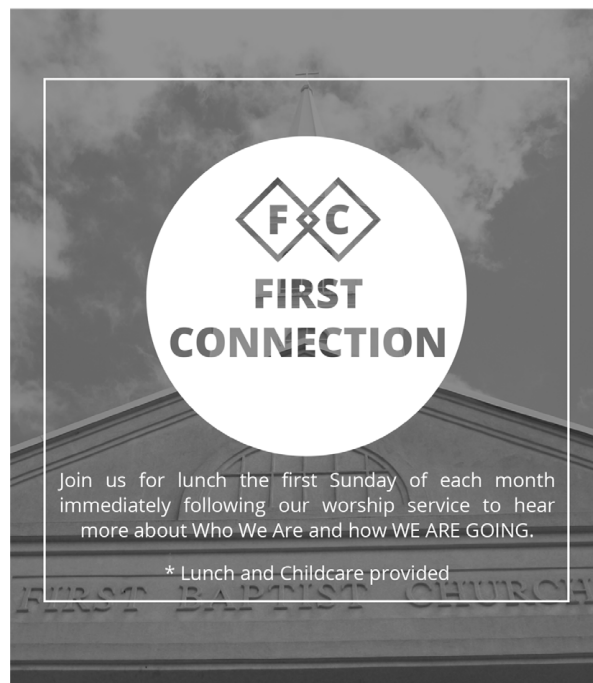




FIRST BAPTIST DOUGLASVILLE

fbcdouglasville.org
(770) 942-5481
5900 Prestley Mill Road
Douglasville, GA 30135



Sunday School	9:30am
Sunday Worship	10:45am
Wednesday Fellowship Dinner	5:30pm
Wednesday Discipleship	6:30pm

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2020: We Are Going Next Steps Guide

Letter From Pastor Tim

“We Are Going!” This is our church tagline and the focus of our church for the last two years. However, I would argue that over that time we have merely implemented the use of this phrase, made it part of our church branding, and have tried to get our church to buy into this vision. Culture is created through language but carried by people. We have installed this language, but we want to go further in helping our church family carry this mission forward, and we still have a long way to go.

So, the theme for the entire year of 2020 will be “We Are Going!” Now that we have been preaching about and emphasizing the importance of missions and evangelism for the last two years, I believe God is calling us to double-down. This emphasis will continue to drive our preaching and teaching as well as our ministries, our events, our programming, our resources, our budget, and our church calendar. I want to keep turning our focus from a “come and see” mentality to a “go and do” mentality. For this to happen in our church, it has to start with every single person that has this book in their hands. God has a plan for your life, and he has a plan for First Baptist Douglasville. As I say often, Jesus has already explicitly stated the purpose of our church in Matthew 28:18-20:

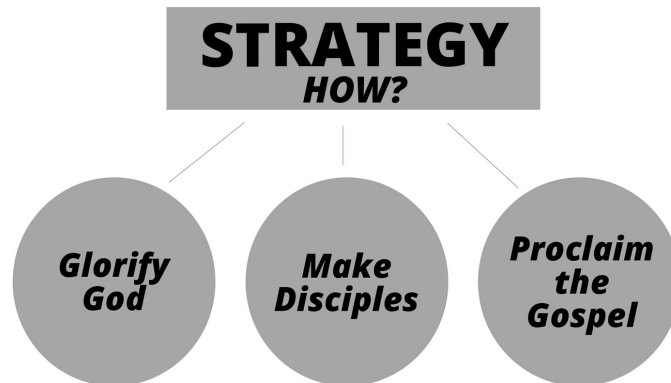
All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

We are to be a church that is on mission with Jesus to make disciples as we carry the gospel to the ends of the world. This year we want to commit ourselves to be a “going” church, and I invite you to join us.

MISSION STATEMENT *WHAT?*

"We exist to display the glory of God by making disciples and proclaiming the gospel throughout the world."

This is our mission statement at First Baptist Douglassville. As you can see, our mission statement answers the simple question, "*What* are we doing?" It is the core purpose for which we exist, and our aim is to keep this singular goal at the center of everything we do as a church. However, notice that this statement can be broken down into three key actions:



Our mission as a church consists of Glorifying God, Making Disciples, and Proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world. These three things together form our purpose as a body. They answer the "*How?*" of our mission as a church. In everything we do and say we want to strategically accomplish these three things.

Furthermore, in order to achieve this mission, we want to be a church that is founded upon three core values. Core Values answer the question "*Why?*" concerning our mission. The reason we want to glorify God in everything we do, make disciples, and proclaim the gospel throughout the world is because we value certain things that motivate us to achieve our mission.

CORE VALUES *WHY?*

1. *The Bible*
2. *Discipleship*
3. *Mission*

We value **The Bible**. The Word of God is our highest and final authority. This is why we are committed to expository preaching through entire books of the Bible. It is why the Bible is at the center of every small group study. It is why we celebrate the milestone of giving all first graders their own Bible, and highlight Bible memorization in our children's ministry each week. It is why we sing songs that are in line with the truths of Scripture at our worship gatherings. The Bible is transformative in the life of the believer as he or she reads, studies, meditates, and memorizes it.

We value **Discipleship**. We value the maturing of every believer. We desire that every follower of Jesus look more and more like his or her Savior, and the purity of Jesus's church is why we strive for the sanctification of every member. This is what motivates us to place such an importance on Sunday School and the Sunday morning worship gatherings—both being formative experiences in the life of the believer. Valuing discipleship is why we encourage all members to be a part of a small group. It is why we champion the unchanging message and yet are committed to ever-changing methodologies so that we can reach the next generation. Furthermore, this is why we covenant together as members for the sake of unity and accountability. Also, the growth of every believer is why we stress service. For, it is as Christians love and serve one another that the world knows we belong to Jesus and that they will ultimately honor God. Finally, to be a disciple of Jesus means you are actively engaged in the disciple-making process. We want FBCD to be filled with disciple-making disciples.

We value **Mission**. The already-not-yet reality of the Kingdom of God motivates us to proclaim the Gospel throughout the entire world. It is why we put mission at the center of everything we do; all events, all services, and all programs have a mission-al/evangelistic component. This is why we stress personal evangelism among our pastors, staff, and church members. It is why we provide opportunities year-round for our church family to go on local and global mission trips. It is why we encourage you to make sure your passport is current. It is why we partner with other SBC churches and entities in their campaigns to more effectively engage the mission of God, such as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. It is why we are committed to local church planting. These values

are what motivate us to pursue the three-fold strategy of Glorifying God, Making Disciples, and Proclaiming the Gospel which enable us to accomplish the mission.

When we are successful in Glorifying God, Making Disciples, and Proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world, we believe that we will be a ***Multicultural, Multigenerational, and Multiplying Church***. This is the church that God is calling us to be. We desire to be a church that looks like our community, and our community is growing in diversity at a very rapid pace. Likewise, the picture that we are given of heaven is that there will be Christians from every tribe, language, and nation. Therefore, we want to be a church that reflects this multicultural reality in the here and now. Furthermore, the Bible constantly celebrates the importance of mature and seasoned believers. At the same time, we need the energy and zeal of the new generation. We believe that these generations are better together. Therefore, we want to be a church that is committed to the unchanging truth of the message of the Bible, while also being willing to change our methods in order to reach those in our community. Finally, we want to be a church that multiplies disciples and multiplies churches. We want to be a church that is known for how many people we send out on mission for Jesus Christ. We want to do this through short-term mission trips, starting new churches, strengthening existing churches, and sending out missionaries all over the world. That is *why* and *how* **WE ARE GOING!**



How To Use This Book

The purpose of this book is to help you grow in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to live on mission for Him in 2020. I am often asked what it means to “live on mission.” People will stop me and ask, “I get that I am supposed to live on mission, but exactly *how* do I do that?” So, this is a book that we want you to keep for the entire duration of 2020 in order to help you grow as a disciple-making disciple. We encourage you to use it when you are at home, but also bring it with you every Sunday. In the pages to come, we are going to provide you with a 52-week devotion that will challenge you to grow in Christ. Also, each week’s lesson will have a practical Next Step to follow—helping us all to intentionally live on mission in 2020.

The second page of each week will be an empty sheet for you to take sermon notes that corresponding Sunday. The purpose of this book is to be interactive. Our hope is that you write in this book as you do your devotion and that you take sermon notes in this book every single Sunday. Furthermore, this book will provide you with more information regarding the mission and vision of our church, how to live on mission as a follower of Christ, and many other things.

As you do your devotion each week, we have provided you with a tool that will help you to grow in your knowledge and obedience of God’s Word. This tool is simply called “S.O.S.” As you read the assigned passage of Scripture for that week, there will be space provided in your book to answer three questions:

What do these verses **S**ay?
What do I need to **O**bey?
What can I **S**hare?

The purpose of this tool is to help you interact with and apply the Bible to your life each week.

Practical Ways to Live on Mission

We often overcomplicate mission and evangelism. First, we must learn that mission isn't something we *do* primarily, it is something we *are*. God is a missional God, and as His people, we take on the identity of our Creator and Redeemer as missionaries. Now, I know you are thinking, "I don't live overseas—I live in Georgia." But, this is a misunderstanding of what mission is and the person who engages in it (i.e. "missionary").

The goal of living on mission is to recalibrate our lives to see mission at the center and not as just another activity among the chaos of our schedules. So, instead of compartmentalizing mission in the same way we do friends, work, extracurricular activities, and finances, the goal is to see all of our lives through the lens of mission. Therefore, we want to think strategically how we are going to leverage our time with friends for the purpose of mission. We are going to strive to see work as a mission field. We are going to view our extracurricular activities as opportunities to bring along an unbelieving friend and enjoy it together. We are going to view our finances, not as what we get to spend on ourselves, but rather the gift of God given to us to steward for the purposes of God.

One easy way to do this is to think strategically about where you Live, Work, and Play. Do you leverage your house for the purpose of mission or as a safehaven for yourself after a long hard day's work? I'm not saying this is wrong—we all need rest, and if God has provided shelter for you and your family that is a reason to rejoice. However, we want to see our homes as a way to serve God. Do you close your door and turn off your light on Halloween, or do you use the opportunity where your entire neighborhood willingly walks up to your house in order to share the light of Christ? What about inviting that neighbor over for dinner with the purpose of developing a relationship in order to share the gospel? You have to eat anyway. Why not eat with the purpose of mission?

Or, have you ever thought about leveraging that "water cooler" time at work for the sake of the gospel? Do you work hard as unto the Lord and always with a strong sense of integrity? Where we work is a massive mission field for each and every

one of us.

Or, think about the various things you do for recreation. Did you ever think those were opportunities to glorify God and make disciples? Look at that word again: recreation. See anything peculiar? If we were to add a hyphen, maybe we would see the underlying biblical thought that could change our perspective on how we recreate. Recreation becomes RE-Creation. As we play, we are fulfilling a purpose we were created for. As image-bearers, we create and participate in the work of our Creator. Crazy, right? We take a ball, a piece of wood, and eight of our friends and create a game we now call baseball. Recreating is participating in the creative work of God as we live out the Great Mandate of Genesis 1:28, to “Subdue the earth.” God wants you to play, to create, to have fun. So, use that birthday party and invite an unbelieving co-worker over. Use that vacation and ask the unbelieving family member to go along. Use that sport each weekend to share the gospel with teammates. Invite an unbelieving neighbor to join you on your morning walk. Like to read? Start a book club with some people from your neighborhood with the intention that everyone gets to pick one book, and maybe yours is one of the four gospels. We can leverage our play for Jesus in countless ways.

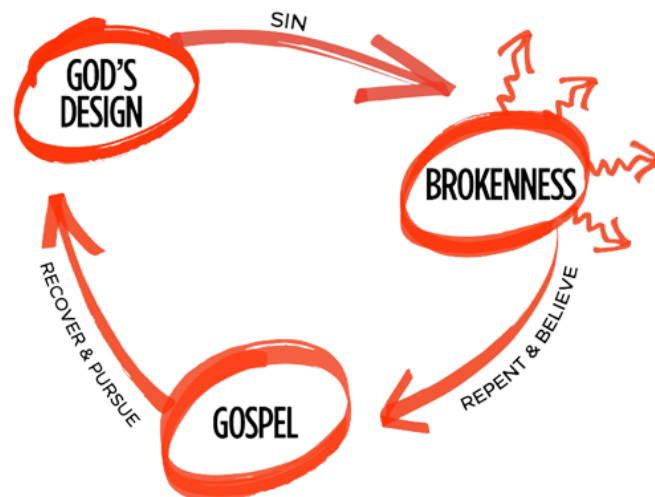
In this book, as we encourage and challenge you to live on mission for Jesus, part of your weekly Bible study will include an exercise for you to complete. This exercise will be called your “Next Step,” which will center on one of three focuses. You will be encouraged to either Pray, Give, or Go. “Pray” will focus on a particular prayer need that week in light of the devotion. “Give” will be an opportunity to arrange your material possessions in such a way that honors Christ and leverages your resources for the purpose of mission. “Go” will focus on specific missional opportunities or intentional ways you can grow as a disciple. These are three simple and practical ways each week for you to live on mission for Christ in 2020. It is our desire that FBCD be a church that witnesses for Jesus where we Live, Work, and Play.

As you’ve been reading, I’m sure that there is someone you have in mind that needs to hear the gospel—that co-worker, or family member, or neighbor. We want to encourage you to pray about who that *one* person is that God has put in your life that needs Jesus. After you spend time praying, we want you to come back to this page and write their name below. This entire

year, we will be challenging you to pray for and share the gospel with your “One” as you live on mission in 2020.

But remember, it’s only mission if it has Jesus as the purpose and goal. Otherwise, it’s just baseball, or walking, or reading. But, if you leverage those things in order to develop relationships and share the gospel, you will live life on mission.

So, you may be thinking, “Okay, I can leverage my morning walk. But, what do I do when I get to the gospel conversation?” We, as your pastoral staff, would love to help you with this. But, one great way to relieve the stress of sharing the gospel is to use the method known as the 3 Circles. Developed by Jimmy Scroggins, pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Florida, this simple evangelism method is easy to use and will assist you in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ anytime and anywhere. (There’s even an app for that!) We’ve provided it below.



In just three minutes or less you can explain how God created the world with a specific, God-honoring design. In our sin, which is rebellion against Him, we introduced brokenness into the world. We look to many things to fix our brokenness: relationships, money, career, etc. But, ultimately none of it will remedy our hopeless situation. In God’s grace and love, He provided a way for us to return to Him and His original design for our lives. This is known as the Gospel, or “Good News,” of Jesus Christ. And if we repent of our sin and believe in this Gospel, God gives us the ability and power to recover and pursue His design. This tool is a great way to share the Gospel. I challenge you to learn it, memorize it, and use it.

Also, as you begin this year's Next Steps Guide, we want to give you the mission trips that we will be offering as a church throughout the following year. May we all commit to sharing the gospel with our "One" and going on at least one mission trip this year! Will you commit to this journey with us?

I, _____, commit to live on mission as a member of First Baptist Church Douglasville for the glory of God and the good of the nations in 2020. I commit to praying for my ONE each day, and to share the Gospel with him or her every chance I get.

My "ONE" is _____

Now, let's get started!

2020 Mission Opportunities

North Africa Mission Trip:

Horn of Africa
 Contact Person: Jamie Wynn
 jamie.wynn@fbcdouglasville.org
 770-942-5481
 April 23-May 4, 2020
 Cost: \$2300

Honduras Mission Trip:

San Pedro Sula, Honduras
 Contact Person: Scott Wilder
 scottnangela1988@yahoo.com
 770-235-6002
 July 16-23, 2020
 Cost: \$1500

Baltimore Mission Trip:

Baltimore, Maryland
 Contact Person: Jamie Wynn
 July 5-11, 2020
 Cost: \$275

Montana Mission Trip:

Kalispell, Montana
 Contact Person: Jim Cook
 jcook@dennistaylor.com
 404-427-6004
 June or July 2020
 Cost: No information yet

South Asia Mission Trip:

Indonesia
 Contact Person: Logan Creasy
 logan.creasy@fbcdouglasville.org
 770-942-5481
 July 11-20, 2020
 Estimated Cost: \$2500

New York Mission Trip:

Long Island City, New York
 Contact Person: Scott Patrick
 scott.patrick@fbcdouglasville.org
 770-942-5481
 October 1-4, 2020
 Cost: \$500-\$800

Preteen Mission Trip:

Brunswick, GA
 Contact Person: Scott Patrick
 scott.patrick@fbcdouglasville.org
 770-942-5481
 July 12-17, 2020
 Estimated Cost: \$150

Colorado Mission Trips:

Denver, Colorado &
 Fort Collins, Colorado
 Summer 2020
 770-942-5481



BIBLE STUDIES



WEEK 1 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Luke 18:18-30

The Rich Young Ruler asked Jesus one of life's big questions: "How can I go to heaven when I die?" This man thought that the answer was to simply be a "good" person, to follow all of the rules, and check off all of the religious boxes. However, Jesus told him that in order to go to heaven when you die, He must be the Lord of all of your life. Jesus cannot simply be in the top three, and He cannot be merely important to us. Jesus must be our Master and our Lord. This story tragically ends with the Rich Young Ruler walking away "very sad, for he was extremely rich." He was unwilling to place Jesus as the Lord of his life. Where do you stand today? Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Are you wrestling with the question: "How can I go to heaven when I die?" The answer is this: give your life to Jesus—all of it!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Spiritual Exercise:

Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler that He must be the Lord of all of his life. Be honest and write your top 5 priorities in order from 1-5.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | |

Next Steps: Pray

Spend time this week praying for a loyal, fully-devoted heart to Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal this year where your heart is not aligned to His. Ask for repentance and faith to trust Him with every area of your life: spiritual, physical, and financial.

Pray for your ONE!

If you have grown up in the church or have been around the church for some time, you have probably heard the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. In fact, if you have grown up in the church, you have probably been taught the song about Zacchaeus. It goes like this: "Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he. He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see." This is a story that is often told to children because it's funny. A man was so short that he had to climb into a tree just to see Jesus. What child doesn't like this story? However, this story is life-changing and has something to teach children, teenagers, and adults alike. It is really not a children's story. In fact, if this story were made into a movie it would be rated R, because this story is about a real man, a man who was a really bad guy, who did really bad things. But his life was changed when he met Jesus. Zacchaeus's behavior changed, but meeting Jesus also changed the way he viewed his money. As verse 8 tells us, he restored everything he ever stole and gave away half of his money to the poor. Jesus changes everything!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

Jesus completely changed the life of Zacchaeus. Therefore, this impacted how Zacchaeus viewed his money and his possessions. This week, develop a giving plan by completing the following exercise.

Income	=	_____
Give (10%)	=	_____
Save (10%)	=	_____
Live on the rest (80%)	=	_____

Pray for your ONE!

This story teaches a simple but powerful truth. When it comes to being generous for the Lord, it is not about the amount—it is about the heart. Compared to those who were wealthy, this poor widow had nothing and yet she is praised by Jesus for giving “out of her poverty.” She did not allow her physical circumstances to keep her from being a generous and cheerful giver to the Lord. What is holding you back from being a generous giver of your finances, your time, and your talents? Do you think that your offering will not matter because it is too little? Are you paralyzed by the limited time that you have in your schedule? Have you given into the lie that you have nothing to offer the Lord? If you are struggling with these things, remember the transforming truth of this short story: when it comes to serving Jesus, it is not about the amount—it is all about the heart!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

One of the keys to becoming a generous giver is consistency. Spend some time in prayer, and if this applies, time talking with your family and then write down on the line below the amount that you plan to give the Lord either weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly in 2020. _____

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 4 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Acts 1:1-11

JD Greear, the pastor of the Summit Church in Durham, NC, wrote a book a few years ago entitled "Jesus Continued: Why the Spirit Inside You is Better Than Jesus Beside You."¹ This comes from John 16:7 in which Jesus says to his disciples, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you." In his gospel, Luke wrote of all Jesus did on Earth. In Acts, Luke writes of Jesus's work through the person of the Holy Spirit indwelling his people and empowering them to continue His mission. The work of Jesus did not end when He ascended into heaven. Christ died for us so that we might live for Him, and be His witnesses in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He will one day return in all His glory. But, in the meantime, we have a lot of work to do on mission with our King.

¹J.D. Greear. *Jesus, Continued: Why The Spirit Inside You Is Better Than Jesus Beside You*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

As a follower of Christ, the question is not, "Will I be his witness?" The question is simply, "Where and How?" Your challenge for this week is to spend time praying through the following questions and to memorize Acts 1:8.

- Am I open and sensitive to God's leading to go where He calls?
- Are there places that if God were to ask me to go I would be very hesitant or unwilling? Why?
- Where and how am I currently living on mission, and where and how might God be leading me to live on mission in the future?

Pray for your ONE!

Jesus has just given his disciples an extraordinary task—take the gospel message around the globe and saturate the Earth with more Christ followers. Here are a bunch of ordinary, blue-collared workers who have been given the most incredible and seemingly impossible task. How did they respond? They prayed. Verse 14 says these disciples came together in one accord and devoted themselves to prayer. This idea of one accord literally means they had a “shared passion,” or “a common ambition.” All other agendas, preferences, and goals took a back seat to the mission of God. We don’t know exactly what was prayed in that room that day, but I would imagine they were asking for more than good health and financial provision. More likely, they prayed fervent prayers of desperation, longing for God to show up and complete His mission through them. Then, at the end of the chapter we see a unified effort to call up another leader and fill the void that was left in the absence of Judas. What we see is that in order to fulfill the mission, the Church must be united in one accord, pray fervently, and raise up more leaders for the sake of expanding God’s kingdom.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

This week, pray through the 4D Missions Prayer Strategy:

Pray for God to **D**evelop more to go.

Pray that God would protect and **D**eliver those who go.

Pray for open **D**oors to share Jesus as we go.

Pray that we would **D**eclare boldly the Gospel when given the chance.

Pray for your ONE!

The day of Pentecost has arrived. It has been around ten days since Jesus promised His followers that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). In this passage, Jesus's followers are gathered together, and the Holy Spirit comes in like a mighty rushing wind and in the form of fire. The evidence that the Holy Spirit has indeed come upon each one of them is that they all begin to speak in other tongues. These Spirit-filled individuals go from a gathered body to a scattered movement—Gospel declaration has begun. The first great declaration of the Gospel is by Peter who preaches the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and invites those who hear to repent, get baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. In that day alone 3,000 souls were saved. That's 3,000 people going from death to life and immediately filled with the Spirit of God. Just like that, a movement was started and the Church was born.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

One thing we learn from Acts 2 is that a Spirit-led person is a going person—a person on mission. The challenge this week is simple: who will you go to? With whom will you share the mighty works of God? Who can you invite to church this week or have over in your home for the purpose of sharing the good news of Jesus?

Pray for your ONE!

If you have ever baked a cake, you know there are some essential ingredients that are required in order to get the desired final product. In the same way, the church has some essential ingredients or practices. When we combine this week's passage with last week's, we see six practices of the early church that are still essential today. The first is Gospel proclamation (1:14-41). In order for a church to be healthy, it must proclaim the Gospel. The second is baptism (1:41), which is the outward expression of an inward reality which every believer is commanded to do. The third essential ingredient is devotion to God's Word (1:42). Today, this should be understood as a devotion to the Scriptures. The fourth is fellowship (1:42). Coming together for worship, missions, and for the building up of one another is essential. The fifth essential ingredient is the partaking of the Lord's Supper (1:42), which serves as a reminder of the Gospel until the return of Christ. The final ingredient is prayer (1:42). The fruit of practicing these essentials can be found in verse 47—favor and influence in the community and God-generated growth. May we be a church that focuses on the essentials and watches God do the rest.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

This week we want to challenge you to commit yourself to prayer and fasting on behalf of our church. Fasting is a way to manifest physically what we desire to be true spiritually. It's a way of asking God to develop our hunger for him the same way we hunger for food. But, fasting doesn't always have to be food-oriented. If you are physically unable to, or would like to ease your way into this spiritual discipline, fast from social media for a day, or from soft drinks. Anything that will make you consciously think about its absence so that you can put your heart on Christ and pray. Commit yourself this week to intentionally pray for our church. Pray that we would embody these principles, and ask God to grow our favor and influence in our community.

Pray for your ONE!

In the Sermon On The Mount, Jesus gives his followers the following command: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). Jesus makes it clear that our good deeds are to be motivated by a desire to point others toward God's glory. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the orphan. But, our ultimate goal is to point others to a Savior who can satisfy their greatest need—the salvation of their soul. Thus, our acts of kindness are to be coupled with Gospel proclamation. The passage this week exemplifies this well. In this passage, Peter performs his first recorded miracle, healing a 40-year-old man who was lame from birth. Word travels fast about this miracle, and Peter is quick to give glory where glory is due. It would have been easy for Peter to take credit, but in verse 12 he says, "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?" Peter then uses this opportunity to share the Gospel with his captivated audience, declaring, "In [Christ's] name has this man been made strong." He seizes the opportunity to declare the Gospel and turn their focus to Jesus. Like Peter, our good works are to be evangelistic opportunities.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Good deeds and evangelism are a powerful combination. This week, commit to perform at least one act of kindness and use that opportunity to share the Gospel. Write a note to a neighbor or co-worker. Take someone dinner and share Christ with them.

Pray for your ONE!

Though often read at funerals or in the face of death, Psalm 23 has far more application than providing comfort amid tragedy. To be sure, those who are called His own, are reminded that He will be with them in their darkest hour. But there is also so much grace and encouragement offered in this short passage that can be applied to everyday life. We are reminded of several central truths about the character and nature of God. The imagery of God as our shepherd reminds us that He will indeed take care of us. A shepherd knows his sheep, provides for his sheep, protects his sheep and leads his sheep. We are reminded in this passage that He is a God that brings restoration—restoration to broken marriages, to the brokenness of addictions, to broken relationships with children, and ultimately to our broken relationship with Himself. Psalm 23 ends with a confident declaration—for all those who are His sheep, we can be assured that goodness and mercy will be close on our heels everywhere we go, and that we will dwell with Him forever. For those who are His, may we have confidence every day that we are in His divine, all-knowing, compassionate care for all eternity.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

If you have never done so, make it a point to memorize Psalm 23 over the next week. Meditate on and rehearse it each day until you know it by heart.

Pray for your ONE!

This passage speaks of a stark contrast. On one hand, you have the fearless faith of Peter and John and the radical generosity of Barnabas in chapter four. On the other hand, you have the dishonesty and idolatry of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter five. Barnabas, which is a nickname meaning “son of encouragement,” is a man of incredible generosity. So much so, that he sells a plot of land and brings all the money to be distributed for the needs of the church. However, in chapter five we read a much different story. A married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, sell a plot of land but cowardly lie about the amount they profit. This lie is not blown off as no big deal. Instead, it cost them their lives. They are not punished for not giving all the money. Peter makes it clear that they could have kept it if they wanted. Instead, the issue is their dishonesty, which is rooted in their idolatry of self. Their lie is about making themselves appear generous and to perhaps get the same recognition that Barnabas received. There is much we can learn from these stories about God’s faithfulness to work in and through His people as well as His fierce justice and opposition toward those who are more concerned with a name for themselves rather than the name of Jesus.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

Will you display radical generosity like the early church who sold their possessions in order to meet the needs of others? Identify one thing you could sell off this week that would allow you to give extra to the church or someone in need.

Pray for your ONE!

What started off as a prayer gathering in chapter one has quickly turned into a movement that is turning the community upside down. The apostles are performing miracles and new believers are added to their numbers each day. This uproar gets the attention of the religious leaders who, out of their jealousy, have the apostles arrested. Instead of defending themselves, the apostles make matters worse by placing responsibility for the death of Christ directly on these men who have them on trial. These religious leaders are enraged. Apparently, they don't like being called murderers. So what do they do? They move toward having the apostles killed. (Ironic, isn't it?) But then Gamaliel steps in and makes an incredibly wise statement: "If this undertaking is from man, it will fail; but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them." Over 2,000 years later and with billions of people around the world declaring their allegiance to Christ, we can be assured that Christianity is not a man-made fad but a movement of God. Christ is building his Church, and nothing can stand against it.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

We are part of a story—a story bigger than ourselves. Jesus is building His kingdom, which means there is more to life than money, a nice home, and a comfortable retirement. This week, meditate on the fact that you are called to live for something bigger than yourself. Then, share this amazing story with someone who needs it.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 12 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Acts 6:1-7

In this short passage, we find the institution of the office of deacon, which means “servant of the church.” Seven godly, full of the spirit, reputable, wise men are selected by the church and commissioned to meet the physical needs of the church. Apparently, some Greek speaking Jews that had converted to Christianity were not getting the care they needed. So, new leaders were brought up and given the responsibility of making sure their needs were met. Raising up new leaders and delegating responsibility demonstrated great leadership and is important for any growing organization to remain healthy and multiply. However, the apostles’ reasoning for this is not simply because they were tired and needed someone to share the workload. The impetus behind this is the centrality of the Word of God. They delegated the role of meeting the needs of the people so that they themselves could prioritize prayer and preaching. Notice what happens as a result of this. Verse 7 says, “the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly.” When new leaders are raised up and the Word remains central, the people of God grow.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Taking ownership of needs and delegating responsibility are crucial. Examine your level of service and answer below:

1) God is calling me to serve in _____.

2) The task(s) I can delegate or share for the purpose of raising up another leader is _____.

3) That person I will raise up is _____.

Pray for your ONE!

This is one of the largest sections in the book of Acts, and it is primarily dedicated to a guy named Stephen. We know very little about Stephen, but what we do know is pretty extraordinary. He is one of the first deacons, a servant of the church, described as a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit (6:5). Chapters 6 and 7 detail Stephen's seizure, his speech, and ultimately his stoning. Stephen does not have a seminary degree. He is not an ordained pastor. He is not one of the apostles. He is just an ordinary man with extraordinary faith and a revolutionary message. Even though Stephen's direct ministry on this Earth seems pretty short lived, his impact and legacy certainly live on. For, it is here that the author of Acts introduces us to Saul, later known as the apostle Paul, who watches over the cloaks of those stoning Stephen. Saul, of course, was not converted in that moment, but it is not far-fetched to assume that Stephen's ministry planted some important seeds into his heart. Furthermore, this event led to the realization of Jesus's commission to the church in Acts 1:8 to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Due to the persecution that Stephen's death spawned, the Gospel began to spread. God is not the author of evil, but he does often use evil to accomplish His perfect plan.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

God orchestrates all things for the purposes of His plan. Take some time to reflect on your own journey. Look back and see God's faithfulness and how He has used the events of your life to achieve His purposes of spreading the Gospel. Thank Him and ask Him for new ways to be a witness for His glory.

Pray for your ONE!

Before the resurrection of Jesus, the crossing of the Red Sea was the most important event in Israel's history and in the entire Bible. It was this single event that Israel would celebrate every year. They would pass this story down to every future generation. It was this event that Israel would look back to and celebrate God rescuing them from their enemies and from slavery. This is why Israel being rescued through the parting of the Red Sea is compared to a baptism. Baptism is a symbolic event of God rescuing us from our enemy, Satan, and from our sins. When we place our faith in the perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection of Jesus, we have been rescued. God, in His grace, gives each Christian an event to look back on and to be reminded of this rescue. This event is our personal baptism.

Baptism Story:

If you are a Christian and have been baptized, write down your baptism story below. As you write this story, remember where, when, how, and by whom you were baptized, and why you chose to be baptized.

Next Steps: Go

If you have not been baptized, I want to challenge you to reach out to someone in our church. This might be a parent, a Sunday School teacher or one of our pastors. We would love to hear about what God is doing in your life and speak with you about the important step of Believer's Baptism.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 15 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

It never fails to amaze me at how often Hollywood mimics the Christian story. The good news of the Bible is that Jesus sacrificed Himself to save us from our sins and that He was brought back from the dead three days later. And Hollywood replays this story every few years. After all, in the 1982 classic, ET died, He was brought back to life, and then at the end of the movie he ascended into the sky. Similar storylines have emerged in other movies like...Guardians of the Galaxy, Harry Potter, and even Disney's Frozen. Anna's act of "true love"—sacrificing herself for her sister Elsa—breaks the curse and brings her back to life again! And this raises the question: why in a world where the majority of people do not claim allegiance to Jesus does this theme dominate our culture in so many ways? I believe the answer is that we all desire a do-over. We all wish we could have a second chance in life, whether it is in a marriage, as a parent, or in our career. Perhaps we wish we could go back and re-live our teenage or college years! Each one of us often find ourselves longing for a new beginning and this is the message of the Gospel. This is the story of Easter! Real faith in the resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

Salvation Story:

If you are a Christian, meaning there has been a time in your life where you have understood that you are a sinner, that you needed God's forgiveness, and you placed your faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, write your salvation story in the space provided. _____

Next Steps: Go

If you are not a Christian, I want to challenge you to reach out to someone in our church. This might be a parent, a Sunday School teacher, or one of our pastors. We would love to talk with you and to share with you how you can become a Christian, because this will completely change your life!

Pray for your ONE!

After Stephen was killed by stoning, the church in Jerusalem experienced great persecution. Members of the church were being hunted, ripped from their homes and families for persecution, imprisonment, and possible execution. Many believers were forced to flee the city, leaving behind their way of life. Some went to areas of Judea and Samaria; others went further away. Because of this persecution, the promise of Acts 1:8 was being fulfilled: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." So, as they spread throughout the area, they also "went about preaching the word." This is amazing! People left Jerusalem to escape intense persecution because of the Gospel, and yet they were sharing this same Gospel and making disciples as they went. What faithfulness and courage! Acts 8:5 tells us that Philip went down to the city of Samaria and "proclaimed to them the Christ," and the result was "much joy in that city" (Acts 8:8). Think about that. The Samaritans were people from both a Jewish and Gentile background, as people from Israel intermarried with those outside the Jewish faith. Therefore, people from both Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds looked down on them. Yet that is where Philip goes with the Gospel. Philip takes the message to an audience that is truly multicultural and multiracial, crossing religious and ethnic boundaries for the sake of Christ. Do you take the Gospel with you as you are going? Do you experience that joy as people come to know the Lord?

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Commit to following the example of these Christians by taking the Gospel with you this week—where you live, work, or play. Choose one of these three areas of your life, and ask God to give you the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ with someone in that sphere of influence. Then, be bold and speak.

Pray for your ONE!

Philip was one of the seven men chosen as the first deacons for the church in Jerusalem. He was an evangelist who God used to help the early church spread the Gospel. After evangelizing in Samaria, he was told to go down toward the desert near the coast, the home of the Philistines, one of the fiercest enemies of ancient Israel. There he met a God-fearing Ethiopian traveling, a Gentile who worshipped the one true God, but who had not converted to Judaism. The Holy Spirit led Philip to approach the man. Philip heard him reading from a familiar passage in Isaiah 53, and according to Acts 8:30, he began a Gospel conversation with a simple, straightforward, yet very effective question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian was equally straightforward in his response: "How can I know unless someone explains it to me?" Philip was readily able to explain how the passage pointed specifically to Jesus as the Messiah, and he led the man to a saving knowledge of King Jesus. The Ethiopian is like many people today who are religious, read the scriptures, seek the truth, and attend worship services, yet they do not yet have a saving faith in Jesus Christ. More than ever, we need men and women who will proclaim the Gospel throughout the world, daring to challenge religious and non-religious people, and invite them to trust in Christ.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

In his first epistle, Peter writes, "...always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). This is the sort of "preparedness" that Philip possessed. When given the opportunity, he proclaimed the Gospel. Can you recall a time where someone with whom you were speaking opened the door for Gospel proclamation? Did you take the opportunity? This week, look for an opportunity to speak truth to someone when God opens the door.

Pray for your ONE!

Most people have at least some familiarity with the miraculous conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, which is the focus of Acts 9. Saul was born a Jew, studied in Jerusalem with Gamaliel (the most prominent teacher of that time), and became a Pharisee. Therefore, he was one of the top Jewish leaders. But he was also a Roman citizen, a right he inherited from his father. He was extremely zealous in his pursuit of Christians, and he threatened them, arrested them, and brought them back to Jerusalem for trial and punishment, torture, and even death. It would have taken Saul at least six days to travel from Jerusalem to Damascus. This shows how far the Way had spread and how strongly Saul was motivated to put down this movement. As he was nearing Damascus, "a light from heaven shone around him." It was an appearance of Jesus Christ in glory. A voice from heaven said: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" His question in response is one for the ages: "Who are you, Lord?" That is also the question each of us should ask for eternity. *Who are you, Lord?* Saul, who studied under the best teacher of the time, who was one of the most prominent Jewish leaders, was suddenly faced with this shocking truth: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Saul's persecution of the church was a persecution of Jesus himself. As Saul later said in his first recorded sermon, Jesus is the Son of God. After this dramatic conversion experience on the road to Damascus, Saul became the greatest missionary and theologian the world has ever known—the apostle Paul.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

A few weeks ago, you wrote out your testimony. Sharing your story of how God saved you and is transforming your life is one of the best and easiest evangelism strategies. Look back over your story from that week's study, and share your story with someone this week.

Pray for your ONE!

In this passage, we read the account of a Gentile soldier named Cornelius, who worshipped the God of Israel. He and all his household feared God, gave generously, and prayed continually. Yet, Cornelius knew that his religious devotion was not enough to save him. He had a vision in which he was told to send for Simon Peter. The day after his men left to bring Peter to him, Peter himself was praying, and God gave him a vision to prepare him for the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius. The meaning of Peter's vision reinforces the multicultural scope of the church's message and mission. The command to eat of the unclean foods, which would have been scandalous for Peter, was symbolically telling Peter that ethnic distinction would no longer mark the people of God. This prepared Peter to be open to sharing the Gospel with the Gentile family of Cornelius. When Peter arrived, he told them that "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35). Peter didn't even get to finish his message. When he told them that "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through this name," the Holy Spirit came and "fell on all who heard the word" (Acts 10:43-44). They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, signifying not only their identification with Christ but their full incorporation into the church—Jew and Gentile alike. At the end of this chapter, we see that salvation has come to the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8), and now the Gentiles (Acts 10).

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This week, commit to set to memory Psalm 67. The Gospel is going to the nations, and this Psalm serves to remind us of this truth and encourage us as we continue on in the mission. "Let the nations be glad!" Then, if it is not already, get your passport current so that you can be ready to go when God calls.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 20 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3

The persecution following Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:58-8:3) continues to have the opposite effect of what was intended. Instead of squashing the movement, God uses it to spread the Gospel abroad. As the believers scattered due to persecution, they came to Antioch (in modern-day Turkey), and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. It was at Antioch that the believers were first called "Christians," which means "belonging to Christ." The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch to confirm the faithfulness of the new outreach (cp. 8:14) and to preach and encourage them. Eventually Saul joined Barnabas in Antioch, and they spent a year preaching and teaching a great many people. This church in Antioch was so vibrant and mission-minded that they became the focus for launching the mission to the Gentiles. They sent a famine relief offering with Saul and Barnabas to deliver to the church in Judea. Then, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit and after fasting and praying, they commissioned Saul and Barnabas, laying their hands on them and sending them off to proclaim the Gospel. This was the early church's approach to missions, and this same model is one that FBCD is using as well. We want to send people out to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples and plant churches just like the church in Antioch.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

There are some very important details in this passage describing the vision, operations, and conduct of the church at Antioch. Identify at least 5 characteristics that make this a model church. This week, fast and pray through these characteristics, asking God to shape FBCD to be a church like Antioch.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Pray for your ONE!

Have you ever found yourself praying for a certain situation, and then being surprised and even overjoyed at the answer? Sometimes, we just need to see God work in a miraculous way to be reminded of His sovereignty, to get that enthusiasm and energy back. That is exactly what happened in this passage. James, the brother of John and a pillar of the Jerusalem church, was executed. Peter was imprisoned, undoubtedly awaiting the same fate. In prison, Peter was guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. The church in Jerusalem was praying fervently to God for Peter's release (Acts 12:5), but they were surprised when God actually answered their prayer and Peter was miraculously set free. The young servant girl Rhoda was so excited to see Peter that she ran back inside and forgot to let him in the house. Those in the house didn't believe her. Peter continued knocking, "and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed." He wanted them to share this with the other disciples so that they would all be encouraged at how God answers prayer. In his letter to the churches, James wrote, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16, KJV).

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

Think back over your walk with the Lord. Recall a time that you were praying fervently, and then God answered your prayers. These milestones provide comfort and encouragement for us when we face more difficult times. Write the occasion below and thank God for it.

Pray for your ONE!

Having been commissioned by the church in Antioch, Barnabas and Saul turned their evangelistic endeavors to the Gentile world of the Roman empire. With this new focus of reaching the Roman world, Saul begins going by his Roman name, Paul. Acts 13:4 marks the beginning of what has been called the first missionary journey of Paul. He and Barnabas were “sent out by the Holy Spirit” and began their journey by visiting the island of Cyprus. There they “proclaimed the word of God” to both the Jews and Gentiles on the island, experiencing both success and persecution. In Acts 13, a specific mission strategy by Paul begins to emerge. He planted churches or strengthened existing churches in strategic cities, and then went on from there to evangelize the surrounding areas. What we see in this passage was the need to keep on moving ahead. They had some success, but they also faced opposition. Paul and Barnabas had to leave, and they “shook off the dust from their feet.” This was a graphic way that Jews illustrated separation from unbelievers (cf. Matt. 10:14; Luke 9:5; 10:11). How difficult that must have been. Yet, despite everything, the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. They were moving forward, taking the Gospel to areas of most need.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

Review Paul’s missionary strategy. (1) They had a “sending” church to sponsor them. (2) They selected strategic cities. (3) They evangelized and they discipled, planting new churches. (4) They strengthened and encouraged those new churches. (5) They trained up leaders for those churches. (6) They moved on to the next area of need. Pray that our church follows this Antioch model. Give to missions to help us achieve those goals. Go on one of our mission trips. You will be changed forever.

Pray for your ONE!

Charles Spurgeon is quoted as saying, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."¹ To be a disciple is to be about the work of making other disciples. Anything less than this is short of God's plan for your life. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas continued their missionary journey, and their pattern was to establish a witness in major population centers and challenge the new believers to take the message out to the more remote areas. They would first go into the Jewish synagogue, and they "spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed" (Acts 14:1). Then they would go on to a new city. Once they had "preached the Gospel to that city and had made many disciples" (Acts 14:21), they would return to cities they had visited previously for the purpose of "strengthening" and "encouraging" the disciples (Acts 14:22). Then they would organize the churches by appointing "elders for them in every church" (Acts 14:23). Finally, they returned to their sending church in Antioch and "declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). This was evangelism, with a strategy for discipleship and follow-through: "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). Disciple-making and evangelism go hand in hand. They are not add-ons to the Christian life, nor are they mutually exclusive. To be a disciple is to be a missionary.

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, "A Sermon and a Reminiscence," *Sword and the Trowel* (March 1873), as cited on http://www.spurgeon.org/s_and_t/srmn1873.htm.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Where do you fall on the spectrum of Spurgeon's quote? Spend some time in prayerful consideration of this. Also, spend time praying for your ONE, and seek out an opportunity this week to share the Gospel with him or her. Follow Paul's example and "strengthen and encourage the disciples" and "preach the Gospel."

Pray for your ONE!

Warren Wiersbe wrote: "The progress of the Gospel has often been hindered by people with closed minds who stand in front of open doors and block the way for others." Acts 15 covers a debate that occurred in Jerusalem over the authenticity of the Gentiles' salvation and the church's acceptance of them. Jesus had given the keys of the kingdom to Peter (Matt. 16:19), and he had used them to open the door of faith to the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), and the Gentiles (Acts 10). Peter spoke first about what God had taught him, and he turned it around on them, saying, "We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (Acts 15:11). Paul and Barnabas spoke next about how God had been working among the Gentiles on their journeys and how God testified to the validity of their salvation through signs and wonders. Then James, the half-brother of Jesus and highly respected leader of the church in Jerusalem, spoke using God's Word as the test of truth. We should do the same as we submit our prejudices, preferences, and presuppositions to the greater purposes of God. If we are to imitate Christ, then we are to be tolerant, understanding, and accepting of those who are entering the kingdom of God by believing in the power of the Gospel.

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol 1, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 461.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

The new church at Antioch was teaching the old church at Jerusalem things about how God was working among them. Barriers broke down at the Jerusalem Council. Our vision at FBCD is to be a multicultural, multigenerational, multiplying church. Pray that God would break down barriers that may hinder this vision. Seek areas to work in our community, in our state, in our country, and around the world. People need to hear the Gospel.

Pray for your ONE!

Paul and Barnabas had spent time in Jerusalem after working for unity in the church, but when it came time to go on their second missionary journey, they couldn't settle their own disagreements! Good and godly people in the church do at times disagree. The disagreement—over whether to take John Mark on the trip—was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas decided to part ways. Paul selected Silas, a Roman citizen who was a prophet and the co-author with Paul of the Thessalonian letters. They also brought Timothy as a replacement for John Mark. Timothy was the shepherd of the church at Ephesus, and Paul's special ambassador to trouble spots in area churches. Going on to Philippi, they met Lydia, a successful businesswoman who embodied hospitality and who was seeking the truth. They led her to the Lord, but afterwards, Paul and Silas were imprisoned when the crowds turned against them. That night, imprisoned in chains, they were "praying and singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25). When you are persecuted or in pain, the midnight hour is not the easiest time for a worship service, but God gives us "songs in the night" (Job 35:20; Ps. 42:8). As an earthquake occurred, the prison doors opened, and their chains were unfastened. The jailer was preparing to kill himself since dishonor had come upon him as he was derelict in his duties to watch over the prisoners. But, Paul and Silas stopped him. His question was one that we all have: "What must I do to be saved?" Their response is memorable: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). In this chapter, different people had different salvation experiences, but all were changed by the grace of God.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This week, have an intentional time of worship either by yourself or with your family. This could involve meditating on Scripture and praying. Spend a few moments either alone or with others singing of the goodness of God out of the overflow of your heart.

Pray for your ONE!

Just before World War II, in the town of Itasca, Texas, a school fire claimed the lives of 263 children. There were very few families in this town who were not directly impacted by this horrible tragedy. The War began shortly after, so the school was not rebuilt until the war ended. After the war, the town was expanding, and they built a new school with what was called “the finest sprinkler system in the world.” Honors students were selected to give a tour of the new facility to show the finest sprinkler system that money could buy. With the postwar boom, the town continued to grow, so seven years later they decided to expand the facility. When they added the new wing, it was discovered that in seven years the sprinkler system had never been connected to the water system! The best system that technology and money had to offer had no power because it wasn’t connected to the right power source. We are shocked by the ignorance displayed in this story, yet tragically this is symbolic of how most Christians live their lives. The Holy Spirit makes unlimited power available to every Christian, and yet so many of us never connect to His power. The reason this is devastating is because the Christian life is a war; we live on a spiritual battlefield. A war is being waged every day in our lives. Even though this battle is spiritual, it is just as real as the physical things that we can see.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This spiritual war is a fight for the hearts and souls of everyone in this world. One of the ways that we win this spiritual war is by rescuing those that are far from God. Write down the name of someone that you know and love that is far from God below and pray for them right now. This could be your “One” or someone new. Pray and ask God to give you the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus with them. _____

Pray for your ONE!

As we read these verses, we see that Paul faithfully went about proclaiming that Jesus was the Christ. We can see several things here that we can take from Paul concerning faithfulness in sharing the Gospel. First, Paul went to the synagogues, a place familiar to him and maybe even people he knew. Second, he was consistent, coming several times to proclaim the Gospel to the people in the city of Thessalonica. Third, we also see that Paul's authority on which he shared the Gospel was the Scripture. He used the Scripture to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed One they had been looking for. Fourth, even when things became difficult for Paul and those who were serving with him, God was faithful to allow some to see the truth and a way of escape in times of trouble. We, too, must be faithful in our Gospel proclamation. We are to leverage our familiar places and be intentional about sharing the Gospel there. Also, we must be persistent and not give up on that family member, neighbor, or co-worker. Finally, we can know God is faithful to provide a way even when there is opposition from those who do not believe.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This week, take a co-worker, school mate, or neighbor to lunch or dinner and share your testimony of God's faithfulness to you. Then, share the Gospel with them and invite them to believe. If you like, use the 3 Circles diagram which is found in the beginning of this book to help you.

Pray for your ONE!

Paul entered the city of Athens and again was faithful to go to the synagogue and preach the Gospel. While there, Paul's teaching piqued the interest of others, and so they invited him to discuss these things on the Aeropagus, the place where the philosophers would go to debate. Though they worshipped many idols, Paul had observed there was one who was named "The Unknown God," which was a "cover all" in case they had missed one. Paul used this opportunity to teach them that this "Unknown God" is Jesus of Nazareth, through whom God has made himself known by his life, death, and resurrection. Unlike their statues and idols, this God could not be shaped into forms made of gold or silver by human hands. Some immediately rejected his teaching, but some wanted to hear more. Yet, others believed. As we live in a world full of idols, we should strive to be intentional in sharing the Gospel, and to find ways to connect and have Gospel conversations with those who we encounter on a regular basis. Like Paul's situation, we should be prepared at all times to give an account for the faith we hold. Some will reject what you have to say, some will require more than one conversation, and some will believe. Persevere!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

What would you say are the prominent idols of our community and society? Write them down below. Meditate on how the Gospel interacts with each one. _____

This week, find real life situations and use them as opportunities to turn regular conversations into Gospel conversations.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 28 SERMON NOTES

July 12, 2020



67

The "Unknown" God

Acts 17:16-34

Handwriting lines for notes

Paul continued to Corinth, where he would faithfully share the Gospel to the people there. Several people served alongside Paul: Aquila and Priscilla, a married couple who were in the tent making business like Paul, and Silas and Timothy. After preaching to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, they rejected it and Paul declared from then on he would share the Gospel message to the Gentiles. Many Corinthians believed, and Paul received a vision from God encouraging him not to be afraid but to continue in the work of sharing the Gospel. God spoke to Paul about His presence and protection, and then told him that there were still His people in the city that belong to Him and need to hear the Gospel message. These promises from God were fulfilled immediately as Paul was attacked by the Jews, yet he was delivered. It is important to serve together with others and to lift each other up. Just as Paul found ministry partners in the area of his trade, tent-making, we too can find like-minded believers in the workplace. As we focus on spreading the Gospel to our area and the world, we need others to help and encourage us. We can rely on the fact that as God promised Paul, we can have courage; and as we share the Gospel, He is with us. We also know that He has many people in our area who need to hear the Gospel and it is up to us to share it with them.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

As you seek ways to share the Gospel with others this week, pray and look for those around you that you can partner with and encourage in the work of the Kingdom. Pray that God would bring more laborers to our church to help us in fulfilling His mission.

Pray for your ONE!

Pricilla and Aquila in chapter 18 and Paul in chapter 19 encountered people who needed help with understanding. Aquila and Pricilla met Apollos, a man from Egypt who was well-spoken and well-versed in the Scripture. He knew of the baptism that John preached about, but not fully about Jesus. They took him in and explained the ways of God more accurately. He then went on to speak with more power by showing, through the Scriptures, that the Christ was Jesus. Paul, likewise, encountered some disciples who believed in Jesus but did not know of the Spirit. Paul instructed them in the truth and baptized them in the name of Jesus. We live in a world today with people who may not have complete truth in what they know and teach. Sometimes, tradition and cultural practices overshadow the truths in God's Word. We should be willing to patiently and lovingly help those who need further instruction in the complete truth of God and Jesus Christ. We also need to be humble and willing to be instructed by others who are trying to help us understand these things ourselves. Ultimately, we see all truth comes from Scripture, which should be the foundation for what we learn and teach others.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Who has poured the truth of God's Word into your life? Send them a text or write them a card thanking them for their investment. Also, who are you pouring into right now? If you do not have someone you are discipling, speak to one of your pastors about it this week and commit yourself to be a disciple-maker.

Pray for your ONE!

What determines who we are? Is it how people see us? Or what we do for a living? In these verses, we see two sets of people who are trying to protect their identity. First, we see a group of Jewish leaders who observed the power of Jesus through Paul and tried to reproduce it on their own. These men tried to mimic this act by casting out a demon from a man. The demon quickly pointed out to them it knew who Jesus and Paul were, but did not know them. Jesus was known by the demon for His power, and Paul was identified as having the power of Christ in him. Yet, these men found out that they could not replicate the power of Christ apart from the Spirit of Christ. They tried to be seen the same as Paul, but in their own power and NOT in the Spirit's power. Also, in this chapter we see a man who became angry with Paul because his trade of making false idols was being threatened by Paul's preaching as people trusted in Christ and walked away from their former lives as idol-worshippers. These people tried to be identified by their own abilities and power, and they failed. We see those today who place their identity in what they do or how people see them, and not in Christ. We must remember as believers—all we have, all we are, and all we can do is in Jesus Christ.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

What defines you? Write some things that you feel identify you.

Commit to memorizing Galatians 2:20 and focus on your identity in Christ.

Pray for your ONE!

Isn't it nice to be around encouraging people? In this passage, Paul is constantly encouraging those around him. However, his encouragement might have been a bit much for one young man. As Paul gathered in the upper room to break bread and speak, the young man sitting in the window in the upper room fell asleep and fell out the window down three floors to his death. In a demonstration of the power of Christ over death, Paul picked the young man up off the ground, let everyone know he was alive, and continued to speak to the people in the room. Talk about a real encouragement—being brought back to life! We, too, should be reminded to encourage those around us. Jesus Christ has brought us life just as he did to this young man through Paul. The young man had a great story to tell, even though it started out with tragedy. Although there may be tragedy in our story, ultimately, we can share with others about how we were dead and have been made alive in Jesus and will live forever in His presence. Don't minimize the story you have to tell of being raised from the dead.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Encourage someone this week by taking them out for coffee or buying them a small but meaningful gift. Write them a note or make it a point to encourage them the next time you see them. Words build up, and it is important we are building one another up whenever we have the opportunity.

Pray for your ONE!

As Paul gets ready to leave Asia for what he believes is the last time he will see the people there, he leaves them with a reminder and a charge. He reminds them that sharing about Jesus is the most important thing. Without hesitation or concern for his own well-being, Paul considers being faithful to share the Gospel the Christian's primary call and purpose in this life. He then encourages them to continue the work and do the same. He reminds them that it was through the Spirit that he serves, and it is through the Spirit that they would do likewise. Paul also warns against fierce wolves, those who would come to try to destroy and distract from the message of the Gospel. As we go through our daily walk, we should be encouraged and reminded by the Bible and those around us, above all else, to serve. We have a call and a command to share the Gospel with those around us and those around the world. We can take heart in knowing it is not in our own strength, but through the work of the Spirit and the power of the Gospel, that we can be faithful to the task given to us by Jesus. We also know there are those who will confront and dispute the message that we are to share. But just as Paul counted his life of no value outside of completing the task that he had been called to do, may we place our priorities and efforts in fulfilling His call to share the Gospel.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

Paul gave his life to serving Jesus and His church. That is a challenge to each of us to give our lives to serving Jesus. Serve Jesus this week by giving something to someone in need or by giving of your time to serve our church in an area of need.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 34 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Matthew 28:16-20

If you have grown up in church or have become familiar with church, odds are that you are well aware of this passage of Scripture. We often call this passage the "Great Commission." Jesus has recently resurrected from the dead, and now He is giving His final marching orders to His disciples, to His church! It is directly from these verses that we have created the mission statement of First Baptist Douglasville. We believe that the Bible teaches us that this is the mission of the church. Therefore, based off Matthew 28:16-20, the Great Commission, the mission statement here at FBCD is "We exist to display the glory of God by making disciples and proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world." Our pastoral staff is often asked, "What is YOUR vision for First Baptist Douglasville?" Without trying to sound super-spiritual, that is honestly not the right question to ask, because it does not really matter what our vision is for First Baptist. Instead, the correct question for any church to ask is this: "What is God's vision for His church?" God has revealed to us in the Bible His purpose, His vision, His mission for His church, and this is revealed to us here in Matthew 28:16-20.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This week, we want you to memorize Matthew 28:16-20. These are our marching orders. Commit to live this out. You are a missionary!

Pray for your ONE!

In January of 2008, at the age of 22, married for 18 months, my wife, Anna, and I landed in Turkey. For two years I coached a football team, built relationships, and shared the Gospel of Jesus with them daily. Through that time, I built a uniquely close relationship with one player named Seyfo. Seyfo is a professing Muslim, and for over two years, I shared Jesus with him continuously. The day that we left Turkey, we arrived at the airport with Seyfo, an entourage of football players, and Seyfo's mother, Nilgun, who held our son Levi at security until we said our goodbyes through tears. About a month later, during a worship service in Louisville, Kentucky, tears came to my eyes as I thought about Seyfo. I was moved to such emotion because I thought to myself, "If I am not there to tell Seyfo about Jesus, who is going to do it?" Like many of you, I was raised in the South, and I had heard about unreached people groups—people that did not know Jesus and had heard next to nothing about him. But, it was not until we moved to Turkey that I met them. So, Seyfo was no longer a statistic to me, he was a dear friend! Let this reality soak in for a moment. There are billions of people all over the world right now that are separated from God and headed straight to an eternal and literal Hell who have not heard that Jesus paid the penalty for their sins and that He offers them salvation today! So, in light of that reality, I want to ask you a question: "Why have I heard about the Good News of Jesus when so many others have not?"

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

Pray for each one of our mission and church planting partners who are telling the Seyfos of the world the gospel.

- Dana Adams – N. Africa.
- The Savages – Indonesia.
- The Houks – South Asia.
- The Whipples – South Asia.
- The Phillipses – Niger.

Pray for your ONE!

I would argue that there is a faulty perspective of Jesus that is alive and well and multiplying rapidly in our culture today. It is a perspective that is popular, pervasive, extremely dangerous and very seductive. This perspective is what I would call "American Dream Christianity." Many of us face the temptation and the seduction of trying to have Jesus and the American Dream all at the same time. We want Jesus *and* comfort. We want Jesus *and* security. We want Jesus *and* safety. We want Jesus *and* prosperity. We want Jesus *and* we want to be liked. We want Jesus to fit our political preference. We want Jesus *and* professional success. We want Jesus *and* the dream house. We want Jesus *and* to send our kids to the best schools. We want Jesus *and* the dream car. This is why we often think and say things like: "I could never be a foster parent, because it would be too hard to see that child leave." Or, "I could never go on an overseas mission trip or become an international missionary because I hate flying," or, "I am a picky eater," or, "it is too dangerous," or, "I make too much money." Or, "I have a hard time sharing my faith because I am an introvert." So, we fill our heads with lies like, "Jesus just wants me to be happy... Jesus wants me to follow my dreams... Jesus wants me to be safe..." However, any fair and honest reading of Scripture will reveal that there is no such thing as Jesus + The American Dream for you or for me. Jesus is a King who came to serve and to die, and the bottomline is that Jesus bids us to come and die, not negotiate.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

This Sunday, after the service, I want to challenge you to go to our missions area and to speak with one of our pastors about going on a mission trip within the next year.

Pray for your ONE!

Our God is a global God with a global mission. His mission is to bring glory to His name through the salvation of the nations. This has always been the mission of God because our God is a missionary God with a missionary heart. Here in Revelation 7:9-10 we get a glimpse of the wonderful picture of the diversity that is the Kingdom of God. However, right now there are more than 6,000 people groups in the world who have still not been reached with the Gospel. This means that they do not have a Christian, a church, or even a Bible among them. This is why we want to be a church that proclaims the Gospel throughout the world. A church that is Multicultural. A church that has as one of its core values going to the world. A church that wants to multiply disciples and multiply churches. We serve a global God with a global mission. Therefore, we must be a church with a global vision!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps:

Pray: This Sunday as we conclude "Missions Month," we will challenge every member of our church to make a financial and life commitment to the Lord. Would you be praying and asking the Lord to show you what this next step will be in your life?

Give: This week, in preparation for this coming Sunday, seek the Lord's leading and talk with your family about what financial commitment to missions you will make this coming Sunday.

Go: Every follower of Jesus is called to live their life on mission for Him. So, what is your next step in going for the mission of God? Is He calling you to go on a mission trip? Does He want you to tell that neighbor, co-worker, or classmate about Him? Is He calling you to give your life to Him on the international mission field? Whatever He is leading you to do, I want to encourage you to make that commitment this coming Sunday.

Pray for your ONE!

We are just a couple of months away from yet another presidential election. Our nation is divided and full of strife related to our next president. Therefore, as followers of Jesus, we must approach this presidential election in a way that brings glory and honor to our God. We cannot allow our opinions, our emotions, our prejudices, and our traditions to control our thoughts and our actions in a way that would be displeasing to God or divisive to His church. We serve a God that we are to honor in everything we do, and this includes politics and how we vote. So, no matter the outcome, may we faithfully obey the words of the apostle Paul here in Romans 13.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

Spend some time now praying for our current and future political leaders. Ask God to allow them to lead and to govern with wisdom, with character, and with integrity. Furthermore, pray and ask the Lord to allow you to engage with politics in a way that gives Him all of the glory and the honor. Take time over the coming days and weeks to do the following things:

1. Make sure that you are registered to vote.
2. Research the different politicians who are running for office and educate yourself on their individual platforms.
3. Pray for candidates who hold Biblical conviction.
4. Finally, engage in political conversation by speaking the truth in love this election season. May we not be divisive, but rather love one another even in the midst of disagreements.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 39 BIBLE STUDY

Read: Daniel 7:1-28

Is anyone really in control? Yes! God is! Daniel 7 makes this truth abundantly clear as it provides something of a panoramic preview of coming attractions from the time of Daniel until that day when time is no more. In this passage, we see history as God sees it. The main truth that is communicated in these powerful verses is that God is in control. He is sovereign over all nations. He is the one who raises up kings and kingdoms, and He is also the one who takes them down. So, as we approach the 2020 presidential election, let us be reminded that presidents will come and go, but our God remains on His throne. So, we can take heart. We do not have to worry. We can continue to do the Lord's work. Our God is in control!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

Pray, thanking God for this reminder that He is in control. As the world around us fights and rages, ask God to remind you day in and day out that He is sovereign, that He is completely in control. May we place our hope in Him and in Him alone.

Pray for your ONE!

Our homes matter. They matter a lot. Our home can be a place of refuge and refreshment, or it can be a place of unrest and weariness. Most of us have a picture of what a dream house would be like. We can visualize the yard, the remodeled kitchen, the hardwood floors, the sprawling master bedroom, and the walk-in closets. We envision the footsteps and laughter of energetic children and grandchildren filling the house with joy and excitement. This is how many of us visualize this world. We see this world as our home, and we want it to be our dream home. A place where all of our dreams, our desires, and our passions are fulfilled. However, this line of thinking does not square with the Bible. In fact, Peter makes it abundantly clear that this world is not our home. We are simply passing through. Therefore, as the presidential election is now weeks away, no matter the outcome, no matter who sits in the White House, may we take comfort in knowing that this is not our dream home! Our dream home awaits us in the new heaven and new earth in the presence of our true king, Jesus Christ!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Let me challenge you to apply these verses to your life this week in the following ways:

- According to verse 12, let's refrain from conducting ourselves in a way on social media that will cause the world to question our faith in Jesus.
- According to verses 13-14, let each one of us be law-abiding citizens that strive to serve our community in a way that brings glory to God.
- According to verse 17, let us "honor the emperor" by praying for our future president, no matter who they might be.

Pray for your ONE!

Gatherings with friends and family members are fun. But, the saddest part of any gathering is saying “goodbye” when it is time to go. Paul experienced this, as well. Some of his friends begged him not to go to Jerusalem because of the fear of what Paul would face when he arrived. Paul told his friends that they were breaking his heart, but he must continue to go to Jerusalem because he was compelled by the Spirit to go and be a witness to the Jews there. When we as a church think about going on mission, we may not know what we will face when we get to where we are going. We must simply trust that the Spirit leads us, no matter the cost. God is leading those we love most to go be a witness to someone across the street, at work, in another state, and even in another country. Many times, we can think of a million reasons why they should not go. But for all the reasons not to go, the reason we must go is that we want people to know about the salvation God has for them. May we all have a desire to be like Paul, determined to go when compelled by the Spirit, no matter the cost.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

Paul had friends that were afraid for him to continue on his journey to share the Gospel. There will always be stumbling blocks that we will face when we are on mission with God. What do you believe is the biggest stumbling block for you to live on mission at this time? _____

Pray that God would release you from this fear and allow you to boldly proclaim the gospel.

Pray for your ONE!

One of the hymns that we sing in church is titled "Blessed Assurance" which says: "This is my story this is my song." Every time I hear or sing this song, I am reminded about the time that Jesus saved me. Everyone who has surrendered their life to Christ has a story of how Christ found them. In this passage, Paul took the opportunity to share his story of how he became a believer. Paul tells his people, the Jews, his story of how God made Himself known to him. Through that experience, Paul surrenders his life to serve Christ. The moment that Paul was sharing his story he was facing death. As we read about his conversion, we can feel the passion that Paul has for the Lord for bringing him from darkness and into the light. Paul was ready to share his story. Sharing our story should come naturally as we engage with people that come into our lives. Knowing that Christ has taken away our sins, we should be happy and blessed; we should be praising Him, as the song says, "all the day long." Be ready, like Paul, in the good times and in the bad times, to let people know that Jesus is yours.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This week, be sure to tell your story to someone. Relay to them the good news of what Jesus has done for you. Or, maybe tell them the latest thing God is teaching you or has done in your life. Proclaim the goodness of God! Don't let your story go to waste. You have it for a missional reason.

Pray for your ONE!

I remember as a child being fearful of thunderstorms that came during the night. I would pull the covers over my head every time the loud clap of thunder would roll. I would end up running and jumping in bed with my parents, and they would end up saying, "You do not have to be afraid now." Those words always made me feel much better. When you face a problematic issue in life, it is encouraging to know someone is there beside you to meet that challenge with you. Paul was in a difficult situation in this passage, facing the Jewish council and trying to explain to them who Jesus was. This council wanted Paul to be killed and ordered a flogging. The Roman commander protected Paul from this brutal treatment by putting him in the barracks instead. Paul must have felt all alone in the barracks knowing that the Jewish Council was not accepting him and fearing that his life would end. But, in the dark of the night, the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage." How amazing Paul must have felt knowing that God was with him in that dark hour. As believers, we can rest assured that in the dark hours of our own life, our Lord is right there with us, standing by us.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

What are the top three things in your life right now that you need Jesus to speak a word of peace over? Write them down, and spend this week asking God to be near you and give you the courage to stand in the midst of the storm for His glory.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Pray for your ONE!

In our society, children are often overlooked and viewed as unimportant, or considered an annoyance. Even Jesus's disciples tried to keep children from coming up to Jesus, but He said, "Let the little children come to me." Children are important in the sight of our Heavenly Father. The Bible gives several accounts where God used children to do His will. In this passage, God used Paul's nephew, who was a young child, to help protect him from the Sanhedrin who wanted him destroyed. The young boy heard the plan of how they were going to kill Paul and decided to warn him. Paul instructed the little boy to go and tell the plan to the Roman commander. This young boy demonstrated courage, wisdom, and trustworthiness in this task set forth by God. This passage allows us to see the importance of how God uses everyone to work out His plan. You may be thinking that God cannot use you to serve Him. All of us can think of plenty of excuses for why we may not be good enough. Those thoughts are not of God; they are from Satan. As we read in this passage, the information that the child told the officials caused them to protect Paul and allowed Paul to share the Gospel with the Roman Governor. God wants to use us to serve and share the Gospel with people in our lives and around the world. God uses children. Will you let Him use you?

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

If you are a parent or grandparent, practice sharing the gospel with your child or grandchild this week using the 3 Circles witnessing tool found in the opening pages of this book. Help them understand how to share their faith as you share yours. If your children are grown or no longer in your home, take the opportunity to share your faith using 3 Circles with someone in the coming days.

Pray for your ONE!

When a baby is born, the parents are so excited to share the joy of the birth of their new baby. The way parents share their joy is by posting pictures on social media, letting the family meet the baby in person, and talking about the newborn baby to everyone that they see. Parents express their joy because the arrival of a new baby is thing worth celebrating. This passage of Scripture reveals how Paul used the opportunity to share the joy of his salvation to the people in the court. He shared how his life was before he became a believer, how Jesus made Himself known to him, and how his life had changed since he surrendered to Christ. Paul shared who Jesus was and what He did to save people from their sin. As believers, we need to express our joy for the salvation Christ has given us. If you find yourself not sharing the joy of knowing Christ to others, what has caused you not to be joyful? Is there discouragement in your life, or have you had a bad day? If Paul could share the joy that he had in his heart about the Lord in the bad situation that he was facing, so can we!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

Christians should be the most joyful people in the world. Choose one of the following options and bring joy to someone's life this week:

1. Bake a cake or cookies for a neighbor or co-worker.
2. Send a card to someone encouraging them.
3. Visit someone in the hospital or who is homebound.
4. Invite someone to join you in your favorite extra-curricular activity.
5. Invite a neighbor over for dinner and game night.

Pray for your ONE!

One of the activities that a person must participate in if they go on a cruise ship is a muster drill. During this drill, people are assigned a particular area of the vessel designated for emergencies and are given detailed instructions on how to respond in a crisis. One of the main things people learn is how to put on a life jacket correctly. In this Bible passage, Paul was on a ship that was in a terrible storm. Paul was giving directions on how to survive to the people on the boat; however, these instructions were given directly from God. Amid this storm, Paul demonstrated the courage that only the Lord could provide. Paul proclaimed his faith in God and shared with the passengers the need to trust God and the instructions that God gave Paul. The passengers were going to have to experience a hard trial before they were going to be rescued. God uses trials in people's lives to help point them to Himself. When we see any of our family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers going through a hard time, God can use our faith in Him to help point them to Jesus. We need to have courage, like Paul, to share our faith with others. Look for people around you who are going through a storm, and share Christ with them. Often, they will look to you, because you have the hope of Christ within you. Just like giving a person who is swimming in deep water a life jacket, you can offer them hope and salvation in Christ while going through the storm.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Pray

Chances are, you have a friend or relative who is going through a storm. This week, dedicate time each day to pray for this individual with a view that he or she would ultimately cling to Jesus as their hope, provision, and peace.

Pray for your ONE!

The Energizer Battery uses a pink bunny to help promote its long-lasting batteries. The slogan that they use to market their battery is "Still Going." This slogan was first used in 1989 and continues today. In the last chapter of Acts, one could say that like this famous battery-operated bunny, Paul keeps going. Even though Paul faced being put to death for sharing the Gospel, was shipwrecked from the storm at sea, and had been bitten on his hand by a snake he continued to share the Gospel and told everyone he came in contact with about Jesus. He pressed on. He finally met with the Jewish leaders in Rome in this passage, only to see them reject the Gospel. Paul reminded them that the prophet Isaiah said that the Jews would reject Christ, that the Gospel would be told to the Gentiles, and they would listen to the message. Paul did not stop there; he continued to preach the Gospel and taught about Jesus boldly. During the two years he was in Rome, he wrote the letters of Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul consistently was witnessing, and the Gospel continued to spread around the world. Even more, though the book of Acts comes to an end, Luke, the author, left the story hanging. I believe this is intentional, because the story of what Christ is doing by His Spirit through His Church is...still going. We are the next chapter of Acts—the mission continues.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Staying energized in serving the Lord takes hard work. Here are some things you can do to help you to keep going:

- Read your Bible daily
- Serve in the church
- Share your testimony
- Go on a mission trip, whether it may be locally, nationally, or internationally
- Commit to pray daily
- Gather for worship
- Fellowship with believers

Pray for your ONE!

As a child, Christmas seemed to never get here fast enough. For days and weeks, I would look through the Sears Christmas Wish Book, just imagining what all might be under the Christmas tree. There was hope that on Christmas morning there would be fun and exciting toys for me. Having hope is a very important part of Christmas, but hope looks different for so many people. For children, there is hope for presents. For adults, there is hope for all the family to be together. But the greatest hope that there is found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In this passage of scripture, the angel Gabriel announced the news to Mary that she was going to give birth to the Savior of the world. For years, people who lived before Jesus was born had a hope for the Messiah to come. They had been promised by prophets in the Old Testament to watch and wait. Mary did not know how all of that was going to happen, but the angel assured her by saying, "For nothing is impossible with God." That one statement provided so much hope for people who were hurting and needed a Savior. This hope allowed Mary to surrender her life to what God wanted her to do. Mary had hope that God was going to take care of the details and that she would follow His will. Mary trusted God and put her hope in Him. What are you putting your hope in today? Christmas will come and go, but the hope you can find in Jesus Christ will last for eternity. Christ is the real hope you need in your life. By trusting and obeying Jesus, you can serve Him and share the hope in Him to others.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

The Christmas season offers us so many opportunities to share the Gospel. One way you can share the hope of Christ is by participating in the Operation Christmas Child shoebox drive. Not only will you give a child a gift, but you will be giving them the greatest gift of all—the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pray for your ONE!

WEEK 49 BIBLE STUDY*Read: Luke 2:8-21*

If you have ever watched the Charlie Brown Christmas special, the words of this passage of scripture sound very familiar. In the cartoon, this passage was given as the answer to the question of what the true meaning of Christmas is. These words do not just explain a holiday but life itself—true life that comes through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of that life, we can know the ONLY definition of true peace here on earth, which is that Jesus was born, died on the cross, and God raised Him from the dead. The shepherds were privileged to hear the message from the angels and then experience it in person there at the manger where Jesus was. As we go through this season, it is easy to be distracted from the reason we celebrate. Furthermore, as pastor Colin Smith says, “We often reverse Luke 2:14, functionally declaring with our lives ‘Glory to *MAN* in the highest, and peace to *God*.’”¹ We seek our own glory and welfare, giving God only a portion of our devotion and praise. May this season be a recalibration to our lives. May we not give Jesus a portion of our hearts, but give Him all the glory He is due. We can know peace on earth if we, like the shepherds, heed the declaration that our Savior has come and allow it to transform our hearts into worshipers.

¹Colin Smith, “Luke 4:14-30.” Sermon from The Gospel Coalition, Orlando, FL, April 8, 2013.

SOS:*Answer the following questions*

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

This week, take time and commit Luke 2:14 to memory. Then, go and share this verse with someone who needs to hear about the peace of God brought to us through the incarnate Christ!

Pray for your ONE!

Christmas is a time of year that brings joy. We see joy in the eyes of children who are waiting to unwrap gifts on Christmas day. Children think that joy comes from getting toys, but real joy comes as we share what we have with others. As Christians, we are called to share the Gospel with people we meet and to serve the Lord. In this passage of Scripture, Joseph answered a call to serve the Lord. He was in a situation he did not know how to handle. But God was with Joseph and promised to meet his needs. Joseph was told by God through a special revelation to take Mary as his wife and to name the baby Jesus. Joseph accepted God's call and was obedient to God. It is always a joy to serve and obey the Lord! Through the life of Jesus, God provided real joy for all mankind because Jesus is the One who can save people from their sins. We have the best news to share with others. As we walk through our day-to-day life, may we obey the call of the Lord and share the good news of Jesus. By obeying God's call to tell others about Christ, we receive a great gift, the gift of joy!

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

The Bible tell us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Obeying the Lord can help us be joyful in our lives. Here are some activities to help you grow in your relationship with the Lord and serve Him joyfully:

- Have a daily prayer and Bible study.
- Attend a Bible study group.
- Worship with your church family.
- Invite someone to the Christmas Concert on December 15th.

Pray for your ONE!

What an amazing journey this must have been for the wise men. First, they began their journey filled with great wonder and excitement to follow the star all the way to the Messiah. When they arrived in the city they were shocked to find no one knew where He was. They were then confronted by a king who, unknown to them, had ill intentions toward Jesus. Then once again the star appeared, and the wise men rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Upon entering the presence of Jesus, they fell and worshiped Him, offering their gifts to Him. Finally, they received a warning from the angel to avoid the one who intended evil toward Jesus, and they left returning to their country a different way than which they came. What a journey, both physically and emotionally. So is life today. We sometimes think our journey with Christ begins with us, but the beginning of every story is God. In the story of the wise men, God, in His great love, revealed to them the way to go by a star. Our path began when God revealed Himself to us. Even though the path led to emotional ups and downs, and unexpected encounters, ultimately the journey of the wise men led them to a personal encounter with Jesus. We, too, can look through the paths that God has led us on to have a personal encounter with the greatest gift He gave this world, His Son. The response of the wise men was to worship Him and honor Him with their best gifts. When we have a personal encounter with the Savior, we worship Him and give to Him of ourselves. Just as the wise men, when we encounter Jesus, we will not return the same way we came.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

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What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Give

The wise men gave incredible gifts to King Jesus. God also gave His greatest gift, His Son, at Christmas. Let me challenge you to give your greatest gift this Christmas season to the Lord. Perhaps you can give to our special missions offering called the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.

Pray for your ONE!

As we are faced with a new year, we usually hold to one of two tendencies. The first is spending time reflecting on the events of the year that is ending. The second is to look ahead to the new year before us. As we take inventory of the past and look to the future concerning health, finances, and personal goals we should give greater focus to our spiritual walk, as well. In this passage, Paul reflects on his spiritual journey. He is quick to point out that with all that has been accomplished in his life, it is his goal to focus on what is still ahead. Paul sums it up in the statement, "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." It's almost as if Paul is saying, "No matter what has happened this far, there is still much to be done. We must stay focused on doing the work we have been called to do in Christ Jesus." As we think of the changing of another year, it's easy to focus heavily on the things that have happened or the way things "used to be." We are reminded as believers we still have much to do for the work of Christ. If we are to be successful, we must continue to look ahead and focus on Him. Paul warns at the end of the passage of those who are focused on themselves and their own desires over the things of Christ. There is nothing wrong with setting goals for the physical things in our life, but we must understand our purpose here on earth is to display the glory of God by making disciples and proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world.

SOS:

Answer the following questions

What do these verses SAY? _____

What do I need to OBEY? _____

What can I SHARE? _____

Next Steps: Go

Reflect on this past year. What was one thing you saw God do over 2020? _____

As you look ahead to the new year, what are you feeling God is calling you to either give up, put on, or surrender to Him? How will you live on mission in 2021? _____

Pray for your ONE!

What Now?

We sincerely hope this year has been a year of tremendous growth in your knowledge of Jesus Christ and your love for Him. We pray this book has been of great service in helping you live on mission. As we bring 2020 to a close and prepare for 2021, may we as a church family commit our lives to continue living for His glory and the good of the nations.

When you started this Next Steps Guide, you made a commitment to pray for your “One” and to share the gospel with him or her. You also committed to live on mission where you live, work, and play. That may have included going on a mission trip, as well. Express your fulfillment of this commitment by listing some key Gospel conversations or opportunities of service you experienced over the past year. Did your “One” come to faith in Jesus? Write it down. If not, continue to pray for him or her in the coming year. Take a moment and pause in celebration of all God did in your life in 2020.

If you have an exciting story of what God has done through this Next Steps Guide, please pass it to the pastoral staff. We would love to celebrate with you!

