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Week 1: Scripture: Sufficient for Salvation

Day 1: Introduction

Introduction: Can We Trust the Bible?

For those who have grown up in church, it's easy to assume we know what's in the Bible. But have you ever thought about how you'd respond if someone asked, "Why do you trust a collection of books written over hundreds of years?" After all, the Bible contains some puzzling stories: a talking serpent (Genesis 3), a talking donkey (Numbers 22), and even a day when the sun stood still (Joshua 10). There are also passages that seem barbaric, outdated, or difficult to reconcile with our modern understanding.

How do we grapple with such a collection of writings that, at first glance, might seem to create more problems than solutions? Can we simply dismiss these issues as the product of a different time and culture? And if so, what authority does the Bible have over our lives today?

When we see the Bible as problematic or irrelevant, it's easy to strip it of its authority. We might cherry-pick the parts we like and ignore the rest—or we may abandon its importance altogether. So how do we respond to these challenges?

The Purpose of the Bible

To determine whether the Bible is trustworthy, we first need to understand its purpose. Think of it this way: to judge whether something is "good," we must ask if it fulfills its intended purpose. For instance, a spoon with a hole in its bowl might be great for blowing bubbles, but it's not great for eating soup—it's failing its purpose as a spoon.

So, what is the purpose of the Bible?

The Bible is not just a book of rules or moral lessons; it's a collection of writings that tells us about God's work in bringing salvation to humanity. At its core, the Bible is **sufficient** to help us understand what we need to know for salvation.

Sufficient for Salvation

How do we judge the Bible's sufficiency? We look at what it says about salvation. Does it provide the knowledge necessary to lead us to salvation? At Shueyville Church, we believe that Scripture is sufficient for salvation.

The Bible contains everything we need to understand how to be saved from sin through the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It reveals who God is, what He has done, and how we are called to respond in faith.

When we approach the Bible with this understanding of its purpose, we see it not as a collection of random or problematic writings, but as God's revelation of His plan for us.

Reflection:

- Read Luke 15:11-32
- What about Jesus's story gives us hope when it comes to salvation?
- Jesus challenges us that it is not just doing bad that gets in the way of our relationship with God, but we sometimes lean on our goodness instead of God. How is that true for you?
- Pray for God to help you hunger and thirst for His Word more in your life, as well as for the whole church at Shueyville.

Day 2: The Bible's Uniqueness Among Ancient Writings

Can we trust the Bible? One way to answer that question is to consider how it stands out from other ancient writings. Most ancient texts focus on the victories of kings, the myths of gods, or moral lessons for society. The Bible, however, does something remarkable—especially in the Gospels.

The Gospels claim to be eyewitness accounts, not fables or philosophical musings. They name real places, real people, and real events. The writers present themselves not as inventors of stories but as witnesses to something extraordinary. They even include details that seem inconvenient or unflattering, such as the disciples' doubts, Peter's denial, or the fact that women—whose testimonies were often dismissed in ancient times—were the first to witness the resurrection.

Beyond this, the Bible's honesty is striking. Heroes like Abraham, Moses, David, and Peter are portrayed with all their flaws and failures. Unlike other ancient writings that glorify their subjects, the Bible shows humanity as it is—broken and in need of redemption. Why? Because the Bible isn't about human greatness; it's about God's grace.

This honesty and historical grounding give the Bible a unique credibility. It doesn't try to impress us with myth or moral superiority; instead, it reveals God's work in history to bring salvation to a broken world.

Reflection Questions:

- Read John 20:1-31 and 21:1-25
- What details does John include that he didn't have to in order to tell the story?
- If he had limited resources to write, why might he keep these details?
- Pray for God to soften your heart to where Jesus may be challenging you.

Day 3: The Bible Transcends Cultures

Have you ever thought about how a book written thousands of years ago in ancient Israel could still speak to us today? The Bible transcends its time and place, speaking to people across cultures, languages, and centuries.

In every corner of the world, people have found the Bible to be meaningful and relevant. It answers universal questions like, “Who is God?” “How am I saved?” and “Is there hope?” These are questions that transcend cultural boundaries because they’re part of the human experience.

While the Bible was written in a specific historical and cultural context, its message reaches far beyond. It reveals truths about God and salvation that apply to every person, no matter where or when they live. Its ability to connect with people across time and place is one of the reasons we trust it as God’s Word.

Think about how many books come and go—bestsellers that fade into obscurity within a few years. Yet the Bible remains the most translated, widely read, and impactful book in history. It speaks to kings and peasants, scholars and children, ancient cultures and modern societies. Why? Because its message comes from God, who is unchanging and desires a relationship with every person.

Reflection Questions:

- Read Matthew 5:13-48
- What are the most difficult instructions Jesus gives for you to receive?
- What might be the most challenging if you lived in a non-Western (US or European) culture?
- Are they different? Why or why not?
- Pray for help to conform your heart to God’s to his will and rule, not our own.

Day 4: Who Is Jesus? Lord, Lunatic, or Liar

One of the Bible's central purposes is to confront us with the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus made bold claims about Himself. He claimed to be God, to forgive sins, and to be the only way to eternal life. These claims leave us with only three options that C.S. Lewis speaks of in *Mere Christianity*: Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord.

If Jesus was lying about who He was, then He deceived millions of people and cannot be trusted. If He was a lunatic—believing things about Himself that weren't true—then we can dismiss Him. But if Jesus is Lord, if He is who He claimed to be, then we must take His words and His life seriously.

The Bible gives us reasons to believe Jesus is Lord. It shows His life of perfect love and compassion, His fulfillment of ancient prophecies, His miracles, and His resurrection from the dead. These are not the actions of a liar or a madman. They are the actions of the Son of God.

Ultimately, the Bible asks us to make a decision about Jesus. We can't remain neutral. If He is Lord, then our lives must change. We must surrender to Him, follow Him, and trust Him for salvation.

Reflection Questions:

- Read John 14:1-14
- What do you think about Jesus' claims to be God?
- What would change in your life if Jesus is truly Lord?
- Pray for God to be Lord of your life in all ways and things.

Day 5: The Centrality of the Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of Christianity. Without it, the entire faith collapses. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then His teachings, His miracles, and His sacrifice on the cross mean nothing. But if the resurrection is true, it changes everything.

The Bible presents the resurrection as a historical event, witnessed by hundreds of people. The disciples, who were once afraid and in hiding, became bold proclaimers of the risen Christ. Many of them even died for this belief. People don't die for something they know is a lie.

The resurrection proves that Jesus is who He claimed to be: the Son of God and the Savior of the world. It shows that His sacrifice on the cross was accepted by God and that He has conquered sin and death. Because of the resurrection, we have hope—not just for this life, but for eternity.

The Bible challenges us to respond to the resurrection. Will we ignore it, dismiss it, or embrace it? If Jesus rose from the dead, then He is alive today, and He is calling us to follow Him.

Reflection Questions:

- Matthew 28:1-20
- Why is the resurrection so essential to our faith?
- How does believing in the resurrection give you hope and purpose?
- Thank God in prayer for the Resurrection work that changes everything.

Week 2: Grace That Meets Us and Transforms Us

Day 1: The Truth of Christianity and Its Unique Claim

Nicodemus, a religious leader, came to Jesus at night, seeking clarity. Jesus responded with words that would have challenged Nicodemus deeply: “You must be born again.” Jesus wasn’t calling him to better behavior or deeper understanding that he could attain through education and wisdom but to a complete transformation—spiritual rebirth through God’s grace.

In a world with many religions and philosophies, we can sometimes feel awkward and difficult to find words to claim that Jesus is the only way to God. Yet, Jesus Himself said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). His words are not a rejection of others but an invitation to all. Jesus isn’t one option among many—He is the path God has provided for reconciliation and life.

The Bible’s message is clear and stands in opposition to other world religions: salvation is not about human effort or the accumulation of good deeds. The Gospel is about grace—God’s gift to humanity through Jesus. Other religions often reflect humanity’s search for transcending or achieving, but Christianity declares something unique: God has come searching for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

To hold firm to this truth is not to dismiss other faiths but to lovingly proclaim the sufficiency of Jesus’ work and gift of grace for us. In doing so, we name the depth and power of God’s grace, which offers salvation to all and transformation to those who believe.

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-21

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean for you personally to be “born again”?
- How does holding onto the truth of Christianity shape how you engage with others?
- Pray for courage to stand firm in your faith and to share God’s truth with love.

Day 2: God's Grace Meets Us Where We Are

The idea of prevenient grace (or preventing grace)—God's grace calling us to repentance before we seek Him—is beautifully illustrated in Psalm 139. The psalmist reflects on how God knows each of us intimately: our thoughts, our words, and even the paths we take. No matter where we go, God's presence is with us, gently drawing us closer to Him.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, unsure and hesitant, yet curious. This is the same prevenient grace at work—God meeting us where we are. Whether we come to Him in boldness or with questions and doubts, His grace pursues us.

This grace is not earned. It's not dependent on how good we are or how much we understand. It's simply God's way of saying, "I love you, and I'm calling you to journey with me." He plants seeds of longing in our hearts, awakens us to His presence, and invites us to take the next step.

The beauty of prevenient grace is that it meets us in our brokenness, but it doesn't leave us there. It invites us into the journey of transformation, to move from darkness into light and from uncertainty into faith.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139:1-16

Reflection Questions:

- Where have you seen God's prevenient grace in your life?
 - How does Psalm 139 deepen your understanding of God's presence with you?
 - Pray for open eyes to recognize how God is drawing you closer to Him.
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Day 3: Grace Is for All People

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people” (Titus 2:11). This declaration speaks to the expanse of God’s love. His grace doesn’t discriminate or exclude; it is for everyone, regardless of race, culture, or status.

When Jesus explained salvation to Nicodemus, He used the familiar imagery of Moses lifting up the snake in the wilderness—a story of healing and rescue for anyone who looked to God. Jesus connects this to his own mission: to be lifted up on the cross so that “everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.” The universality of God’s grace is clear—it is available to all who look to Jesus in faith, freely.

God’s grace reminds us that no one is too far gone, too broken, or too undeserving of His love. As His followers, we are called to reflect this grace in our relationships. The Gospel challenges us to extend love and kindness to those who are different from us, trusting that God’s grace is at work in their hearts, just as it is in ours.

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11-14, Numbers 21:4-9

Reflection Questions:

- How does it encourage you to know that God’s grace is for all people and what does it change for you right now as you reflect on this?
 - Who in your life needs to hear about God’s grace?
 - Pray for opportunities to reflect God’s grace to others this week.
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Day 4: Jesus Justifies Us

The cross is the centerpiece of God’s plan for salvation. When Jesus said, “The Son of Man must be lifted up,” He was pointing directly to the moment when He would take on the sins of the world and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross on Calvary.

Through this act, Jesus offers **justifying grace**—the grace that removes our guilt and makes us right with God. The idea of justifying grace comes from the legal definition that we are made right before God, acquitted from all charges because of the payment of Jesus. Romans 3 reminds us that all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory, but we are justified freely by His grace. This justification is not something we achieve through effort or good works. It is a gift that we receive when we put our faith in Jesus.

Justifying grace should be deeply moving. It means that the weight of our sin is lifted, and we are no longer defined by our failures but by God’s love and forgiveness. This grace should begin to transform us when we realize the depth of God’s love for us in paying off all of our sin and guilt, giving us the confidence to live as children of God and the courage to share His love with others.

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:21-28, John 3:14-17

Reflection Questions:

- How does Jesus’ sacrifice change the way you view God’s grace?
 - What does it mean for you to be justified by faith?
 - Pray for a heart that fully embraces the forgiveness and freedom found in Jesus.
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Day 5: Grace Is for Those Who Believe

At the end of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, He makes a pivotal distinction: God's grace is unlimited in its invitation, but it is only those who believe who are justified and receive eternal life. Prevenient grace, which goes before, is extended to all people. It is the nudge of God's love that awakens our hearts and invites us to step closer. Yet, justifying grace—the grace that restores us to right relationship with God—requires faith.

Jesus tells Nicodemus, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son” (John 3:18). This isn't about exclusion but invitation. Grace opens the door for all, but walking through that door requires belief—a personal decision to trust in Jesus.

Faith is more than intellectual agreement. It's stepping into the light, as Jesus explains in John 3:19-21. To believe in Jesus is to trust Him with your whole life, to let His truth shape your actions, and to live in the hope and confidence of salvation. Faith is the response to God's prevenient grace, the “yes” that allows justifying grace to transform us.

Ephesians 2 reminds us that salvation is “by grace... through faith.” It is a gift, not something we can earn. Prevenient grace reaches every person, but it is faith in Jesus that unlocks the fullness of God's redeeming work. This is why grace is both universal and specific. It is available to all but only changes the lives of those who believe.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10, John 3:18-21

Reflection Questions:

- How does understanding the distinction between prevenient grace and justifying grace deepen your view of God's love?
- Why is belief necessary to receive the fullness of God's grace?
- Pray for the courage to step into the light and fully trust in Jesus, allowing His grace to transform your life.

Week 3: Holy Living and Rules

Day 1: Abiding in Christ as the Source of Life

In John 15, Jesus describes Himself as the vine and His followers as the branches. He says, “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4). This imagery reminds us that our spiritual life, growth, and fruitfulness come not from striving to follow rules but from staying connected to Jesus.

Rules can feel constraining if we focus on them as the goal, but they take on a different meaning when we see them as the natural outcome of a relationship with Christ. The “rules” of Christianity—obedience, discipline, and holiness—are like guardrails, helping us remain connected to the life-giving vine. They don’t produce life; they protect it.

Abiding in Christ isn’t about following rules for their own sake. It’s about being so deeply connected to Him that fruitfulness naturally follows. Just as a branch draws life from the vine, we draw life from Jesus when we prioritize time with Him through Scripture, prayer, and worship.

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-8

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to “remain in Christ” in your daily life?
 - How does staying connected to Jesus bring fruitfulness into your life?
 - Pray for the grace to abide in Christ and experience the life and freedom He offers
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Day 2: Obedience as an Expression of Love

After describing the vine and branches, Jesus tells His disciples, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (John 15:9-10). Obedience to God’s commands isn’t about earning His love; it’s about staying rooted in it.

When we love someone, our actions naturally reflect that love. In the same way, following Jesus’ commands isn’t about begrudging submission but joyful response. His “rules” are expressions of His love and wisdom, designed to lead us into a life of flourishing.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reflects this connection between love and obedience. Known as the Shema, it begins with a declaration of God’s uniqueness and a call to love Him with all our heart, soul, and strength. This love is expressed by keeping His commands and passing them on to future generations.

Jesus also promises that obedience leads to joy: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). When we live within the framework of God’s guidance, we experience the fullness of life that comes from being aligned with His will.

Scripture Reading: John 15:9-11, Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Reflection Questions:

- How does obedience to Jesus help you experience His love more deeply?
 - What commands of Jesus have brought joy into your life?
 - Pray for a heart that sees obedience as an act of love and trust in God.
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Day 3: Loving Others as Evidence of Connection

Jesus commands us to love one another as He has loved us, saying, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:12-13). This sacrificial love is the ultimate evidence of a life connected to Christ.

Christian “rules” often focus on how we treat others—loving our enemies, forgiving those who hurt us, and serving those in need. These actions can feel like constraints if we focus on them as obligations. But when we abide in Christ, they become the natural overflow of His love working in us.

Jesus laid down His life for us, and He calls us to reflect that same love to the world. Loving others isn’t just a rule to follow; it’s the fruit of a life connected to Him. When we struggle to love, it’s an invitation to go back to the vine and let His love fill us first.

Scripture Reading: John 15:12-13, 1 John 4:7-12

Reflection Questions:

- What fruit is evident in your life right now?
 - Where is God calling you to show sacrificial love to someone in your life?
 - Pray for the Spirit to grow His fruit in your life, making you a blessing to others..
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Day 4: Bearing Fruit for God's Glory

Jesus chose us to bear fruit—fruit that will last. He says, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8). This fruitfulness is not a matter of striving or rule-following but of transformation through the work of God’s grace. It is the outworking of sanctification, or the process by which we are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ.

Sanctification is understood as a work of grace that begins at the moment of justification (when we are forgiven and made right with God) and continues throughout our lives. In other words, it is our journey of growing in love for God and neighbor, where the Holy Spirit transforms us into people who reflect God’s holiness. Sanctification isn’t about earning salvation; it’s about God’s grace helping us to bear fruit that brings Him glory and blesses others.

The fruit of sanctification includes both the transformation of our character and the impact of our actions. Paul calls this the “fruit of the Spirit,” describing it as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These qualities grow in us as we remain connected to Jesus, the true vine, and walk by the Spirit.

This fruit isn’t only for personal growth; it’s also for God’s glory and the benefit of others. Sanctification calls us to live in such a way that our lives reflect God’s goodness and draw others to Him.

Scripture Reading: John 15:14-17, Galatians 5:16-25

Reflection Questions:

- How would you describe the kind of fruit your life is bearing right now? How does it reflect your connection to Christ?
 - What does the idea of sanctification mean to you, and how does it inspire you to live more fully for God?
 - Pray for the Spirit to continue the work of sanctification in your life, bearing fruit that glorifies God and blesses others.
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Day 5: Freedom in Christ: Rules that Liberate

In Galatians 5, Paul contrasts the freedom of living by the Spirit with the bondage of living for the flesh. He writes, “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13).

Christian rules often feel like constraints to those who don’t understand their purpose. But in reality, these “rules” are pathways to true freedom. Psalm 119:32 says, “I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.” God’s commands free us from the destructive power of sin and guide us toward abundant life.

When we abide in Christ and walk by the Spirit, the rules of Christianity are no longer a burden. They become a joy because they lead us deeper into the life we were created to live—a life of love, service, and freedom in Christ.

Scripture Reading: John 15:14-17, Galatians 5:13-18, Psalm 119:30-32

Reflection Questions:

- How does walking in the Spirit bring freedom to your life?
- Where do you need to embrace God’s guidance to experience true freedom?
- Pray for the Spirit to lead you into a life of freedom, joy, and purpose.

Week 4: Sinful and Suffering, Why Bad Things Happen

Day 1: The Root of Sin and Suffering

When the serpent tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, he planted doubt about God's goodness. "Did God really say...?" the serpent asked, suggesting that God was withholding something good. Adam and Eve believed the lie, disobeyed God, and sin entered the world (Genesis 3:1-7).

At its core, sin is a rejection of God's authority and an attempt to define good and evil on our own terms. This rejection didn't just break humanity's relationship with God; it unleashed suffering, pain, and death into the world. The harmony of creation was shattered, and the natural order was thrown into chaos.

We often ask why God allows suffering, but Genesis 3 shows that suffering was never part of His original design. It entered the world because of humanity's choice to turn away from Him. While this doesn't answer every question about suffering, it reminds us of its root cause: sin and our estrangement from God.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:1-7, Romans 5:12-14

Reflection Questions:

- What does the serpent's deception reveal about the nature of sin?
 - In what ways do you see the effects of sin and suffering in your own life or the world around you?
 - Pray for the humility to trust God's goodness and wisdom, even when it's hard to understand.
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Day 2: The Consequences of Sin

When Adam and Eve disobeyed, the consequences of their sin spread far beyond themselves. God declared that sin would affect every aspect of life: relationships, work, and creation itself (Genesis 3:8-19). Pain, suffering, and toil became part of the human experience, not as punishment for each individual act but as the natural result of a world estranged from its Creator.

Paul echoes this in Romans 8:20-22, describing how creation was “subjected to frustration” and now “groans” as it waits for restoration. This groaning reminds us that the brokenness of the world is not the way things are supposed to be.

Suffering is a reminder of the seriousness of sin. It shows us the depth of humanity’s rebellion against God and the devastating ripple effects it has on the world. But even in the consequences of sin, God’s grace is present. He clothed Adam and Eve to cover their shame (Genesis 3:21), a small but profound sign of His mercy and provision.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:8-19, Romans 8:18-22

Reflection Questions:

- How does the brokenness described in Genesis 3 help you understand the suffering in the world today?
 - Where do you see God’s grace in the midst of sin’s consequences?
 - Pray for the strength to trust God’s plan for redemption, even in the face of pain and suffering.
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Day 3: God’s Promise in the Midst of Brokenness

Even as God declares the consequences of sin, He offers hope. In Genesis 3:15, God promises that the offspring of the woman will crush the serpent’s head, foreshadowing the victory of Jesus over sin and death. This is the first glimpse of the Gospel in Scripture—the promise that God would not leave humanity in its broken state.

Throughout the Bible, we see this promise unfold. Jesus came to defeat sin and suffering by taking them upon Himself. He entered our broken world, experienced our pain, and bore our sin on the cross. Through His resurrection, He conquered death and began the process of restoring creation.

While suffering remains a part of life in this fallen world, God’s promise gives us hope. We look forward to the day when Jesus will return, and He will “wipe every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4). Until then, we trust in His presence and His plan to bring ultimate restoration.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:15, Revelation 21:1-5, Romans 5:15-21

Reflection Questions:

- How does God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 give you hope in the midst of suffering?
 - What does it mean to trust in Jesus’ victory over sin and death?
 - Pray for faith to hold onto God’s promises, even when life feels overwhelming.
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Day 4: Living in a Groaning World

Paul writes in Romans 8:22-25 that creation and humanity alike “groan” as we wait for redemption. This groaning is not despair but longing—a recognition that the world is not as it should be and a yearning for God’s restoration.

Suffering often confronts us with difficult questions: Why does God allow this pain? Why hasn’t He made things right yet? While the Bible doesn’t give us all the answers, it points us to a God who is present in our pain. Jesus Himself groaned in anguish as He faced the cross, showing us that God is not distant from our suffering.

Our groaning also reminds us of the hope we have in Christ. Paul calls it “the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23), the day when all things will be made new. In the meantime, we are called to persevere, trusting that God’s Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us when we don’t know how to pray (Romans 8:26-27).

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:22-27, John 11:32-44

Reflection Questions:

- How does recognizing that the world “groans” help you process suffering?
 - Where do you see signs of hope in the midst of brokenness?
 - Pray for perseverance and for the Spirit to strengthen you in times of struggle.
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Day 5: God's Presence in Our Pain

The brokenness of the world can feel overwhelming, but the Bible reminds us that God is near to the brokenhearted. Psalm 34:18 says, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” God doesn’t promise to shield us from all suffering, but He promises to be with us in the midst of it.

In Isaiah 53, we see a prophecy about Jesus as the “Man of Sorrows,” one who was “familiar with pain.” Jesus willingly entered our brokenness to bring us healing. He understands our suffering because He endured it Himself, and through His resurrection, He offers us the hope of a restored relationship with God and a future free from pain.

As we face suffering, we can hold onto the truth that God is with us. He offers comfort, strength, and hope, even when we don’t have all the answers. And as people redeemed by Christ, we are called to extend His presence to others—walking alongside those who suffer and reflecting His love in a hurting world.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 34:17-22, Isaiah 53:3-6, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Reflection Questions:

- How has God been present in your pain or suffering?
- How can you reflect God’s presence to someone who is hurting?
- Pray for the brokenhearted and for God’s comfort and strength to sustain them.

Week 5: The Church, For Better or For Worse

Day 1: One Body, Many Parts

Paul writes, “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12). This beautiful metaphor reminds us that the Church is a unified body made up of diverse members, each with a unique role. While we may have different gifts and callings, we all share the same purpose: to glorify Christ and serve His kingdom.

However, tension arises when we forget this unity. Division, comparison, and pride disrupt the Body’s harmony. Some members may feel unimportant, while others may try to do everything on their own. But Paul emphasizes that every part is vital: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’” (v. 21). The Church’s strength comes not from the greatness of individual members but from the way Christ works through the whole Body.

Even when the Church falls short, its design points us to God’s wisdom and grace. We are reminded that unity in Christ doesn’t mean uniformity—it means working together, valuing one another, and relying on Jesus to guide us.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, Ephesians 4:1-6

Reflection Questions:

- How does knowing you are part of the Body of Christ shape your understanding of your role in the Church?
 - What gifts or roles has God given you to contribute to the Church’s mission?
 - Pray for unity in the Church and for a heart that seeks to contribute to its mission.
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Day 2: Broken but Redeemed

The Church has been responsible for injustice and hypocrisy throughout history. This reality can be deeply disheartening. Yet, it's important to remember that the Church is made up of sinners who are still in the process of being transformed by God's grace.

In Matthew 9:12-13, Jesus says, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." The Church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners. It's a place where broken people gather to encounter God's grace and work out their salvation.

The Church's brokenness does not mean it is beyond redemption. Ephesians 5:25-27 describes Jesus' love for the Church, saying that He gave Himself up for her "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." Jesus is still at work, purifying His Church and preparing her to reflect His glory.

This doesn't excuse wrongdoing in the Church but reminds us that the object of our faith is not the Church itself but Christ. He is the head of the Church, the one who redeems and renews it. When we encounter hypocrisy or injustice, we are called to grieve, pray for change, and trust that Christ is still working to purify His Body.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 9:9-13, Ephesians 5:25-27

Reflection Questions:

- How can you respond when you see brokenness or hypocrisy in the Church?
 - What does it mean to you that the Church is both broken and redeemed?
 - Pray for humility to acknowledge the Church's faults and for God's grace to bring healing and renewal.
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Day 3: Christ Is the Head of the Church

While the Church often fails, its foundation is unshakable because Christ Himself is its head. Colossians 1:18 says, “He is the head of the body, the Church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.”

This truth shifts our focus. When the Church fails, we are reminded that it is not the source of our hope—Jesus is. He is the one who redeems, sustains, and leads His Church. The Church’s purpose is to point to Him, not to itself.

1 Peter 2:4-5 calls believers “living stones,” being built into a spiritual house to offer sacrifices pleasing to God. Christ is the cornerstone of this house, the foundation on which everything rests. When the Church forgets this and seeks its own glory, it loses its way. But when it remains rooted in Christ, it reflects His love and truth to the world.

When Christians fall short, it’s an opportunity to refocus on Jesus. He is the perfect example of love, justice, and mercy. The Church may be imperfect, but it remains His chosen instrument to bring His message of hope and redemption to the world.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:15-20, 1 Peter 2:4-5

Reflection Questions:

- How does Christ’s role as the head of the Church give you hope, even when the Church fails?
 - In what ways can you personally reflect Christ to the world through the Church?
 - Pray for the Church to grow in its reflection of Christ and to stay rooted in Him.
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Day 4: Living as a Witness to the World

Jesus tells His disciples in John 13:35, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The Church’s witness to the world is not based on its perfection but on its ability to reflect Christ’s love. Hypocrisy and division damage this witness, but unity and love point others to God’s transforming power.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul emphasizes that every member of the Body has a role to play in building up the Church and glorifying Christ. When we live in humility, serving one another and valuing every member, we show the world what it looks like to live in God’s kingdom.

However, this kind of witness requires intentional effort. It means confessing our sins, forgiving one another, and seeking reconciliation when relationships are strained. It means prioritizing Christ’s mission over personal preferences or pride.

The Church will never be perfect, but when it lives in unity and love, it shines as a light in a dark world. As individual members of the Body, we are called to contribute to this witness by reflecting Christ’s character in our daily lives.

Scripture Reading: John 13:34-35, 1 Corinthians 12:21-27

Reflection Questions:

- How can you contribute to the Church’s witness by showing love to others?
 - Where is God calling you to confess, forgive, or reconcile within the Church?
 - Pray for the Church to be a place of love, unity, and healing that points people to Christ.
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Day 5: The Church's Mission to a Broken World

Jesus gave the Church a clear mission: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). The Church exists not for its own glory but to fulfill this mission of sharing the Gospel and making disciples.

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 that we are “Christ’s ambassadors,” entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. This means that even in its brokenness, the Church has a vital role to play in bringing God’s hope and healing to the world.

The Church’s mission is not about showcasing its greatness but about pointing to Christ’s greatness. When we focus on His love and grace, we can be a source of light in the midst of darkness.

Despite its imperfections, the Church is the vessel through which God works to bring His message of hope and redemption to the world. This mission calls us to humility, service, and a reliance on God’s Spirit to empower us for the work He has given us.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:16-20, 2 Corinthians 5:16-20

Reflection Questions:

- How can you participate in the Church’s mission to share the Gospel and make disciples?
- In what ways can you reflect Christ’s love and grace as His ambassador?
- Pray for the Church to stay focused on its mission and to rely on God’s Spirit for guidance and strength.

Week 6: A Loving AND Just God?

Day 1: A God Who Is Both Loving and Just

The story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 is sobering. The rich man, who ignored Lazarus' suffering, finds himself in torment after death. Meanwhile, Lazarus, who endured hardship in life, is comforted at Abraham's side. This parable highlights the reality of God's justice and the eternal consequences of our choices.

God's justice can feel uncomfortable in a culture that prioritizes individual freedom and tolerance. We often prefer to think of Him as purely loving. But true love and justice cannot be separated. A loving God must also be just; He cannot ignore evil or allow sin to go unaddressed.

Yet God's justice is not cold or detached—it flows from His love. He desires all people to repent and come to Him (2 Peter 3:9). His justice is patient, giving us time to turn back to Him, but it is also certain. The decisions we make about how we respond to Him in this life have eternal significance.

Scripture Reading: Luke 16:19-31, 2 Peter 3:8-10

Reflection Questions:

- How do you see God's justice as a necessary part of His love?
 - What choices are you making now that reflect your relationship with God?
 - Pray for a heart that trusts both God's love and His justice, and ask Him to help you live in alignment with His will.
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Day 2: God Allows Us to Choose

The rich man's story is tragic because it shows the consequences of choosing to live apart from God. Throughout his life, the rich man prioritized wealth and comfort, ignoring the needs of others and neglecting his relationship with God. In the end, his eternal destiny reflected the choices he had made.

God doesn't force anyone into a relationship with Him. He gives us the freedom to choose—to accept His love and grace or to reject it. This freedom is a reflection of His love, but it also comes with responsibility. To choose separation from God in this life is to experience separation from Him in eternity.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.'" God honors our choices, even when those choices lead us away from Him.

Yet God's heart is always for reconciliation. He sent Jesus to seek and save the lost, offering us a way back to Him. The question is: How will we respond?

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20, John 3:16-18

Reflection Questions:

- How does God's gift of free will challenge or encourage you?
 - What does it mean to choose life in your relationship with God?
 - Pray for wisdom to make choices that reflect God's love and truth in your life.
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Day 3: Hell as Separation from God

One of the hardest questions Christians face is how a loving God could send people to hell. But the Bible presents hell not as a place God sends people arbitrarily but as the natural outcome of rejecting Him. In Luke 16, the rich man experiences torment, not because God takes pleasure in punishment but because separation from God is, by definition, anguish.

Hell is described as a place where people are “shut out from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is the ultimate consequence of choosing to live apart from Him. God doesn’t force anyone into hell; instead, He honors our decision to reject His presence.

God’s desire is for everyone to be saved and to come into a relationship with Him (1 Timothy 2:4). He sent Jesus to bridge the gap between us and Him so that no one would have to experience eternal separation. Hell is not a sign of God’s lack of love but a reflection of His respect for our freedom to choose.

Scripture Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Matthew 25:31-46

Reflection Questions:

- How does understanding hell as separation from God change the way you think about it?
 - How do your daily decisions reflect your desire to draw closer to God or move away from Him?
 - Pray for those who have not yet chosen to accept God’s love and ask for opportunities to share His grace with them.
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Day 4: The Cross: Where Love and Justice Meet

God's justice and love are perfectly displayed in the cross of Christ. Romans 3:23-26 explains that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, but God made a way for us to be justified through Jesus. On the cross, Jesus bore the punishment for our sins, satisfying God's justice while extending His love.

The cross shows us that God doesn't ignore sin—He deals with it. But instead of leaving us to face the consequences, He steps in to take them upon Himself. This is the ultimate expression of His love.

The rich man in Luke 16 represents what happens when people reject God's offer of salvation. But Jesus' death and resurrection mean that we don't have to face the fate of separation from God. Through faith in Him, we are reconciled to God and invited into eternal life.

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:23-26, Isaiah 53:4-6, John 19:28-30

Reflection Questions:

- How does the cross help you understand both God's love and His justice?
 - What does it mean to you personally that Jesus took the punishment for your sins?
 - Pray with gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice and ask God to help you share the hope of the Gospel with others.
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Day 5: God's Invitation to Eternal Life

The story of Lazarus and the rich man serves as a powerful reminder that once our earthly life is over, it is too late to change our eternal destiny. However, it also points to the urgent opportunity we have in this life to respond to God's love. In this moment, God offers us the gift of eternal life—a relationship with Him that starts now and extends forever.

God's invitation to eternal life is rooted in His love for us. Jesus offers abundant life, both now and forever. In John 10:10, Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." This life isn't just about a future in heaven, but about a deep, fulfilling relationship with God that begins today.

In Revelation 22:17, we read, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." This is God's open invitation to all, regardless of past mistakes or circumstances. His invitation is to come to Him, drink of His grace, and receive eternal life.

The question for us today is: Will we respond to God's invitation?

Scripture Reading:

John 10:10, Revelation 22:17, 2 Corinthians 6:2

Reflection Questions:

- How does the promise of eternal life through Jesus shape your view of life now?
- In what ways can you respond to God's invitation today?
- Pray for a heart that eagerly accepts God's invitation and for opportunities to share His love with others.