

How to Use this Prayer Guide

Remember ring and run? Usually a group of middle or high school teens with too much time on their hands would approach a house after dark. One daring teen would approach the front door, ring the doorbell and then the whole group would run away before the door opened. Hence the phrase “ring and run.”

Prayer can be just like ring and run. We struggle knowing what to say and how to stay attentive. We tire and bore of our repetitiveness. We are carried along by false illusions of self-reliance. We fixate on praying and not on the One to whom we pray. We ring God’s door yet fail to linger long enough to see and experience the God of peace, joy and hope. Given all these difficulties we hurriedly enter into prayer and then hurriedly exit out of prayer. Prayer is hard.

Everyone struggles with prayer. Yet learning to pray is worth all our time, effort and attention. We must cultivate a continuing daily prayer habit that incorporates praising God for who He is, confessing sin in our life, thanking Him for His blessings, and humbly petitioning for His provision. Indeed, prayer is as vital to our spiritual life with God as oxygen is to our physical life.

The purpose of this devotional is to learn how to pray and then become men and women of prayer. We want to be

Defined by the **Word**, **Devoted** to **Prayer**
and **Dependent** on the **Holy Spirit**.

Only then can we thrive in our relationship with God and be who we are called to be. Come join us as we learn together how to pray.

DAY 1 – What is Prayer

Matthew 6:9 - Pray then like this; "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name."

Prayer is simply talking to God. It is personal communication with God. Yet, prayer doesn't always seem so simple—or easy. Perhaps this could be due to our misunderstanding of what prayer is and why we pray.

To be sure, prayer (along with Bible study) are vital to cultivating a relationship with God. Nothing is more important in our daily walk with God than these two disciplines. And yet many are negligent in both. More than a few of us are subsisting on silence from God and with God. R.C. Sproul rightly remarked, *"If Christ could make a complaint it would be my bride never talks to me."* Why is that?

It may be that we need to remind ourselves to whom we are talking, what we are doing, and why. God is our Father. Isn't that how Jesus tells us to pray in Matthew 6:9? Jesus' Father is our Father. Moreover, we know God our Father is all powerful and all knowing. What an astonishing position we have with Him! By calling Him Father, we declare we are His child and, therefore, in relationship with Him. Can you fathom that we are in relationship with the one true God who is all powerful and all knowing?! But what relationship can survive without communication?

Undoubtedly, no relationship can withstand silence. Moreover, whether we realize it or not, we need God. In prayer, we make known that we are needy and He is generous; we are creature and He is creator; we are sinful and He is Holy. Yet, sometimes our lives go well enough that we mistakenly believe in our own self-sufficiency. Consequently, we see no need to pray. And herein lies the problem: prayer is not merely a means whereby we get things from God. He is not some cosmic celestial being we go to only when the bottom drops out. Prayer then is not solely getting things from God, but rather we get God Himself. Friend, your heavenly Father desires genuine, intimate relationship with you.

With a corrected perspective, prayer becomes delight, not drudgery. We are putting before Him our praises, confessions, thanksgivings, and needs. Indeed, the aim of prayer is to seek God's glory over and above God's gifts. That is our chief aim: to glorify God forever. But without recognizing who God is and why we pray, we are left to play with prayer like some bored toddler who's grown tired of yesterday's toy.

So, what is prayer? Prayer is talking to God, remembering who God is—our almighty Father.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray through Psalm 86 paying special attention to verses 1-10.

Day 2 - Pray Like Jesus

Luke 5:16 - But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

The Bible records Jesus praying twenty-five different times during His earthly ministry. Undoubtedly, Jesus prayed much more than that. Jesus was a man of prayer. Yes, of course, Jesus is God but even so—having taken on humanity, being made in the likeness of men—Jesus very much believed in, embraced, modeled and espoused prayer. Shouldn't we also? Isn't Jesus the one whom we follow and obey? If yes, then it is clear we should do what He did.

Jesus prayed alone. Jesus was a busy person. In the Gospels we see Him moving from place to place, preaching, teaching, healing, confronting, and discipling. He was so busy He couldn't even put down roots. Luke 9:58, *And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* Yet, time and time again we see Jesus slipping away from crowds, apostles and the ministry of people to go pray. In other words, Jesus prayed alone (Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23; Matthew 6:46; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:18). Why does Jesus do this? Let's face it—life is a constant onslaught of responsibilities and distractions always competing for our attention. Constant. It's hard to concentrate with the drumbeat of life pounding away hour after hour. Getting away from the distractions and busyness of life was a practical and wise choice for Jesus, as it should be for us.

Jesus prayed often. Jesus prayed at the start of His ministry (baptism), the end of His ministry (on the cross), and every place in between. Prayer is not just a required activity—it is God's appointed means of working in and through His people for His purposes. Moreover, prayer builds relationship with God. Knowing about God through His Word should drive us to knowing God in prayer.

Jesus prays continually. Would it surprise you to know Jesus is still interceding for us today? Hebrews 7:25, *"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."* Intercession means praying on behalf of someone else. Jesus is still praying on our behalf! Prayer was not a check list for Jesus—it was part and parcel to who He is as the Son of God. As children of God, adopted into God's family (Romans 8:14-15; Ephesians 1:5), we need to follow the example of Jesus.

Prayer Prompts:

- Meditate and pray about Jesus' example of prayer in Matthew 14:23 and Mark 1:35.

Day 3 - Organizing Prayer: Chaos or Calendar

Ephesians 5:15-16 - Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

We are busy people. Work and sleep account for most of our day and with the evolution of a digital society, technology is owning more and more of our time. We know we are commanded to pray. We may even want to pray. Yet many of us struggle to make the best use of our time when we actually get down to the business of praying.

How can we make the most of the time we spend in prayer? Truth be told, with the chaotic life we lead many of us go into prayer with no less than half a dozen concerns, petitions, and confessions on our mind. And given our limited time to actually be in prayer, our prayer time can, and often does, feel like, well—chaos.

Perhaps it is time to consider using a calendar. By using a calendar our prayers can be divided up into categories, which, can then be designated for certain days of the week. For example, you could pray for your immediate family on Monday, your work and co-workers on Tuesday, prayer requests on Wednesday, church family and pastors on Thursday and missions/lost people on Friday. By dividing up the people and things we pray for on a regular basis, we enable ourselves to spend more time praying for each category than if we prayed for everyone and everything in the limited time we have when we pray.

Many who adopt the use of a calendar testify to the transformative effect it has on their prayer life. For starters, using a prayer calendar will allow you to spend more time in prayer on whatever or for whomever you're praying. This in turn allows you to pray with more focus, depth and vision. Now with ten or more minutes to spend on your family or work or prayer requests you are able to go beyond the immediate needs and concerns and think about not only the here and now earthly life but the eternal spiritual life as well.

Why not try this calendar idea out and see how it can enrich your prayer life? Begin by making a list of all the prayers you pray on a regular basis. Then, assign these regular prayer requests to a day of the week. With all your prayers organized, the fun part begins: learning how to fill your prayers with rich, eternal impacting prayers. Read on as we continue our discussion of learning to pray.

Prayer Prompts:

- Separate your prayers into categories and assign them a day of the week. Then begin praying for each category. What is today's category? Pray for that today. Begin carving out time during the week to pray undistracted from the demands of life.

Day 4 - Parts of Prayer: Method or Madness

1 Timothy 2:1 - First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.

We're making great progress in learning to pray! We have learned a simple definition of prayer and we see the perfect model of prayer in Jesus. Yesterday, we discovered organizing our prayers by topic over the course of a week affords us more time to pray about any given person or concern. Now let's talk about the kinds of prayers we can offer up to God when we pray.

Pastor Matt Carter states, "The Bible lists at least nine main types of prayer: prayer of faith (James 5:15), prayer of agreement (also known as corporate prayer in Acts 2:42), prayer of request (also known as petition or supplication) (Philippians 4:6), prayer of thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2-3), prayer of worship (Acts 13:2-3), prayer of consecration (also known as dedication) (Matt. 26:39), prayer of intercession (1 Tim. 2:1), prayer of imprecation (Psalms 69), and praying in the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:14-15)."

With all those types of prayers how are we to know what to pray on a regular basis? Consider ACTS: **Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication**. This acrostic has been a helpful method in training believers how to order their prayer. While we can and should make use of other kinds of prayers, these four—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication—should be a regular part of our consistent prayer life.

First and foremost, we need to regularly offer up prayers of **adoration** to God. The Psalmist declares, *"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"* (Psalm 150:6). Adoration simply means to pay honor and reverence to God. God is worthy and due our praises even if circumstances in our lives are unfavorable. Next, if we're honest, we need to **confess** daily sin to God. While our all our sins have been dealt with by Christ's death and resurrection, we still need to confess and repent of sins we commit on a daily basis (Psalm 51; 1 John 1:8-10). Since we are recipients of constant grace and kindness from God, we always have much to be **thankful** for. Therefore, we need to remember to tell God about our gratefulness for salvation, daily mercies, provisions and so much more (Colossians 3:15, 17; Philippians 4:6-7). Lastly, since we are dependent creatures, we need to pray prayers of **supplication** or petition (Psalm 55:1; Matthew 6:11).

By adopting this method of prayer, we incorporate vital elements of prayer when we talk to God. More on ACTS tomorrow.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray through Psalm 146. Also look at Psalm 51 and consider King David's grief over his sin.

Day 5 - Parts & Priorities: ACTS

Philippians 4:6 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

As we saw yesterday, there are four kinds of prayers—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This acrostic—when followed in order—is particularly helpful in reminding us of the *parts and priorities* of prayer. ACTS is no mere formula, for prayer is not formulaic. Prayer isn't powerful because of formulas or methods. The letters ACTS remind us what to pray and how to prioritize prayer lest we pray like SCAT. SCAT is simply mis-prioritized parts—starting with supplication and ending with adoration and thanksgiving. Friends, we must be careful to approach God rightly with awe, reverence, and humility.

Let's take a look at each part and discover how to incorporate these into our communication with God.

Adoration: praise, worship, and glorifying God. Hebrews 13:15, *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.* Frankly, every time we come to Scripture describing God's attributes or demonstrating God's love, mercy, and faithfulness to us, we can offer up praise. In fact, the Psalms are filled with praise for our God. For example, read Psalms 145-150. We can even sing songs and hymns to God in our prayer life. Many cherished hymns have praise built into them. Sing!

Confession: agreeing with God that we have sinned in thought, word, motivation and deed. The word confess means "to agree with." 1 John 1:9, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Read Psalm 51 or Ezra 9:5-15 for wonderful examples of heartfelt confession and repentance before the Lord.

Thanksgiving: grateful acknowledgment of unmerited favor (grace). By God's grace and mercy, we will not be given what we deserve; we will be given what we don't deserve: salvation. Friends, we have much to be thankful for—even when the circumstances of life say otherwise (1 Thess. 5:18). Consider incorporating some thoughts from Psalm 136 in your prayers.

Supplication: a request or petition. We are bringing our needs for ourselves and others before our Father. Indeed, Jesus tells us to pray for our needs. But take to heart James' instruction in James 4:3, *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.* When our priorities are shaped by God's agenda, we will be praying powerfully and purposefully.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray through Psalm 100:4-5 and give thanks to the Lord. Meditate on what James is teaching in James 4:3.

Day 6 - Praying the Scriptures

Matthew 4:4 - But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Author Don Whitney has a marvelous little book called ***Praying The Bible***. He begins his book with the following words, *"Since prayer is talking with God, why don't people pray more? Why don't the people of God enjoy prayer more? I maintain that people—truly born-again, genuinely Christian people—often do not pray simply because they do not feel like it. And the reason they don't feel like praying is that when they do pray, they tend to say the same old things about the same old things."*

Sound familiar? Can you relate?

In truth, praying about the same things is not the problem. The rhythm of our prayer lives tends to be fairly consistent: jobs, finances, spouses, children, friends, loved ones, prayer requests and kingdom-related prayers. These categories remain steadfast for most of us. The problem, according to Whitney, is not that we "pray about the same old things; rather it's that we say the same old things..."

What are we to do? How can we revitalize our prayer life? Who can help us breathe new life and words into our prayers? Consider the Scriptures. We have at our finger tips a vast treasury of truth, wisdom, prayers and instruction. Indeed, what we have before us are the very words of God. What if we learn how to pray through a passage of Scripture?

By taking Scripture into our prayers we are using the words and thoughts inspired by God, transforming them into prayer, and then offering them back up to God where they originated. In this way we will never be "saying the same old thing" nor will we run out of things to say.

A few words of caution as we embark on praying the Scriptures. First, realize we are not turning isolated verses into a prayer. Rather, we are praying the meaning of the verse in context. Why? The meaning of individual verses is controlled by the verses that come before and after. In other words, context is crucial. Context helps the reader understand what a verse means. We want to be praying through the meaning of the text, not just repeating words. Also, we need to investigate the meanings of words to fully understand what the passage is saying. Words don't have meanings, they have ranges of meanings and we need to do the work of learning what those meanings are.

Prayer Prompts:

- Consider Psalm 119:17-18 and Proverbs 2:1. Pray God's Word back to Him praising the very Words of God.

Day 7 - Understanding What We Pray: Words

Psalm 119:22-24 - Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes.

A well-known Bible teacher, Jen Wilkin, recounted the conversation between herself and her teenage son. She prefaced the story by letting the audience know about the rather prevalent drug and alcohol problem in her son's public school. She said, *"My son came home one day from school, looked at me and said, 'Mom, um, Stephen got stoned today.' He had this really serious look on his face. I turned to him and said, 'Honey, who is this Stephen and do his parents know what's going on with him? How well do you know him? Are you spending a lot of time around him?' And my son's face got more and more confused and finally he said, 'Mom what are you talking about?' And I said, 'What are you talking about?' And he said, 'Mom, in my quiet time I'm studying Acts and Stephen got stoned.'"*

Words matter—as does context. Words have more than one meaning. If we really want to know what is being communicated in Scripture, we'll have to put some time into understanding what certain words mean and how they are used in the context of the sentence. Many times, readers will come across words and think they already know what the meanings are. Yet, more times than not, when we look up words we gain a deeper understanding of what the word means—particularly Biblical words. This simple act of defining words will bring greater clarity to the meaning of the Scripture.

If you have a Bible dictionary, by all means use this to look up key words. Invest in a gently used dictionary. The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary is a great resource. You can also access it at:

Holman Bible Dictionary:
<http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

What words should you look up? Places, structures, repeated words, words you don't know or cannot say, verbs, Biblical characters, people groups such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Samaritans, Greeks, Romans, and Gentiles. Titles: Apostles, prophets, priests, bishops, deacons, elders, servants, minister, and tax collector. Key words such as love, peace, faith, hope, joy, grace, fear, patience, sin, holy, adoption, blessing, covenant, temple, tithe, submission, clean and unclean, righteous, exile, elect, remnant, atonement, defilement, and any other word you think is important.

Once we understand the words we are reading in context, we will begin to see a greater understanding of God's Word.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray Psalm 119:18, 73, and 125. Consider adding this to your daily prayers of petition.

Day 8 - Garlands of Prayer: Instruction, Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition

Psalm 119:18 - Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.

In additions to ACTS, to guide your prayer life, consider another method of prayer as a garland of four twisted strands. These four strands are **instruction, confession, thanksgiving and petition**. While this is very similar to ACTS, it does have one different part: instruction.

Let's take a closer look to understand how it works. First, we have **instruction**. As we are studying Scripture (remember to look up words and read verses in context of one another), we must ask ourselves what is the main point of the verse? In other words, what is the author trying to tell us in this verse—given its context? The instruction part of this garland method asks, "What is Scripture telling me to do?"

Once we know what the instruction of the verse or passage is, we can ask, "How does the instruction of this verse lead us to offer up thanksgiving, confession and petition to God?"

What this method forces us to do is think about what we're reading and to consider how to apply it to our lives. Rather than read the Word hurriedly like a water skier zooming across the lake, we want to slow down—like a scuba diver who leisurely looks around—and discover the text patiently and carefully.

We want to fill our minds with His Word and ponder it. Reflect on it. Give it weight and value. Thinking and pondering Scripture is letting the Bible "brew in the brain." When we do this (reading carefully and looking up words) we can know God rightly, be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), and develop a rich prayer life stemming from God's rich Word.

Friend, all this teaching on prayer may be new to you. Be encouraged—what seems overwhelming can be accomplished gradually, by making little changes over time. Rome wasn't built in a day, right?

To pray Scripture, we want to understand it rightly. We are not just learning how to pray; we are learning to pray *well*—in line with God's will and Word. To do that we must understand what Scripture says and means. Bible intake and prayer are the foundational spiritual disciplines that mature us into Christ-likeness. We want to give them top priority in our lives. By doing this we are valuing and prioritizing God in our lives.

Prayer Prompts:

- Meditate and pray through James 1:22-25. What is Scripture commanding you to do? Pray to be faithful in obeying God's Word.

Day 9 - Watch Me: I'll Show You

Exodus 20:3 - You shall have no other gods before Me.

In days 11-20 we will walk through a passage examining six verses together, yet praying through them individually. Let's look at one verse today and pray our way through it.

Consider the first commandment. Exodus 20:3, *You shall have no other gods before Me*. By way of reminder, we can't overemphasize the need to read Scripture in context. When studying Scripture, start at the beginning of a book and make your way continuously through the book from start to finish. That way you follow the flow of thought.

To start, we could look up "gods" and "before." "gods" (little g) mean man-made concepts of God; idols—physical or material images or things considered divine and worthy of worship. Basically, paying divine honor to any created thing. "Before" means above, beyond, over.

Given that understanding of the words, what is the **instruction** God gives us in Exodus 20:3? Clearly, we are not to recognize, trust, obey or worship (prize, value, love) anything or anyone above God. That is what God calls us to do.

Given that instruction, what can we give thanks for? Perhaps we can offer up **thanksgiving** that He has not only revealed Himself to us, but also offered Himself to be our God apart from any merit or request on our part (Ephesians 2:8-9). Moreover, God has brought us into His family, adopted us as His child and cares for, comforts, guards and strengthens us all the days of our life. Thank you, Father, for bringing us into your family and being our God.

Let's keep going. How does this text lead us to **confession**? Well, sadly, the truth is we have committed countless acts of idolatry by loving, prioritizing, valuing, and esteeming many things and people above God. We have broken this command more than we have kept it. God, please forgive us. We repent and seek your mercy once more.

Lastly, how does this verse lead us to **petition**? What can we ask of God given what we have learned so far? We can and should ask for an undivided heart. We need God to preserve our faithfulness to Him so that we never hold anything in higher regard or love than God.

Scripture can supply us with deep, vivid, powerful, purposeful prayers if we will only take the time to learn and understand what God's Word is saying to us.

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, help me to cling solely to You and to... *Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways. Psalm 119:37*

Day 10 - Let's Do It Together

Psalm 23:1 - The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

We've been learning a lot these last ten days! We've learned what prayer is, how to organize it, what kinds of prayers to pray and in what order, the value of looking up words, and how to pray Scripture. Be patient as you adopt bits and pieces of this over time. Change takes time.

Look at Psalm 23:1. Let's consider the first half of that verse. What words would you look up?

Shepherd is a key word in the Bible. In fact, just reading the word "Shepherd" might recall to your mind the parable in the New Testament of the lost sheep (Matthew 18) or Jesus' words "*I am the good shepherd*" (John 10:11). What would help us understand all of these Scripture references is learning more about the word shepherd. Even if we don't recall the parable or the "I am" statement, the Lord is being called *something*. We should look that up.

When we look up shepherd we learn this person is a keeper of sheep. A shepherd cared for the flock—feeding, protecting, and leading them. He was responsible for every sheep, guarding it with his very life. We learn Jesus compared Himself to a shepherd in John 10:11. The shepherd/sheep relationship in the New Testament is speaking of Christ and His followers. And considering all that a shepherd does for his flock, we can begin to get a deeper understanding of how Christ cares for us.

How about the word "Lord"? Try looking that word up and see what you find.

Once we have looked up key words, how can we pray this verse? Well, let's start with the instruction of the verse. It is telling us the Lord is our shepherd. Since we know what that word means, we should rest and trust in His good care of us. In fact, the rest of the Psalm speaks to this idea of resting and trusting in the good Shepherd. Well then, how can we offer up thanksgiving from this verse? We could say, "*Thank you Lord for being my shepherd, caring for me and laying down your life to save mine.*" What about this verse prompts us to confession? Have there been times when we didn't rest and trust in His care of us? Sadly, yes. We need to confess this to our good Shepherd. Lastly, let us go to God in prayer and humbly ask God for help in living a life of a trust and obedience to Him.

Prayer Prompts:

- Choose Scripture **you** are studying and pray through one or more verses using ACTS or the Garland model of prayer as your guide. (Refer back to Day 5 and Day 8).

Day 11 - Background for Colossians 3:12-17

Colossians 3:12-17 - So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

In these next ten days we will continue learning how to pray Scripture working our way through Colossians 3:12-17. Before we get into this passage—looking up words and praying through it—we need to learn a little about the passage so we are ready to study it correctly.

Paul is writing to the church at Colossae around A.D. 62, approximately 30 years after the death of Jesus. Interestingly, Paul has never met any the believers at Colossae. This church was birthed about ten years earlier when a young man named Epaphras, who heard the Gospel preached by Paul, began sharing the Gospel in Colossae. When Paul writes to Colossae, he was in prison in Rome and Epaphras was with him. Epaphras informed Paul there was a false teaching threatening the health of the church. Paul writes Colossae to address this false teaching.

In writing Colossae Paul's goal is to set forth a proper understanding of the Gospel starting in chapter 1:15 all the way through chapter 2. Paul's writing sets Christ as supreme and preeminent above all things. When we come to chapter three, much of Paul's theology has been explained and he moves on to Christian living. All his theology is practical, and all his practical living is based on good theology.

Our passage beginning in verse 12 is full of instruction on Christian virtues. Paul begins chapter three with *"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."* Paul's premise is that our position before God, which is a gift of grace, calls for virtuous living to God. Verses 12-17 are descriptions of that virtuous living.

With that background understanding, let's start looking at verse 12 tomorrow.

Prayer Prompts:

- Father open the eyes of my heart this week as I study Colossians 3:12-17 that I may know you more and make you known in my life.

Day 12 - Chosen of God

Colossians 3:12 - So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion,

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on the beginning of verse 12.

As we think about praying through the beginning of this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **chosen** (see also "Election" in the Bible dictionary), **holy**, and **compassion**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- What does it mean to be "chosen"? Who has done the choosing?
- How should the truth of being chosen affect my identity and behavior?
- What does it mean to be holy? Describe God's holiness.
- In what ways am I unholy?
- How does being beloved impact my view of God?
- What is compassion? And, why must I be told to put it on?
- How can I practically show compassion towards others?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for family members.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 13 - What to put on

Colossians 3:12 - So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on the end of verse 12.

As we think about praying through the end of this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- How have the Biblical definitions of kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience changed my previous understanding of these words?
- How does humility impact the other words?
- How often should I "put on" these characteristics?
- Describe how Jesus has shown these traits. What does this say about who He is?
- What does it look like when I live out the opposite of these words in my life? Compare these with the broader context of Colossians 3:5-9.
- How is my home, church, and community impacted when I live out these words as continuing attitudes and actions?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for others (friends, co-worker, teacher, neighbor, coach).

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 14 - Bearing and Forgiving

Colossians 3:13 - bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on verse 13.

As we think about praying through this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **Lord** and **forgiveness**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- What does “bear with me” mean? How does “patience” in verse 12 and “bearing with one another” in verse 13 connect?
- Using the broader context of Colossians 1:13-14 & 2:13-14, what does Christ’s forgiveness look like? What does this reveal about Him?
- How are we to forgive? Which descriptive words are used?
- What does the title “Lord” mean? How does knowing the Lord’s authority over me impact my view of His forgiveness of me?
- Is there a limit to forgiveness? Why or why not?
- Do I forgive like this?
- Who am I not forgiving? Who do I need to ask for forgiveness?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for specific prayer requests.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today’s Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 15 - Put on Love

Colossians 3:14 - Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on verse 14.

As we think about praying through this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **love, bond, and unity**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- How is love listed differently than the other characteristics here? Why?
- Who is our example and how does He love?
- What is the heart attitude of love?
- When I am bonded by something, what does that mean?
- What is the evidence when I am not bound by love to others? What do I need to repent of before God and others?
- Who has given us the ability to be unified? How is love unifying?
- Describe this type of love and unity when lived out at Richland Creek Community Church. What is the impact beyond Richland Creek?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for your church family and its pastors.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 16 - Peace of Christ

Colossians 3:15 - Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on verse 15.

As we think about praying through this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **peace, Christ, and call**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- Whose peace is being discussed? Describe His character.
- How does the title "Christ" impact my understanding of God and peace?
- Is this peace internal, external, or both? How so? What impact does this have on myself and others?
- What does it mean to allow something to rule us?
- How is "called" connected with "chosen" in verse 12? Who has done the calling? How does the source of the calling impact peace and thankfulness?
- Who in my life does not have the peace of Christ because they do not yet have a relationship with Christ?
- Where am I not pursuing peace and allowing it to rule?
- Am I thankful?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for missions and salvation of the lost.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 17 - Word of Christ

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on the beginning of verse 16.

As we think about praying through the beginning of this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **word, Christ, and dwell**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- What does “word” refer to in this verse?
- What does the title “Christ” mean? What does it tell me about who Jesus is?
- What image comes to mind when I think of the word “richly”?
- How can the word of Christ richly dwell within me?
- Why does God want me to let the word of Christ richly dwell within me?
- Do I let the word of Christ dwell within me? Does it richly dwell within me?
- What steps can I take to increase the quality of my interaction with the word of Christ?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for the community, country, and world leaders.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today’s Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 18 - With all Wisdom

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on the end of verse 16.

As we think about praying through the end of this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **wisdom, admonishing, psalms, and hymns**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- How does the Bible define wisdom? Why do I need wisdom?
- Do I seek wisdom from God's Word or from worldly sources?
- What is the difference between teaching and admonishing?
- Do I teach and admonish with godly wisdom or worldly wisdom?
- Do I ever speak the word of Christ to others?
- Do I sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to others?
- What should happen as we remind each other of the Gospel in these ways?
- Does my heart overflow with thankfulness and genuine worship to God?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praising God for what He has done this week.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 19 - Whatever You Do

Colossians 3:17 - Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on the beginning of verse 17.

As we think about praying through the beginning of this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **Lord and Jesus**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- What does "in word or deed" mean?
- What does it mean to do something "in the name of" someone else?
- What does the title "Lord" mean? What does it tell me about who Jesus is?
- What does the proper name "Jesus" mean? What did He come to do?
- Is Jesus Lord of my life?
- How is what I believe about Jesus reflected in my words and deeds?
- How much of what I say and do is done in the name of the Lord Jesus?
- Do I honor or dishonor His name with my words and deeds?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for family members.

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 20 - Giving Thanks

Colossians 3:17 - Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 as a whole before we focus on the end of verse 17.

As we think about praying through the end of this verse we need to understand what Paul means as he uses the words **giving thanks** (i.e., thanksgiving), **God, and Father**. Our first task is to look up these words.

Helpful Resource:

Holman Bible Dictionary <http://classic.studylight.org/dic/hbd/>

Questions to Consider:

- What is thanksgiving? Why is thanksgiving important to God?
- Through whom do I get to offer thanksgiving to God? Why is this possible?
- Who is God? Do I remember Who God is when I talk to Him?
- How does my relationship with my earthly father impact the way I see God?
- How should the knowledge that I have a perfect, loving heavenly Father affect my life and my prayers?
- How might giving thanks change my attitude toward God and/or my circumstances?
- Based on this verse, what can I thank God for today?

Prayer Prompts:

Using a prayer calendar: (Refer to Day 3 - Chaos or Calendar)

- Today focus on praying for others (friends, co-worker, teacher, neighbor, coach).

Using one of the two models below, pray through today's Scripture:

Using our ACTS model of prayer:

Adoration - What could we praise God for based on this verse?

Confession - How do these verses lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Supplication - What petitions could we make based on this verse?

Using our garland model of prayer:

Instruction - Is this text leading us to do anything?

Confession - Where does the text lead us towards confession?

Thanksgiving - Is there anything we can give thanks for?

Petition - What requests could we make based on this verse?

Day 21 - Opportunities to Grow Through Transition

Initial findings through our assessment reports.

Romans 15:4-6 - "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

By now you should be familiar with Dr. Ewart's presentation "A New Normal" complete with the assessment process circles. The main circle in the middle that the others function around is labeled "Mission." We would define bringing glory to God as the ultimate Mission of Richland Creek. The other five circles that continually cycle and intertwine around this core belief are, in order of application: Assessment; Identification; Vision Development; Adjustment; and Implementation. We have recently completed assessment reports involving our church family, church leadership, and the community around us, with much of this being shared in our worship services on 2/16/20.

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The initial findings have already led to the identification of 9 primary opportunities for our church. Some of these are even moving forward into the Vision Development & Adjustment phases through staff work groups and our Elder Body. While there are indeed several other opportunities for us to grow, these 9 were determined to be of highest priority. These each reflect corporate and individual opportunities for growth in discipleship, membership, church leadership, and more.

In the following pages, each of the 9 opportunities is highlighted along with Bible verses and prayer prompts. Would you and your family please join with us in prayer for these vital areas? We look forward with great anticipation as we walk through this transitional season with you as we all follow God's "train tracks" devoted to prayer, defined by the Word, and dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Prayer Prompts: Psalm 86:11-12

- Pray for the ongoing transition process and the spiritual growth of our church.
- That I would be a part of the ultimate mission of our church, to glorify God, personally and corporately.
- Pray regularly for our church family.
- Pray regularly for our church leadership.

Day 22 - Assessment: Discipleship

Develop a clearly defined, unified vision for church programs, schedules and ministry to create true disciples and fulfill God's Mission.

Matthew 16:24-25 - "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Through our ongoing assessment process, we keep coming back to the truth of being defined by the Word. The Bible is God's heartfelt message to us. It is what He wants us to know about Him and how He wants us to live for Him. It serves both as a cautionary tale and as a hopeful promise for each of us. The entire narrative of Scripture focuses on God's love for us, our disobedience to Him, His promised rescue through His Son Jesus Christ, and His plan for us as His followers.

Studying God's Word is how we get to know Him better. We grow closer to Him as we read, study, and apply His truth in our lives. As disciples, and as a church family, our lives must be defined by His Word. Our leadership team is committed to working toward defining biblically what a growing disciple is at Richland Creek, teaching who a disciple should be, what should they know, and what they should do. Our assessment process has identified that this is something we can, and should, do better.

We encourage you to pray for your own personal discipleship, as well as the corporate discipleship within our church family. Also, please pray for all in church leadership as we work to ensure our discipleship process is defined by the Word.

Questions to consider:

Is my life defined by God's Word? How can our church improve our discipleship process to fulfill God's mission?

Prayer Prompts: John 13:34-35

- That I identify I am under the authority of the Bible in every area of my life.
- That I understand that to know God's Word fully, I need to study it carefully, and obey it completely.
- That I will develop a continuing daily habit of studying the Bible in context for my own growth and regularly gathering with other believers to study it as well.
- That our church would be defined by His Word.
- That our church ministries and programs would be unified to help make true disciples.
- That our church leadership team would biblically define and teach what a growing disciple at Richland Creek should be, know, and do.

Day 23 - Assessment: Leadership Function

Leadership polity, structure, alignment, responsibilities, and compensation must be clarified, modified and codified.

Colossians 1:16-18 - "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

Our church has been blessed with tremendous growth over the years, both spiritually and numerically. However, our focus in the past was often more on the numerical side of growth, and our leadership structure was built to chase this down. While we did see increased attendance and participation, we also saw competition and a lack of unity as our ministry bumper cars raced toward the next race.

The assessment process has revealed many things about our leadership structure and function. We were operating as bumper cars, not aligned by the same mission. To put it another way, we were not on track. We are now in a unique season to assess, identify, develop vision, adjust, and implement our entire leadership function and structure. Things must be clarified (made clear to all), modified (changed as needed for the betterment of all), and codified (put into a working system to benefit all) to align with God's mission for His church. Working together, we can glorify God through the function of our leadership.

Questions to consider:

How can I encourage our leadership as they grow in these areas? How can I help promote true biblical unity in our church family?

Prayer Prompts: Ephesians 4:11-12

- That our leadership would walk with the Lord humbly.
- That our leadership would be unified in God's mission for His church.
- That our Pastors/Elders would shepherd well, loving people in a Christ-like manner.
- That God would grant wisdom and patience through this process.
- That our church family would continue to grow in faith and love.
- That God will identify to us His called man, in His timing, to serve as our lead Pastor.

Day 24 - Assessment: Membership

Define church membership, expectations, goals, and accountability.

Romans 12:4-5 - "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

As we continue our sermons series through the Book of Acts, the idea of "one" is a recurring theme. We hear about the church having one heart, one mind, and one accord. These are biblical goals that are worthwhile and attainable, but yet seem hard to truly grasp. After all, how can over 2000 people be, know, and do the same thing...at the same time! We can if our hearts, minds, and actions are based in and focused on Christ.

The assessment process has shown that our church membership process needs to be reviewed and improved to develop the "oneness" we see in Acts. We must work toward clearer definitions, expectations, and goals for membership. We also must develop a higher level of accountability to God and to each other as a church family.

Our church is a family. If you haven't thought about it that way before, now is the time to change. Think about your own family and how it functions: What is your mission and what are your goals?; What are your expectations for your spouse/kids?; How are you measuring these things?; How are you accountable to each other? Working as one, our church can learn, grow, and live together as a godly family

Questions to consider:

If not a member, what issues are holding me back from committing to this family? How can I help grow in and promote the biblical idea of "one" at Richland Creek?

Prayer Prompts: Acts 4:31-32

- That our church family would embrace the biblical idea of "one" from the Book of Acts.
- That our leadership would develop clear expectations and goals for our membership process.
- That as members we would gladly be held accountable to God and each other.
- That we would lead and disciple our own families well.
- That God will bring many new people into our church family.

Day 25 - Assessment: **Communication**

Define a proper communication strategy to support discipleship goals and issues.

Ephesians 4:15-16 “...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Communication is often a blessing or a curse. On the one hand, when we are “in the know”, understanding the value of something and why we are doing it, it is a unifying blessing. On the other hand, when we are “in the dark”, without understood value or the reasons why, it is a divisive curse. This is true in our homes, workplaces, and especially in our church.

Clear, biblical communication is vital for a healthy church. It is absolutely crucial to the spirit of “one” we see with the early church in Acts. The goals then and now are the same: glorify God through unity and edify each other. Good communication in our church should be seen as much more than imparting information. It should clarify, unify, and edify, stirring us to participate in God’s mission.

Communication was identified as one of our biggest areas of opportunity through the assessment process, with only “trust” being named more frequently in interviews/surveys. Improving our communication strategy to support our discipleship goals will go a long way in strengthening the trust we have in church leadership, and with each other.

Questions to consider:

How can I be an active part of communication in our church? Is my communication with others a blessing or a curse? How can our leadership communicate better with our church family?

Prayer Prompts: Psalm 133:1

- That our church leadership will develop a clear, biblical communication strategy.
- That our church communication would clarify, unify, and edify.
- That we would use all communication tools available to help us as we follow God’s mission for our church.
- That I would address any trust issues I have with a member of church leadership, or another church member, in a biblical fashion (Matthew 18:15).

Day 26 - Assessment: Prayer

Create a proactive vs. reactive corporate prayer strategy.

Philippians 4:6-7-“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Have you ever been through a traumatic season of life, or known someone who has? It is in these times that we often do everything within our own power to change things, only to end up exhausted, frustrated, and discouraged. Once arrived at the proverbial “end of the rope” we turn to God in prayer as our final resort. This can be true in our personal lives as well as in the life of our church, especially in the season of great transition we are experiencing.

Prayer should be our first and continuous response. We pray to glorify God, submitting to His will and timing. It shows our complete trust and utter dependence in God. We must be devoted to prayer individually and corporately.

Through our Prayer Services and these Prayer Guides we have taken the first steps in a proactive prayer strategy. There is much more to be done in this area as we move toward having one heart, one mind, and one accord. Our leadership team looks forward expectantly with you all to what God has in store for our church.

Questions to consider:

How can I be an active part of communication in our church? Is my communication with others a blessing or a curse? How can our leadership communicate better with our church family?

Prayer Prompts: Colossians 4:2

- That I identify my need to be devoted to prayer, privately and alongside others, as a basic part of being God’s children by grace.
- That I understand that as I pray, I am not changing God’s mind about circumstances, but allowing Him to replace my anxiety with His peace.
- That I will develop a continuing daily private prayer habit that incorporates praising God for who He is, confessing sin in my life, thanksgiving for His blessings, and humble petition for His provision.
- That our families would pray together regularly.
- That as a church we would make prayer a priority, continuing to create a proactive vs. reactive corporate prayer strategy.

Day 27 - Assessment: Stewardship

Grow a healthier understanding and practice of stewardship.

Matthew 6:19-21 - "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The words of Jesus in the passage above give us the key to biblical stewardship and generosity: our hearts. Stewardship is not about what we have, but about who we are in Christ. Whatever tangible resources we have came from God; we do not own them. We are merely stewards of these resources for a season. We can choose to use these resources to glorify God, or ourselves. It all depends upon our hearts.

God has blessed us with time, talents, and treasures. Time is not only how long we are on this earth, but also what we do with it. Talents are the things we are good at and/or enjoy doing through experience and practice. Treasures are the tangible resources we possess. As we think of these three areas, ask yourself these three questions: What is my focus? What am I good at and enjoy doing? What do I materially possess? Now, think about how these fit into your discipleship.

Giving is an act of worship, guided by our hearts. When our hearts are focused on God, the Holy Spirit guides us to be good stewards of the things God has entrusted to us. Our generosity should never be grounded in legalism, compulsion, or selfishness. Following God together, we can develop a healthier understanding and practice of stewardship.

Questions to consider:

What is my focus? What am I good at and enjoy doing? What do I materially possess? Does my stewardship glorify God as I follow His mission?

Prayer Prompts: 2 Corinthians 9:7

- That I identify as a steward, and never an owner, of my time, talent and treasure.
- That I understand that biblically, giving is both a command and a privilege, and should be done joyfully and sacrificially.
- That our congregation would grow a healthier understanding and practice of stewardship of God's resources.
- That through our generosity, the church budget would grow to provide greater Kingdom impact.
- That our leadership team would operate with integrity and transparency regarding God's resources.

Day 28 - Assessment: Sunday Morning Schedule

Adjust the current Sunday morning schedule to not rush the worship services and to create better transitional flow.

Ephesians 3:20-21 - "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

We live in a culture that never seems to slow down. We try to pack in as much as we can in the least amount of time possible. Everything from work, school, family time, meals, activities, and more turn into a race against the clock. Is it any wonder that our time together as a church family often also operates this way?

Slowing things down a bit on Sunday mornings has been identified as an opportunity through the assessment process. The thinking here is that adjusting our Sunday morning schedule could facilitate deeper Bible messages, a fuller worship experience, and richer fellowship. Plus, it would likely have several practical benefits to areas such as parking, greeting, and more.

The current Sunday morning schedule has been with us for many years and has been good overall. We are all used to it and it is comfortable. However, now is the time to assess the good in order to adjust to the even better.

Questions to consider:

Do I slow down to make time for personal discipleship? How can I help our church family to adjust to a different Sunday morning schedule should it change?

Prayer Prompts: Hebrews 9:11

- That I make time to slow down for personal discipleship.
- That our church leadership will adjust the schedule if needed.
- That our Sunday morning schedule and programming would glorify God.
- That the preaching and teaching at Richland Creek would continue to be defined by His Word.

Day 29 - Assessment: Personal Witness

Develop and implement a systemic strategy to engage the congregation in personal evangelism and not primarily event or attractional evangelism.

Acts 1:8 - "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When you put your faith in Christ, the most amazing exchange occurred. Christ took your sins from you, putting them on Himself having died on the cross as suitable payment for the judgment you deserve. He also gave you His righteousness in the person of the Holy Spirit, filling you to help as you live for Him. This is true for all Christians, whether or not you are gifted as an evangelist.

We are all not only capable, but also commanded, to give witness of Jesus and how He transformed our lives. Of course, we could all benefit from the help of others who have been walking with Christ longer than we have. They probably know more Scripture than we do. They likely have shared the Gospel more than we have. They may also have shared their personal testimony more often.

This is where the church can do better in this process. Events and attractions have proven to be less than effective in this endeavor. Our leadership team is working towards a strategy that will equip and encourage each of us to be prepared at any time to share the Gospel and our testimonies. God is glorified when we share the Gospel and tell how Christ has transformed our lives. Through His Word and our witness, other lives can be transformed as well.

Questions to consider:

Do I know how to share the Gospel and my testimony of faith? How can I help equip and encourage others in evangelism?

Prayer Prompts: 1 Peter 3:15

- That I identify evangelism as a command of Scripture, both of the church corporately and of each believer personally.
- That I will develop a clear and simple Gospel outline and personal testimony that can be shared at any time.
- That I will embrace my faith as who I am rather than what I do, being His in all areas of my life.
- I will pray for lost people I know regularly and fervently (pray for them by name).
- That our leadership would develop and implement a systematic strategy to engage the congregation in personal evangelism.

Day 30 - Assessment: **Administrative Space**

Complete the current administrative space construction project.

Nehemiah 2:18 - "And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work."

In reading the Scripture above, we can all agree that completing the planned administrative space construction project pales in comparison to Nehemiah and the walls of Jerusalem. However, it is an important part of how ministry at Richland Creek can move forward and improve on the existing foundation.

Our church is a busy place, with ministry occurring every day of the week at virtually all times of day. Effective ministry requires prayerful and thoughtful planning. Sometimes ministry is one on one, with a family, or in a larger group. There is much support needed behind the scenes to ensure excellence for God's glory on Sunday and Wednesday. All of these things and more would be greatly benefited by completing the planned office suite area above the FLC front lobby. God has us in the financial position to complete this task as planned, and we look forward to how this space will be used for ministry and kingdom growth.

Questions to consider:

How can I be a part of ministry at Richland Creek? How can we best use our facility to glory God?

Prayer Prompts: Hebrews 10:23-25

- That God is glorified in and through this construction project.
- That every ministry of Richland Creek would glorify God in how we use our facility.
- Pray for our facilities and administrative staff and volunteers.
- Prayerfully consider what my role is in ministry at Richland Creek.

Hebrews 10:23-25 - "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

Thank You Church

To all who contributed to make this prayer guide possible. To God be the glory!

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