 15)? Why don't we recognize this in God's warnings for us too?



WHO DO YOU HAVE TO WARN YOU WHEN YOU'RE MOVING AWAY FROM THE LORD? WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Movements in our culture often paint God as only a God of love. Honestly, at the core, this isn't wrong because what God does is rooted in His love for us. But when people say things like, "The God I follow is a God of love," they're typically resisting the truth that He is also a God of justice. He is also holy and righteous, and He hates sin because it separates us from Him. In fact, God hates it so much that He took it on Himself to defeat sin and death through sending His Son. So, somehow God's love and all His other attributes intertwine and are not at war with one another. God's justice is rooted in His love for His creation—in His desire to care for us and to save us from sin and its effects. Many times, people are willing to accept only that God is loving, but He can't be truly loving if He allows sin to go unchecked. Sin, when it grows and matures, leads to death (James 1:15). Because God is loving, He doesn't sit back and do nothing; instead, He warns us—over and over—and He convicts us of our sin, allowing us to feel the guilt of it so that we'll return to Him.



DAY ONE

PROVERBS 12:15

Have you ever been convinced you were right about a situation but then turned out to be wrong? Maybe you even argued with a friend about it and later had to admit you were wrong. It's a humbling feeling! For example, you were convinced that the next football game was a home game, but you were wrong. Or maybe you were sure that you knew the way to someone's house, but you actually had no idea where you were going and led everyone in the wrong direction. More seriously, maybe you were certain that a party would be safe to attend and even ignored someone's advice not to go, but they were right.

We are often convinced we're right, and in our pride, we struggle to accept when we're wrong. Our pride blinds us from seeing it. Proverbs is a book full of wise sayings. In the verse today, the speaker cautioned us against thinking we're always right. Instead, whoever listens to counsel, or godly advice, is wise. What does it mean to listen? Well, it means we're willing to really hear someone's words. We reflect on them and put them next to God's Word to see if they hold truth. If we're honest with ourselves, many times, we know we're wrong when it comes to sinful choices. We can sense the Holy Spirit urging us to go another way. But it comes down to obedience. It involves us laying down our sinful desires and choosing wisdom instead—even when we really want to choose what seems fun or logical. Listening to someone's godly advice is difficult when it goes against what we want to do. Though we don't want their advice to be right, we usually know when it is. In those cases, we would be wise to follow it instead of stubbornly holding to our own way.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU IGNORED GODLY ADVICE? WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM DOING SO?**
- **WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM ADMITTING WHEN YOU ARE WRONG?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME WISDOM. WHEN I STRUGGLE TO KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT, PLEASE SPEAK TO ME THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOUR WORD. HELP ME TO FOLLOW GODLY ADVICE EVEN WHEN IT ISN'T WHAT I WANT TO HEAR.



DAY TWO

GENESIS 2:15-17; 3:1-6

Yesterday, we read about ignoring wise advice. Though many of us struggle with this area, we aren't the first to do so. In fact, it started in the garden of Eden with the first man and the first woman—Adam and Eve. God clearly explained the boundaries in the garden. Adam and Eve could eat from any tree except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God explained that eating from this tree would lead to their death. Those were pretty clear consequences, right? But Eve was deceived by the serpent with just a simple question: "Did God actually say?" She and Adam took the bite—literally!

Aren't we similar? God's commands are clear in His Word. We know sin leads to death ultimately, but it also leads to pain and suffering, to separation from God. Our sin can even lead others into sin. But we so often find ourselves doubting God's commands and asking, "Did God actually say?" And we typically ask this question because we want to justify our desires. We wonder if profanity is really that big of a deal because everyone else uses it. We wonder if certain websites are really that bad because everyone else looks at them. We question if dating someone who doesn't know the Lord is really that serious because our friends date unbelievers and seem happy. We're tempted by our own sinful desires, and we allow doubt to enter our minds. We question God's Word even though it's clear, even when the Holy Spirit urges us to listen, even when God uses a godly friend, parent, or mentor to warn us. And this is how we slip; this is how we compromise what we know is true. Here's something to ask yourself: Do you really have any reason to doubt the Lord? Has He ever not been faithful and true? So, when it comes to sin, why would you doubt His guidance then?

- **WHAT SIN OR HABIT DO YOU FIND YOURSELF ASKING, "DID GOD ACTUALLY SAY"?**
- **WHERE CAN YOU TURN TO FIND TRUTH? WHO CAN YOU TRUST TO LEAD YOU IN A GODLY DIRECTION?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU'RE SO FAITHFUL. YOUR WORD IS TRUE.
YOU DO WHAT YOU SAY. I HAVE NO REASON TO
DOUBT WHAT YOU'VE SPOKEN. HELP ME TO CHOOSE
TRUTH WHEN I WANT TO CHOOSE A LIE.



DAY THREE

PROVERBS 27:6

Has anyone ever criticized you? Maybe you were in charge of a group project, and someone in the group pointed out something you did wrong. Criticism stings, but is it always bad? Not at all. We can think of criticism in two ways: One form tears you down for the sake of making you look or feel bad and another form that's rooted in truth lovingly builds you up and helps you improve. We'd be foolish to run from the second type, right?

Here are some difficult truths you may need to hear right now (truths we all need to hear at some point): Real friends will make you better. Your real friends will help you see your sin. Your real friends won't agree with your sinful decisions to keep the peace. Your real friends will risk making you upset to speak godly truth when you're slipping. And they'll do all this in a spirit of love—not to tear you down, but to call you up and to help you walk toward God. It will still sting. Even the verse today described this type of criticism as “wounds of a friend” because accountability hurts. But we can trust this type of correction. We can trust God's Word to correct us, and we can trust those who live according to His Word. Those friends who lead you away from God though? Those are the “kisses of an enemy.” It seems like a gesture of love, but it's fooling you. We see Christ model loving criticism; He spoke truth even when it cut deeply. He spoke truth because He was motivated by His great love for people. Pay attention to your friends who are willing to speak truth. Don't reject it because you stubbornly want to go your own way. Listen, and be grateful for God's kindness to put people like them in your life.

- **WHEN HAS SOMEONE LOVINGLY POINTED OUT YOUR SIN, BUT YOU RESPONDED BY BEING OFFENDED? WHY?**
- **WHY DO WE OFTEN REJECT “WOUNDS OF A FRIEND”? HOW CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND CRITICISM ONLY MEANT TO TEAR YOU DOWN?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR CRITICISM THAT'S MEANT TO CALL ME UP AND HOLD ME ACCOUNTABLE. HELP ME NOT TO REJECT THIS TYPE OF ADVICE AND TO FOLLOW IT INSTEAD OF BEING OFFENDED.



DAY FOUR

PROVERBS 27:17



Blades become dull over time. They can be sharpened in a few ways, but all methods involve some force and another piece of iron—another tool. A blade can't sharpen itself. Sharpening a blade effectively requires skill and action; if done incorrectly, the blade can actually become more dull.

Yesterday we talked about how loving criticism is a gift that calls us up and makes us better. We talked about how we can trust “wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6). Just a few verses down, the writer went on to explain one major purpose of friendship: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (v. 17). What does it mean to sharpen someone or for someone to sharpen us? Think about a blade on a knife. This verse captured the method of rubbing one blade across another blade, and in the process, both blades are sharpened. Both blades become more useful for their intended purpose. Sometimes, blades require heat and the pounding force of a hammer to be sharpened or straightened; they may require a file to shave away dull edges. Spiritually, we can't sharpen ourselves; we need another tool. And one of the many tools God uses is our friendship with other believers (God also uses His Word, trials, hardships, and so on). Sharpening takes effort. It can be exhausting work. Sometimes, it makes us uncomfortable. It takes time. But when we sharpen one another, we will find that we're shaped for God's purposes. We're sharper and more useful in reaching others with the gospel. But like blades dull with use and without care, time and apathy make us dull. The sharpening process is ongoing. We need a community of other believers if we're going to stay sharp.

- **WHAT FRIENDSHIP IS SHARPENING YOU SPIRITUALLY?**
- **REMAINING SPIRITUALLY SHARP TAKES EFFORT. WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO SHARPEN YOURSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE?**

PRAY

GOD, PLEASE SEND FRIENDS INTO MY LIFE WHO ARE WILLING TO SHARPEN ME, AND HELP ME TO SHARPEN THEM. NOT CARING AND BECOMING SPIRITUALLY DULL IS EASY, BUT I WANT TO MAKE EFFORTS TO GROW.



DAY FIVE

HEBREWS 10:24-25

We've talked a lot this week about listening to the right advice and the importance of having people in our lives who are willing to tell us difficult truth. But listen, not everything about our relationships with other believers needs to be based on helping each other see what we're doing wrong. Our relationships and friendships with other believers should be grounded in helping each other do and celebrate the good too.

Today's passage comes from the book of Hebrews, which was likely written during the church's persecution by Nero. The writer (most likely Paul) encouraged believers to think about how they could push one another toward love and good works. In other words, Paul reminded them to consider how they could help one another do good things in this world out of love for other people. The writer went on to explain that they shouldn't give up being together consistently because their relationships gave them the encouragement they needed. During a time of hardship and persecution, Paul reminded believers that they needed one another, not only to point out sin, but to push one another toward what's good. To lift one another up. To offer one another encouragement. Many studies show that people are more likely to respond to encouragement than criticism. If this is true, then your encouragement could do more for someone than you realize. Their encouragement probably motivates you too. Take Paul's advice: Don't give up on being with godly community in your local church, and look for ways to encourage one another as often as possible.

- **WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF YOU CONSISTENTLY MEETING WITH A GODLY GROUP OF PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH? DOES SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR PRIORITIES OR SCHEDULE NEED TO CHANGE?**
- **WHO HAS ENCOURAGED YOU IN YOUR WALK WITH GOD? WHO CAN YOU ENCOURAGE THIS WEEK?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE CHURCH. THANK YOU FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS WHO LOVE ME AND ENCOURAGE ME. HELP ME TO PRIORITIZE MEETING WITH OTHER BELIEVERS AND ENCOURAGING THEM IN THEIR WALK WITH THE LORD.

CAN THESE *BONES LIVE?*

unit 15 | session 5



CHRIST CONNECTION

God gave Ezekiel a vision of the power of God to bring life out of death and to restore a broken and scattered people. Ezekiel's vision was fulfilled ultimately in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Immanuel—God with us—the King who gives life and rules over a unified people from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev. 7:9).

DEATH TO LIFE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Ezekiel 37

GOD'S SPIRIT GIVES LIFE

EZEKIEL 37:1-10

1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. 3 And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O LORD God, you know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus says the LORD God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD." 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the LORD God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

OUR HOPE IS SECURE

EZEKIEL 37:11-14

11 Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' 12 Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the LORD God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

MAIN POINT.

We are evidence of God's power to bring life from death and restoration from destruction.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

God is all-powerful: God can do anything so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean that God can sin—since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing that an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

DISCUSSION

GOD'S SPIRIT GIVES LIFE

EZEKIEL 37:1-10



- Do you believe anything is possible for God? Why do we doubt this?
- Why do you think God showed Ezekiel these bones? What might God want Him (and us) to realize?
- When did the bones actually come alive? What does this mean for us?

OUR HOPE IS SECURE

EZEKIEL 37:11-14



- If God can revive a destroyed nation, what hope can we have?
- What did the people feel (v. 11)? Are our feelings always true?
- Why would God want to revive Israel even after all they had done against Him?



HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE GIVE YOU HOPE EVEN WHEN WHAT YOU'RE FACING FEELS HOPELESS?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Does God's presence have limitations? For instance, could we mess up so badly that God would leave us? Does He have a boundary concerning how far He will go before He gives up on us? These are questions God's people probably asked in their exile. Had God left them? Sure, their own rebellion landed them in exile. Israel was destroyed, and the temple was obliterated because the people repeatedly ignored God's warnings. They were exiled and scattered by their own doing. So, surely God was done with them? Since the temple was gone, surely God's presence was gone too? The short answer is this: God never left them. He was never confined to the temple. He was with them even in their consequences, even in their exile. If we have called on Jesus for salvation, then as God's children, we have assurance that He is always with us and working in us (Phil. 1:6). God can cross any boundary. We can't wander far enough that we're out of His reach. Even in our own consequences for sin, the Lord is with us. We may suffer from relational distance when we sin, but God will never leave us. We can't mistake consequences for abandonment.



DAY ONE

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-23

Have you ever been in a situation that felt impossible—like a positive outcome wasn't possible or all hope was lost? Honestly, death can feel that way, can't it? When we lose loved ones, we may feel hopeless. Grief is heavy—so heavy at times that it can feel like it's crushing any joy or hope you had left. Death feels so final.

Many of us have read about Jesus's resurrection. We study it at Easter, and we believe Jesus conquered our sin. But we often forget that Jesus conquered death—not just His own death but all death. In the passage today, Paul reminded believers in Corinth of this same truth. Death trickled down through history because of Adam's sin. Death is reality for us. No matter what we do, our life here will end, and this can cause many people to feel afraid. But for believers, death isn't final; it's only a doorway. Because Jesus rose from the grave, we will rise too. Just as death came from one man (Adam), life comes from One—Jesus. We share in His resurrection! Knowing this can give us hope here and now, even when we face the death of a loved one and even when we may face our own. Knowing this helps us grieve with hope (1 Thess. 4:13). We have this wonderful hope that this life isn't all there is; death isn't the end. We're made alive in Christ now and for eternity. And knowing this must motivate us to share the gospel with others.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH FEELING LIKE DEATH WAS FINAL AND HOPELESS?**
- **WHY ARE BELIEVERS ABLE TO GRIEVE DIFFERENTLY THAN THE WORLD—WITH HOPE?**

PRAY

GOD, DEATH SOMETIMES FEELS SCARY AND FINAL.
I TRUST THAT JESUS HAS CONQUERED DEATH
BECAUSE OF HIS OWN DEATH. I HAVE FAITH THAT
DEATH ISN'T FINAL. HELP ME TO GRIEVE WITH HOPE
AND TO SHARE THAT HOPE WITH OTHERS.



DAY TWO

GALATIANS 2:20

Think back to when you were only five years old. In what ways have you changed? Are you more bold or more shy? Are you sillier or more serious? Even your physical appearance has probably changed. Though you may still be recognizable, your features aren't the same. Time has a way of changing us. The circumstances we live through, the highs and the lows, change us too. We're often shaped by our life experiences.

As believers, we've experienced Christ. We've encountered Him. And encountering Him and remaining the same is impossible. It would be like falling from a tall tower and then getting up and walking away with no injuries. Your body would show evidence of the fall. When we encounter Jesus, our lives should display the evidence. Paul explained to the church in Galatia that once he met Jesus, his old self died—it was “crucified with Christ.” He even explained that he no longer lived at all but that Christ lived in him. Paul radically changed because he allowed his old life to die; he surrendered it in faith, knowing Christ loved him and gave His life for him. Before knowing Jesus, Paul (formerly known as Saul before meeting Jesus) persecuted Christians. He imprisoned them and ordered their deaths; he did everything he could to ravage the early church (Act 8:3). But that version of Paul was dead and gone. Christ lived in him. What about you? Since meeting Christ, have you seen transformation in your life? Has your old self—your sinful, worldly lifestyle—died and faded away, or do you still cling to it? There isn't anything to fear in letting that part of yourself go. You're still you; you're still who God created you to be. But with Christ now living within you, you're made alive and free!

- **WHY ARE WE AFRAID TO LET GO OF OUR OLD LIFESTYLES?**
- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CRUCIFY SOMETHING? WHAT DOES PAUL MEAN BY SAYING “I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST”?**

PRAY

GOD, I DON'T KNOW WHY I CLING TO MY OLD SELF. I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BECAUSE I KNOW YOU LOVE ME AND GAVE YOUR SON FOR ME. HELP ME TO PUT MY SINFUL LIFESTYLE BEHIND ME AS I FOLLOW YOU.



DAY THREE

EPHESIANS 2:1-7

This week, we read about a vision of God restoring Israel from death to life. While His people were exiled, God gave Ezekiel a vision of a valley full of dry bones. He commanded Ezekiel to speak His Word and to prophesy over the bones to come alive. Then, God breathed life into the bones and they formed a vast army. After years and years of wandering away from the Lord, Israel appeared to be spiritually lifeless. But God showed Ezekiel this vision to communicate that He was going to restore His people. He alone could bring them back from death.

We often think of physical death as our greatest enemy, but we forget that the worst type of death is spiritual death. Spiritual death means separation from God. The truth is that before knowing Christ, we were all spiritually lifeless. We were as dead as the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel's vision. Paul explained in the passage today that we were once dead in our trespasses and sins—in the way we used to live. But God saved us. Through Christ, we were brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. God breathed His Spirit into us, and everything changed, right? We went from dead to alive, so surely that change is evident in the way we walk—in the way we now live? In this passage, Paul said “once walked” and “once lived” when he describe believers’ lifestyles before knowing Jesus. And that’s the key: We were dead; we are now alive. Moving from death to life makes a striking difference. Instead, many believers who’ve been brought to life walk around as if they’re still dead. We try to walk in our previous “course of this world” (v. 2) even though that path only led to death. When we meet Christ, we’re made new. We’re made alive. Why would we want to go back to a lifestyle of death?

- **WHAT HABITS OR SIN FROM BEFORE YOU MET JESUS DO YOU STILL WALK IN? HOW CAN YOU WALK IN LIFE INSTEAD?**
- **WHY SHOULD MEETING JESUS CREATE A NOTICEABLE CHANGE IN US?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME FROM DEATH TO LIFE! I DON'T WANT TO WALK IN THE WAYS OF MY OLD LIFE. I WANT TO WALK IN A WAY THAT SHOWS OTHERS I'VE BEEN MADE NEW.



DAY FOUR



GENESIS 2:7

Have you ever had to take a deep breath to calm down? When we're nervous, almost by instinct, we inhale deeply to calm our nerves. Pay attention the next time you get nervous, and you'll probably notice that you do this too. Watch batters before they step into the batter's box or basketball players at the free throw line; many of them take a deep breath. Doing this helps our system to regulate and manage stress. Deep breathing works against our body's response to fight back or run, a response called "fight or flight."

Deep breathing may calm our system, but breath is critical for life. If we stop breathing, we stop living. We can't operate without air. In Eden, God formed Adam from dust. But Adam wasn't alive until God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." That's the moment Adam "became a living creature." Spiritually, God breathes His Spirit into us when we confess Christ as our Lord and call on Him for salvation. In the way that air is required for us to physically breathe, God's Spirit living inside of us is required for us to be alive spiritually. The Holy Spirit lives within us to guide us, comfort us, and convict us. The gift of the Holy Spirit acts as a "seal" (2 Cor. 1:22), marking us as people who belong to the Lord. His Spirit is also called a "guarantee" (2 Cor. 5:5) because it promises our future inheritance. The Holy Spirit living within us works to develop spiritual fruit too (Gal. 5:22-23). Think about it: Fruit is a sure sign that a plant or tree is alive. The fruit of the Spirit is a sure sign we're spiritually alive too! We can't produce spiritual fruit on our own. But God's Spirit works in us, giving us life and helping us thrive!

- **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU'RE SPIRITUALLY ALIVE AND THRIVING?**
- **IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDING YOU, COMFORTING YOU, AND CONVICTING YOU?**

PRAY

**GOD, I CAN'T LIVE APART FROM YOU. YOUR SPIRIT
LIVING INSIDE OF ME MAKES ME ALIVE. THANK YOU
FOR THE GIFT OF YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH SEALS ME
AND PRODUCES FRUIT IN ME.**



DAY FIVE

EZEKIEL 36:22-27

Have you ever wanted to do the right thing but instead did the wrong thing that you didn't really want to do? In other words, have you ever felt torn over doing what is right over what is wrong? Of course you have. Even Paul explained that he often struggled with doing the "evil" that he didn't want to do (Rom. 7:15-20). The truth is that we walk around with a battle going on inside of us at all times. It's a battle of our flesh versus our spirit—the Holy Spirit. And like Paul explained, on our own, we can't do the good we want to do. Nothing good lives inside of us without God's Spirit living within us (Rom. 7:18).

In today's passage, God explained through Ezekiel that He was going to make Israel clean. They had profaned, or defiled, His name among the nations. They had cheapened His reputation, and through them, God was going to ensure that the nations knew of His holiness. The nations would recognize God's holiness through His people living holy lives (v. 23). But how could they do this when they had the same battle raging inside of them as we have raging inside of us? God said He was going to place His Spirit within His people, and His Spirit would cause them to desire to follow His commands (v. 27). Really take that in for a minute. On our own—in our flesh—we don't want to follow God. Our sinful nature is even hostile toward Him. But His Spirit living within us longs for God's will. It longs for God's commands. And it transforms our desires to long for these things as well. Now, as long as we're here on earth, we'll battle our sinful nature. But, we can position ourselves to follow the Holy Spirit instead of our own flesh. Reading God's Word, praying, worshiping daily, and spending time with godly believers are all steps that help us follow the Holy Spirit's voice. They're actions we can take in the battle between our flesh and the Spirit.

- **HOW HAS THE HOLY SPIRIT CHANGED YOUR DESIRES?**
- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT INSTEAD OF GIVING IN TO YOUR FLESH?**

PRAY

**GOD, NOTHING GOOD LIVES INSIDE OF ME WITHOUT
YOUR SPIRIT. PLEASE TRANSFORM MY DESIRES SO
THAT I LONG TO FOLLOW YOUR SPIRIT INSTEAD OF
MY FLESH.**

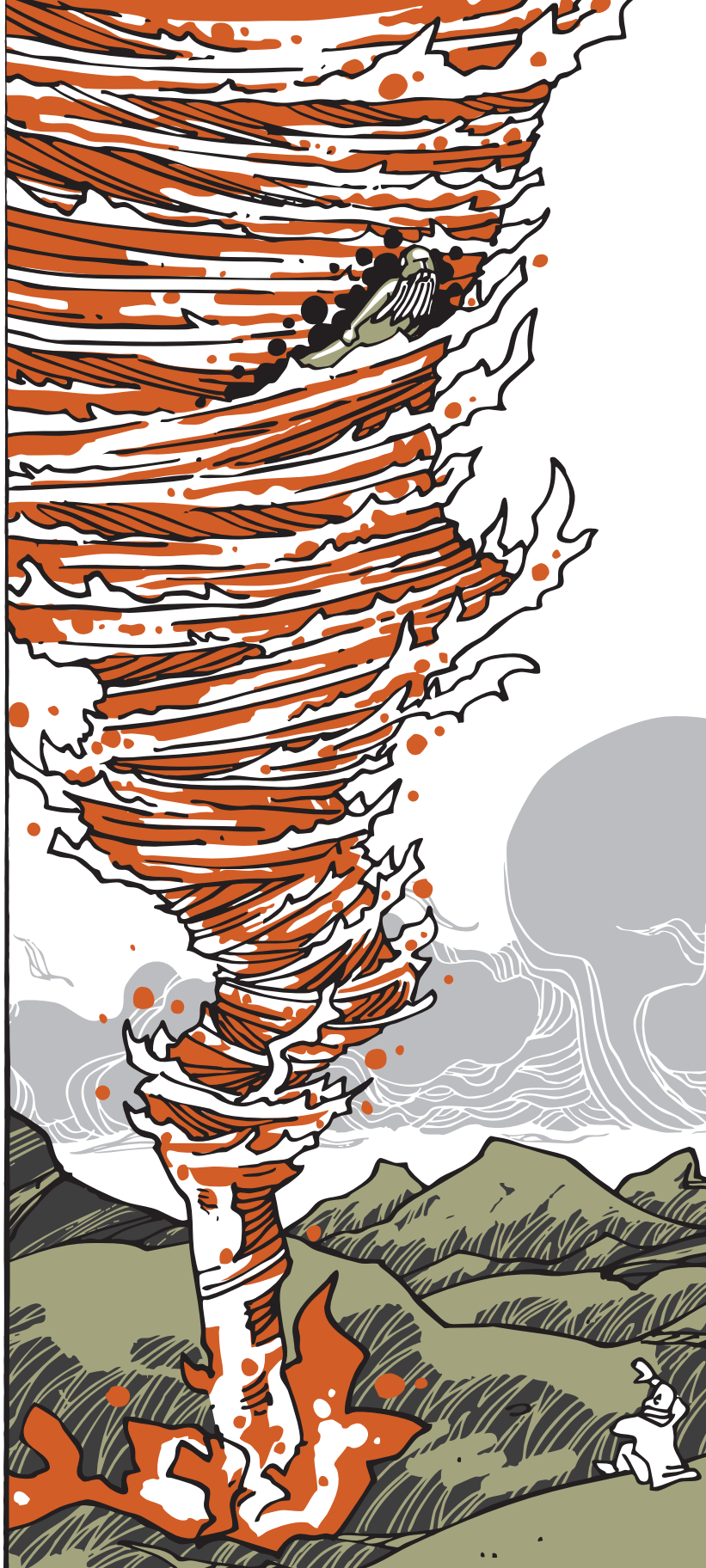


AUTHOR & CONTENT EDITOR

ALECIA BRYANT

Can a voice be incredibly loud yet barely detectable at the same time? Somehow, God's voice is like this—close because His Spirit lives within us, but other voices often suffocate it. God speaks to us—encouraging us, warning us, leading us. But sometimes, we miss all of it. Sometimes, we would rather listen to another voice. And like God's people, we find ourselves in places we never intended to go—places of wandering and exile. The truth is that God will always be with you. He will always pursue you. God wrote His Word on your heart, deep within. Choose His voice above any other. Every time. Let it transform you from the inside out.

Alecia Bryant



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- This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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