

New Testament Challenge Syllabus
Piedmont International Church

Welcome to the New Testament Challenge Life Group.

Have you actually ever read the New Testament? Most people haven't. This is your big chance to read it through and learn more about your faith than ever before!

This Spring you will have the opportunity to read through the New Testament in its entirety. Every day you will be reading several chapters from the New Testament (see the reading plan attached).

Included below are questions and thought starters for every day of the reading. They are just designed to get you thinking and don't cover all the readings every day. You are encouraged to begin to move beyond these questions. Highlight verses and phrases in your Bible that stand out to you. Make notes, jot down ideas that encourage you. These may be the starting place for the best discussions with others.

Be sure to keep up with your reading. If you do – God will change your life!

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE SYLLABUS

Monday, February 1 to Sunday, April 4

Week #1: Week of January 31 - The Challenge of Radical Love

Quick Facts about the Book of Matthew:

- Written by one of Jesus' disciples – Matthew (who was a tax collector)
- Originally believe to be the first Gospel –though now many scholars believe Mark is the oldest now. Was written in the first century AD and was in completed for within a few decades of Jesus' death. A very fresh history.
- Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience (whereas Luke wrote to a very Greek audience). Note the many references to Old Testament prophecy (very important to Jews) and that the genealogy in Matthew 1 only goes back to Abraham (the Father of the Israelite people). Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam to emphasize Jesus' universal impact.
- The famous Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5-7.

Quick Facts about the Book of Acts:

- Really the Acts of the Apostles (those who saw the resurrected Jesus).
- Best history of the early church – from a handful of believers in Jerusalem to 5,000 in just a short time to having Christianity spread all across Asia Minor and into Europe in less than one generation. Unprecedented spread of a faith by a persecuted people through peaceful means.
- First half focuses on Peter. The last half focuses on Paul and his journeys.
- Was written by Luke who was a doctor and went with Paul on several of his mission trips.
- Acts is really Part II of the Gospel of Luke (continues the story) that we will read later this semester.

Day #1 – Monday, February 1 – Read Matthew 1-2, Acts 1-3

1. What do you know about your genealogy? What would you like to discover about it? (Matthew 1 Genealogy)
2. From Joseph's responsiveness of going to Egypt what do you learn about faith and obedience? How long would it take you to say "yes" if God asked you to relocate?
3. What have been your best experiences in group prayer? How is praying with others for a common mission different from private prayer about your individual concerns? (Acts 1 – Disciples praying)
4. Have you ever traveled where you did not speak the language? What happened? (Acts 2 – Pentecost)
5. As the cripple, what would you write as a diary entry for a typical day? When Peter grabs your hand? After the healing? (Acts 3 – Healing of the crippled man)

Day #2 – Tuesday, February 2 – Read Matthew 3-4, Acts 4-6

1. Who has been a John the Baptist in your life? How did he or she prepare you to meet Jesus?
2. Is there someone who is pointing you to Jesus as you consider Him? (Matt. 3)
3. What is the most persecution you have experienced due to your faith? How did you take it? (Acts 4)
4. Which responsibility at home or work would you gladly give up? Never give up?

(Acts 6 – Apostles choose 12 people to carry out ministry of the church...what does this say about who should do the ministry of the church – the pastors or the members?)

Day #3 – Wednesday, February 3 – Read Matthew 5-6, Acts 7-9

1. This past week, did you feel more blessed or stressed? What can you do to be more focused on God's blessings in your life? (Matthew 5 – Sermon on the Mount)
2. What causes you the most worry? What is God saying to you through this passage about handling your particular worry or disappointment? (Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mount)
3. How did the Lord first get your attention? Was it in some dramatic event or something more subtle? (Acts 9 – Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus)

Day #4 – Thursday, February 4 – Read Matthew 7-8, Acts 10-12

1. Describe a time when you saw a despised or neglected person receive a surprising amount of love and respect. (Matthew 8)
2. As a child, what foods did you refuse to eat? What foods do you still dislike today? (Acts 10 – Peter and Cornelius)

Day #5 – Friday, February 5 – Read Matthew 9-10, Acts 13-15

1. What is the longest you have hiked or hitchhiked your way across country?
2. What was one of the biggest misunderstandings about Christianity you had to overcome before you could believe? (Acts 14)
3. What were some of the expected, extra-biblical rules that people are often expected to follow when they become a Christian? Have you ever experienced that? How? (Acts 15)

Day #6 – Saturday, February 6 – Read Matthew 11-12, Acts 16-18

1. In what specific way can you be an encourager to someone in church leadership? In your family? Among your friends? (Matthew 11)
2. What is one habit or behavior you do which totally annoys others around you? (Matt 12)
3. Where do you have an "open door" for ministry now: In your home? School? Work? Community? How will you take advantage of it? (Acts 15)

Day #7 – Sunday, February 7 – Read Matthew 13-14, Acts 19-21

1. Can you see and hear Jesus at work in today's world? If so, how? (Matthew 13)
2. If you fed five thousand people at a picnic, what would you serve? (Matthew 14)
3. What place did your parents have to drag you to, because you were scared to go there: Circus? Dentist? Elsewhere?

Week #2: Week of February 8 - The Challenge of Generosity

Quick Facts about the Book of Romans:

- Paul probably wrote Romans around 58 AD from Corinth. He was about to return to Jerusalem with an offering he had raised from the churches he had planted to give to the church in Jerusalem which was suffering from severe persecution.
- Romans is the only letter Paul wrote to a church he had nothing to with starting and which to this point he had not been in contact with. Thus, note how Romans seems impersonal compared to Paul's other letters to churches. There are few details of practical problems in Romans because Paul does not personally know the church.
- Romans is the most theological and least practical of Paul's letters. Another reason (see the first reason above) is that Rome was the center of the known world at this time and a capital of intellect. Romans is laid out more as a theological treatise perhaps in part because Paul

wanted to lay out the intellectual validity of the faith to those in Rome.

- Paul desperately wanted to visit Rome (which he would later do in chains and eventually he would die there)...so this letter introduces himself to the church in Rome. Paul's passion was spreading the Good News of Jesus as far as he could. Like New York today, what influenced Rome influenced the world. But besides wanting to share in Rome – Paul also may have wanted to establish a base from which to take missionary journeys further west (maybe as far west as Spain).

Day #8 – Monday, February 8 – Read Matthew 15-16, Acts 22-24

Peter's Confession/Jesus' Prediction (Matthew 16:13-28)

1. If you were to ask the average person today, "Who is Jesus Christ?", what would he say?
2. Who do you say Jesus is?
3. Why did Peter get so upset when Jesus explained the cross?
4. When you hear Jesus' words, "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me," what runs through your mind?
5. How does verse 26 influence the way you make priorities?

Day #9 – Tuesday, February 9 – Read Matthew 17-18, Acts 25-27

Paul Sails for Rome (Acts 27)

1. When was a time that God brought you through a storm on your way to a destination that you knew He wanted you to go?
2. What is the danger of equating comfort with God's will for your life?
3. What does it say about God that He would chose to take Paul to Rome as a prisoner on a ship that wrecked?

Day #10 – Wednesday, February 10 – Read Matthew 19-20, Acts 28

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20)

1. If you had been one of the first hired workers, how would you have felt at pay time?
2. How do you feel about recent converts getting the same benefits as you in the kingdom?
3. Does being gracious to the workers at the eleventh hour equate to being unfair to the workers who were hired early in the morning?

Day #11 – Thursday, February 11 – Read Matthew 21-22, Romans 1-3

No One Is Righteous/Righteousness Through Faith (Romans 3:9-31)

1. How close have you come to getting in trouble with the law?
2. What is said in verses 10-18 about human thought, human direction, human speech, human action? A human view of God?
3. Do you think people are more likely to turn to God out of fear of the consequences of sin or out of love for God? Why?
4. Beginning with verse 21, what new idea does Paul now reveal. Why is it necessary for every human being?
5. If you had to explain the gospel message from this passage alone, what would you say?

Day #12 – Friday, February 12 – Read Matthew 23-24, Romans 4-6

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ (Romans 6:1-14)

1. What is Paul's short answer to the addict who says he is a slave to his habit?

2. What does it mean to live under grace and not under the Law?
3. How do you keep sin from reigning in your life? What do you do mentally, physically, spiritually?

Day #13 – Saturday, February 13 – Read Matthew 25-26, Romans 7-9

The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25)

1. What were the master's expectations of his servants while he was away?
2. Why do you think the master became angry with the servant with one talent?
3. What are some talents either material or immaterial in your life that Jesus expects you to steward well and multiply?

All Things Working For the Good of Those Who Love Him (Rom. 8:28)

1. Looking back, how have you seen things work out for your good even though it did not make sense at the time?
2. What situation could this verse be applied to in your life presently?
3. Why is it important that the verse ends with the phrase "who have been called according to his purpose?"

Day #14 – Sunday, February 14 – Read Matthew 27-28, Romans 10-12

Being a Living Sacrifice (Rom. 12)

1. What do you hear when Paul says do not conform to the world? How do we stay engaged with our culture and those around us while remaining faithful to this command?
2. What does it mean to offer your body as a living sacrifice?
3. What are some ways that you have been able to practice the renewing of your mind?

Week #4: Week of February 15 - The Challenge of Perseverance

Quick Facts about the Book of Mark:

- Mark is believed to be the earliest of the 4 Gospels. It was written within a few decades of the death of Jesus and in circulation among the early church. It is the earliest account of Jesus' life that has survived.
- There are sections of Mark that appear almost word for word in both Matthew and Luke (written just a few years later). This leads scholars to believe that both Matthew (one of Jesus' disciples) and Luke (a doctor who traveled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys) had the Gospel of Mark sitting in front of them and were using it as a reference as they wrote their own Gospels.
- It is believed that Mark is Peter's account of Jesus' life and that Mark wrote down the account from listening to Peter tell stories about Jesus (perhaps from Peter's sermons).
- Mark was the nephew of Barnabas and traveled with Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey. But Mark abandoned the journey. Later when Paul and Barnabas were about to go on a 2nd missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark, but Paul didn't. So, Barnabas and Mark went together and Paul and Silas went together. Later on Paul and Mark reconcile and Mark travels with Paul again.
- Mark is the shortest Gospel in length. In fact, there are only 24 verses in all of Mark that don't also appear somewhere in Matthew or Luke.

- Notice that the Gospel of Mark is all about action. It has fewer of Jesus words, but tells story after story of Jesus in rapid fashion.
- Notice that in Mark the disciples seem to always lack faith and never seem to understand who Jesus is until the very end. Compare that to the blind man Jesus heals in Mark 8:22-26. Note that the blind man can't see clearly at first...and then later the picture becomes clear. That is a picture of the disciples faith in Mark – gradual.

Quick Facts about the Book of 1 Corinthians:

- Paul stayed longer with the church in Corinth than he did in any of the other churches he started.
- It was in 55 AD (25 years after Jesus' death) that Paul learned that things were not all well in Corinth and wrote to the church there from the city of Ephesus. Paul is very personal and straight-forward in this letter because he knew the people of the church so well (contrast with Romans where he didn't know them well at all).
- Paul wrote several letters to Corinth (at least 4). Remember that his letters existed on scraps of papyrus and it wasn't until 90 AD that they were all collected together. So, some authors believe that part of Paul's letters to the Corinthians got thrown in together when they were copied. In 1 Corinthians 5:9 Paul refers to a previous letter he wrote to the church. Some scholars believe it is lost. Some believe that part of it is contained in 2 Corinthians 6:13 – 7:2. (Remember, originally there were no verses and chapters – just Paul's writings grouped together.) Then in 2 Corinthians 7:8 Paul refers to a previous "severe" letter that he wrote. Some scholars believe it lost – others believe it to be 2 Corinthians 10-13.
- *So there are a couple of possibilities with the 4 letters we know Paul wrote to Corinth:
 - We have lost the 1st one. The 2nd one is 1 Corinthians. We lost the 3rd (severe) letter.
 - The 4th one is 2 Corinthians.
 - Letter #1 is 2 Corinthians 6:13-7:2; Letter #2 is 1 Corinthians; Letter #3 is 2 Corinthians 10-13; and Letter #4 is 2 Corinthians 1-9.

Day #15 – Monday, February 15 – Read Mark 1-2, Romans 13-15

Jesus in the Wilderness (Mark 4)

1. If you knew Jesus were going to return to earth tomorrow, what would you do today?
2. What illustration or action could you use to demonstrate what the word "repent" means?
3. Have you ever been in a "spiritual wilderness?" What did God teach you there?

Day #16 – Tuesday, February 16 – Read Mark 3-4, Romans 16

Sower and the Seed (Mark 4:1-20)

1. Which soil would best describe your response to the news about Jesus when you first heard it? Now?
2. What kind of "crop" are you producing? What does the crop look like?
3. Where is all the power to produce a crop? How do you let God's Word be planted in your life?

Day #17 – Wednesday, February 17 – Read Mark 5-6, 1 Corinthians 1-2

John the Baptist Beheaded (Mark 6:14-29)

1. Why do you think Mark included this flashback to Herod between sending out the disciples v. (6-13) and their return (v. 30-31)?
2. What do you do when God's message leaves you puzzled with an ending like this?
3. What would this story say to someone facing persecution, then and now?

Day #18 – Thursday, February 18 – Read Mark 7-8, 1 Corinthians 3-4

Growing in Christ (1 Corinthians 3)

1. Paul talks about "growing up" in Christ. How does that growth happen? How do you want to "grow-up" more into Christ? What do you want that to look like?
2. What are we called to build our lives upon?
3. We are "God's temple." What does it mean to you to know that God himself lives in you?

Day #19 – Friday, February 19 – Read Mark 9-10, 1 Corinthians 5-7

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10: 17-26)

1. Why do you think Jesus told him to sell everything and give to the poor?
2. What did the rich young ruler gain by choosing his wealth over Jesus' command?
3. What is one thing you can do this week to let go of material things and embrace God's kingdom more fully?

Marriage (1 Cor. 7)

1. What do you consider the most important ingredient in a good marriage and why?
2. Why should marriage be aspired to?
3. In what ways can God use singleness for His kingdom?

Day #20 – Saturday, February 20 – Read Mark 11-12, 1 Corinthians 8-10

The Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:28-34)

1. In the three possibilities of love relationships (with God, neighbors and self) where are you the strongest? The weakest?
2. What have you found that helps love to grow in each area?
3. Who is the neighbor you most need to demonstrate love to right now?

Day #21 – Sunday, February 21 – Read Mark 13-14, 1 Corinthians 11-13

Love (1 Corinthians 13)

1. How does love described here compare to love as typically defined in our culture?
2. In your opinion, what is the best way to develop the ability to love others?
3. What from culture do you think illustrates the love described in chapter thirteen (movies, books, etc.)?

Week #5: Week of February 22 - The Challenge of Forgiveness

Quick Facts about the Gospel of Luke:

- Luke was a Gentile and had the distinction of being the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew.

- As a Gentile (a non-Jewish person), Luke's gospel is targeted primarily to Gentiles. Note that

in Luke's genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 is different from Matthew's in Matthew 1. Matthew traced Jesus back to Abraham because it was important for him to communicate to Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah from the line of Abraham and David. But Luke traces Jesus all the way back to Adam. Why? So, that Gentiles can see that Jesus died for everyone from the line of Adam (everyone in the world) – not just Jews.

- Note that in Luke Jesus talks more about women and the poor than in any other Gospel writer. Luke is clear that Jesus is empowering to women and compassionate to the poor. Mary is emphasized more in Luke whereas Joseph is emphasized more in Matthew. Also note that in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew when Jesus gives the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) Jesus says blessed are the "poor in spirit" but in Luke when Jesus gives the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6 Jesus has a slightly different message and says blessed are the "poor." Jesus gave two different sermons, but Matthew and Luke chose to record different ones. Although they were both concerned with both spiritual and physical redemption, Matthew was more focused on the spiritual and Luke the physical.
- Remember, Luke is also the author of Acts, and the Gospel of Luke is book 1 with Acts being book 2. Luke was a physician (which might explain his passion for what Jesus said about physical pain and suffering) who traveled with Paul on many of his missionary journeys.
- Also note as you read Luke – the special emphasis on prayer. Jesus is continually getting away from the people and commotion to find a secluded place to be with God and pray. If Jesus needed that on a continual basis – how much more do we need it?

Quick Facts about the Book of 2 Corinthians:

- Paul stayed longer with the church in Corinth than he did in any of the other churches he started. As a result, his letters to this church are very personal and straightforward.
- It was in 55 AD (25 years after Jesus' death) that Paul learned that things were not all well in Corinth and wrote to the church there from the city of Ephesus. Paul is very personal and straight-forward in this letter because he knew the people of the church so well (contrast with Romans where he didn't know them well at all).
- Paul wrote several letters to Corinth (at least 4). Remember that his letters existed on scraps of papyrus and it wasn't until 90 AD that they were all collected together. So, some authors believe that part of Paul's letters to the Corinthians got thrown in together when they were copied. In 1 Corinthians 5:9 Paul refers to a previous letter he wrote to the church. Some scholars believe it is lost. Some believe that part of it is contained in 2 Corinthians 6:13 – 7:2. (Remember, originally there were no verses and chapters – just Paul's writings grouped together.) Then in 2 Corinthians 7:8 Paul refers to a previous "severe" letter that he wrote. Some scholars believe it lost – others believe it to be 2 Corinthians 10-13.
 - *So there are a couple of possibilities with the 4 letters we know Paul wrote to Corinth:
 - (1) We have lost the 1st one. The 2nd one is 1 Corinthians. We lost the 3rd (severe) letter. The 4th one is 2 Corinthians.
 - (2) Letter #1 is 2 Corinthians 6:13-7:2; Letter #2 is 1 Corinthians; Letter #3 is 2 Corinthians 10-13; and Letter #4 is 2 Corinthians 1-9.

Day #22 – Monday, February 22 – Read Mark 15-16, 1 Corinthians 14-16

The Death of Jesus/The Resurrection (Mark 15:33-41 & Mark 16: 1-8)

1. How difficult is it for you to believe that Jesus actually died for your sins?

2. How easy is it for you to explain to others why Jesus had to be crucified?
3. If Jesus appeared to you, what one question would you ask him?
4. To whom is Jesus sending you with the message He has risen? How will you accomplish this mission?

Day #23 – Tuesday, February 23 – Read Luke 1-2, 2 Corinthians 1-3

The God Who Comforts Us (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

1. What is the relationship between God's ability to comfort us and our ability to comfort others?
2. What does it mean to you that Paul refers to God as the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort?
3. How can distress in your life be viewed in light of this passage?

Day #24 – Wednesday, February 24 – Read Luke 3, 2 Corinthians 4-6

We are the Temple of God (2 Cor. 6: 14-18)

1. What is the difference between being yoked with unbelievers and having relationships with unbelievers?
2. What does it mean that you are the dwelling place of God?
3. How does the teaching of Romans 12 about being a living sacrifice correlate with this passage?

Day #25 – Thursday, February 25 – Read Luke 4, 2 Corinthians 7-9

The Temptation of Jesus (Luke 4)

1. What is the significance of Jesus being tempted after He had fasted for 40 days?
2. How does Satan's use of Scripture differ from the way Jesus uses it?
3. How do the three temptations correlate with Satan's tempting in the Garden (Gen. 3) and what John says about sin (1 John 2:16)?

Day #26 – Friday, February 26 – Read Luke 5, 2 Corinthians 10-11

The Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)

1. If you had been Simon Peter when Jesus said, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch," what would you have done?
2. What did Peter mean when he said "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"?
3. How did Jesus call you to Himself and to His ministry? How did He get your attention?
4. Peter, James and John "left everything and followed Him" (v. 11) Where is Jesus asking you to follow Him? What must you give up to follow Him?

Day #27 – Saturday, February 27 – Read Luke 6, 2 Corinthians 12-13

Love for Enemies (Luke 6:27-36)

1. Why has Jesus made a shift in the object of love (see Lev. 19:18)? What specifically are we to do to enemies?
2. Since applying verses 29-30 literally could reinforce someone's bad behavior, what is Jesus' point (see vv.31, 36)
3. How does this description of love challenge you?
4. How can that be a model for relating to someone you find difficult?

Day #28 – Sunday, February 28 – Read Luke 7, Galatians 1-3

No Longer Under the Law (Galatians 3)

1. What question does Paul ask in verse two and why is this so crucial?
2. What “additions” to faith might outsiders sense in Christian circles that would serve as barriers to their faith?
3. How is attempting to be right with God through keeping the Law like being in prison?

Week #6: Week of March 1 - The Challenge of Servanthood

Galatians

Be ready – Paul is very angry in this book. He is writing to the church at Galatia that he helped start. In his absence, some “Super Apostles” have come and are speaking against Paul and his teachings. Some of them are telling the Galatians that everyone has to follow the Jewish law to be saved. Paul’s response is...very confrontational.

Ephesians

- Ephesians was written while Paul was in prison...probably very near to the end of his life.
- Some believe that Ephesians was a circular letter that was originally written to be passed from church to church.

Philippians

- Paul wrote this letter to the church when he was in prison in Rome.
- Note that the famous passage in Philippians 2:5-11 about having the same attitude of Christ was probably an early hymn recited or even sang in the early church.

Colossians

- The town of Colosse was the smallest and least significant town or city to which we have a letter from Paul.
- Colossians is perhaps the most different of all of Paul’s letters. If you put them side by side it would stand out as not fitting in as much. The reason is that in Colossians Paul is writing to counteract a heresy (we don’t know exactly what) and Paul speaks in spiritual language he doesn’t use in his other letters. We get to see another side of Paul here.

Day #29 – Monday, March 1 – Read Luke 8, Galatians 4-6

Life by the Spirit (Galatians 5)

1. Which spiritual fruit are “blossoming” for you? Which are in the “bud” stage?
2. Which sinful acts are dead and buried? Which are “mortally wounded?” Which are “Alive and well?”
3. How can you and the Spirit kill one and allow the other to grow?

Day #30 – Tuesday, March 2 – Read Luke 9, Ephesians 1-3

Made Alive in Christ (Ephesians 2)

1. What does it mean to you that your salvation moved you from being dead to being alive?
2. How is this different than being moved from bad to good?
3. We have been seated with Jesus in the heavenly realms. What are the implications of this verse in your life and how have you applied them to your life this week?
4. What good work do you feel God may have in mind for you?

Day #31 – Wednesday, March 3– Read Luke 10, Ephesians 4-6

Ripe for the Harvest (Luke 10)

1. How do you feel about the Harvest where you live? Do you know people who are “ripe” for harvest?
2. Have you ever felt like a lamb among wolves? What did you learn from the experience?
3. What do these verses show you about the privileges you have in Jesus?

Day #32 – Thursday, March 4– Read Luke 11, Philippians 1-2

Imitating Christ’s Humility (Philippians 2)

1. What does it mean to consider someone “better than yourself” (v. 3)? How does humility differ from being a doormat?
2. How do you balance meeting the needs of others with meeting your own needs?
3. Jesus “making himself nothing” is one of the more theological passages in the Bible.
4. What does it say about God that He would include a theological truth in the context of a command for us concerning our attitudes? How do you balance studying theology with
5. practical obedience in simple areas of life?

Day #33 – Friday, March 5– Read Luke 12, Philippians 3-4

Do Not Worry (Luke 12)

1. Right now, how much worry do you have in your life? Why?
2. What is God’s promise to those who believe in him?
3. What is the treasure God has given you that you value most?

Day #34 – Saturday, March 6 – Read Luke 13, Colossians 1-2

Jesus’ Triumph Over Sin (Colossians 2)

1. What does it mean that Jesus canceled the written code with His death on the cross?
2. If Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities by making a public spectacle of them then why do we struggle with overcoming spiritual warfare?
3. How can these verses help you fight the spirits/thoughts of accusation and/or guilt in your life?

Day #35 – Sunday, March 7 – Read Luke 14, Colossians 3-4

The Cost of Being a Disciple (Luke 14)

1. When has a family relationship or close friendship been a hindrance to your wholehearted devotion to Christ?
2. What price have you had to pay to follow Christ? How hard or easy has that been?
3. What are some things you are currently doing that keep you from losing your saltiness?

Week #7: Week of March 8 The Challenge of Godliness

Quick Facts about First Timothy:

- Timothy was a young man who was probably converted during Paul’s first missionary journey.
- When Paul returned to the area a year or two later, Timothy was recommended to him as a faithful disciple of Christ who would make a good traveling companion.

- Timothy is always associated with Paul in a mentor, apprentice relationship.
- Paul addresses the false teachers who were characterized as proud, arrogant, contentious and greedy. These teachers were more involved in speculating about obscure matters rather than exposition about Christ and the Christian lifestyle of love.

Quick Facts about Second Timothy:

- Although similar to First Timothy, Second Timothy is far more personal in tone. Paul wishes to pass on the commitment of a life lived for the cause of Christ to a younger man who will carry the torch further.
- Paul writes this letter waiting for his full trial but he did not expect to be released.
- Whether he ever saw Timothy again is unknown.
- According to tradition, Paul was beheaded shortly after this letter was written.

Day #36 – Monday, March 8– Read Luke 15, 1 Thessalonians 1-3

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

1. Of the two brothers, which reminds you of your own story?
2. Why do you think the Father did not take time to get an explanation from his son?
3. Have there been seasons of your life where you were in the pig pen? If so, how did you feel God received you when you returned?

Day #37 – Tuesday, March 9 – Read Luke 16, 1 Thessalonians 4-5

The Coming of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

1. What is Paul's concern in verse 13?
2. How can you have hope when it comes to death?
3. What does Paul mean in 5:4? Why is this not going to be a problem for the believer?
4. How does this passage help you as you consider your own death?

Day #38 – Wednesday, March 10 – Read Luke 17, 2 Thessalonians 1-3

Sin, Faith, Duty (Luke 17:1-10)

1. How is our attitude toward sin different from our attitude toward sinners? Why do you think this is so?
2. Do you think Jesus' statement in verse 6 is meant to be taken literally? Why or why not?
3. From the verses 4-10, what would you say are four characteristics of disciples? Can you summarize each of these four in one word?
4. Of the four characteristics of a disciple, with which do you have the most difficulty?

Day #39 – Thursday, March 11 – Read Luke 18, 1 Timothy 1-3

The Lord's Grace to Paul (1 Timothy 1: 12-20)

1. What was your life like before you knew Christ?
2. According to verse 15, why did Jesus come into the world? How does this make you feel?
3. How do you feel about talking about your past life when you share your faith?
4. Why is someone like a Paul such a good witness to unbelievers?
5. How can you incorporate Paul's story into your habit of witnessing?

Leadership in the Church and for Each Believer (1 Timothy 3)

1. Although applied specifically to leaders here, why are these qualities important for all Christians?
2. Of these qualities, what are two or three you have made progress with in this past year?
3. In which area do you want to grow now? How can this group help you?

Day #40 – Friday, March 12– Read Luke 19, 1 Timothy 4-6

Love of Money (1 Timothy 6)

1. What is the “great gain” in “godliness with contentment” (v. 6)?
2. Why do you think we struggle with our finances?
3. Is there a difference between enjoying money and being a lover of money?

Day #41 – Saturday, March 13 – Read Luke 20, 2 Timothy 1-2

A Workman Approved by God (2 Timothy 2:14-26)

1. According to verses 15-16 and 22-24, what should you pursue and what should you flee?
2. How do you know if you are “quarreling about words” or standing up against false teachings? Which do most Christians spend more time doing?
3. What action steps can you take to produce the following in your life this week? Righteousness? Faith? Love? Peace?

Day #42 – Sunday, March 14 – Read Luke 21, 2 Timothy 3-4

Signs of the End of the Age (Luke 21)

1. Is Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem relevant for Christians today? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever felt that verses 12-19 were the story of your life? What happened? How did God protect you through this time of persecution?
3. When reading the parable of the fig tree today, how near is the fig tree to sprouting?
4. What makes you think this? How does this affect the way you live your life?
5. How well does your life reflect verse 36?

Week #8: Week of March 15 The Challenge of Obedience

Day #43 – Monday, March 15– Read Luke 22, Titus 1-3

The Last Supper (Luke 22)

1. What does sharing the Lord’s Supper mean to you? What do you think about as you receive it?
2. With which disciple do you most identify? Why?
3. Have you ever been like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane – needing to pray, but unable to stay awake or focus? What is the thing in your life that most drives you to the ground in prayer like Jesus did?

Day #44 – Tuesday, March 16 – Read Luke 23, Philemon 1

Jesus’ Death (Luke 23)

1. What does the darkness of the day remind of you or make you think of?

2. What hope does the promise Jesus gave to the thief on his right give to you?
3. What does Jesus death mean to you?

Day #45 – Wednesday, March 17 – Read Luke 24, Hebrews 1-2

Jesus' Resurrection (Luke 24)

1. What words do you use to describe the feeling of grief that the women were experiencing on the way to the grave of Jesus that morning?
2. Notice how many times in this chapter the words “Be Not Afraid” or “Do Not Fear” appear.
3. How does the resurrection of Jesus make those words real in our life?
4. How does Luke 24:46-49 summarize the entire purpose of Jesus' life on earth and how do they apply to followers of Jesus today?

Day #46 – Thursday, March 18 – Read John 1-2, Hebrews 3-4

Jesus Greater Than Moses (Hebrews 3)

1. What does God promise here to those who trust and “fix” themselves on Jesus? How does this hope keep us going here on earth?
2. What threatens that hope? How can we guard against the things which threaten to pull us from Jesus?
3. How can we encourage others and receive encouragement to resist evil and stand firm in the faith?

Day #47 – Friday, March 19 – Read John 3-4, Hebrews 5-7

Jesus Our High Priest (Hebrews 5)

1. Why is it hard for many people to trust the love of God? Have you ever been there?
2. How would you explain the priesthood of Jesus to someone like that? To someone who doesn't understand the Old Testament priestly system?
3. What situations have made you wonder about turning from Christ? How are we encouraged by knowing that Jesus is our High Priest?

Day #48 – Saturday, March 20 – Read John 5-6, Hebrews 8-10

Jesus the Bread of Life (John 6)

1. Jesus used earthly bread to teach a much deeper lesson. What are your deepest hungers?
2. How do you seek to satisfy them? Does the hunger stay away?
3. What is Jesus answer to hunger? How does he promise to satisfy us?
4. What does it mean to know that Jesus is the “Bread of Life?” How has he satisfied the hungers in your life?

Day #49 – Sunday, March 21 – Read John 7-8, Hebrews 11-13

Faith is . . . (Hebrews 11)

1. How would you define faith? What are some verbs that describe your faith?
2. As you read through this list of people whose faith is rewarded, who in your life has been an example of great faith? Take a moment and thank God for them.
3. How did they demonstrate their faith? What made it obvious to you? How did it encourage you?
4. Who has God placed in your life that needs you to be an example of faith? What are specific ways you can demonstrate faith to them?

Week #9: Week of March 22 - The Challenge of Eternity

Quick Facts about John:

- John refers to himself in the book as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”
- John was the only disciple who did not die a martyr’s death.
- He wrote The Gospel of John at the end of life. It is the last of the four gospels to be written and more than likely he had read Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
- John’s Gospel is the most theological of the four and he uses imagery a lot like calling Jesus the light of world, the bread of life, the door, the vine, etc. There are also the seven “I AM” statements from Jesus.
- John takes 6 chapters to cover the scene between Jesus and His disciples the night before His crucifixion as they celebrated Passover, which we now celebrate as Communion.

Quick Facts about James:

- He was the brother of Jesus. He did not believe in Jesus divinity until after Jesus resurrected and ascended into Heaven.
- He was one of the first leaders in the early church.
- Many scholars believe James was the first book written chronologically speaking in the New Testament.
- Some scholars believe that James is a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5.
- James was one of the first Christian martyrs when the persecution of the church began.

Quick Facts about 1st and 2nd Peter:

- Both are written by Peter towards the end of his life.
- Peter references Paul’s letters in his letters and refers to them as equal with Old Testament scripture.
- Context of these letters: In the 64 AD a great fire destroyed much of Rome. It was widely believed that the Emperor Nero was responsible for the fire. However, he blamed the Christians for it and this began their persecution. Peter writes this letter to offer hope in the midst of suffering.
- Soon after he wrote these letters, Peter was crucified upside down.

Day #50 – Monday, March 22– Read John 9-10

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind (John 9)

1. Why might the disciples have thought that sin caused this man’s blindness? What problem with their reasoning does Jesus’ words in verse 3 point out?
2. What part does faith have in this healing? How does the blind man demonstrate his faith?

3. What was the last miracle that Jesus performed in your life? What part did faith play?
4. When is it hardest for you to have faith in the power of God?
5. When have you felt as if Jesus waited too long to intervene? Looking back, how do you think this wait helped you? Hurt you? What would you suggest to people who feel as if God has deserted them?

Day #51 – Tuesday, March 23– Read John 11-12, James 1-3

The Death of Lazarus (John 11)

1. Why does Jesus deliberately delay in traveling to see Lazarus (v. 6)?
2. Why do you think Jesus wept?
3. How did Jesus respond to Martha when she questioned him for taking so long to get there?
4. How did Jesus respond to Mary when she questioned him for taking so long to get there?
5. How are the responses different? How do they demonstrate the heart of Jesus in identifying with others?

When You Face Trials (James 1)

1. What are some ways that you have been able to “consider it pure joy” when you were faced with a difficult circumstance?
2. How does perseverance play into this type of attitude? What difficult situation have you had to demonstrate perseverance in?
3. James says “every good and perfect gift is from above” (v. 17). What are some good gifts that God has given you over this past year?

Day #52 – Wednesday, March 24 – Read John 13-14, James 4-5

Jesus Washes His Disciples’ Feet (John 13:1-17)

1. Why didn’t the disciples wash their feet before supper?
2. What would you have done if Jesus wanted to wash your feet?
3. What service has someone done for you that demonstrated their love? What’s something you have done?
4. Why don’t you think Christians don’t serve each other more than they do?

Jesus, the Way to the Father (John 14:5-14)

1. What is absolute about verse 6?
2. What does “No one comes to the Father except through me” mean to you? What does this verse do to your commitment to telling others about Jesus?
3. How is Jesus “the Way” in you life? The “truth”? The “life”?

Day #53 – Thursday, March 25 – Read John 15-16, 1 Peter 1-2

The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-17)

1. According to this analogy, what is the relationship between the believer and Jesus where fruit is concerned?
2. What do you think Jesus means in verses 12-13? Why would this change our relationship to Jesus from servant to friend?
3. What does it mean to you to “remain” or “abide” in Jesus? How do you do this?

The Living Stone and a Chosen People (1 Peter 2:4-12)

1. How does it make you feel to know you are chosen by God- that you belong to Him?
2. How is Christ a cornerstone? Why would people stumble over the stone rather than build their lives on it?
3. How do you respond to Peter's description of you and other Christians, in verse 9?
4. How is our new status with God to influence the way we live? Why is this important?

Day #54 – Friday, March 26 – Read John 17-18, 1 Peter 3-5

Living for God (1 Peter 4)

1. What type of changes began to take place in your life after you gave it to Christ?
2. What did your friends think about this? Did they respect you or did they mock you?
3. How do you maintain relationships with friends who do not honor God while honoring God with your life?

Day #55 – Saturday, March 27 – Read John 19-21, 2 Peter 1-3

False Teachers (2 Peter 2)

1. Why do you think it easy for people to follow false teachers?
2. Has there ever been a time when you were persuaded by someone who you now view as a false teacher?
3. What are some ways that you can guard against following the teachings of a false teacher?

Day #56 – Sunday, March 28 – 1 John 1-5

God's Love and Ours (1 John 1-5)

1. Since you became a Christian, has the tug of the world been stronger or fainter? How? Why?
2. Who are the antichrists in your life? How do they lead you astray?
3. How have you experienced God's lavish love this week?
4. How would you finish this sentence, "love is like..."?
5. Is the love discussed in this passage an action or a feeling? Why? What does this tell you about love?
4. What is the condition for prayer to be answered? What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name?

Week #10: Week of March 29

Quick Facts about 2nd John and 3rd John:

- They are both very short only having one chapter each.
- Written by the Apostle John in A.D. 80's or early 90's.
- Address the issue of hospitality for itinerant teachers who were serving to spread the Gospel As well as how to handle false teachers who were looking for a free stay from well intentioned believer.

Quick Facts about Jude:

- Jude was one of Jesus' biological brothers whom like James (another brother) came to believe in Jesus after the resurrection and ascension.
- The theme of the book is to contend for the faith against false teachers.

- Dated anywhere from 65 to 80 A.D.

Quick Facts about Revelation

- Written by the Apostle John while he was in exile on the Island of Patmos.

- The focus of Revelation is Jesus and that He shall overcome.

- Interpreted many ways over the centuries, however, the book's central purpose is not to arouse speculation about the future. Rather, it is meant to encourage Christians in every age to maintain their faith despite opposition, and to do so in the confidence that they will share in Jesus' ultimate victory over all forces that oppose Him and His people.

Day #57 – Monday, March 29 – 2 John 1, 3 John 1, Jude 1

Hospitality (2nd John and 3rd John)

1. How have you shown hospitality to others in the past?
2. Have you ever traveled into another county and been shown hospitality in a great way?
3. Why do you think John links love and obedience to Jesus' commands in 2nd John?

Being Aware of False Teachers (Jude)

1. How could someone be vulnerable to a false teacher?
2. How can you defend the teachings of Scripture without offending those who do not believe them?
3. Have you ever had to confront someone who was teaching something that was not true and how did you handle it? What are your thoughts on whether or not it is your place to say something?

Day #58 – Tuesday, March 30– Revelation 1-4

The Church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)

1. What good things characterized this church?
2. How might its strengths have been the cause of its failure?
3. What are the characteristics of forsaking your first love when it comes to our relationship with God? How you ever found yourself there? What did you do?

The Church in Laodicea (Revelation 2: 14-22)

1. How does wealth keep us from seeking Jesus? Why would He say, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich (verse 18)?
2. When have you experienced the rebuke and discipline of Jesus from His heart of love (verse 19)?
3. Is your live characterized more by a thermometer (you reflect your surroundings) or a thermostat (you regulate your surroundings)? What would Jesus say concerning this (verse 15-16)?

Day #59 – Wednesday, March 31– Revelation 5-8

The Scroll and the Lamb (Revelation 5)

1. What do you think makes the scroll so significant (Jeremiah 36:2-32)?
2. Why is Christ the only one worthy enough to open it? What titles are used to describe Him?
3. What does it mean that He is both a Lion and a Lamb?

The Seals (Revelation 6)

1. Which seal opening makes the greatest impression on you? Why?
2. What's the worst thing that has happened to you because of your faithfulness to the Word of God?
3. How does this passage make you feel about the end times? Why?

Day #60 – Thursday, April 1 – Revelation 9-12

The Angel and the Little Scroll (Revelation 10)

1. Describe the angel that announces the coming of the seventh trumpet. In what ways does this picture contrast with the traditional view of angels?
2. What happens to the small scroll? How can a revelation from God be both sweet and bitter?
3. How has God's Word been both sweet and sour to you?

The Woman and the Dragon (Revelation 12)

1. Describe the woman, the dragon, and the child. Who does the woman represent, the dragon, and the child?
2. What do you learn about conflict from this passage? How could you apply this in your own life?
3. How real do you think Satan is? When has he seemed most real to you? Why?
4. What do you need to do to become stronger for spiritual battle?

Day #61 – Friday, April 2 – Revelation 13-16

The Lamb and the 144,000 (Revelation 14)

1. Compare the mark of the beast with the mark of God.
2. What has been one of the most difficult periods of your life? How did your relationship with Christ enable you to endure?

Day #62 – Saturday, April 3 – Revelation 17-19

Hallelujah! (Revelation 19)

1. In contrast to the silence that comes with the fall of Babylon, what characterizes the new scene in heaven? Who participates in this praise?
2. What are four things for which you are extremely grateful to God? How do you usually express your gratitude to him about these four things?
3. How has your interest in worshiping God increased or decreased in the last year? Why?

Day #63 – Sunday, April 4 – Revelation 20-22

The River of Life (Revelation 22)

1. What words of Christ are repeated three times in this closing (vv. 7, 12, 20)? How do these words and the rest of verse 7 sum up the importance of Revelation?
2. What does Jesus say about himself in verses 12-13? What is the significance of this?
3. How have you prepared yourself for Christ's second coming?