



The Nature of God

WHEN HAVE YOU LOOKED FOR ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS?

The POINT >

There is one God, and He has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

> JOHN 14:8-11,16-20,23-26

⁸“Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. ¹⁷ He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn’t see him or know him. But you do know him,

because he remains with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.

²³ Jesus answered, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ The one who doesn’t love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵ “I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. ²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Ben Franklin suggested Daylight Saving Time as a joke. He claimed, facetiously, the extra hour of daylight would save people a lot of money on candles.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

There is one eternal God who reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person of the Trinity has distinct personal attributes.

Daylight Saving Time. Some of us welcome springing forward and an extra hour of daylight in the evenings. Others struggle for weeks to catch up from that lost hour of sleep. Then there are those of us who dread changing the clocks in our cars!

We all face things that seem complicated, but with enough work and determination we can usually figure them out. Yet some things are simply beyond our ability to grasp. Your little brother may be learning to count, but we don't expect him to be able to understand algebra. It's not that your younger brother is dumb. Instead, we know that his brain is still developing, and it will be awhile before abstract ideas like advanced math are within his ability to grasp. But with hard work and good teachers, your brother will be able to understand it one day.

One subject that remains beyond the ability of all people to grasp is the Trinity. A key truth in Scripture is that God has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—three persons, but one God. Our finite minds cannot fully comprehend how three can be one, but we can still appreciate the beauty of the nature of God.

JOHN 14:8-11

1 How did Jesus picture God while on the earth?

2 How would you explain the relationship between Jesus and the Father in your own words?

JOHN 14:16-20

3 Why was Jesus' leaving good news for the disciples?

4 Why do we need the Holy Spirit to work in our lives?

5 How might Jesus' promises in these verses encourage us?



Today, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us in the same ways Jesus guided His disciples while He was on earth.



#BSFLFaithFoundations

JOHN 14:23-26

6 How does seeing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit help you engage with Him in your daily life?

7 What difference does the Holy Spirit make in our understanding of God's Word?

8 How do we see the Persons of the Trinity at work today?



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

There is one eternal God who reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person of the Trinity has distinct personal attributes.

From the time God revealed Himself through the law to Moses and the Israelites, God made it clear that there is one God. Before they would enter the promised land, which was occupied by pagan nations who believed in many gods, Moses reminded the people, “Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4-5). Today, this is still true—there is one God, and He exists eternally as Father, Son, and Spirit.

> CHRIST

The Bible clearly teaches that there is one God. At the same time, God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It’s tough to wrap our minds around this reality!

9 Today, thank God for the following:

- > For loving you and including you in His sovereign plan.
- > For sending Jesus to reveal the nature of God and to pay the price for your sins.
- > For sending the Holy Spirit to work in you and through you.

➤ COMMUNITY

God has lived for eternity in relationship within the context of the Trinity. And He created us as relational people—we are made to live in relationship with Him and with other people.

10 How would you describe the relationships you have within the church?



11 What steps will you take this week to deepen those relationships?

➤ CULTURE

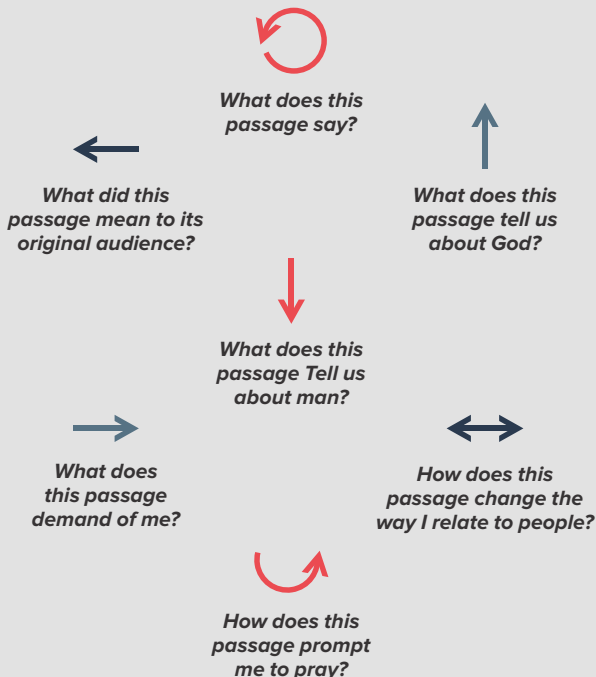
Just as the world around us reveals something about God and the Bible clearly reveals the nature of God, we are called to reflect God to the people around us.

12 How will you live in order to reflect God to your friends and neighbors this week?

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **JOHN 1:16**

As followers of Christ, we are familiar with the idea of grace. We must be because we are saved only by the grace of God. Grace specifically refers to God's giving us a gift which is totally undeserved. Specifically, He's given us His love and favor. Because every person has sinned (with Jesus' being the only exception), not one of us deserves God's blessings. Still, He has chosen to bless us in many ways. All people are subject to the goodness of God—we enjoy life, sunshine and rain, relationships with others, the air we breathe, and much more. These are all expressions of His grace. However, for those who trust God and follow in obedience, we've received "grace upon grace"—God's good gifts in ways that are beyond comprehension. If you belong to Christ, you've received not only earthly blessings, but eternal blessings—salvation, hope, and a relationship with God.

➤ **How specifically has God blessed you?**

➤ **How do you see these as expressions of God's grace in your life?**

Day Two

JOHN 1:17a



The law was given for a couple reasons. First, it gave God's people a picture of His character and helped them understand how they could fulfill their purpose of reflecting Him to the world. Second, it demanded holiness and revealed clearly that no one could live up to its standards. Though God was kind to give the law—otherwise the people would have been left without an understanding of God's expectations—the law was not an expression of grace. If we ever think we can work to earn God's favor, we're making a tragic mistake. We can never be good enough. Only Jesus did that.

➤ **Why are people often tempted to believe that, if we are good enough, God will be pleased with us?**

➤ **How does the law show our need for a Savior?**

Day Three

JOHN 1:17b

Though the law revealed something of God's nature and character, it wasn't the full picture of God. The law was and is truth. It revealed that people are truly fallen and incapable of making right what sin has broken, but it was never intended to be the full picture. This is why it was necessary that Jesus came. Sin separated us from God, and the only way we would be reconciled was that Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. This is the ultimate gift and is the clearest expression of God's grace. Jesus is the truth—the true and clear picture of God's nature and character. He is also grace—the gift that made our salvation possible. Whereas the law only partially revealed God's character, Jesus is the full and perfect picture, revealing to us both God's grace and truth.

➤ **How is Jesus the expression of both God's grace and truth?**

➤ **Why was it necessary that Jesus came to earth?**

Day Four

JOHN 1:18a

The Bible teaches that God isn't a physical being in the ways that humans are. God is immaterial and invisible—He is spirit (John 4:24)—and this means that we can't see Him physically with our eyes. Rather, we “see” God by understanding His nature and character. Still, this verse implies that it is impossible that any person would ever fully grasp the infinite God, whose thoughts are far higher than our thoughts and whose ways are altogether different than our ways. Prophets heard God speak and delivered the messages to the people. Priests entered into the Most Holy Place where they stood in the very presence of God. Still, no man has ever fully known or ever seen God.

➤ **What does it mean that God is spirit?**

➤ **If we can't see God, how do we know Him?**

Day Five

JOHN 1:18b



Despite that no human has ever seen God, Jesus has. Jesus has lived alongside the Father for eternity—a position of being equal—and is Himself God. Whereas the prophets delivered the law and delivered God's messages on behalf of God, none had ever known God fully. However, Jesus did. When He came to earth, Jesus was able to communicate the truth of God in a way that no one before Him ever could, because not only had He seen God, Jesus is God. His teaching reflected God in ways that the law never could, and His life reflected God as no other human could. For us to fulfill God's purposes for our lives, specifically reflecting His nature because we're created in His image, we must look to Jesus. He is the only one ever to have seen God, and He is the only perfect picture of the nature of God.

➤ **Why is it that only Jesus has fully known God?**

➤ **How is Jesus' life and teaching the perfect picture of God?**



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WHEN HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN TO FOLLOW THROUGH?

God's Purpose for People

The
POINT ➤

God created us to honor and live in
relationship with Him.

➤ GENESIS 1:1-5,26-31

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

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²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole

earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” ²⁷So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” ²⁹God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, ³⁰for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

If you feel like you can never remember the answers to the questions on your history exam, maybe you should just move into the classroom—whenever we walk through a door it triggers the brain to forget what we just learned.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

God is Creator, and all creation is a result of His work and exists to glorify Him.

I have six kids, and every Friday after dinner we evaluate the way each one has handled their responsibilities, including schoolwork and chores, as well as their general attitude throughout the week. Based on their self-assessment and that of their brothers and sisters, I give them their week's allowance.

Although none of their chores are terribly difficult, there is inevitably at least one kid who doesn't get their full allowance because they failed to follow through on something that should have been simple and routine. For example, my 12-year-old son has the responsibility of taking the trash out each time it fills up, but I can't count the number of times he has "forgotten" to do it.

Many young people dread responsibility, but we know firsthand that as we grow older, responsibility is handed to us in greater measure. We need to see that responsibility is not a bad thing! From the very beginning, God made us to handle the responsibilities He's entrusted to us, and He's given us the tools we need to do it well. Now it's up to us to understand specifically what God expects of us and to live it out.

GENESIS 1:1-5

1 How should these verses shape our view of the rest of God's Word?

2 What does it mean that God is the center of the creation story?



*When the world looks at us, they shouldn't see people simply living for themselves. Instead, we should be known for carrying out the highest calling imaginable—displaying the image of God who made us.
#BSFLFaithFoundations*

GENESIS 1:26-27

3 What responsibility did God give people at creation?

4 How do we see God's image in people?

5 How do you seek every day to live for God's glory?

GENESIS 1:28-31

6 List some ways we can take care of God's creation.

7 Summarize our mission and purpose as stewards of God's creation.

8 What does the creation story teach us about God's love for us?



LIVE IT OUT

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

God is Creator, and all creation is a result of His work and exists to glorify Him.

God created the universe and all it contains for the purpose of glorifying Himself. People, who are made in the image of God, are the highest beings of creation, and we glorify God by reflecting Him to the world and loving Him with all that we are.

> CHRIST

Being made in the image of God is a great blessing, but it's also a huge responsibility.

9 Take a few minutes to thank God for creating you, then thank Him for creating you in His image. Ask for His help to live out this great privilege and responsibility.

10 Make a short list of words that describe God. Next to each word, explain how you can reflect that characteristic as someone made in God's image.



GOD

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> COMMUNITY

The church is the body of Christ on earth. Christians are called to reflect God not only individually, but also collectively as a church body.

11 List a few specific ways your church reflects God to your community.

12 How can you grow in becoming involved with your church to help better reflect the goodness of God?

> CULTURE

God's purpose for His people today is that we would reflect Him so that others, including lost people, would have a clear picture of God.

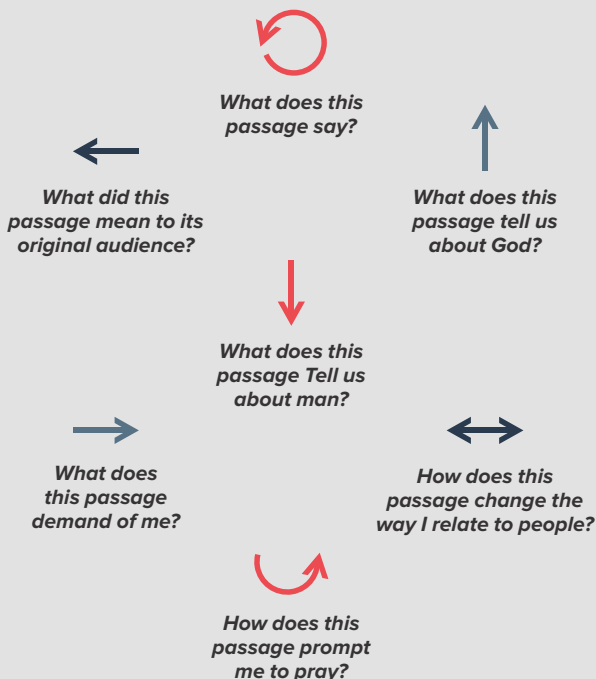
13 Who do you know that does not have a clear understanding of God?

14 How will you live this week to reflect God's image in ways that your friend can see God in you? Make it a point to pray every day for your friend, so that he or she would see God clearly, not only in your life, but through God's Word.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

ECCLESIASTES 12:13a

Ecclesiastes is a book that was written about the meaning of life. Solomon tried essentially all that life had to offer—seeking pleasure, entertainment, wine, possessions, knowledge, fulfillment in work, and more—and his goal was to find out what might give lasting satisfaction and fulfillment. Given that he was the richest man on earth and worth an estimated \$2 trillion, Solomon could do anything or have anything he wanted. Literally! So he tried it all, and after a lifetime of seeking to understand life's meaning, Solomon wrote down his perspectives. When he says, “When all has been heard,” he’s referring to his consideration of all the things he’d experienced. And Solomon came to some very clear conclusions about the purpose and meaning of life.

> **What things have you tried as a way to bring happiness and satisfaction?**

> **What conclusions have you made so far?**

Day Two

ECCLESIASTES 12:13b



After he'd tried finding satisfaction in everything life had to offer, Solomon summed up his conclusions in this: Fear God and keep his commands. Many times, when we consider the idea of fearing God, we may be inclined to think of giving God reverence and respect. This certainly applies, but it doesn't begin to cover what Solomon is talking about. Here's the truth. No matter what we may experience during our time on earth, all people die. More importantly, we will all stand before God in judgment, and to know we will be judged according to the ways we've lived on earth (including our thoughts, desires, and motives) should provoke a healthy level of fear. In light of this, we should obey God in everything.

➤ In what ways do you “fear” God?

➤ Why is it so important to obey God in all things?

Day Three

ECCLESIASTES 12:13c

To fear God and obey His commands is certainly for all people. But this isn't all this verse means. Another way to say it is "this is the whole of humanity" or "this is the whole reason for our existence." When God created us in His image, it was so we would reflect His nature and character to the world. He gave the law to His people to help them know Him and to help them know how to live in order to reflect Him. Obeying the law is the way to fulfill our purpose of reflecting God, and the inverse is also true. Failure to obey the law is to fail to fulfill our purpose. If we want to experience the purpose and meaning God has for us—which is the only true meaning—we must obey God. This applies to all people.

➤ How have you sought happiness, fulfillment, and meaning?

➤ How does God's law help us to experience our true purpose?

Day Four

ECCLESIASTES 12:14a

In our lives, we will do things we're not necessarily proud of. We will use our words in ways that hurt others. We will behave in ways that cause conflict, embarrass our families or ourselves, or that cause injury, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We may not always pay close attention to the ways we "act," as this verse says. However, we need to be completely aware that God is aware of every action, every word, every work, and one day we will be required to give an account of every one. There may be times when we know we've done wrong, and we think we've gotten away with it. However, this is never the way it works. The truth is that God will bring every act to judgment. For the good we've done, God stands ready to offer reward. And for the wrongs we've committed, God requires a price that Jesus has already paid.

➤ **How does it make you feel to know God will judge every act?**

➤ **Why does God judge our actions?**

Day Five

ECCLESIASTES 12:14b



Not only does God judge our actions that are outwardly visible, including our words. He also judges the things that aren't seen—our thoughts, desires, and motives. In one sense, people can know the things that are inside our hearts by listening to the ways we speak and observing the ways we live, as the things we express always flow from our internal condition. However, in another sense, we can't even fully know ourselves, and as Jeremiah asks, "The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). The answer: God understands the details about even the secret things in our hearts. And He will judge us according to all of it. So let's be sure to work on aligning not only the ways we live, but also our hearts, to God's standards.

➤ **What does the way you live say about your desires?**

➤ **How can you make sure to align your heart to God's standards?**

3

The Problem of Sin

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WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN IN TROUBLE FOR SAYING “NO”?

The POINT >

We are sinners, and on our own, we can do nothing about it.

> ISAIAH 59:1-13

¹ Indeed, the LORD'S arm is not too weak to save, and his ear is not too deaf to hear. ² But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen. ³ For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers, with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, and your tongues mutter injustice. ⁴ No one makes claims justly; no one pleads honestly. They trust in empty and worthless words; they conceive trouble and give birth to iniquity. ⁵ They hatch viper's eggs and weave spider's webs. Whoever eats their eggs will die; crack one open, and a viper is hatched. ⁶ Their webs cannot become clothing, and they cannot cover themselves with their works. Their works are sinful works, and violent acts are in their hands. ⁷ Their feet run after evil, and they rush to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are sinful

thoughts; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths.

⁸ They have not known the path of peace, and there is no justice in their ways. They have made their roads crooked; no one who walks on them will know peace.

⁹ Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We hope for light, but there is darkness; for brightness, but we live in the night. ¹⁰ We grope along a wall like the blind; we grope like those without eyes. We stumble at noon as though it were twilight; we are like the dead among those who are healthy. ¹¹ We all growl like bears and moan like doves. We hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. ¹² For our transgressions have multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us. For our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: ¹³ transgression and deception against the LORD, turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering lying words from the heart.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Broccoli is technically a giant bundle of flowers, so go ahead and add it to your next bouquet.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

All people have sinned, and have been separated from God, but we can be restored to a relationship with Him when we trust in Jesus and turn from our sin.

Some people are experts at “no.” Young children, when they’re asked to eat their broccoli, shake their head from side to side in an emphatic, “No!”

Nobody has to teach us to do this. Admittedly, in any number of ways, I said *no* to my parents many times growing up, and chances are, you do too. By saying no, we are in essence rejecting the instructions of those in positions of authority. We are born with the inclination toward living pridefully and doing the things we want. The truth is that we just don’t like being told what to do, and this goes beyond our relationship with our parents. We also reject God’s authority by saying no to His instructions and commands. This is called sin, and we are born with a nature that leads us to sin.

Saying no to our parents often leads to punishment, and the same is true when we say no to God’s commands. No amount of good on our part will cancel out that punishment, but thankfully, God did not leave us in this state.

ISAIAH 59:1-5

1 What sins do you commonly see in the world?

2 How did you become aware of your own sin?



It's sad enough that so many won't even acknowledge that sin is a problem, but it's just as tragic that others believe they can fix it on their own. #BSFLFaithFoundations

ISAIAH 59:6-8

3 How do people try to hide their sin?

4 Why are we unable to fix our sin problem on our own?

5 What are the consequences for refusing to acknowledge the sin in our lives?

ISAIAH 59:9-13

6 When have you failed to deal with a sin by yourself?

7 How do these verses help you to better understand sin?

8 Where do you see hope or good news in Isaiah 59:1-13?





LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

All people have sinned, and have been separated from God, but we can be restored to a relationship with Him when we trust in Jesus and turn from our sin.

A good way to think about sin is that we're aiming the arrow of our lives at the bullseye of God's holiness, and if we miss the target even once, we're sinners. All people have sinned, plain and simple. There's nothing we can do to repair the brokenness in our lives or restore our relationship with God. Thankfully, Jesus did all that was necessary to pay the price for our sin, and when we trust in Him, we can be forgiven.

> CHRIST

For us to experience salvation in Jesus, we must confess our sins. Confess means to agree with God about what's true, and it's true that we've all sinned.

9 Pray to God and admit that you are a sinner who has fallen short of God's standard. Confess your sin to Him and ask for forgiveness. He is faithful to forgive when we are humble.

10 Evaluate where you are most prone to give into temptation. Being tempted is not sin, but it can easily lead to sin. Write a brief list of steps you will take to resist temptation.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

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& WORLD

> COMMUNITY

One of the best ways to deal with the sins we struggle with is to invite a trusted friend to help by holding us accountable. Reach out to one or two trusted friends (of the same gender), and talk through areas in which you are tempted to sin.

11 Ask your friends to:

- > Pray for you.
- > Hold you accountable to live in obedience to God.
- > Keep you encouraged as you seek to follow Jesus.



> CULTURE

The ways we deal with the sin in our lives has a powerful impact on the non-believers around us. When Christians don't live rightly, we're accused of being hypocrites, and we bring dishonor to Jesus.

Read the following questions and journal your response:

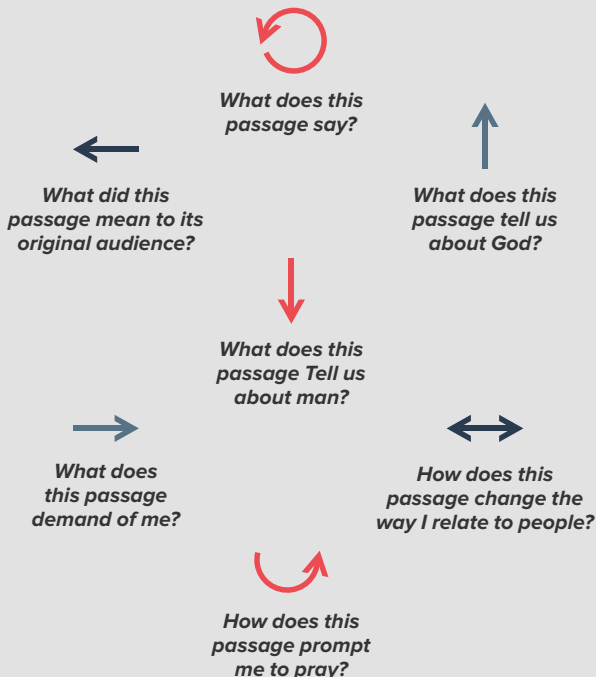
12 How have your sins impacted your testimony among lost friends?

13 What changes will you commit to making so that your life honors God among non-believers?

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **JAMES 1:13a**

Because we live in a broken world, we will face difficult circumstances. And because we are fallen people, we will sometimes be tempted to sin. Because most people generally like to think of themselves as good, we're often quick to blame others for the things that go wrong in our lives—we certainly don't want to blame ourselves. We may even be tempted to blame God for all the ways our lives are difficult. However, this is not the case. In Matthew 4:3, Satan is called the tempter. He confronted Jesus in the wilderness and tempted Jesus to live in ways that were outside God's will. Satan is known for tempting people to live in ways that are contrary to God's purposes, which is altogether contrary to God's character. God, on the other hand, desires for us to live in line with His will and never tempts us to do otherwise. Whenever we may be tempted to blame God for the difficult things we may face in this life, we need to understand clearly, God does not tempt us to sin.

- > **What difficult things are you facing now which may tempt you to sin?**
- > **When have you been tempted to blame God for the trials and temptations in your life?**

Day Two

JAMES 1:13b



God loves things that are righteous and good. He also hates things that are evil. Temptation is specifically the desiring of something that is evil. This means not only that God isn't tempted, but He can't be tempted by evil. We may ask, "Didn't Jesus experience temptation?" The answer is yes. In the incarnation, Jesus laid aside certain divine powers and privileges, and He took on our flesh and weaknesses, entering into our experience so He could be our perfect High Priest and sympathize with us in our suffering. Jesus is fully divine and He is fully human. And whereas His human nature was subject to temptation, the divine never could be. Because God loves good and hates evil, it's not possible that He would experience temptation to sin. Based on this, He never tempts us to sin.

➤ **In your own words, what is temptation?**

➤ **Why isn't God tempted with evil?**

Day Three

JAMES 1:14

Temptation promises something good, but it's all a lie. This is the way Satan worked from the time of the fall, and it's the way he still works today. "Drawn away and enticed" refers specifically to the way a fisherman catches a fish. There's a piece of food that looks tasty and delicious, but buried inside is a hook, and once it becomes lodged in the fish's lip, there's no escaping. Temptation is always an appeal to our own evil desires—our desires to live selfishly and indulgently instead of according to God's will—and looks on the outside to be something that will make us happy. However, inside there's a hidden hook that creates pain and drags us into danger, destruction, and ultimately death.

➤ **When has something appealed to you but turned out to be something else?**

➤ **Why are we tempted to buy into the trap of sin?**

Day Four

JAMES 1:15a

We're often inclined to think of sin as "doing" bad things. We see drinking and smoking as sin. We see cursing or behaving inappropriately with members of the opposite sex as sin. We see disobedience to parents, being unkind to others at school, looking at pornography, stealing, lying, skipping church, and many other things as sin. And this is right. However, it's not all sin is. Sin isn't simply an act, but it's the result of a long process that takes place in our hearts. Sin begins when we fail to desire God and the good things to which He's called us, and instead, we choose to live selfishly. Disobedience to parents is saying, "I don't care what you say, I'm going to do what I want." Being unkind to others is the same as, "I don't care how my words or actions make you feel." Any sin is rebellion against God and His standards and is the expression of our heart's choosing to live for self instead of God.

- **Consider a sin you struggle with. How can you see that it's the result of a process?**
- **What are the biggest ways you are tempted to live selfishly instead of for God and others?**

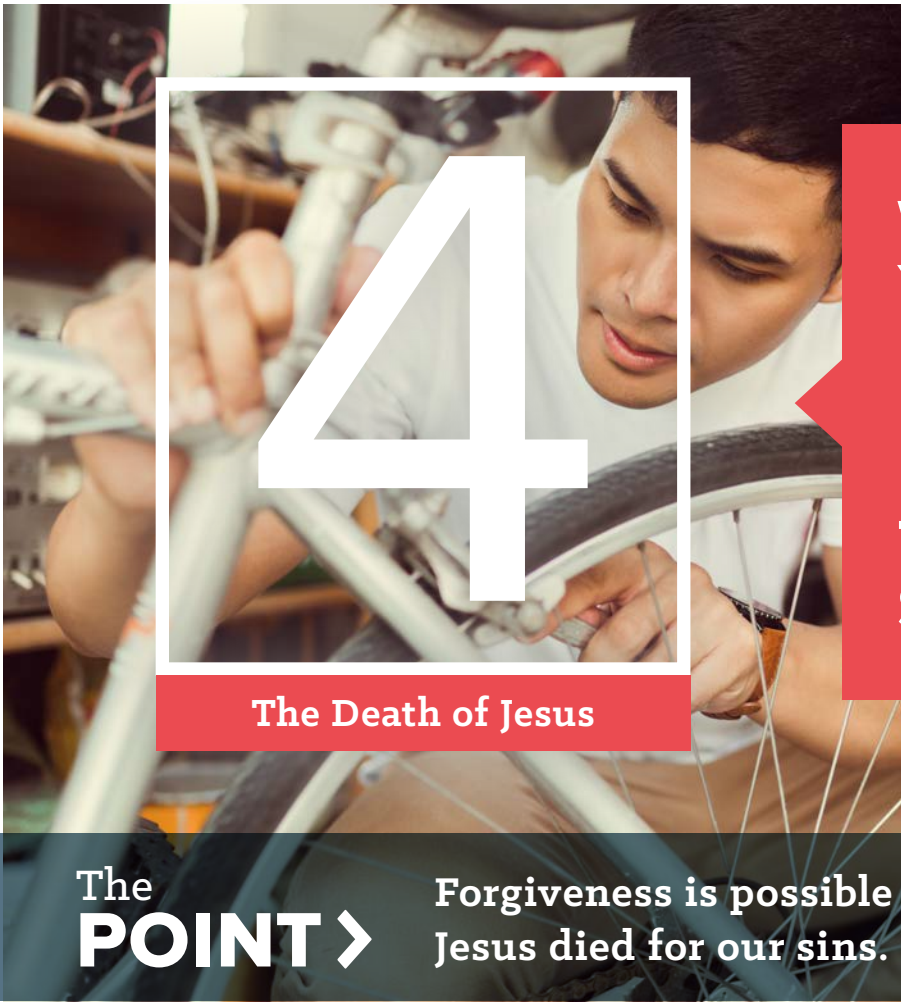
Day Five

JAMES 1:15b



When Adam and Eve sinned, the result was their being cut off from a whole relationship with God, and in that moment, they died spiritually. They didn't immediately experience the full consequences of their choices, but the end was inevitable. When we sin, just like Adam and Eve, we may not always see immediate consequences, but we need to understand that the consequence of all sin is ultimately death. Thankfully, Jesus has made a way that we can be spared sin's eternal consequences. Scripture teaches that to be saved, we must confess our sins, we must believe in Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins, and we must live by faith in Him. We can never make things right ourselves. Thankfully, Jesus did, and when we trust in Him for salvation, we will be spared from sin's ultimate consequence—death.

- **How did you come to understand your own sin?**
- **What does it take to be saved?**



4

The Death of Jesus

?

WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN FRUSTRATED BY YOUR INABILITY TO FIX SOMETHING?

The
POINT ➤

Forgiveness is possible because
Jesus died for our sins.

➤ JOHN 19:8-11,16b-18,28-30

⁸When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. ⁹He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus did not give him an answer. ¹⁰So Pilate said to him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?” ¹¹“You would have no authority over me at all,” Jesus answered him, “if it hadn’t been given you from above. This is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.”

.....

¹⁶... Then they took Jesus away. ¹⁷Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull,

which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him and two others with him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

.....

²⁸After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, “I’m thirsty.” ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth. ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

A small amount of super glue is strong enough to lift a jeep.¹ Better use caution so your fingers don't end up stuck together forever.



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Before the beginning of time, God's plan for salvation centered on Jesus' death and resurrection, which makes salvation possible.

With the ever-growing popularity of DIY networks and shows, more and more people are being motivated and challenged to fix or upgrade something without calling a trained professional. Whether sewing our own clothes or replacing the clutch on a dirt bike, there are loads of videos online detailing every single step of the process.

When we finally get to step back and see the results of all the hard work, it's an incredible feeling! Otherwise, why would we go through all the trouble? Even if it took four times longer than it should have, we can say, "I did it!"

We can't fix everything, though. Sometimes we have to call a licensed plumber or trained mechanic, and nobody would recommend attempting your own heart surgery! A broken relationship with God is something else we can't repair on our own. Plenty of religions and philosophies suggest we can, but their methods are ineffective and hopeless. The truth is that there is only One who can fix our sin problem.

JOHN 19:8-11

1 How can we know that God is in control?

2 Why did God plan for Jesus to be crucified?



When Jesus died, His death paid a price we could never afford.

#BSFLFaithFoundations



JOHN 19:16b-18

3 What emotions do you experience when you think about Jesus' crucifixion?

4 How does Jesus' suffering shape your view of God?

5 Why did Jesus have to pay the price instead of us?

JOHN 19:28-30

6 What are the good results of Jesus' crucifixion?

7 How should we view our sin in light of the price Jesus paid for our forgiveness?

8 How would you describe the importance of the cross to someone who needed to hear it?



LIVE IT OUT

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Before the beginning of time, God's plan for salvation centered on Jesus' death and resurrection, which makes salvation possible.

Because God is just, it is necessary that there is a payment for sin—it's impossible that He would simply let it go—and the price for our sin is eternal judgment in hell. Thankfully, through His death on the cross, Jesus paid the price. And because Jesus is righteous, death could not hold Him and He rose from the grave. When we place our trust in Jesus, living by faith in obedience to God, we will be forgiven of sin and live eternally with God.

> CHRIST

Jesus' death was the sacrifice that paid for the sins of the world. In view of what Jesus has done for you, give thanks!

9 Write a brief prayer offering thanks to Jesus for dying on the cross that you could be forgiven of your sins and reconciled to God.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD



> COMMUNITY

Our sin meant that we were enemies of God. However, even when we were rebellious and disobedient, Jesus died that we would be forgiven.

10 Offer forgiveness—chances are there is someone in your life who has hurt or offended you. Maybe it's even someone in your family or in the church. Since God has forgiven us, it's important that we forgive others. Reach out to the person who has wronged you and share that you're willing to forgive them and that you'd like to see your relationship restored.

> CULTURE

The forgiveness and salvation Jesus provided through His death is available to all. But for us to receive it, we must first acknowledge that we've sinned.

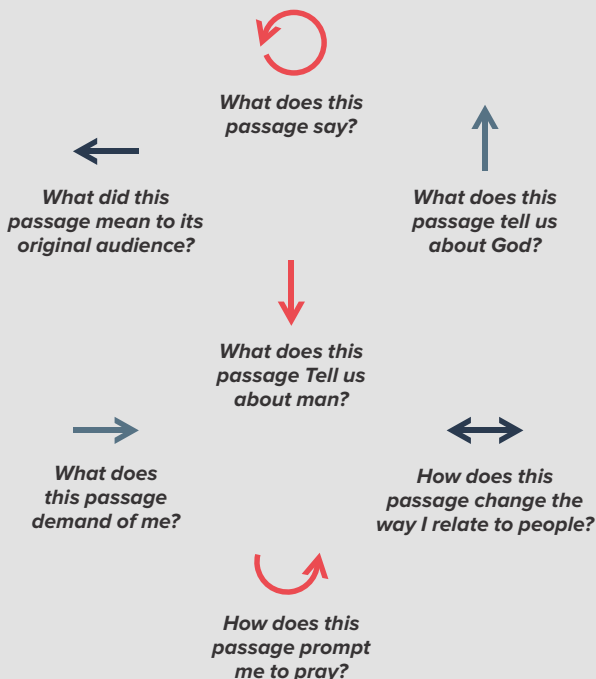
11 This week, have a conversation with a non-believing friend about these things.

- > Share that you've sinned and fallen short of God's standards, but because of Jesus' sacrifice, you've been forgiven.
- > Ask if they'd like to trust Jesus for forgiveness and salvation.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **ROMANS 6:5**

Leading up to this passage in Romans 6, Paul has addressed the importance of our being baptized into Christ. Water baptism is of essential importance—perhaps more important than many of us understand. But this passage isn't speaking directly to water baptism. Baptism refers specifically to our identifying so deeply with something or someone that our life is now defined according to that identification. For instance (and get ready because this is going to be a bit silly, but true), if my wife picks me up from the library, I'm in a sense baptized into her van. By opening the door and sitting in the passenger seat, the next 15 minutes of my life are defined by the van and my wife's driving it. I go where it goes. I see only through its windows. "If" (and that's big) we are baptized into Jesus, it's because the old selfish person has died and a new spiritual person has been raised. Being baptized into Christ involves our identifying with Him to the point that we go where He goes, we see as He sees, and we live as He does.

➤ **What is the significance of baptism?**

➤ **How does your life prove that you've identified with Jesus?**

Day Two

ROMANS 6:6-7



When we imagine an old man or old lady (and I mean ancient), what comes to mind is a person who's frail and hunched over, whose hair is gray and whose face is marked by deep wrinkles, and who lacks energy and strength. When Paul talks about the "old self," he's speaking essentially of the same idea, except on a spiritual level. The old self refers to the spirit that is worn out and on the verge of death. Because of the curse, the natural self is powerless to do anything about our sin. Surrendering to Jesus involves the death of the old, useless self. Thankfully, when we die to sin, it no longer has a claim against us.

➤ **How is an unsaved person like an old man or woman?**

➤ **Why does sin have no claim against a saved person?**

Day Three

ROMANS 6:8-9

Here's that word again—*if*. Dying with Christ means a couple specific things:

- We no longer depend on the old self, which is powerless to do anything about our sin issue, to earn God's favor.
- We no longer live selfishly in ways that we want and in opposition to God.

If we've died with Christ, then and only then can we be confident that we will experience new life in Him. The Bible contains stories of several people (other than Jesus) being raised from the dead. Perhaps Lazarus is the most familiar. However, we don't identify with Lazarus in his death and resurrection. Here's why. Though Lazarus was raised, he still died again—physically speaking, at least. But Jesus, after he was raised, never again experienced death, and "if" we identify with Jesus, we can know confidently that we will never taste the ultimate consequence of our sin. Sin and death have no claim on us. This is evident in our living in obedience to Jesus every day in the here and now, and this will be perfectly evident through the eternal life we enjoy in Jesus' eternal kingdom.

➤ **How can we know we've died with Christ?**

➤ **How is our being raised with Jesus evident in our lives?**

Day Four

ROMANS 6:10

That Jesus died to sin is a once-and-for-all reality that has powerful implications for our lives. Though Jesus, because He took on our flesh along with its weaknesses, was subject to temptation, He did not and could not sin. When Jesus died on the cross bearing the penalty for our sin, it was a one-time reality. Jesus' death was to destroy sin, and His life—every choice, every word, every interaction, every desire—was to glorify God. If we identify with Jesus in His death on the cross, we can know for certain that death no longer has a claim on our lives. In turn, we are called to live with everything we are for God's glory.

➤ **Why did Jesus die?**

➤ **What does it mean that He died “once for all time”?**

Day Five

ROMANS 6:11



From the point of coming to faith in Jesus, our lives are defined by being dead to sin and being alive in Jesus. This affects not only the ways we see ourselves, but also the ways we live every day. We no longer live selfishly and in ways that are evidence of sin in our lives, but in ways that show we love Jesus. If we expect to live with Christ for eternity in heaven, then we must not live according to the flesh—after all, we are dead to sin. Instead, we must live in ways every day that show we are alive in Jesus.

➤ **What defines the life of a Christian?**

➤ **How does your life fit this definition?**

5

The Resurrection of Jesus

?

WHAT
IMPOSSIBLE
IDEAS ARE
NOW A
REALITY?

The POINT >

New life is possible when we
trust in the risen Christ.

> JOHN 20:3-9,19-23,27-29

³At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. ⁵Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷The wrapping that had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. ⁸The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed. ⁹For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead.

¹⁹When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked

because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." ²²After saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but believe." ²⁸Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Even with amazing phones, we still aren't good listeners. On average, people can only listen to about 100 words per minute. But we think faster than we hear, and our brains can process thoughts at about 3000 words per minute.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus, because He is God, had the power to perform miracles, and He did so as a sign of His divine nature and to help people overcome their lack of faith.

The idea that people could communicate without being in the same room seemed impossible until Samuel Morse showed what a telegraph could do in 1837. The idea that voices, not just dots and dashes, could be transmitted seemed impossible until Reginald Fessenden did it in 1901.

We could go on and on about how people have taken inventions and innovations to the next seemingly impossible level. Today we use smartphones—tiny computers that fit in our hands and give us instant access to near-endless amounts of data.

While we might marvel at science and the amazing things once considered impossible, one thing remains impossible for us—to raise a man to life who has been dead for days after enduring an agonizing execution, horrific wounds, and extreme loss of blood. But what is impossible for us is not impossible for God. God performed this “impossible” miracle and gave us something far greater than even the most advanced technology!

JOHN 20:3-9

1 What evidence has helped you believe in the historical accuracy of Jesus' resurrection?

2 Why is it important to believe in the resurrection?

JOHN 20:19-23

3 How has Jesus' resurrection brought peace to your life?

4 How should we act based on this passage?

5 What difference should the resurrection make in the ways we live?



JOHN 20:27-29

6 When have you experienced doubts about your faith?

7 How have you related to Thomas?

8 What has Jesus done to help you grow in your faith?

*It is the responsibility of all Jesus' disciples to live in ways that give evidence of His resurrection.
#BSFLFaithFoundations*





LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus, because He is God, had the power to perform miracles, and He did so as a sign of His divine nature and to help people overcome their lack of faith.

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus performed many miracles, including healing the sick, multiplying food, walking on water, and even raising the dead. He did these things as signs of who He truly is and to help people overcome our struggles to believe. Jesus' greatest miracle was His resurrection, proving once and for all His power over sin and death. When we confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, our sins will be forgiven and we will be given new eternal life in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10).

> CHRIST

The Christian faith depends on the reality of Jesus' resurrection. There is no salvation without Jesus' dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

9 When have you, like Thomas, had doubts about the resurrection of Jesus? How have you dealt with doubts regarding your faith? Do you still need to deal with these doubts?

10 Write an honest prayer to God expressing struggles you may have with your faith. Ask God to reveal clearly to you the truth about Jesus (much like Jesus did for Thomas) and to help you trust fully in Him.

> COMMUNITY

The Bible teaches that it's not uncommon for followers of Jesus to have questions and struggle with our faith, and one of the biggest tools to help us remain faithful is to spend time with our church family, reminding one another of the truth of the gospel (Heb. 2:1; 10:24-25).

11 Who do you know in your church, or perhaps a Christian friend at school, who may be struggling with doubts?



Make it a point to encourage them at least three times this week through a text, social media, or in person, reminding them of the truth of the gospel.

> CULTURE

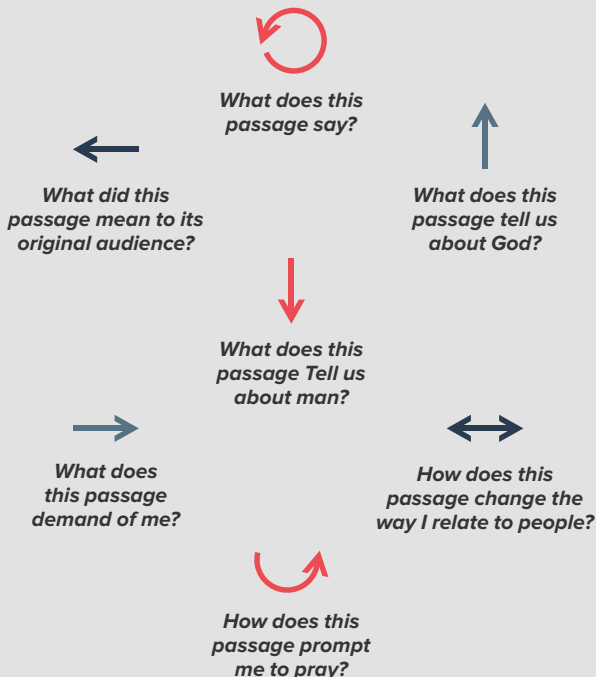
We're surrounded by people who are skeptical about the claims of the Christian faith.

12 This week, ask your unbelieving friends about the ways they may struggle to believe the Bible. Ask respectfully if they'd be okay with your sharing why you believe. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" if they ask you difficult questions. Talk with a leader at church to find answers and follow up with your friends.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

JOHN 11:17-19

The Jewish tradition was to bury on the day a person died. That Lazarus was in the tomb for four days indicates that he'd been dead that same length of time. When Jesus received the message of Lazarus's illness, He didn't immediately rush to heal him, but instead waited two days before making the journey to see His friends (v. 6). By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus's body had begun to decompose, and whereas, Jesus had previously raised others from the dead (Luke 7:11-17; 8:49-56), this was a whole different situation. Because of the length of time Lazarus had been dead, there was no possibility in the minds of the Jews of his being raised to life. This is the reason Jesus waited so long to return to His friends (v. 4).

> Why did the situation seem so hopeless?

> When have you faced a situation that seemed hopeless to you?

Day Two

JOHN 11:20



In Luke 10:38-42, we are given a picture of Mary and Martha's personalities. Mary was relational and laid back. Martha, on the other hand, liked to stay busy, continually working to make sure that everything that needed to be done actually got done. True to form, when Martha heard Jesus was coming, she had some things she wanted to say to Him—after all, she was known to speak her mind (Luke 10:40)—so she stepped away from the crowd who had gathered to mourn to speak to Jesus in private. The perspectives she would share weren't necessarily grounded in faith. Nonetheless, she spoke honestly from her heart, and inasmuch as she was willing to listen humbly to Jesus' reply, this was a great way to approach the situation.

- **When have you been hesitant to share how you really feel with God?**
- **Why is it important that we share our hearts and not simply try to say all the right things when we engage with God?**

Day Three

JOHN 11:21-22

When Mary and Martha found out that their brother was seriously ill, one of the first things to come to their minds was probably to ask Jesus to come help. They knew of Jesus' power. Plus, they had a close relationship with Him. If He was going to heal anyone, they must have thought it would be the people He loved. But Jesus didn't make it in time. Further, Lazarus had been dead for four days with his body already decomposing before Jesus showed up. In one sense, Martha's words to Jesus were a complaint. However, it was also an expression of her faith. She truly did believe that if Jesus had been there, He could have healed her brother. But now, it was simply too late. Still, Martha believed that Jesus, because of His special connection with God, could ask and that the Father could bring something good of the situation. Her perspective was, in a certain sense, healthy. Still, she couldn't have imagined what she would witness in the coming moments.

- **When have you needed Jesus to show up in your life?**
- **Do you truly believe that Jesus can accomplish things that might seem to be impossible? How does your life show this?**

Day Four

JOHN 11:23-24

Martha had shared her thoughts with Jesus, and in response, Jesus shared that Lazarus would rise again. However, Jesus and Martha simply weren't on the same wavelength. Martha said, "Yeah, I know that—he'll rise again in the resurrection at the last day." At least some of the Jews believed that at the end of this age, God's people would be raised from the dead, and this was Martha's perspective. Certainly, there was some hope and comfort in this belief. But this wasn't what Martha wanted in this moment. She wanted her brother to be alive in the here-and-now, but it was too late. At least that's what she thought.

➤ **When have you come to realize that what Jesus (or the Bible) said was different from what you originally thought?**

➤ **Why is it so important that we know not only what the Bible says, but that we also understand the meaning?**

Day Five

JOHN 11:25-26



When Jesus made this statement—"I am the resurrection and the life"—He used very specific language that was unmistakable to the Jews. When Moses asked God His name, the Lord responded, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14). In claiming "I am," Jesus used the very language that God used when revealing Himself to Moses. Jesus was making the statement that, not only is there a resurrection on the last day, but "I Am" that resurrection. And not only on the last day, but at all times, including today. For those who trust Jesus, the resurrection is a reality every day. We are freed from sin's consequences—ultimately death—and we are raised to live a new life in Christ. Lazarus was living proof of this reality, and when we live for Jesus, we are too.

➤ **What does it mean that Jesus is the resurrection?**

➤ **How does your life demonstrate that you've been raised from the dead?**



The Work of the Holy Spirit

?

**WHEN HAVE
YOU BEEN
PART OF
A BIG
CELEBRATION?**

The POINT >

The Holy Spirit magnifies the work of Jesus.

> JOHN 15:26-27; 16:7-15

²⁶ “When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

.....

⁷ Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment:

⁹ About sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you

will no longer see me; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. ¹² “I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

It takes only a few seconds to fill a small balloon with helium. The floats for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, which contain about 300,000 square feet of helium, take over two hours to fill up.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit inspired and guided people to write the Bible and used the personalities and voices of men to communicate the very words of God.

New Orleans is known as a city of never-ending parties. It's also a city of parades. Lots of parades! For almost no money at all, you can rent a parade. Getting married? Have a parade. Celebrating a birthday? Have a parade. Celebrating because it's a Thursday? Have a parade. When a parade comes down the street, it grabs everyone's attention—whether they want their attention grabbed or not. Everyone sees the parade and certainly hears it. Parades aren't meant to be subtle and quiet. The people in the parade do what they can to draw attention to something they consider worth celebrating.

The Holy Spirit's role is a lot like that parade, but for a far greater reason. He works tirelessly to grab people's attention and magnify the work of Jesus. He works in and through our lives to make sure others know Jesus is someone worth celebrating.

The Holy Spirit plays such an important role in the life of the church, yet many Christians spend little time thinking or talking about Him? Jesus gave us great insight into this rarely discussed person of the Trinity.

JOHN 15:26-27

1 What does it mean to be Christ's witnesses?

2 How can the Holy Spirit help you tell others about Jesus?



The Holy Spirit dwells in all believers, and He does for all believers everything that Jesus did for His disciples.
#BSFLFaith Foundations



JOHN 16:7-11

3 What does it mean that the Holy Spirit convicts us?

4 When has the Holy Spirit helped you to see sin in your life?

5 Why is it a positive thing to be convicted of your sin?

JOHN 16:12-15

6 When has the Holy Spirit guided you to the truth?

7 Why do believers still have doubts if the Holy Spirit guides them?

8 List some ways the Holy Spirit has helped you glorify Jesus.



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit inspired and guided people to write the Bible and used the personalities and voices of men to communicate the very words of God.

Jesus said it was better that He went away, because in His place, the Holy Spirit would come to minister to God's people, and while Jesus was only one place at one time while on earth, the Spirit would be present with all God's people no matter where we are. One way the Holy Spirit ministers to us is that He helps us to understand the things Jesus said, including inspiring the exact words the authors of Scripture wrote down, as well as helping us today to know how these words apply to our lives.

>CHRIST

The Bible speaks over and over about the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. (See Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11; Gal. 4:6.) We have a relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit's ministry to us. This involves our living not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.

9 Read Galatians 5:16-25. Make a list of the "works of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit."

10 Beside each item on the list, make a brief note about how each one describes you. Is your life characterized more by living in the flesh or the Spirit? How will you commit to growing?

> COMMUNITY

The church body is the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells today (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We are called to devote ourselves, not only as individuals, but also corporately to worshiping God. When we sin, we bring harm not only to ourselves but to the church.

11 How can you encourage other Christians, particularly those in your church family or in this group, to live worshipfully and in view of the Spirit's dwelling in us?



12 Who do you know who may be struggling with sin? How can you kindly and graciously encourage them to honor the Spirit who dwells in us?

> CULTURE

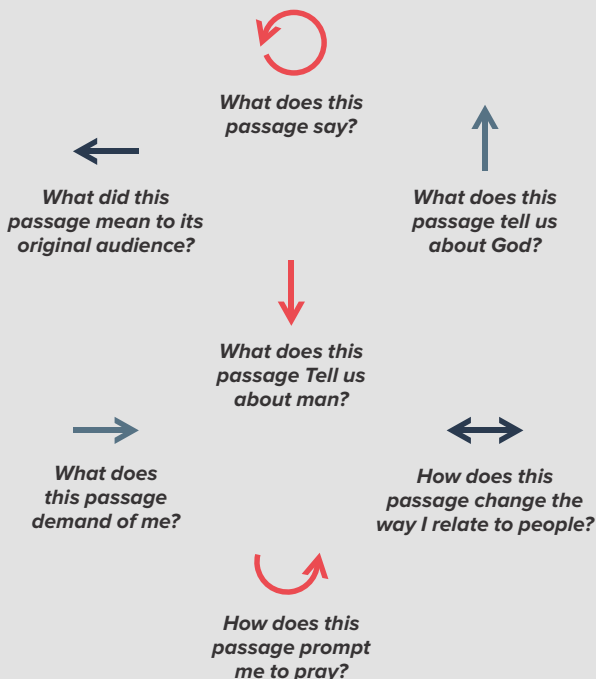
The Holy Spirit comes into our lives to help us magnify the work of Jesus.

13 How will you allow the Holy Spirit to use you to talk about Jesus with a non-believer. Trust Him to guide the conversation and give you words that bring honor to Christ.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **ACTS 1:4**

After His death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples over a period of several weeks. During this time, He helped them to believe in the resurrection by offering proof of what had happened, and He continued to teach them about the kingdom of God. Only moments before Jesus would ascend to heaven, He reminded them of the importance of the Holy Spirit's ministry in their lives. In John 16:6-11, we read of Jesus' sharing with His disciples that it was better that He left. With Jesus' being gone, the Spirit would come and minister to God's people in a way that was different from Jesus' ministry. Jesus, as a man, was only one place at a time, and the number of people He served was limited by their being where He was. With the Spirit, however, these limitations don't apply. He is able to serve anyone, anywhere. God had promised to send the Spirit, and on multiple occasions, Jesus had reminded His disciples of this promise. This promise would soon be fulfilled.

➤ **Why did Jesus say it was better that He leave so the Spirit would come?**

➤ **Why was the Spirit so important in the lives of the disciples?**

Day Two

ACTS 1:5



John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). Though the Bible doesn't mention the apostles' being baptized, Jesus (as well as other New Testament authors) clearly teach the importance of baptism in identifying with Jesus. To demonstrate that they were followers of Christ, it's safe to assume the disciples had been baptized. Now Jesus taught them that though water baptism was important, it wasn't the whole story. Whereas their bodies had been immersed in water, it was even more important that their spirits be immersed in the Holy Spirit Himself. Through water baptism, we make the one-time declaration that we identify with Jesus in His death and resurrection. In turn, it is our being baptized with the Spirit that allows us to live out this declaration every day.

➤ **Why is water baptism so important?**

➤ **Why is it necessary that we are baptized with the Spirit?**

Day Three

ACTS 1:6

In Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 (these are Old Testament prophecies), God had not only promised to restore His people, but He also promised to pour out His Spirit. As faithful Jews, the apostles were familiar with these prophecies, and they connected the coming of the Spirit with the Messiah's re-establishing Israel as a powerful, earthly kingdom. Since they believed that Jesus was the Messiah (and they were right), they thought He would now establish God's kingdom on earth. Their Messiah had died, and they were crushed. But He had been raised from the dead, and their hope was restored. Now, Jesus was speaking about the specific event—the coming of the Spirit—that was connected with God's kingdom being established. With all they had been through, it was finally time that all they'd dreamed of would be made a reality—the kingdom of Israel would be restored! At least, that's what they thought.

➤ **When have you misunderstood what God actually intended through His Word?**

➤ **How would you describe the kingdom of God?**

Day Four

ACTS 1:7

The disciples had all kinds of questions, and they naturally wanted answers. Specifically, they wanted to know the timing of God's kingdom being restored to Israel. Jesus didn't address the nature of the kingdom—only the timing. And what He said was essentially that they didn't need to worry about these things. God is in control of all the details. Our responsibility is simply to trust that He is in control and to live in obedience to the specific things to which He has called each of us. This is not to say we shouldn't seek answers to our questions—we should. However, we must also accept that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours, and we can never fully grasp His nature or purposes. We should seek every day to know God as deeply and intimately as possible, and in areas we just don't understand, we should simply trust and live in obedience.

- **What is something about God that you struggle to grasp?**
- **How can we learn to trust in areas we may not understand?**

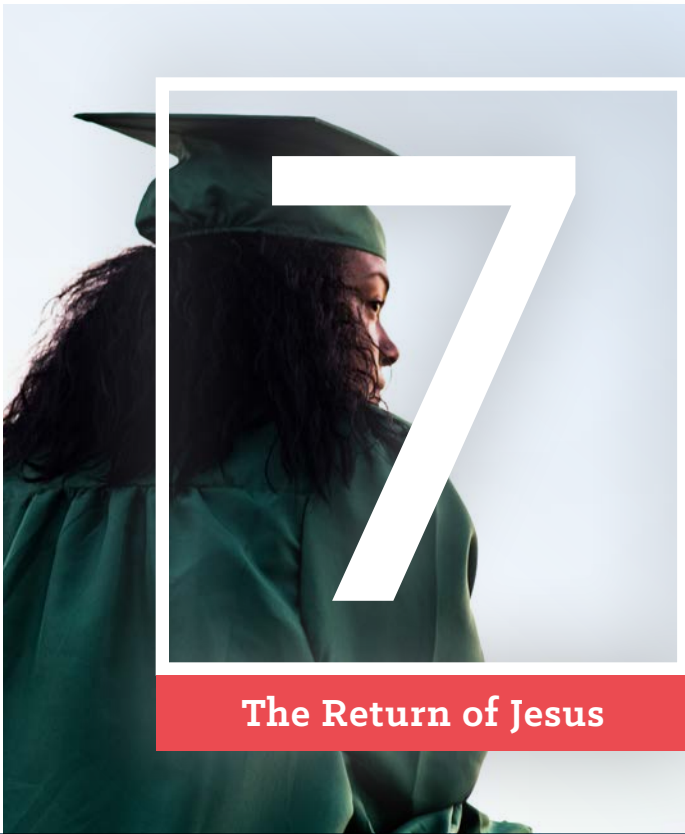
Day Five

ACTS 1:8



The prophecies in Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2, on one level, apply to God's Spirit being poured out and God's kingdom being established. However, this applied more directly to the apostles in an eternal sense—the Spirit would come upon them that, through their sharing the gospel, people would be brought into God's eternal kingdom. The Holy Spirit would empower them to spread the gospel throughout the world and lay the foundations of the church. Through sharing their testimonies—the things they had seen and heard from Jesus—God would use the apostles to impact the lives of many they encountered. Today, followers of Jesus have the same Spirit in our lives, and God wants to use us for the same purposes as the apostles. By the power of the Spirit, we are called to testify about Jesus, pointing others to the hope found only in Him.

- **How would you describe the mission of the apostles? Why was the Spirit so important to this mission?**
- **How has the Spirit used you to point others to the hope of Jesus?**



The Return of Jesus

WHAT MAJOR MILESTONE ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO?

The POINT ➤

Jesus will return to establish His eternal kingdom.

➤ MATTHEW 24:3-8,29-32,42-44

³While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴Jesus replied to them, “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will deceive many. ⁶You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these events are the beginning of labor pains.

²⁹“Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light;

the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. ³²“Learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near.

⁴²Therefore be alert, since you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into.

⁴⁴This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

In 1899, Troy, New York granted a letter—which was arguably the first driver’s license—to a man allowing him to operate a “horseless carriage” on city streets at speeds up to six mph.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus will one day return to exercise His reign over creation, and He will make all things new.

We often look forward to major milestones in life with both excitement and trepidation.

- **Entering high school:** When we transition into high school, it’s clear that we’re no longer kids, but young men and women with increased responsibilities and privileges.
- **Graduation:** Graduation marks a major accomplishment. We have fulfilled the requirements of 12 or more years of school and have completed an incredible task.

Many will experience all these. Others won’t. Whatever the case, one major milestone awaits humanity—one day Jesus will return to earth. Even followers of Christ can view this event with both excitement and trepidation. We don’t necessarily know the details of when or how it will happen. Nonetheless, we do know that life will definitely change, and for those with a relationship with Christ, it will only change for the better!

MATTHEW 24:3-8

1 How can you have hope even though things will get worse?

2 How do these verses cause you worry or fear? How do they bring comfort?

When Jesus returns, we're going to know it! In fact, everyone alive is going to know it! #BSFLFaithFoundations



MATTHEW 24:42-44

6 Why do we sometimes forget about Jesus' coming?

MATTHEW 24:29-32

3 In your own words, describe Jesus' power and glory that will be revealed at His return.

4 What can you learn about Jesus from the fig tree?

5 How can these verses give us hope in dark times?

7 What might be the consequences of not being prepared when Jesus returns?

8 How can you be ready for Jesus' return?





LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus will one day return to exercise His reign over creation, and He will make all things new.

The Bible teaches that Jesus will one day return for His people and exercise His reign over all creation. Because we don't know when this will happen, we need to live continually with the awareness that Jesus could return at any moment. Because of our deep love for Jesus, because we want to be with Him, and because we desire His restoring all that sin has broken, we should long for Jesus' return.

> CHRIST

We are to live every moment in anticipation of Jesus' return. This is a strong motivation to make sure we live lives of purity.

9 PREPARE:

- > What changes do you need to make in your life to show you're ready for Jesus to return?

10 PRAY:

- > Ask Jesus to help you give continual consideration to His return.
- > Ask Him to help you live in ways that show you are ready for His appearing.

> COMMUNITY

We're called to fellowshiping continually with other believers, specifically to serve and encourage our church family, and "all the more as you see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). This refers to Jesus' return, and as this time nears, it's important that we devote ourselves to encouraging our Christian brothers and sisters to live for Jesus.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25.

11 List three specific ways you will encourage friends this week to live in light of Jesus' return.



> CULTURE

There are people around us who never think about Jesus' coming back, and they're simply not ready.

12 What are the implications of people's not being ready?

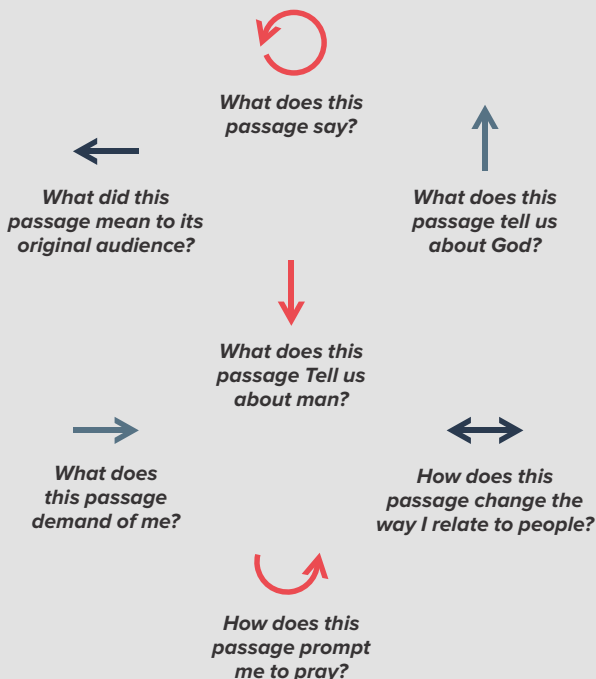
13 Who do you know who isn't ready?

14 What is God calling you to do to help others who may not know Jesus prepare for His return? Do these things this week.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-2

In Acts 1, when Jesus told His disciples about the coming of the Spirit, they tied the Spirit's coming with Jesus' establishing His kingdom on earth. So they asked Jesus if this was the case, and He responded, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). Still, many of Jesus' followers expected Him to come again in their lifetime, and when many died without Jesus' returning, some began to grow impatient or confused and may even have struggled with their faith. Paul reminded the church of the same thing Jesus had said—it's not our place to know the times and the seasons. In fact, they already knew that the day of the Lord will come when we least expect it. Because of this, we need to live every day, every moment, with Jesus' return in mind. When He comes, we don't want to be caught living disobediently. We want to be found faithful, working to carry out Jesus' mission.

➤ **Why is it so important to live in light of Jesus' return?**

➤ **What are the implications of being found faithful versus unfaithful when Jesus comes?**

Day Two

1 THESSALONIANS 5:3-4



When we go to sleep at night, most people make sure to lock their doors. However, some people live in communities where they feel so safe that they feel no need to lock up. However, should a thief come along one night, an unlocked home would be especially vulnerable. The people who say “peace and security” are like a naive homeowner, except they’re dealing with issues of eternity. They live as if Jesus will never return, and there will be consequences for their lack of concern. For those who give no thought to these matters, one day they will be caught off guard, and they will suffer for their lack of attention to Jesus’ return. Christians, however, know better, and we should live every day knowing that Jesus could come at any moment.

- **Are you sometimes tempted to become so comfortable that you forget to live as if Jesus is coming back? Why or why not?**
- **How would you describe what it means to live in light of Jesus’ return?**

Day Three

1 THESSALONIANS 5:5

Light and dark, in Scripture, refers to living in ways that are worthy of being seen by others—and by God—versus living in ways that are shameful, that are done at night and in the dark, and deserve to be hidden. For those who have followed Jesus in faith, we no longer live in the dark—in ways that would bring shame to the name of Jesus. Instead, we are children of light, and we live, just as Jesus did, in righteousness and in ways that bring honor to the Lord. Notice, the apostle Paul did not say, “If you’re a Christian, you should live in ways that aren’t shameful.” It’s not about doing—it’s a matter of being. He said, “You *are* all children of light” [emphasis mine]. For true followers of Jesus, the overwhelming pattern of our lives will be living in ways that honor Jesus.

- **What is the significance of light and dark in Scripture?**
- **How would you describe the life of a child of light?**

Day Four

1 THESSALONIANS 5:6-8

Many people (especially teens) enjoy sleeping late. Lying around lazily communicates in a certain sense that there's nothing else we need to do in the moment—that there are no urgent needs in our lives. Paul shares with the church that although one day we will enter into eternal rest (and even now, we can rest in Jesus), now is not the time to “sleep” in the spiritual sense. This refers to spiritual laziness or a general lack of concern about the things going on in the world. Though physical darkness may send a message that it's time for our bodies to rest, and the night tempts some to engage in all kinds of unhealthy behaviors, Christians should never let spiritual darkness tempt us to be lazy, or worse. Instead, in a dark world, we must remain alert and intentionally devoted to the pursuit of holy living.

- **How do you see spiritual darkness affecting worldly people?**
- **When are you tempted to be lazy about spiritual things?**

Day Five

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-11



It is natural for people to have a certain level of fear or apprehension about death. After all, there are details that we simply don't understand, and it's certainly true that no one in this life has experienced firsthand what lies on the other side. However, Paul offers this encouragement—whether we're “awake or asleep” (that's alive or dead), we can know that those who belong to Jesus will live together with Him. Sin will be judged, and those who have rejected Christ will not be spared from the wrath of God. For those who have believed, however, Jesus will one day return and take us to heaven where we will dwell for eternity. Life is difficult and this world is dark. Let's make sure to continually remind our brothers and sisters of Jesus' return and the future that awaits God's people.

- **What are your thoughts or feelings about death?**
- **Why is it important to understand that, whether we're “awake or asleep,” we will live with Jesus if we are saved?**



1

Our Commission

?

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST NEWS YOU'VE EVER HAD TO TRY TO KEEP SECRET?

The POINT >

God sends us to tell others about Jesus.

> MATTHEW 28:18-20

¹⁸ Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

> 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

¹⁶ From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective. Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective, yet now we no longer know him in this way. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he

is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! ¹⁸ Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." ²¹ He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Process servers are responsible for delivering bad news, but here's some great news. Sea turtles, which were once near extinction, have seen populations increase by 980 percent.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

God loves all people, regardless of ethnicity or status, desires that we would all turn to Him for salvation, and demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to bear the penalty for our sin on the cross.

We live in a society where people sue others for all kinds of things, and it happens that my mom is an attorney. When someone (a plaintiff) seeks legal action against someone else (a defendant), a formal document must be delivered to the defendant informing them of their requirement to be in court. To make a little extra money in college, I would work for my mom as a process server, which meant I delivered the letters.

It wasn't always easy, and sometimes, it was downright dangerous, depending on how people responded to the bad news I delivered. However, it was important for both parties that this news be delivered.

The message we are called to deliver to the world is much more important than a subpoena to be in court. God expects His followers to carry the message of Jesus to the world. Though it can be challenging and the news may not always be well received, it's vital to provide an opportunity for others to respond to a life or death situation. We also need to remember that we're not sharing bad news—the message of Jesus is good news!

MATTHEW 28:18-20

1 When have you shared the gospel with others?

2 Why do some people not share their faith?

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-19

3 How did you find out about salvation through Jesus?

4 How has following Jesus changed your life?

5 What struggles have you faced in sharing your faith?

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20-21

6 What does it look like to be an ambassador for Christ?

7 How can you grow in sharing Jesus with others?

8 How does it make you feel knowing that God has entrusted you with the gospel?



As ambassadors for Christ, we serve as His representatives on earth, and we are to share Jesus' love and sacrifice. #BSFLShareChrist



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

God loves all people, regardless of ethnicity or status, desires that we would all turn to Him for salvation, and demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to bear the penalty for our sin on the cross.

God has created all people in His image, and every person is incredibly valuable to Him. However, because of our choice to disobey God, we have all been cut off from a relationship with Him. But because He loves all people, God desires to see that relationship restored, and He's made a way for this to happen. Through His death on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sin. Now, it's up to God's people to share the good news of Jesus that they would believe and be restored to God.

>CHRIST

The way we're saved from sin and brought into relationship with Jesus is through our believing the gospel.

9 Briefly record your testimony by answering the following:

What was your life like before Jesus?

What did God use to help you to believe the gospel?

How has your life changed since coming to know Jesus?

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

> COMMUNITY

Before a band goes on stage or a football team hits the field, they rehearse or practice over and over again. We can apply this same principle to sharing the gospel.

10 This week, get together with Christian friends and practice sharing the gospel, as well as your testimony.



> CULTURE

Telling others about Jesus can be challenging, but He's opened your eyes to see the truth of the gospel, and He will use you to do the same.

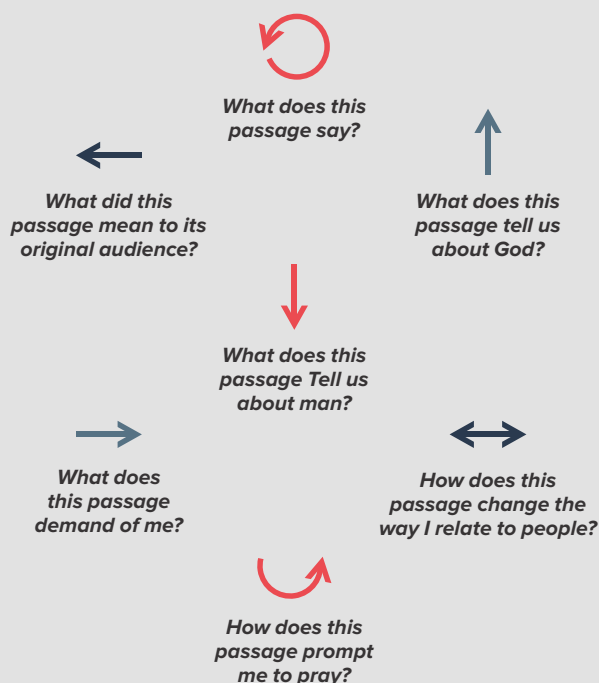
11 How would you describe your worries or concerns about sharing the gospel?

12 Ask God to help you to have the courage and boldness to share, and make it a point to do so this week.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

LUKE 24:44-45

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He spent time with His followers teaching them and allowing them to observe the ways He lived. However, the disciples were slow in understanding the things Jesus shared with them. They saw things from their own—and sometimes very narrow—perspectives, and they often missed the point of Jesus' words. However, after Jesus' resurrection, this would begin to change. As Jesus' followers heard His teachings about the Old Testament Scriptures, they began to understand it in ways they hadn't before. It could have been because their faith had been powerfully impacted by their seeing the resurrected Jesus. It could have been that Jesus supernaturally opened their eyes to see the truth. Either way, Jesus began a process that would be carried on by the Holy Spirit—Jesus helped His followers to understand that He is the perfect fulfillment of the law and the prophets, and that He alone is worthy of our worship.

➤ **Why do we need the Spirit to open our minds to the truth of Scripture?**

➤ **How is Jesus the fulfillment of all the Old Testament?**

Day Two

LUKE 24:46



In helping His disciples to understand that He is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus outlined the main points of the gospel. First, He addressed the crucifixion and resurrection. In fulfilling the promises of God, Jesus suffered and died on the cross as the payment for our sins. But because He held power over sin and death, the grave couldn't hold Him, and Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. It was of essential importance that the disciples understand clearly the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection to fulfill the mission to which Jesus would soon call them.

➤ **Why was it necessary that Jesus died?**

➤ **Why was it so important that the disciples understand the crucifixion and resurrection?**

Day Three

LUKE 24:47

In Mark 1, we read that John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (v. 4). Jesus preached the same message—that repenting from sin and believing the truth of the gospel was necessary for forgiveness and being brought into God's kingdom (Mark 1:14). Before Jesus left the earth, this same good news was entrusted to His followers. Jesus told His disciples that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations. If people would turn in faith to Jesus, they would experience God's forgiveness in their lives. Jesus' disciples were commissioned to declare this message to all people. Today, we've been called to this same mission.

➤ **In your own words, what is the message of the gospel?**

➤ **Why is the gospel "good news"?**

Day Four

LUKE 24:48

For generations, the Old Testament had pointed forward to the Messiah and the ways He would make it possible for God's people to experience forgiveness and restoration. Jesus helped His followers to see how He'd fulfilled the prophecies, then He pointed out that they had actually witnessed the prophecies' being fulfilled. A witness is specifically someone who sees an event take place. This would be an important reality with the gospel's spreading to the nations. God would use the witness of Jesus' followers—their actually seeing Jesus' power, most clearly expressed through the resurrection—in helping people come to faith in Christ. If you're a follower of a Christ, you've witnessed firsthand the power of Jesus in your life. We are called to tell others about the ways Jesus has impacted us. When we do, others will be drawn to Christ.

➤ **How would you share your testimony about what Jesus has done in your life?**

➤ **Why is an eyewitness account so powerful?**

Day Five

LUKE 24:49



At times, the thought of sharing our testimony or sharing the gospel with a non-believer can be intimidating. However, Jesus promised that we won't be alone when we do. God had promised to send His Holy Spirit to empower His people to carry out the mission, and Jesus told them that the Spirit would come very soon. In fact, approximately a week after this conversation, the Spirit would come upon the disciples in power. When this happened, they began to testify about Jesus and many came to faith. The same Spirit is in our lives today, and when we will boldly proclaim the message of the gospel—just as Jesus called us to do through the Great Commission—He will use us to draw people to Himself.

➤ **How do you feel when you think about sharing the gospel?**

➤ **Why is our depending on the Spirit essential in fulfilling the Great Commission?**



Start with Prayer

?

WHAT IS
A TOP
PRIORITY
IN YOUR
LIFE?

The
POINT ➤

God calls us to pray for others' salvation.

➤ 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

¹First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.

⁷For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

⁸Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Thanks to tougher school schedules, teen employment is down 34 percent from 2000.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

Creation testifies as to the existence of God, and because His power and nature are understood through what He has made, people are without excuse for their disbelief and disobedience.

Since coming to faith in Christ as a junior in high school, my prayer life has gone through many high, as well as low, points. Early on, I had plenty of time to pray—or maybe it’s more accurate to say that I “made” more time to pray. I often met with friends before school to pray, and we got together every Thursday evening to study the Bible and pray. On weekends, we would go to the local mall or other places around town to share the gospel, and we would always pray before and after.

However, over time, life got busier. College, work, and family have all brought more and more responsibility, and though I’ve remained committed to prayer, busyness sometimes keeps me from praying as I should. My struggle is never a lack of desire, but a matter of prioritizing the things that are truly important. I’ve learned over the years that, if I want a healthy prayer life, I have to be very intentional with my prayer time.

I’m not alone. Many people struggle with prayer. When we see obvious, physical needs others may have, we know what to pray. However, prayer is much more than these things. We should also pray for the spiritual needs of others, including their salvation. And ultimately, we should pray in order to remain relationally connected with God.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

1 What does a dynamic or effective prayer life look like?

2 Do you find it difficult or easy to pray? How so?



1 TIMOTHY 2:3-6

3 How does prayer shape our desires?

4 When have you seen your prayers make a difference?

5 How does prayer help us to depend on God?

At the heart of prayer is a dependence on the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live pure lives and witness to others.

#BSFLShareChrist



1 TIMOTHY 2:7-8

6 What does prayer have to do with sharing the gospel?

7 How specifically can we pray for those who share the gospel (ourselves and others)?

8 What response should we have after praying for the salvation of others?



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

Creation testifies as to the existence of God, and because His power and nature are understood through what He has made, people are without excuse for their disbelief and disobedience.

God has made Himself known to us in various ways. From the beginning, God made His power and existence known through creation, and in Old Testament times, God spoke through the law and the prophets. He revealed Himself most clearly through Jesus, and today we have the completed Scriptures, which are authoritative and without error. Despite the ways God has revealed Himself, people have difficulty believing and following Jesus. Because of our sinfulness, people tend to be prideful and hard-hearted, and this is why it's so important for us to pray for others. We can share the gospel, but only God can change hearts.

> CHRIST

Relations are built on clear communication, and our relationship with Jesus depends upon our continually devoting ourselves to prayer.

9 Every day this week, pray in these specific ways, and be sure to journal your prayers:

> **Petitions:**

> **Prayers:**

> **Intercessions:**

> **Thanksgivings:**



> COMMUNITY

Scripture calls us to pray privately and in secret (Matt. 6:6). We're also called to pray together (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:24-32; Isa. 56:7).

10 Get together with fellow believers this week and spend time praying for one another, for your churches, and for the unsaved. Consider establishing this as a regular time to gather and pray.

> CULTURE

As you pray this week, devote a significant portion of your time to praying for non-believing friends.

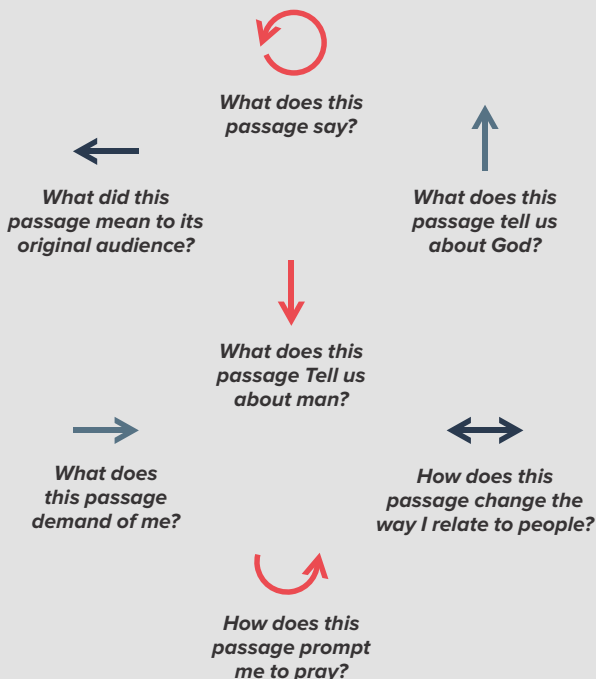
11 Make a list of people you know who aren't followers of Jesus.

12 Pray for them by name, asking God to soften their hearts and open their eyes to the gospel. Make it a point to share the gospel this week.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

MATTHEW 9:35a

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He consistently traveled from town to town, sharing the gospel with as many as would listen. The synagogue was the place where Jews gathered week to week to study God's Word, and it was a common practice that visiting Jewish rabbis had the opportunity to stand before the gathered people to share their perspectives on the Scriptures. Jesus had the reputation as a well respected rabbi (see Mark 9:5; 14:45; John 1:38; 20:16), so when He visited the synagogues in Israel, He stepped into ready-made opportunities to share the gospel with those in attendance. The message Jesus shared and the authority with which He shared it were unlike anything the people had ever encountered and contained the power to transform lives.

- **Why was it so important that Jesus traveled from town to town?**
- **How would you describe God's role in creating this arrangement that allowed for Jesus' teaching throughout Israel?**

Day Two

MATTHEW 9:35b



People from all around came to see Jesus. Undoubtedly, many who were sick had tried everything they knew to find healing, yet found no answers. However, they were hearing stories of a man named Jesus who was able to heal issues that had confounded all others. As important as healing the sick was in Jesus' ministry, this wasn't His purpose. Jesus also preached the gospel to those He encountered—this was His purpose (Mark 1:38). The healings provided temporary relief from sin's effects. Only the gospel, however, provided the answer for sin's ultimate consequence.

➤ **Why do you think so many people came to see Jesus?**

➤ **How would you describe the purpose of Jesus' ministry?**

Day Three

MATTHEW 9:36

As much as the people's physical suffering grieved Jesus, the compassion He felt most deeply was due to their being like sheep without a shepherd. Sheep are essentially helpless animals, and without the guidance of a good shepherd, they are doomed. They'll wander aimlessly, eventually starving or injuring themselves. With no defensive weapons, they can become easy targets for predators. The people faced all kinds of practical, physical needs. However, the desperate state of their spiritual condition was a far greater need. Israel's spiritual leaders didn't know God or understand His Word, and they'd failed to shepherd God's people. The leaders were selfish and prideful, and the people were suffering spiritually. Jesus, in expressing His humanity, felt great compassion concerning the people's pain, and He would minister to them in profoundly meaningful ways.

➤ **How would you describe the compassion Jesus felt for the people of Israel?**

➤ **How are people like sheep?**

Day Four

MATTHEW 9:37

At a specific time, a farmer must go into his fields and collect all the grain. Otherwise, it will be lost. In fact, a large team of workers must be hired in order to harvest all the grain within a healthy time frame on larger farms. As Jesus looked out over all the people who were coming to Him, He understood that their souls would be lost if they were brought to God. Jesus felt a sense of urgency that these people would hear the gospel—the means by which the people would be saved. However, He also knew that there was a desperate shortage of faithful teachers who would proclaim the truth of God’s message. Jesus’ answer was to invite all His followers—including Christians today—to join in His mission of harvesting souls for the kingdom.

- **What did Jesus mean that “the harvest is abundant”?**
- **How does this apply in our world today?**

Day Five

MATTHEW 9:38



Jesus’ followers are called to join Jesus in His mission of proclaiming the gospel to all people. We do this by testifying about Jesus’ transforming power in our lives, as well as through sharing the gospel. We also engage in Jesus’ mission through our prayers. In verse 38, Jesus called His disciples to pray specifically that more workers would join in the mission of reaching the lost. Today, there is a shortage of people committed to sharing the hope of Jesus with the hopeless people all around us. We need to understand that our prayers make a difference, and if we pray for more workers, God will answer. Let’s get busy sharing the gospel, and let’s pray that God would surround us with others committed to doing the same.

- **Why is it so important to pray for more workers in the field?**
- **How are you living as an answer to Jesus’ prayer for more workers?**

3

The Message

?

WHERE DO
YOU TURN FOR
TRUSTWORTHY
INFORMATION?

The POINT >

Jesus saves those who trust in Him.

> ROMANS 10:8b-17

⁸ ... **The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.** This is the message of faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, **Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame,** ¹² since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. ¹³ For **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing

about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: **How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.** ¹⁶ But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, **Lord, who has believed our message?**

¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

The average person has more than 80 apps downloaded on their phone and uses 9 apps on a daily basis.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, which means He didn't inherit the sinful nature passed down from Adam, which made Him fit to be our Savior.

Developing relationships and friendships online has become commonplace, whether through social media, video game communities, or even dating apps. However, it is common for people to portray themselves online in ways that don't align with who they really are. A recent TV series investigated these online-only relationships, and when online "friends" refused to move forward with in-person meetings, suspicions arose that the person was pretending to be someone they were not. The show's investigators then sought to discover the truth, and over and over, when the truth was uncovered, people were heartbroken or humiliated to find out they'd been deceived. This series reveals some people's desperate need to trust someone who will value and honor them.

Trust is a major issue in our society, and our culture is severely lacking in truth and trust. Fortunately, there's an answer—His name is Jesus. A relationship with Him provides the promise of an eternal future with the One who is the truth and can always be trusted.

ROMANS 10:8b-10

1 How are belief and confession related?

2 What does it mean to confess and follow Jesus as Lord?



*People have used a variety of means to spread the message of salvation, but it all comes down to one essential element: one person telling another about Jesus.
#BSFLShareChrist*

ROMANS 10:11-13

- 3** What does the gospel have to do with shame?
- 4** When have you experienced shame?
- 5** How has the gospel freed you from shame?

ROMANS 10:14-17

- 6** What opportunities to share the gospel have you missed?
- 7** How would you explain the gospel to someone?
- 8** How specifically will you commit to sharing the good news?



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, which means He didn't inherit the sinful nature passed down from Adam, which made Him fit to be our Savior.

The price for our sins was a sinless sacrifice. Because we have all descended from Adam, we inherited his sin nature, and therefore, no natural person could ever be fit to pay sin's price. However, because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He inherited no sin nature. And though Jesus was tempted to sin in the same ways we are, He lived in perfect obedience to God. Jesus lived a righteous life and is therefore able to save those who trust Him.

> CHRIST

We are saved when we:

- > Confess to God, agreeing with what He says is true.
- > Believe in Jesus as the Savior.

9 How does your life—not just what you say, but the ways you live—demonstrate that you have truly been saved and transformed?

10 What changes do you need to make to align your life more closely to Scripture's standards?

> COMMUNITY

Most of us came to faith because someone invested in our lives, leading us to Jesus.

11 This week, write a note (or text or email) thanking the people who helped you come to faith. Thank them specifically for their obedience to God and for sharing the gospel with you.



> CULTURE

Many people today refuse to believe the truths of Scripture, and the consequences are real. To be saved, non-believers must confess and believe.

12 How would you describe these ideas to unsaved friends?

CONFESS

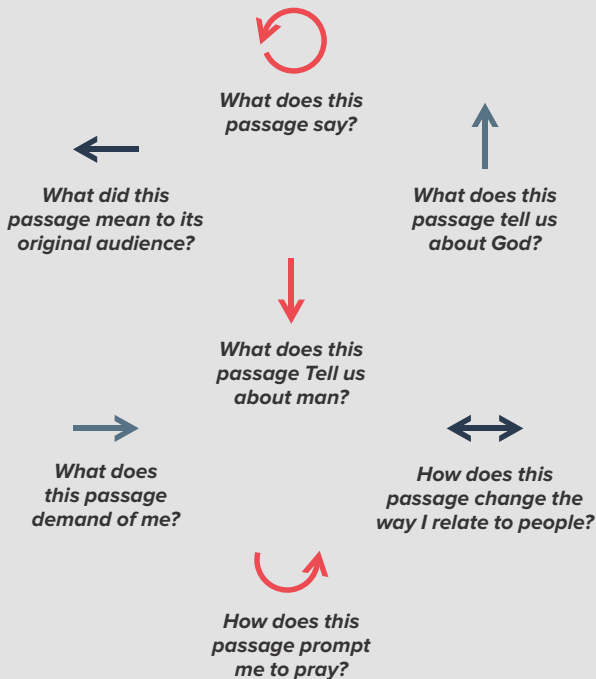
BELIEVE

This week, share these with people who need to know Jesus.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **MARK 1:14a**

John was a prophet whom God had sent to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry. He was bold not only in proclaiming the truth of Scripture, but also in "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). John was continually calling people to repent of their sins so they could experience God's forgiveness, and he didn't discriminate. Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee (the region where John ministered), was living in an incestuous relationship with his niece, and John pointed out his sin. Ultimately, John would be killed for his commitment to telling the truth. We, too, may face rejection for speaking the truth. Still, it is the right thing to do. God used John in powerful ways, and as long as we speak the truth with boldness, patience, and kindness, God will use us too.

➤ **Why was John so bold, even when speaking the truth would lead to his arrest and death?**

➤ **How is God calling you to be more bold in sharing the gospel?**

Day Two

MARK 1:14b



When Jesus began His public ministry, He traveled from town to town throughout Galilee, the northern rural region of Israel, proclaiming the gospel to anyone who would listen. Jesus became known for supernaturally healing the sick, and people from all around would flock to Him to be healed from their diseases. He would also—and perhaps more importantly—preach the gospel to all who would listen. In fact, sharing the gospel was central to His mission for in this message is the power to transform lives—not only in the here-and-now, but for eternity. The good news that Jesus preached is the same message we’re called to share today. In fact, just as the gospel was central to Jesus’ mission, it’s also central to ours. As followers of Christ, we are called to proclaim the good news of God to the people in our lives.

➤ **In your own words, what is the good news of God?**

➤ **Why was sharing the good news central to Jesus’ mission?**

Day Three

MARK 1:15a

In Genesis 15, we read of God’s establishing a covenant with Abraham. God had promised to give Abraham and his offspring a land where they would experience God’s blessing (Gen. 13:15). However, God wouldn’t give it over to them immediately. At that time, the land was occupied by other nations, and God saw that “the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure” (Gen. 15:16). Regarding even pagan people, God was patient and allowed them the opportunity to repent before judging them. When Jesus said, “the time is fulfilled,” this was the same language as the Amorites’ sin being “full” or “complete.” Jesus was saying to the Jewish people, *God has been patient with you, but His patience has run out and your rebellion is now full.* God had sent Jesus to separate the faithful from the rebellious. God’s grace would be poured out on those who would repent from their sins. However, for those who rejected Jesus, God would no longer be patient and merciful.

➤ **Why do you think God was so patient with the Amorites and other pagan nations?**

➤ **Why is it dangerous to test God’s patience?**

Day Four

MARK 1:15b

For generations, the Jewish people had been looking for the Messiah—an anointed king who would free Israel from oppression and restore the nation to a position of prominence among the nations of the world. The prophets had foretold the Messiah’s coming. However, the Jews interpreted the messages according to their own desires and perspectives. When Jesus came to earth, He didn’t establish the kind of kingdom the people were expecting, for God’s kingdom isn’t first an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual one. God’s kingdom exists where people live under the rule of Jesus. In proclaiming the gospel, Jesus was telling people that He had come to establish God’s heavenly kingdom as a reality on earth.

- **How would you describe the kingdom of God?**
- **How does your life show that you live in submission to the rule of Christ?**

Day Five

MARK 1:15c



Though we are all sinners and God will only be patient for so long, those who are willing to turn from their sin and trust in Jesus can be part of God’s kingdom forever. This is the good news Jesus brought to the world. In fact, there is no better news! This applied not only to the people in Jesus’ time—it applies to us today. Forgiveness of sin and salvation from death is available to anyone who chooses to repent and believe. We are called to live this way. Further, it’s the responsibility of all Jesus’ followers to share this good news with the people in our lives.

- **What is true repentance? Belief?**
- **What practical steps will you take to share this good news with the people in your life who may not follow Christ?**

4

Live the Message

?

WHAT'S
YOUR
FAVORITE
T-SHIRT?

The
POINT >

How we live reflects on the message we share.

> COLOSSIANS 3:1-3,12-17

¹ So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

.....

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of

Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

T-shirts have been made from a variety of materials over time, including cotton, as well as yarn, polyester, leather, alligator skin, gold, and even human hair—gross!¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

God is Creator, all creation is a result of His work, and He created people in His image and as His crowning achievement to enjoy a relationship with Him and reflect His glory.

If you're anything like me, you have way too many t-shirts, and on laundry day, your t-shirt drawer may be stuffed so full that you have trouble getting it closed!

Why do we have so many t-shirts? For one, they're just so comfortable. Beyond this, they're relatively inexpensive, and they look pretty nice. Plus, they make great souvenirs, and we often attach great memories to our shirts. And perhaps the biggest reason—whether it's your favorite sports team or brand of skate shoes, a quirky statement or a cool piece of art, the graphic on a t-shirt says something about who we are and the things we value.

As Christians, we put on more than clothes as a fashion statement. We're also called to make another kind of statement by putting on ways of living that declare, "I'm a follower of Jesus!" The ways we speak and act are much more powerful than the design on a t-shirt. Let's make sure our lives point others to Christ.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-3

1 What does it mean to die to self? To be raised with Christ?

2 Why is it sometimes tough to live out our faith?

When Jesus is first in our lives and we continually wear a wardrobe of godly character, others will see and hear Jesus through us. #BSFLShareChrist



COLOSSIANS 3:12-15

3 How have others noticed your spiritual “clothes”?

4 What are some practical steps believers can take to put on the character of Christ?

5 What have been the most difficult traits for you to display?



COLOSSIANS 3:16-17

6 How are you making God’s Word the center of your life?

7 How do the ways you live every day reflect a heart of worship?

8 What can you do to have more gratitude towards God?



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

God is Creator, all creation is a result of His work, and He created people in His image and as His crowning achievement to enjoy a relationship with Him and reflect His glory.

God created us for a couple of very specific purposes. We were made to live in relationship with Him and to reflect His glory and goodness to the world. We do these things in the ways we live. When we live selfishly and sinfully, we fail in fulfilling His purposes for our lives—we are separated relationally from Him and others fail to see His character reflected through our lives. However, when we live in obedience out of a heart of love for God, we experience intimacy with our creator and others see our Father through our lives.

> CHRIST

9 We are called to live as Jesus lived. Using the list of characteristics we are to “put on,” briefly describe how Jesus exemplified each of these:

Compassion

Kindness

Humility

Gentleness

Patience

Forbearance

Forgiveness

Love

10 Which ones do you do well? Where do you struggle?

11 What steps will you take to make sure to live more like Jesus?



> COMMUNITY

12 Accountability is important in helping us grow to be more like Jesus. Give a trusted friend permission to point out times when you are thinking or living more like the world than like Christ.

> CULTURE

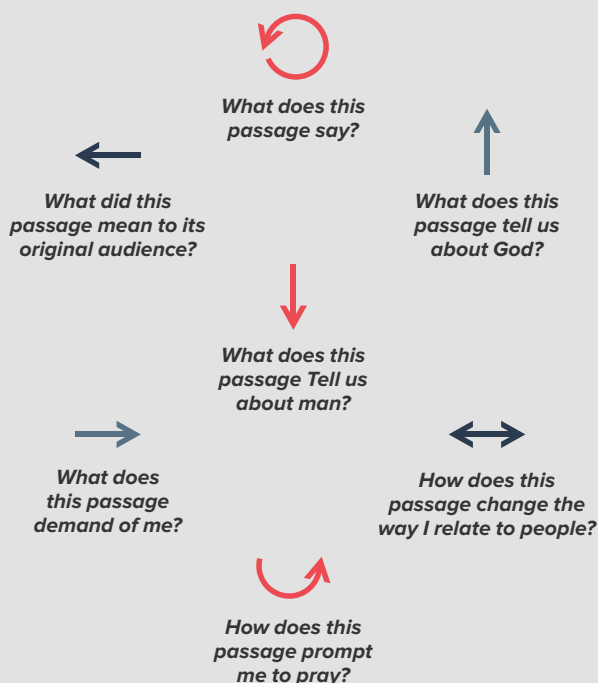
The characteristics we “put on” are intended to help others see the ways Jesus has impacted our lives.

13 As you seek to live like Christ, make sure your non-believing friends know why you live the way you do. Share that it’s because you want to reflect Christ, and point them to the gospel.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

1 JOHN 3:13

Jesus shared with His disciples that if we live as the world lives, then it will love us as its own (John 15:19). However, the world hated Jesus, and because we live as He did, the world will hate us too. We live in a world that has been broken by sin. In fact, the world is so warped that people are inclined toward seeing what is evil as good, and in turn, they see what is good as evil (Isa. 5:20). Many are tempted to believe that when we surrender our lives to Jesus, our lives will automatically become easy. This isn't the case. According to what Jesus taught, we should expect quite the opposite—we'll be rejected, even persecuted, for following Jesus. However, it is all worth it as we are made more like Christ, and through the faith that leads us to live well through suffering, we are given the gift of God's grace leading to eternal life.

➤ **Why does the world hate followers of Jesus?**

➤ **How would you describe "hate" in this verse?**

Day Two

1 JOHN 3:14-15



Jesus taught that the greatest commandments are that His followers love God above all else and that we love others as much as we love ourselves. In fact, loving others is so important in the lives of Jesus' followers that we can know that we have eternal life (or not) by the presence of love in our lives. If there's a lack of love—not just the way we feel, but in the way we treat others—then we have reason to question God's transforming work in our lives. However, when we live (and love) like Jesus, we can have confidence that our hearts have been changed, and we will live eternally with God.

➤ **Why is love an essential part of following Jesus?**

➤ **Based on the ways you live, do you have confidence you have eternal life?**

Day Three

1 JOHN 3:16

At times, we may be tempted to compare ourselves to others and to see ourselves as good people. However, the standard God has set for His people isn't based on those we encounter from day to day. The standard is Jesus. And the way He demonstrated His love for us is that He laid down His life for sinners. Jesus' love was certainly expressed in His sacrifice on the cross, but this wasn't the only way. Jesus lived every moment of every day as an expression of God's love for people. It wasn't a single act of dying for those He loved—Jesus chose every day to give up any and all selfish desires in order to sacrificially show love to the people who desperately needed it. Jesus lived and died as a clear picture of the love of God, and we are called to live this same way. In fact, this is the mark of a true follower of Jesus.

➤ **How specifically did Jesus live as an expression of God's love?**

➤ **What are practical ways we can “lay down our lives” for others?**

Day Four

1 JOHN 3:17

James asks, “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works?” (Jas. 2:14), and claims that “faith” that doesn’t lead to meeting others’ needs in real ways is a false faith. If someone is hungry and we pray for them and genuinely desire to see them fed, but we don’t share our own food, then we have legitimate heart issues. If someone is cold and we desperately want to see them obtain a coat and shelter, but we don’t share from our own closets or invite them to stay in our home, we need to examine our hearts. Here’s the issue—if we see people in need, but we withhold real-world expressions of love and compassion, then we need to ask ourselves, “Is God’s love really in my heart?” John’s perspective here is that when the love of God has transformed a person’s heart that love will be expressed. Every time. Without question.

- **Who do you know who has real-life needs? What are you doing to meet those needs?**
- **How is the love of God for others expressed in real ways through your life?**

Day Five

1 JOHN 3:18



We all know that talk is cheap. Many people like to talk a big game, but fail to back it up in the ways they live. This certainly applies to many Christians today, and this is why one of the biggest complaints against Christians is acting as hypocrites. A hypocrite is a person who acts (or claims) to be something which they don’t live out. As Christians, we are to be known not only by what we say—and we are to speak the truth and share the gospel continually—but also in the ways we live, backing up our claims by showing real love to everyone in our lives. This is the defining characteristic of a true follower of Christ. Jesus loved in real ways, and in following Him, we will love others too.

- **When have you failed to back up your words in the way you live?**
- **How is God calling you to reflect His love in action and in truth?**



Share the Message

?

WHAT ARE
SOME TOPICS
YOU'RE
ALWAYS
READY TO
TALK ABOUT?

The POINT ➤

Our daily conversations are
opportunities to share Christ.

➤ ACTS 17:16-18,22-23,30-31

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed when he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, as well as in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also debated with him. Some said, “What is this ignorant show-off trying to say?” Others replied, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign deities”—because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

.....

²² Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious

in every respect. ²³ For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

.....

³⁰ “Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Goldfish have an average attention span of nine seconds, but studies show that the average person's is only eight.¹

**LEVELS OF
BIBLICAL
LEARNING // BIBLE**

The Bible is the story of God's work to redeem fallen creation through the saving work of Jesus, who will one day make all things new.

When I was in college, I would always keep a small New Testament Bible in my bag or in my pocket. During breaks between classes, I would often sit down on a bench or on the lawn outside the music building to read Scripture. One day, a fellow music student with whom I was acquainted, but didn't know well, sat down next to me and struck up a conversation. I quickly answered, then got back to reading. When my friend interrupted me again, I became a little annoyed until I realized that I was acting in an utterly selfish and foolish way. I was completely ignoring the opportunity God had brought before me.

As a young Christian, I knew the importance not only of studying the Bible, but also sharing my faith. I was committed to telling others about Jesus, and I often prayed God would give me opportunities to share. However, I would come to see that I was often self-focused and oblivious to the things God was doing around me. Thankfully, God was gracious to allow me to grow in this.

We have opportunities every day to share Jesus, but if we aren't paying attention, we can easily miss them. God works through us to share the gospel with the people He wants to draw to Himself. We need to be ready to share.

ACTS 17:16-18

1 What can you do to become more aware of gospel opportunities?

2 How can we be prepared to share the gospel when the opportunity presents itself?

ACTS 17:22-23

3 What stands out to you about Paul's approach to sharing the gospel?

4 How can you make connections with non-religious people?

5 What are some simple ways you can help others understand the truths about God?

ACTS 17:30-31

6 What truths are essential when communicating the gospel?

7 How would you explain God's judgment to a non-believer?

8 How can you be like Paul in sharing the gospel?



*Opportunities
to share the
gospel can come
at unexpected
moments.
#BSFLShareChrist*



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

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PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // BIBLE

The Bible is the story of God's work to redeem fallen creation through the saving work of Jesus, who will one day make all things new.

As followers of Jesus, our relationship with Him is the center of our lives and defines who we are. Loving Him—heart, mind, soul, and strength—is the defining characteristic of our lives. If these things are true, Jesus will be continually in our thoughts, and it's only natural that He would come up in our conversations. One of the most powerful ways God's kingdom advances is through His people sharing the gospel, and He has called us to share of His love for all people, including the death and resurrection of Jesus and His plan to restore all that sin has broken.

>CHRIST

The gospel is the message that we can:

- > Be forgiven of our sins.
- > Be reconciled to God.
- > Spend eternity with Christ in the newly restored heavens and earth.

9 In your own words, write down what each of these means to you.

10 Write a prayer thanking Jesus for His sacrifice that allowed salvation to become real in your life.

➤ COMMUNITY

Sometimes, we spend time with our Christian friends and talk about school or sports, boys or girls, clothes, video games, and so many other things, but we never get around to talking about the things of God. This shouldn't be the case. If Jesus is truly the center of our lives, we'll find ourselves continually thinking and talking about the ways we're experiencing Him in our lives—especially with other Christians!

11 This week (and beyond), intentionally choose to talk with your Christian friends about:

- What you're learning in Scripture.
- Ways you're experiencing God's blessings.
- Ways you may be spiritually struggling.



➤ CULTURE

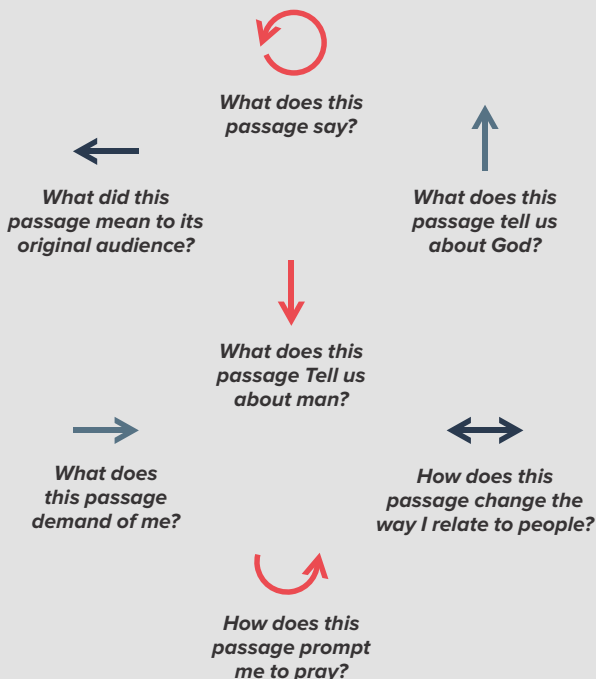
We often think of evangelism and sharing the gospel as something that's highly formal and something we do on mission trips or during official church outreach efforts. Though these are good things, evangelism should never be limited to formal programs. Instead, the gospel should be so comfortable and familiar to us that we talk about it continually.

12 Make it a point to include talk of the gospel in several conversations with non-believing friends. Choose a specific number and commit to making it happen.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One 1 JOHN 1:1a

John began his gospel account with these words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). In this letter written to the church, John began with a similar idea—that Jesus has existed from the very beginning. Jesus was present before the creation of the world. Jesus was alive before He became a man and entered into our experience. In fact, because Jesus is God, He has existed not only throughout the history of the world, but for eternity past. In a world where things change, often more quickly than we can keep up with, Jesus has always been around, and He is faithful and unchanging. This is the reason our hope is secure in Christ—everything else may fall apart, but Jesus will always be with us.

➤ **How have you experienced the world’s being highly unstable?**

➤ **Why is it important to understand that Jesus has existed for eternity, and He is faithful and unchanging?**

Day Two

1 JOHN 1:1b



In chapter 1 of John's gospel, he went on to share that the Word became flesh and lived among us so we could clearly see the character and person of God (v. 14). In this passage, John shared that those who were alive during Jesus' life on earth were able to hear, see, and touch the One who had been alive for eternity. Jesus is the Word made flesh, and the message He proclaimed—the gospel—is the truth that allows people to experience the life that God has desired for us all along. Jesus not only spoke about the kingdom of God, but He lived as a perfect representation of God's nature in human form. In Christ, God made it possible that we could receive eternal life.

➤ **Why did Jesus become flesh and live among us?**

➤ **What is the “word of life” that Jesus shared?**

Day Three

1 JOHN 1:2

When God created Adam and Eve, they enjoyed a whole relationship with God and experienced the life that God desires for all people. However, when they chose sin, they were cut off from this blessed existence, and instead, experienced the curse of sin with its frustrations and pains and ultimately death. Since the fall, no person has ever experienced life as God intended—at least, not in this lifetime. However, when Jesus came, because He was conceived by the Spirit and lived in perfect, wholehearted obedience to the Father, sin had no claim on Him. Jesus is the only person to live a truly blessed life—one in which the Father is fully pleased. We witness His life through the Scriptures, and if we trust in Him for salvation, we will share in His blessings for eternity.

➤ **How is Jesus the picture of a blessed life?**

➤ **How was Jesus blessed despite His being rejected and dying on the cross?**

Day Four

1 JOHN 1:3a

John shared with the church that he and others had known Jesus while He was on the earth. He had the privilege of observing the ways Jesus lived and hearing the message Jesus taught. Now, John was sharing the things he'd seen and heard with the people he cared about deeply. John knew just how important that gospel was. In fact, sharing the gospel was the mission Jesus had entrusted to His followers, and this is our mission today. For people to trust Jesus and be restored in their relationship with God, they must hear the message, and without our sharing, they will never hear it. At times, the thought of talking about spiritual things may make us a little uncomfortable. However, it doesn't have to be this way. If Jesus is the most important thing in our lives—and as Christians, He is!—then it should be natural to talk about Him with others. Plus, we know that our friends and loved ones' eternities depend on their hearing about Jesus. Let's be the ones to tell them.

- **What is your reaction to the idea of sharing about Jesus with your friends?**
- **When was the last time you shared your faith? How did the hearer respond?**

Day Five

1 JOHN 1:3b



There was a specific reason that John shared about Jesus with the people he cared about—so they would have fellowship with one another. We often think of fellowship as simply spending time together, and in a certain sense, this is true. However, real Christian fellowship implies two specific things. First, fellowship involves being together in pursuit of a common goal—being on mission together. Second, and more importantly, it only happens when people are united by faith in Jesus and by the power of the Spirit. John knew that this happens only when people believe the gospel. He wanted so desperately to have fellowship with the people he loved, so he continually talked about Jesus. It is right for us to live this same way.

- **How would you describe fellowship?**
- **Why is sharing Jesus essential to true fellowship?**

6

Trust God to Work

WHAT'S AT
THE TOP
OF YOUR
BUCKET
LIST?

The
POINT >

Share Christ in all situations, but leave
the results to God.

> MATTHEW 13:3-8,18-23

³Then he told them many things in parables, saying, “Consider the sower who went out to sow. ⁴As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn’t have much soil, and it grew up quickly since the soil wasn’t deep. ⁶But when the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it. ⁸Still other seed fell on good ground and produced fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times what was sown.

.....
¹⁸“So listen to the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and doesn’t

understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the one sown along the path. ²⁰And the one sown on rocky ground—this is one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. ²¹But he has no root and is short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²Now the one sown among the thorns—this is one who hears the word, but the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³But the one sown on the good ground—this is one who hears and understands the word, who does produce fruit and yields: some a hundred, some sixty, some thirty times what was sown.”



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

The top bucket list item is to see the Northern Lights, and the second most popular is skydiving.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

People are God's most loved creation and have been given responsibility for overseeing His creation. As we steward it for His purposes, we reflect God's character and authority.

A bucket list is a checklist of activities or tasks a person wants to complete before the end of this life. There are loads of books and blogs filled with bucket-list ideas: One hundred places to visit before you die. One hundred books to read before you die. One hundred foods to try, movies to see, adventures to go on, and on and on.

Some people create their lists just for fun while others take it quite seriously. Few people complete their bucket list unless it consists of only “low hanging fruit”—things that are fairly easy to accomplish. Whether we complete our lists or not, inasmuch as we receive the experiences with gratitude, it's generally good to have these kinds of goals and to pursue experiencing the rich life God has made available to us.

As cool as it is to summit a mountain, swim with dolphins, or visit the pyramids, one thing that should be on every Christ-follower's bucket list is leading others to faith. This experience impacts not only this life, but it also makes a difference for eternity—in our own lives, as well as those we lead to faith! It's great to enjoy the world which God created as “very good,” but let's make sure we prioritize the eternal even more than the here and now.

MATTHEW 13:3-8

1 Why is it important to spread the gospel as widely as possible?

2 How would you rate yourself at sharing the gospel?



MATTHEW 13:18-22

3 Why do some people refuse to follow Jesus?

4 How do you typically respond when a person is not receptive to hearing the gospel?

5 Why shouldn't you become discouraged if someone rejects the gospel?



The good soil is rich for discipleship, for growing in Christ, and for sharing Him with others. #BSFLShareChrist

MATTHEW 13:23

6 When have you seen the gospel land in good soil?

7 What does it look like in someone's life when they experience salvation?

8 How can you rely on God to help you with evangelism?



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

People are God's most loved creation and have been given responsibility for overseeing His creation. As we steward it for His purposes, we reflect God's character and authority.

God has entrusted to us the treasure of the gospel. He has also entrusted to us oversight of His creation. This means that we are responsible to share the gospel with our words, and we are to reflect God's character in all the ways we live. It's always both—words and actions. When we live out these specific aspects of God's calling on our lives, He will use us to draw others to Himself.

> CHRIST

In the parable of the soils, there is fruitless soil (hard, rocky, and thorn-infested) and good soil. If we're Christians, then we are certainly the good soil. Still, we must consider if we're highly productive—the 100 times soil—or less productive.

9 Be honest with yourself and with God. Which kind of soil are you? How would you rate your fruitfulness for the gospel?

10 What steps do you need to take in order to be more fruitful for the kingdom?

Pray that Jesus would help you to be fruitful.

> COMMUNITY

For soil to be fruitful, it must be prepared. In our lives, God uses His Word and the Holy Spirit, as well as other people, to cultivate our hearts that we would live productive lives.

11 How have others helped you grow in producing fruit for the kingdom?



12 In what areas of your life do you need help tending? Invite someone to help you cultivate a fruitful heart.

> CULTURE

Jesus came to earth to spread the seeds of the gospel. He is the Sower, and He's invited us to take part in His mission. When we share the gospel, the seeds will often fall on soil that isn't receptive or which doesn't produce healthy fruit. Still, we are called to share freely.

13 Make a goal, specifically the number of times you'll commit to sharing the gospel in the next 30 days. (Spreading seeds freely would mean setting a high number.) You'll experience rejection. Don't be discouraged—Jesus faced rejection, too!

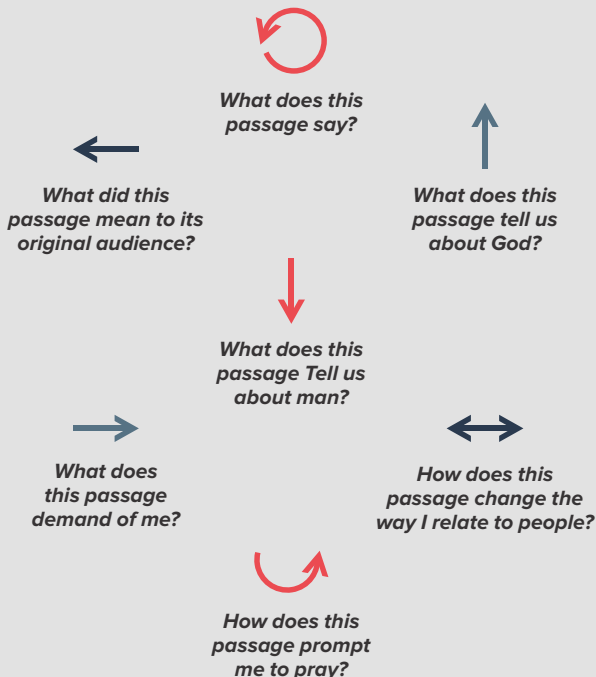
> How many times will you commit to sharing?

14 At the end of the 30 days, make sure to write down both the struggles you faced, as well as victories you experienced. (A victory doesn't necessarily have to be someone's coming to faith. Your sharing is in and of itself something to celebrate as it's a lost person's willingness to listen.)

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

1 CORINTHIANS 3:5

Paul wrote these verses to deal specifically with a challenging situation in the Corinthian church. Apollos was a Jew who had come to faith in Christ and had a powerful evangelistic ministry. He had traveled to Corinth to preach, and some from the church particularly appreciated Apollos' ministry and devoted themselves to following him. Others loved Paul and chose to follow him, refusing to listen to Apollos. From these different perspectives, division had grown in the church. Paul wrote to the church to let them know that they should devote themselves to neither himself nor Apollos. They were simply servants to the One whom the people should really follow—Jesus. Today, we must be careful about the ways we follow other people. It's okay to appreciate the ministry of a particular music artist, and we should certainly honor and follow the spiritual leaders God has placed in our lives. However, ultimately, we must understand that it is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who deserves our devotion.

➤ **When have you seen these kinds of preferences create division among Christians?**

➤ **Why is it so important to understand that only Jesus is worthy of our devotion?**

Day Two

1 CORINTHIANS 3:6



A farmer must carry out a variety of specific responsibilities in order to produce a healthy crop—remove rocks, till the soil, add fertilizer, plant the seed, water continuously, pull weeds, and more. And after he does all this, the farmer expects (and hopes) that the seeds will grow into healthy plants and produce fruit, but the truth is, he can't simply make that happen. The farmer's job is to create the conditions necessary for producing fruit, but there are parts of the process that are simply outside of his control. It's the same with people's coming to faith. Paul and Apollos were servants who did their part in creating conditions that would allow people to come to faith. However, it was God who produced the fruit of faith in the hearts of lost people.

➤ **How is sharing the gospel like farming?**

➤ **When have you seen God produce fruit in the heart of a lost person?**

Day Three

1 CORINTHIANS 3:7

There are some people who focus on our being created in God's image—the fact that we're children of the King of the universe and God considered us worthy of paying the ultimate price to purchase us out of slavery—and they conclude, "My worth is beyond measure." There are others who focus on our brokenness and the fact that we disobey God over and over. It's absolutely impossible that we could ever live up to God's standards, and they conclude, "I'm a worm." The truth is, both are right. It's a matter of context. When Paul says that those who share the gospel are nothing, he doesn't mean that we have no value. What he's saying is that no matter what we do, it's up to God to create faith in an unbelieving heart. There's nothing that any person can do to bring the spiritually dead to life. Compared to God, we bring no value to the mission of changing lives. This is why it's such a great honor that God chooses to use us anyway.

➤ **When have you felt helpless to change the heart or mind of someone who was making bad choices?**

➤ **If only God can give growth, how are we to see our responsibility?**

Day Four

1 CORINTHIANS 3:8

Scripture speaks of every Christian's having a gift from the Holy Spirit, and though there are different gifts, they help the many members of the church to function together for one purpose (1 Cor. 12:4). Paul planted seeds of the gospel. Apollos watered those seeds in helping create conditions in which fruit could grow. And by doing what God had called them to, they were part of the same mission. As members of the body of Christ, we are called to work together in carrying out His mission. Still, we must understand that we're each rewarded (or judged) individually based on our living faithfully according to God's call on our lives. Notice, the eternal rewards we receive from God are not based on success, but on our labor—the degree to which we serve God faithfully during our lives on earth. God is pleased with our faithfulness, and when we obey, God works through us to produce fruit in the lives of the lost.

- **How are you continually laboring to share the gospel with the lost?**
- **How does it make you feel to know that your eternal rewards will be based on your sowing seeds of the gospel in this life?**

Day Five

1 CORINTHIANS 3:9



The term “coworkers” does not mean that we are God’s partners, but that we are His servants working under His guidance. Still, it does imply that God uses us in meaningful ways in accomplishing His purposes. Could God call people to Himself without using us? Of course! But He has chosen, nonetheless, to work through us in reconciling people to Himself. According to God’s design, for the lost to be saved, they must hear the gospel. For them to hear, we must share it. The hearts of the lost are the soil and the field where seeds need to be planted. Let’s commit to spreading seeds among as many hearts as possible. We will be rewarded, and perhaps more importantly, the lost will be saved. This is our purpose.

- **If God’s mission depended on you, how successful, on a scale from 1 to 10, would it be? How can you make improvements?**
- **Why do you think God chooses us as His coworkers?**