



## **Life Group Lesson Guide**

**EVERY  
GENERATION  
REACHING  
THE NEXT  
GENERATION**

# - Lesson 1 -

## Giving God Your First Fruits

### Key Verse:

*Colossians 1:18* He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

### Core Value:

Jesus deserves first place in every area of our life.

### Lesson:

What takes top priority in your life? When you wake up each morning, what is on your mind? How we start each day affects the direction our day takes. In this lesson, we will explore how our choice of first fruits affects how we spend our time, work and serve, and disciple others.

#### 1. First Fruits

In the Old Testament, we see the festival of the First Fruits mentioned in *Leviticus 23:9-14* and *Exodus 26*. The first fruits offering symbolized the consecration of the entire harvest to God and was an earnest or pledge for the full harvest yet to come. The people would offer the first and best of their harvest, trusting God to supply the future harvest to meet their needs. *Proverbs 3:9* reminds us to honor the **LORD** from your wealth and from the first fruits of all your produce.

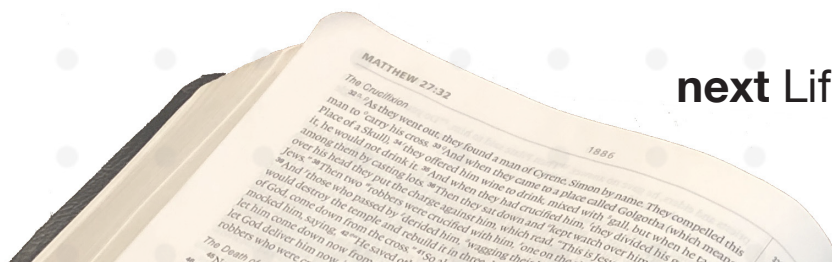
In the New Testament, we see the term first fruits in *Romans 8:23*. We are reminded that having the Holy Spirit living in us, as Christians, guarantees the full completion of our salvation. In *James 1:18*, Christians are referred to as the first fruits among His creatures. Giving first fruits reminds us of our trust in God to provide for us and the surety of our salvation because of the work of the Holy Spirit living within us.

#### 2. First Place: Time

We all make decisions every day that automatically make other decisions for us. Every yes we say to something necessitates a no to something else. For example, I can afford this house, but I must make my current car last another five years. Another is that we can afford this vacation but must stop eating out. The first choice drives what must happen for the second choice. What is the driver of your time?

*Matthew 6:33* tells us to seek first the kingdom of God. What does it look like to seek God first each day? I was challenged in a class to read my bible or pray before I looked at my phone each morning. I was surprised by how hard this was. I was also surprised how looking at my phone first started me down a path that consumed all the time I had allotted to read my bible and pray that day. If you have said, "I do not have time to read my bible or pray daily," then something besides God is driving your time.

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### 3. First Place: Work/Service

*Colossians 3:23–24* “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” Does Jesus get first place in how you work? Others should see a difference in how we approach basic tasks, challenges, teamwork, encouragement, etc. It’s easy to be ministry-minded with church activities but less so with our daily work. The Bible presents another view that reveals it should be the same. Do you look for opportunities to impact the kingdom as you walk throughout your day?

*1 Peter 4:8–11* teaches us that we are to serve one another without complaint and with love for one another. Verse 10 reminds us to use our gifts to serve one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. *1 Peter 4:11* challenges us to: “Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

### 4. First Place: Discipleship

*Matthew 28:19–20* “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” These verses are known as the great commission. Jesus commands all of us to go and make disciples. That command may start in your home with family or a roommate. It may be someone from your church or a new friend. Part of giving Jesus first in everything is making disciples. Is that something you have prioritized in your life? What is your plan for discipleship?

### Personal Reflection:

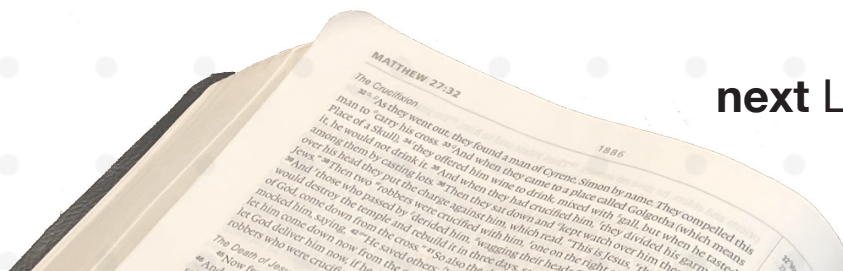
1. If your bank account and calendar could talk, what would they say are your first fruits?
2. What changes do you need to make in your daily rhythms to place God first in all things?
3. Are there areas of your finances that you struggle to trust in God’s hands?

### Group Discussion:

1. Who in your life models a life lived with Jesus first? What things do they do to exhibit this?
2. Satan use lies to discourage you from making Jesus first in everything. What verses provide truth to shine the light on each of these lies?
3. How can we help each other live this principle out? Be specific.

### Practical Ideas for Mobilization:

- Pray and ask God to direct you on where to start making Him first in all things.
- Plan the first steps toward changing your daily life to put God first.
- Pray for God to show you who He wants you to invest in for weekly discipleship.



## - Lesson 2 -

# The Praying Church

### Key Verse:

*Ephesians 6:18–20 (ESV): “..praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

### Core Value:

Prayer is essential and foundational to a healthy church.

### Lesson:

#### 1. Prayer is a Privilege

Prayer is one of our greatest privileges of being a child of God. Time spent in prayer should be a priority in our Christian walk, personally and corporately as a church. Many times, prayer becomes the last resort, and as a result, we miss the power and blessings of the Lord. Prayer is seen as something we “have to do” rather than the privilege it is. As believers, we have direct access to the Most High and can come to Him with everything, knowing He can do anything. It is truly a gift as well as an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Scripture passages abound in teaching us how to pray, giving examples of prayer, and revealing the results of God’s work through prayer. One of these passages is found in [Psalm 121:1–2](#) as David rejoices in the opportunity to worship with God’s people in His house. Prayer is at the heart of worship and refocuses our attention back on our great God.

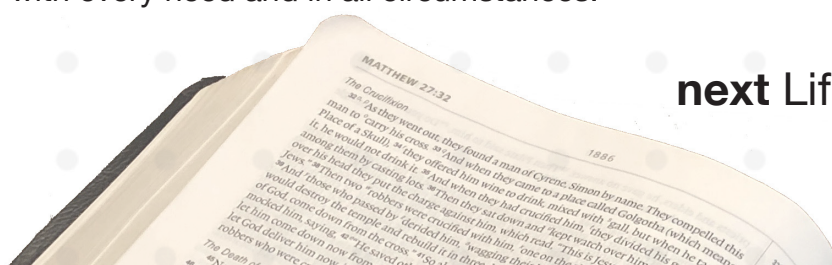
- In light of scripture, how should we, as a church, pray?
- Why is prayer so important in the life of a thriving, effective church?

Prayer is a broad topic, but this lesson will focus on the basics of prayer.

#### 2. The Basics of Prayer

##### A. Why Should the Church Pray?

**Focused Attention** - Prayer is at the heart of worship in the local church. Regular, heartfelt, and humble prayer enables believers to refocus their self-centered attention back to God. We must admit that God alone is the One who enables and equips us to carry out His will. Prayer is how God chooses to meet our needs ([Philippians 4:6](#)). By bringing our requests to God, we are acknowledging that He is our sustainer and provider. We must trust Him each and every day, with every need and in all circumstances.





**Unity of Believers** – Joining in corporate prayer unifies the local body of believers. In the book of Acts, we see the church gathered together in unity as they earnestly prayed ([Acts 12:5](#)). These believers approached God with childlike faith and humility while trusting God to do what was best with their request. As a result, they experienced God’s powerful deliverance of Peter, and no doubt their joy and faith increased.

**Fight the Enemy** – Faithful prayer enables us to wear the Armor of God and fight the enemy the way God intends. We must recognize that we cannot fight spiritual battles in our own power. As Christians, we are always subject to the temptations and attacks of the devil. [Ephesians 6:10–17](#) describes putting on the different pieces of the armor and why they are necessary. It’s only fitting that instructions for prayer follow in verses [18–20](#). Prayer is what holds these pieces of armor together and empowers them to be effective.

## B. How Should the Church Pray?

**Spirit Led** – Paul is asking the church in [Ephesians 6:18](#) to pray “*in the Spirit*.” He recognized that effective prayer must be Spirit led. Only in the Spirit’s power and direction can we pray in the will of God according to [Romans 8:26–27](#). We must allow our prayers to be moved and guided by the Holy Spirit. He will empower and direct our prayers, and He will petition for us when we do not know exactly how to pray.

**Always with Perseverance** – We are also commanded to be joyful always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything ([1 Thessalonians 5:16–17](#)). Prayer is appropriate at all times and should not fluctuate with feelings or circumstances. Our personal and collective prayer should not be vain repetition but rather heartfelt, persistent, and regular communication with our Lord.

**Continually Alert** – [Ephesians 6:18](#) admonishes believers to “...keep alert with all perseverance....” We must remain aware of what is going on around us and be discerning of the threats and dangers around us, spiritually speaking. Our adversary, the devil, is described in [1 Peter 5:7–8](#) as a roaring lion prowling about seeking someone to devour. We are reminded once again how important prayer is to be victorious in spiritual warfare.

## C. Who Should the Church Pray For?

**The Saints** – Scripture reminds us of the importance of praying for the saints, those brothers and sisters in Christ who are part of our church family. When we regularly intercede privately and collectively for other believers, we will see individuals edified, participants encouraged, new believers disciplined, faith strengthened, and repentance experienced. Praying collectively teaches us how to love and care for others and allows us to make an impact that will last through eternity.

**Pastors and Teachers** – Paul requests prayer in [Ephesians 6:19](#) when he says, “*and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel*”. As a minister of the gospel, Paul knew the value of prayer, and he did not hesitate to share specific requests. Those who have been called to teach and shepherd need consistent prayer as they seek to be used by God to accomplish His will. Our pastors and teachers



need prayers for boldness to preach the truth, wisdom for ministering to others, continued faithfulness in shepherding the flock, and protection from spiritual attacks.

### 3. Conclusion

Our very lives and the life of our church should be characterized by an attitude of prayer. We should be known for interceding for the needs of others, willingly submitting to God's purposes and plans, and asking that His perfect will be accomplished. Jesus calls us to pray because it works!

### Personal Reflection:

1. Do I regularly pray privately and corporately? If not, what am I willing to do to make this a priority?
2. Do I allow the Holy Spirit to lead and direct my prayers, or are they self-seeking and guided by personal interests alone?
3. Do I faithfully pray for our pastors, life group leaders, and others within the church who are called to teach the truths of God's Word? If not, why not?
4. Does my prayer life reveal that I believe God can do absolutely anything? What can I do practically to increase my faith in Him?

### Group Discussion:

1. What are some practical ways our church could become more unified through prayer?
2. What are some areas that need specific prayer as our church looks forward to another 100 years of serving the Lord and our community?
3. What are three ways that we, as a church, can better pray and support our members, ministries, and ministers?

### Practical Ideas for Mobilization:

- Foster a prayerful environment. Review or read "21 Days to Childlike Prayer" by Jed Coppenger
- Regularly celebrate answers to prayer in the lives of others.
- Faithfully attend church/life groups and invest practically and prayerfully in those around you.



## - Lesson 3 - Legacy

### Key Verse:

**Joshua 4:21–24 (ESV):** *“And he said to the people of Israel, ‘When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”*

### Core Value:

God will provide us with opportunities to pass our faith to the next generation.

### Lesson:

Charles Spurgeon wrote *“A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you when the forget-me-nots have withered. Carve your name on hearts, not on marble.”*

- Can you think of a time when someone carved their name on your heart?
- Give an example. Did it change your life?
- How has it affected you?

### 1. Generation One - Crossing the Jordan

**Read Joshua 4.** After 40 years of wandering the desert, God is finally leading His people into the promised land, Israel. The crossing of the people of Israel was led by the priest carrying the Ark of Covenant, and as soon as their feet touched the waters of the Jordan, the river dried up allowing the nation to cross on dry land.

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God directed Israel to stack the stones for two reasons: **1.** Reminder for future generations; **2.** That the world may know that He is God and has orchestrated this. There are going to be times in our lives that God will hold back the waters for us. It might be a prayer that has been answered that could have only been done by the power of God. It might even be several small things that over time stack up to become something big.

- Is there a time that God has “provided you dry ground to walk on”?
- Why is it important that we let others know about these times?
- Specifically, the next generation?

## 2. The Next Generation - Compromise

**Joshua 24:29–31 (ESV):** “After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old. And they buried him in His own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel.”

After the death of Joshua, we read that Israel served the Lord during the following generation. However, in **Judges 2:1–5**, we see that this same generation that “served the Lord” did not follow all of God’s commands for the taking of the land. This generation compromised by not fully driving out the people of the land. Because of this, God says in **Judges 2:3 (ESV):** “...I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.” Even though they “served the Lord,” they did not fully follow His commands.

- What are some things that we compromise on despite what God’s Word tells us?

## 3. The Next Generation - Does Not Know the Lord

**Judges 2:10 (ESV):** “And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.”

Throughout the Old Testament, we see generation after generation “do what is evil in the sight of the Lord” or “continue in the sins of their father.” In Judges 2:10, what is the reason they did this? They did not know the work that He had done for Israel. As we see from Joshua 4 and the gathering of the stones, God wants us to be intentional in letting the next generation know what He has done.

- How are we being intentional in doing so?
- How are we passing on this legacy to the next generation?



#### 4. The Next Step - Intentionally Invest

The reason that you are here today is that someone invested in your life. Someone was intentional in telling you what God has done for them and what He has done for you. It is important that we continue this legacy for the next generation. [Psalm 78:1–4](#) tells us, *“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. **We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that He has done.**”*

There are many reasons that we choose to “hide the glorious deeds of the Lord” from those around us. Maybe we are scared that we will be made fun of or alienate family and friends. Maybe it’s that we are ashamed of the trouble that God has saved us from. Maybe it’s that we are afraid of being the “poster child” for this struggle that God has carried us through. God does not want us to hide what He has done for us—He wants us to intentionally share these things with others and the next generation.

Ronald Reagan once said that *“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.”* Just like freedom, our faith is not a character or trait that will automatically be passed on from generation to generation. If we want the next generation to follow, we must be intentional in what we tell them.

- Are there stones that God has asked us to stack for others to see? A “memorial” that might give us the opportunity to show how God has provided dry ground for us to walk on?
- Why might we hide the *“glorious deeds of the Lord, His might, and the wonders that He has done?”*

#### 5. The Next Step - Walk in Them

[Ephesians 2:10 \(ESV\)](#): *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

The Greek word for workmanship is the same word that we get the English word poem. We are God’s poem. His masterpiece that He created for good works. Good works that He has already prepared for us. Our responsibility is to simply walk in them. Looking back at the quote from Spurgeon, you might ask how you can leave your name on someone’s heart. [Ephesians 2:10](#) tells us that all we need to do is to open our eyes and walk in them. God provides us with opportunities to pass on our faith to our generation and the next.

### Personal Reflection:

- Am I intentionally involved in passing my faith to someone else?
- Is there a set of stones that I am hiding?
- Am I looking for the good works that God has put before me?

### Group Discussion:

- Discuss this quote. "Reputation is what people think of us now. Legacy is what people think of us long after we are gone."
- What are ways that we can build a legacy of faith to influence the next generation?
- Why are our failures highlighted more than our victories?

### Practical Ideas for Mobilization:

- Pray that you will not become complacent in sharing your faith and "the glorious deeds of the Lord" with the next generation.
- Allow God to open your eyes to the importance that you play in His plan for future generations.



## - Lesson 4 - Generosity

### Key Verse:

2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV): *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

### Core Value:

Our giving must be Spirit-led and from a willing, obedient heart.

### Lesson:

How we use our finances can be a very personal matter, particularly in our giving to the Lord's work and those in need. Jesus emphasized the private nature of our benevolence when He tells us to *“not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”* [Matthew 6:3 \(ESV\)](#). Obeying this command guards us from pride and wrong motives.

This principle doesn't preclude us from motivating each other to be generous. Paul's letters are filled with admonitions on how to love and serve each other. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul talks openly about giving. He encourages the believers in Corinth to fulfill their commitment to give to their needy brethren in Jerusalem, and he uses the generosity of other churches to motivate them.

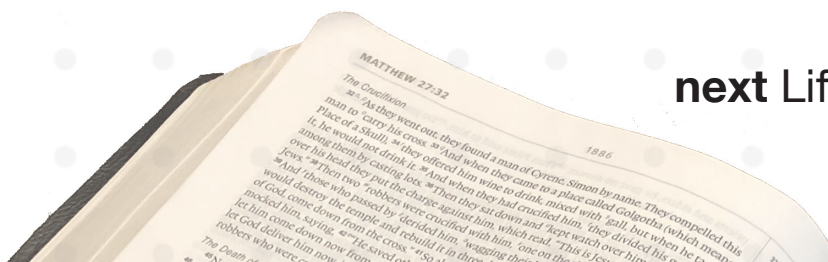
There can be challenges to teaching about giving in the church, but there is much to learn from Paul's teaching and example.

### 1. Challenge One – False Teachers and Bad Examples

Some churches and religious organizations abuse the topic of giving. “Prosperity preachers” prey on the flock by mishandling God's Word. They tell people to “give to God” and promise that, in return, He is obligated to bless them financially. In the process, these wolves in sheep's clothing become fabulously wealthy.

To avoid this perception, sincere pastors and other legitimate ministries may be tempted to avoid the topic of giving all together. This may keep God's people from receiving vital Biblical teaching on honoring God with their finances, which brings true spiritual and financial blessing.

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## 2. Response to this Challenge – Maintain Godly Character in the Pulpit and the Pews

It is notable that Jesus had much to say on money and stewardship. He knows our hearts, and He reminds us that our views on money and our use of resources reveal our character and our priorities. *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* [Matthew 6:21 \(ESV\)](#).

Integrity must be the hallmark of every Christ-follower whether we are giving or spending what is given. Throughout his letter, Paul defends his integrity to the Corinthian church. Two examples are in 2 Corinthians.

- *“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God”* [2 Corinthians 4:1–2 \(ESV\)](#).
- *“We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry”* [2 Corinthians 6:3 \(ESV\)](#).

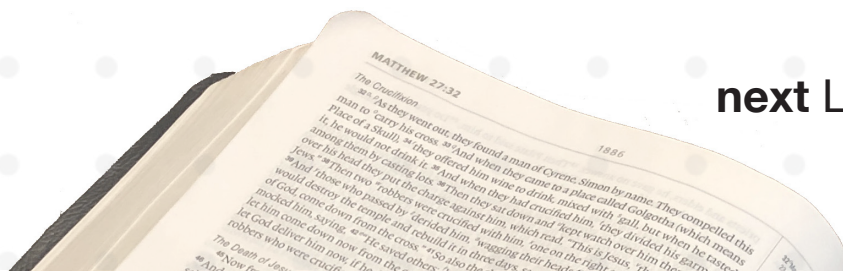
## 3. Challenge Two – Economic Realities

Corinth was in southern Greece, also known as Achaia. To stir up the Corinthians’ generosity, Paul references the churches in Macedonia (northern Greece). In [2 Corinthians 8](#), the Macedonians were *“in a severe test of affliction”* and very poor, but they begged to give to their needy brethren in Jerusalem. They gave out of their abundance of joy ([2 Corinthians 8:2](#)) because they had first given themselves to the Lord ([2 Corinthians 8:5](#)). Paul wanted the Corinthians to follow their example and *“complete among you this act of grace”* [2 Corinthians 8:6 \(ESV\)](#).

## 4. Response to this Challenge – Remember God Knows Our Needs and Our Hearts

Our key verse reminds us that God sees our hearts. The story of the widow’s mite in Luke 21 reveals that our motives are more important than the amount we give. We may have little or much, but our attitude is open before the Lord. Like the Macedonians, He may prompt us to give according to our ability or beyond it ([2 Corinthians 8:3](#)).

Earning and spending is a necessary part of life. In the parable of the talents, Jesus compares wise investing of resources to serve His Kingdom. In [Matthew 6:19–34](#), He tells us that our possessions are vulnerable to decay and theft, but we have the opportunity to use our wealth for eternal returns. Money can be our master or a means of serving our Master. He assures us our Heavenly Father knows what we need, so we shouldn’t be anxious.





## 5. Challenge Three – Feeling Manipulated or Giving Grudgingly

There are many opportunities to give to various causes. We can feel inundated and pressured to donate to this or that, which can desensitize us and cause us to overlook opportunities to meet real needs. We need the Holy Spirit to help us discern when to give.

In appealing to the Corinthians, Paul was not manipulating them to give. He reminded them of important truths. Christ's sacrifice made them spiritually rich ([2 Corinthians 8:2](#)). They had already committed to give ([2 Corinthians 8:10–11, 9:5](#)), they had the means to give ([2 Corinthians 8:14–15](#)), and Paul, Titus, and the other leaders were trustworthy to deliver their gift ([2 Corinthians 8:16–23](#)).

## 6. Response to this Challenge – Remember that God is Faithful to Guide and Bless us as we Seek to be Faithful Conduits of His Resources

Paul gave the Corinthians valid reasons to show generosity, but he also wanted to make sure they gave cheerfully. In our key verse, he told them not to give “[grudgingly or under compulsion](#),” literally meaning to not “give out of regret or pain or constraint.” He wanted them to give willingly, joyously, and bountifully.

This should be our mindset as well. Like the Corinthians, we can receive the promised blessings:

- Grace and resources to meet the needs we are called to meet ([2 Corinthians 9:8–9](#))
- Material and spiritual fruit ([2 Corinthians 9:10–11](#))
- Thanksgiving and praise to God ([2 Corinthians 9:12–13](#))
- Unity and mutual edification with other believers, those who give and those who receive ([2 Corinthians 9:14](#))

## Personal Reflection Questions

- Do I see myself as the owner or steward of what I have? What is the difference?
- How do I respond when money/giving is mentioned in church?
- Can I relate to the three challenges mentioned above?
- Do I give sparingly or bountifully? Grudgingly or cheerfully?



## Discussion Questions

- Share about a generous person in your life. How do they live out this quality? Have you seen God bless their generosity? What stands out to you about their outlook/demeanor?
- If he was here today, could Paul use Central as an example of generosity? What impact does a generous church have on its community?

## Practical Ideas for Mobilization

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you in discerning how to be generous this week.
- Identify inhibitors to being a cheerful giver.
- Be generous, give cheerfully this week with your time and/or resources.



## - Lesson 5 - Faith: How to Please God

### Key Verse:

*Hebrews 11:6 (ESV): "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."*

### Core Value:

Faith is found in a posture of humility based on understanding and trusting in what God promises.

### Lesson:

How many people have ridden on an airplane? When you rode on the airplane, did you verify the maintenance logs before you flew? Pilot's credentials? Air Traffic Controller's currency? It is improbable (unless you happened to be a pilot) that anyone here has done these tasks or could even verify these things if they tried. Yet almost everyone is perfectly OK with flying. Why is that? What are we trusting in that allows us to freely do something as unnatural as slipping the sure bonds of earth to an elevation far above what is safe?

#### 1. What is Faith?

It is assurance and conviction.

*Hebrews 11:1* provides a clear definition of faith, but what does having faith mean? Faith is not a blind leap in the dark to something we cannot know. Faith is trust in the promises of God that cannot be seen or touched. Although there is not a tangible formula for knowing, God simply asks us, as believers, to listen to His promises and trust that what He says is true. Thankfully, *Hebrews 11* gives us a long list of examples of heroes whose faith saved them.

Noah is the example in *Hebrews 11:7 (ESV)* (given right after our key verse): "*By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.*" What did Noah have to look at? He had some desert and a bunch of friends and family telling him he was crazy and mocking him. Yet, what choice did he make? Did he choose to build an ark because of a feeling that it was going to rain? Did he choose to be a renegade and believe in what was contrary to the world around him? No, he simply chose to trust with assurance



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that what God said was true. God is gracious to us and tells us what we need for life and Godliness in his Word. Because of Noah's trust in God's Word, he *"became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith"* through Jesus ([Hebrews 11:7b](#)). The conviction of what he could not see was manifested in the action of building a physical ark.

## 2. Faith Requires Belief, Humility, and Action

Even the demons believe God, so what is different? Humility and submission.

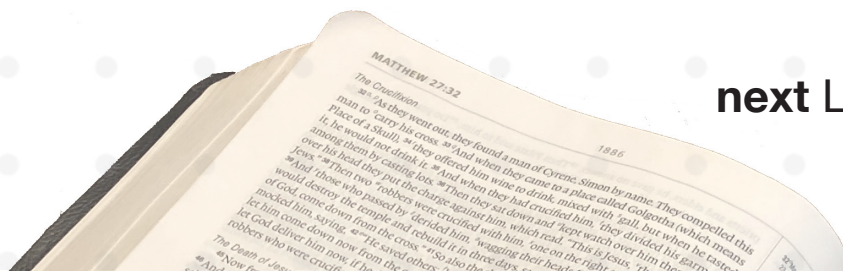
The first step in having faith is knowing what we believe. Thankfully, God makes this part abundantly clear and gives us evidence through the Bible, supported by history. In [1 Corinthians 15:3–11](#), Paul articulates one of the earliest creeds of the church, which, in its simplest form, is what we are to know and submit to. Christ died, was buried, and was raised. What does Paul tell us there? *"...Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures"* [1 Corinthians 15:3B \(ESV\)](#). We believe in what God says.

The Bible helps us to understand more about true faith. Once we believe in God, we must humble ourselves before Him and His commandments. Our humility breeds obedience to His laws. [James 2:14–26](#) brings clarity to what this looks like. Although faith is separate from works, true faith bears fruit. In [James 2:19](#), we see a grand warning for the church. Even the demons believe in God, yet clearly, the demons are not saved simply based on belief. Abraham, we are told, believed God and was justified once he submitted to what God said and walked forward toward the hope of what God promised. As [James 2:24 \(ESV\)](#) says, *"You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."* This verse, read in context, shows us that faith drives action. Real faith will drive active obedience to the Word of God.

## 3. How Do We Know God is Worthy of Our Trust?

We know God is worthy of our trust because His promises are true and have been proven true time and again. By His grace, He has given us the Bible to know Him. We do not simply throw our hands up and blindly follow. We listen to and believe God. As humans, we are always putting trust in something.

- Why not put our trust in what God says—even when it cannot be physically verified?
- Why do we instead put our trust in what humans say even though it cannot be physically verified?





## 4. Conclusion

If you do not have faith in God, then where is your faith oriented? We are finite creatures. We are created by God for His glory. If we try to find satisfaction and meaning in ourselves, then we quickly come to the end of ourselves and must put trust in something outside of us. Whether this trust is in science, our own abilities, our spouse, or our job, we learn from an early age that something must give us meaning. There comes a point in everyone's life when a decision must be made, and that decision is often made without the complete picture. We fly on airplanes in this way, and we build worldviews in this way.

God, in Christ, gives us the surest meaning. The simplest form of this is the story of the Bible. We are all sinners before a Holy God. God desires us to be redeemed to Himself. In Jesus, He made a way that only He could make, and because of that, we can have life with Him. That is our ultimate hope. We must submit, in humility, to God, choosing to trust His promises by faith in what is hoped for and assurance in things not seen.

This is how we exercise faith that pleases God.

## Personal Reflection Questions

- What actions has my faith driven that bears fruit?
- What do I have most trouble surrendering in faith to Christ?
- What can I do this week to increase my view of God and bolster my faith?

## Discussion Questions

- What is the relationship between assurance and faith?
- Where is the most difficult jump for you: From belief to humility or from humility to action?
- What are the differences between knowing, believing, and trusting for the Christian?

## Practical Ideas for Mobilization

- Start a prayer journal. By actively watching how God is answering your prayers, you will observe God's faithfulness to you over time.
- As you read your Bible each day, ask God to show you the actions He is calling you to take based on these passages.
- Find a person who has been walking faithfully with Jesus for a long time, seek them out, and ask to go to lunch to hear their story. Ask specifically how they came to faith and how they have endured.





## - Lesson 6 -

# Obedience to God

### Key Verse:

*Psalm 40:7–8a (ESV): “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God...’”*

### Core Value:

God desires our obedience above all other things.

### Lesson:

Why do we obey God? Why do we want to obey God? What does it mean to obey God? In this lesson, we will dive into what it looks like to obey God and what God expects from us in obedience.

#### 1. Obedience

*Holman’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines obedience as “to hear God’s Word and act accordingly,” and *Eerdmann’s Bible Dictionary* defines it as “True hearing or obedience involves the physical hearer and a belief or trust that in turn motivates the hearer to act in accordance with the speaker’s desires.”

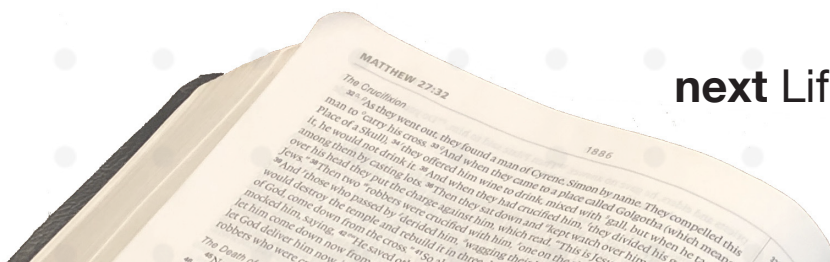
*Hebrews 10:6–8 (ESV): “in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’ When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law).”*

The Law came to show us what is right and wrong and that we are unable or incapable of keeping it. Jesus came so that we may have a relationship with Him and the Holy Spirit within us, enabling us to live well and make right choices.

Have you ever been fearful of doing something wrong? Fear of stepping out of line? You knew that there was a punishment if you disobeyed, and the thought of punishment scared you into obedience. Another point of view is, if you do not obey, you will hurt the one expecting obedience. It will hurt their heart—they trusted you to do the right thing and you chose not to.

You are a Jesus follower who accepts that the Lord Jesus sacrificed for you to be in a relationship with Him and to be called “friend” by Him. Have you ever thought about that? Scripture does not write that we call Him friend. He does not need us, but He lifts

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us up and calls us friend, His friend.

I could say all day I know someone famous and namedrop, but it lifts me to their level when they call me and extend their hand in friendship. That is what the God of the Universe has done for us. We should be starstruck every moment of every day because we know Jesus. We should be eager to do anything He asks of us.

- Why aren't you eager to do everything God asks of us?
- Is the work too hard? Too hard to love one another? Too hard to share the truth of the Gospel with all around us? Too hard to live a quiet, productive life? Too hard to be His hands and feet?

*Psalm 40* shares that the Lord delights when we do His will. What is the will of God? Have you ever asked Him: “*Lord, what is Your will?*”—not “*what is Your will for my life?*”

We have direct access to Him through His Word. If we ask the right questions and seek His thoughts by reading His words, we may find more answers. Most of us probably know what is right and wrong. Often, if we lived out the scripture we already know, we would be demonstrating more about scripture than we currently do. To know God's heart and what motivates Him, we simply need to read the words He has given us.

- Why do we struggle with obedience? (Saul struggled with obeying and waiting on the Lord.)

*1 Samuel 15:22–23 (ESV): “And Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the Word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.’”*

- What motivated Saul to disobey?

If you read *1 Samuel 15*, you read that God commanded for Saul to destroy all. *1 Samuel 15:3 (ESV)* says “*Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.*” The Lord commanded that ALL was to be destroyed. Saul was victorious in the battle. *1 Samuel 15:9 (ESV)* says, “*But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.*”

- Why would Saul disobey?
- Would you have disobeyed?
- Can you see yourself desiring the best of the land that the defeated people have to offer?



Is obedience merely NOT doing what is wrong, or is there more to it than that? Sometimes it is easier to look at things in reverse—what is disobedience? In [1 Samuel 15:23](#), the scriptures equate disobedience with rebellion, divination or witchcraft, iniquity, and idolatry. Disobedience is the rejection of the very Word of the Lord. Psalm 40 shares that our Lord delights when we do His will. What is the will of the Lord? While the will of the Lord is an all-encompassing idea, there are several verses that help us apply this principle.

- [Ephesians 5:17 \(ESV\)](#): *“Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” To do what is right requires us to study His Word—to hide it in our hearts.*
- [Psalm 119:104 \(ESV\)](#): *“Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.”*

Is it possible to always obey without failure? Humanly, no; however, if we believe in His Word, Philippians 4:13 reminds us that we can do all things in His strength. How do I access His strength? Through faith.

- [2 Timothy 1:7 \(ESV\)](#): *“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”*
- [1 Corinthians 10:13 \(ESV\)](#): *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”*

Our Father desires our obedience not our sacrifices. His heart desires our obedience to be out of our love for Him and our desire to please Him. Simply trusting Him, faithfully walking with Him, doing His will as He reveals tasks to us, and pleasing Him should be our motivation.

- [2 Corinthians 5:6–9 \(ESV\)](#): *“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.”*
- [James 4:7–8 \(ESV\)](#): *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”*
- [Galatians 2:20 \(ESV\)](#): *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but*



*Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

## 2. What Does Obedience Look Like?

According to [Hebrews 11](#), we see obedience in Enoch who was pleasing to God because of his faith. Noah was warned by God of things not yet seen and walked with God in faith. Abraham not only obeyed God by leaving his home but also walked by faith and was willing to sacrifice his son. Sarah, by faith, received the ability to conceive. Moses left a life of ease to lead by faith, leading God's people out of bondage. Esther walked fearfully but faithfully before the King. Elijah lived by a brook and faithfully waited for birds to bring him food. David lived in the wilderness and, by faith, spared King Saul's life, knowing God had a plan. Stephen, who by faith, stood in the midst of the leadership's rebellion and shared the truth to a condemning world. Paul, when the jail was opened for his escape, stayed and led the jailer to a saving faith in the Lord.

Without heartfelt, relationship-driven obedience, we can give our first fruits, our best prayers, be known for generosity, and leave a beautiful legacy without committing to the works that build His Kingdom. He desires our love, admiration, and choice to obey Him out of our love for Him in return for His love for us. [1 John 4:19](#) says, "We love because he first loved us."

## Personal Reflection Questions

Take control of your thoughts. By recognizing your own voice, you will be more apt to recognize when evil is trying to misdirect you.

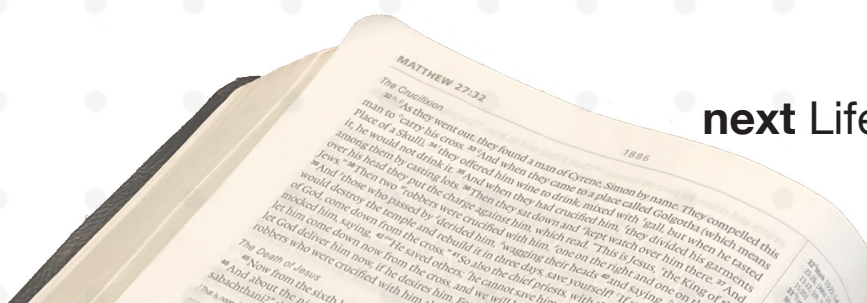
1. What verses help me stay focused in obeying God?
2. How do I know when it is God asking me to obey and not my own selfish desires?

## Discussion Questions

1. If all-meant-all for Saul, when does all-mean-all for us? Do we surrender all to Him fully or only when we think we need His help?
2. Which is harder for us to do? Obey in small things, or obey in large things? Why is that harder for us?
3. How important is trust in obedience? Does it make it easier or harder to obey when there is trust?

## Practical Ideas for Mobilization

- When making a decision, seek God FIRST before asking others for their opinion.
- Keep a journal of your "pillars" (your Ebenezers) of obedience. When did you follow God in obedience and see His blessings?
- Start with obedience in the small things.









That the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments

Psalm 78:6-7



*For more information, please visit [www.centralbcs.org/next](http://www.centralbcs.org/next)  
For answers to questions, please email [next@centralbcs.org](mailto:next@centralbcs.org)*

