

# 1V1

**BY PASTOR JAYSON COMBS  
& DR. RANDY T. JOHNSON**

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

ROGER ALLEN  
NOBLE BAIRD  
PAT BEDELL  
PATRICK BICKNELL  
HOLLY BOSTON  
CALEB COMBS  
SIERRA COMBS  
JUSTIN DEAN  
DEBBIE KERR  
DEBBIE GABBARA  
LARRY GABBARA  
MITCHELL HOLMES

JAMES MANN  
MARK O'CONNOR  
JILL OSMON  
PHILIP PIASECKI  
JOHN RIGG  
PATRICK ROWLAND  
FERDINAND SANDERS  
JOHN STONE  
JOSH THAYER  
KEATON WASHBURN

DESIGNED BY: CASEY MAXWELL  
FORMATTED BY: SHAWNA JOHNSON

**Copyright © 2020 The River Church**

**All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of The River Church. Inquiries should be sent to the publisher.**

**First Edition, October 2020**

**Published by:  
The River Church  
8393 E. Holly Rd.  
Holly, MI 48442**

**Scriptures are taken from the Bible,  
English Standard Version (ESV)**



**THE RIVER CHURCH**

**Printed in the United States of America**



# CONTENTS

## **09      LESSON ONE | REACH**

- 15**      Devotion 1: Selling Eternity
- 17**      Devotion 2: Ambassadors
- 19**      Devotion 3: Investment
- 21**      Devotion 4: Ready to Suffer
- 23**      Devotion 5: It Is Not About Us
- 25**      Devotion 6: Hard Work

## **29      LESSON TWO | GATHER**

- 37**      Devotion 1: Rights
- 41**      Devotion 2: Life of Worship
- 45**      Devotion 3: Without Expectation
- 47**      Devotion 4: Commitment
- 49**      Devotion 5: Break the Silence
- 53**      Devotion 6: Decisions

## **57      LESSON THREE | GROW**

- 63**      Devotion 1: Mirror Jesus
- 67**      Devotion 2: Breath of Fresh Air
- 69**      Devotion 3: Motives
- 71**      Devotion 4: Thank You, Coach
- 73**      Devotion 5: Escalator
- 75**      Devotion 6: Imitation

**79      LESSON FOUR | CORRECTION**

- 85**      Devotion 1: Without Wrinkle
- 87**      Devotion 2: Never Too Late
- 89**      Devotion 3: Bring Your Brother Back
- 91**      Devotion 4: I Am Not Your Enemy
- 93**      Devotion 5: Let Go and Let God
- 95**      Devotion 6: Unity

**99      LESSON FIVE | GIVING**

- 105**      Devotion 1: "Mine"
  - 109**      Devotion 2: PT Cruiser
  - 111**      Devotion 3: Glory From God
  - 113**      Devotion 4: Shut the Door and Open Your Heart
  - 115**      Devotion 5: God and Yourself
  - 117**      Devotion 6: Sacrificial Worship
-



# PREFACE

---

Matthew 28:19-20 is referred to as the Great Commission. It is the last two verses of the book of Matthew. Jesus has already risen from the dead, and He gets the disciples together for some final words. It is a coach's last pep talk as the players enter the arena for a big game. He says, ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”***

It is these verses that are the basis for who we are as the Church: The Church exists to glorify God by reaching the world with the Gospel, gathering with the saints, and growing in the Lord through His Word.

This mission seems quite clear from Jesus' words. We often view these as a team, but they should also be approached as individuals. *1V1* focuses on ministry often needing one person to reach one other person. All too often, we dismiss items as the Church's responsibility and forget our personal obligation in reaching out to those around us, encouraging others at a gathering, and mentoring or discipling someone else. *1V1* also challenges for the importance of viewing correction and giving from a personal, individual perspective.

*1V1* consists of five study guides for personal or group discussion and thirty devotions covering the mission of the Church and address the potentially awkward, but very important topics of correction and giving. These will help remind the believer to focus on essentials and listen for their calling by God.

---

LESSON ONE

# REACH

PASTOR CHUCK LINDSEY

---

Jesus said, “**Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature**” (Mark 16:15 NKJV).

1. Who was He talking to?

---



---



---

Think about it for a moment. Put yourself there. Who was He speaking to? It is pretty clear that He was not talking to religious organizations (Pharisees or Sadducees). He was not speaking to a brand of “church” or even to key ministry leaders and their programming. Jesus was talking to individuals. He was looking into the eyes of each and every person standing there and “commissioning” them individually. He was asking each of His followers to personally go into their world and (as Matthews account says it), “**Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**” It was not a corporate strategy, it was His mission passed on to each person individually. His mission was to “seek and to save that which was lost” and He laid that on His followers right there, that day, and it was to be their mission, and our mission until He returns.

2. What difference does it make whether Jesus was talking to a group or individuals?

---



---



---

Over the years, I have seen a general misunderstanding in the church regarding this Great Commission from our Lord to “**go into all the world.**” My pastor used to say that the “Great Commission” should be called “the Great omission” because so few actually do it.

So few are sharing the Gospel with lost people. However, I think for many, and maybe you, it is because we have misunderstood Jesus' words to us.

There are three misunderstandings of the Great Commission.

**Misunderstanding #1:** "I have to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel."

3. What stands out to you in this statement?

---

---

---

That is not what Jesus said. He did not tell individuals to become world travelers or missionaries in order to share the Gospel. That is a misunderstanding and is completely overwhelming. The idea that you or I need to go into the whole world to try to share the Gospel seems an impossible task. Actually, it is impossible. That is not what Jesus was telling us to do. Jesus was saying, "Go back into your world and as you do, share the Gospel with the lost people in your path."

4. Who does this include? Think for a moment about who is in your immediate sphere of influence.

---

---

---

Do your spouse and children know Christ? Start there. From there, think about your parents and family members. Do they know Jesus? That is a good start. Which of your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and classmates do not know Christ?

5. Make a list of these people and start praying for their salvation.

---



---



---

**Misunderstanding #2:** “I have to be a preacher to preach the Gospel. I have to be a pastor, missionary, evangelist, or on a church staff to do what Jesus is saying here.”

6. What stands out to you in this statement?

---



---



---

No! Again, think about who Jesus was talking to. He was not talking to “professionals” (whatever that means!). He was talking to normal, regular people, like you and I. What this means is that this “mission” is not for the elite, “Navy Seals” of Christianity, it is for us. Ephesian 4:12 tells us that the pastors and leaders are commissioned by God to “equip God’s people to do the work of the ministry.” What this means is that the “ministry” is not a church job or the description of a professional “minister,” instead it is a description of the daily life of God’s people as they are trying to carry out the mission to “Preach the Gospel to every person.” Hear that again, the “ministry” is the “mission” that Jesus has sent you and me on personally. It is to reach the lost people in our lives.

**Misunderstanding #3:** “The church will do that! My church will hold events and do things that preach the Gospel.”

7. What stands out to you in this statement?

---



---



---

This was not Jesus' only design for sharing the Gospel. When we understand that Jesus was giving His mission to individual Christians, then this kind of thinking does not really make sense. It could never be a church or an organization's job to do this for me personally.

I often think about it this way: my grandfather does not (at this point) know the Lord. He is not saved. He is a car guy. He loves cars and builds race cars. Several years back, a church nearby held a car show and my grandpa went to it and brought one of his race cars. He pulled into the parking lot, parked in his designated space, popped the hood, and sat in a camping chair for the next six hours as people passed through to admire his car. Now, I might be tempted to think, "Yes, finally! Someone is doing something to reach my grandpa! Finally, an event that interests him and that he would come to! Maybe he will be saved." Now listen, I certainly thought some of that, and I quietly prayed throughout the day that He would be impacted and come to saving faith in Christ. Yet, I have shared the Gospel with my grandfather many, many times and I know that reaching him is my responsibility, not the church. Think about how tragic it would be if I never personally shared the Gospel with my grandpa and was waiting for an event that appealed to him, only to have him sit in a lawn chair in the parking lot of the church for six hours and go home unchanged! The same is true for any of us.

If we misunderstand this mission from Jesus, then we will wait for some event or some moment that our lost family will "come to" to try to reach them. Doing this we will waste a lot of precious time and we will likely be very disappointed. The truth is so much better. The Lord has sent us and will give us all we need to reach them.

8. What church outreach event do you like most?

---

---

---

9. How can this event supplement individual outreach?

---

---

---

Our Lord demonstrated all of this continually throughout His earthly life. When Jesus spoke, He was never really talking to the crowds, He was always talking to the individuals within the crowd and He was always available to the one person who needed Him. To see it, look no further than the midnight meeting with Nicodemus in John chapter 3. It was a secret meeting, under the cover of night, but was exactly what Nick needed to ask his questions. Jesus met him there, was patient with him and his lack of spiritual understanding, answered and asked questions, and clearly cared deeply for the man. Then Jesus shared the Gospel with him one on one and a life was forever changed.

10. What strategies can we learn from this Bible story?

---

---

---

Can I encourage you to start with your "list?" Begin to pray for the lost in your life. Then look for opportunities to share the hope you have with those you know and love. Trust Him for their reception to it and the changed life. He has called each of us!



# SELLING ETERNITY

---

## REACH, DEVOTION 1

James Mann

Who has ever followed the latest and greatest fad in the world? Usually, these fads are some kind of “get rich quick” program. They always say that for someone to be successful with these, they cannot have any sort of shame in it. Most of the time, you hear people talking about these systems and they are always trying to sell you on it. This is not me bashing them whatsoever but instead praising them. Many of them believe that the product they are selling is life-changing and they want you to be a part of it. In their minds, their product is so amazing that there is no reason for them to feel shame in pushing it on other people. As many of us know, most of these businesses have an expiration date. They are only good for so long. As someone who used to sell LuLaRoe, I can attest to this.

This leads to something interesting. There is a product out there that does not have an expiration date. People have been “selling” it for centuries and it is still relevant. I can also guarantee that you will become extremely wealthy in selling this product. I bet you would want to be a part of this sales team. Many of you have already picked up on this product and are cringing at the cheesiness of the previous statements. The product is the love and grace of God. The problem is many of us do not go out of our way to sell this to people. We are almost ashamed to do so, unlike those selling their “get rich quick” products.

Romans 1:16 says, ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*** We need to be going out of our way to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone knowing that

it is a product everyone needs. Oh, and the guarantee of becoming extremely wealthy early on; we can know that we are doing the work of God in assisting people to reach eternal life. To me, that is worth more than any dollar amount.

# AMBASSADORS

---

## REACH, DEVOTION 2

Noble Baird

***“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20***

Did you read that verse? I am not sure about you, but my first reaction is WOW! Read that verse again. We are ambassadors of Christ! What an incredible privilege, but also an incredible calling! Webster defines an Ambassador as, “An authorized representative or messenger; a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government.” In this passage, Paul is writing about two different topics. The first is our relationship with Christ and the second, our relationship with the world.

He begins in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 writing, ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”*** Paul reminds the church in Corinth and us of the message of the Gospel. It is through Christ that we have been saved and reconciled to our Heavenly Father. Without the atoning blood of Christ over us, we would never be able to have a relationship with God. Yet, God reconciled, redeemed, saved us from our sins, and repaired that broken relationship! It does not stop there. This is where the second part comes in, our relationship and call in this world.

What is this ministry of reconciliation? Paul makes it clear that through us, we have been called to carry the Gospel, this message

of reconciliation, to the world. God has called us to be His representatives, His messenger, and His highest ranking agent to a broken and sinful world that is in such need of reconciliation to its Creator. Today, I hope you are challenged with two things. First, never forget that you have been redeemed and reconciled to the Lord through our Savior Jesus Christ. If you are reading this and have not experienced that reconciliation and redemption, you can do that right now! Romans 10:9 tells us that if we confess Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that He is truly the Risen Savior, you will be saved! Secondly, we have been called the Ambassadors of Christ. We have been given the greatest calling ever, the privilege to represent our Savior, Jesus Christ, to the whole world on God's behalf. Wow!

# INVESTMENT

---

## REACH, DEVOTION 3

John Rigg

**W**hen I began my life journey as a young man, I would receive financial advice from others to make sure that I invested in my future. It seemed like everyone had an opinion on what I should do with the monies I earned each week. The great difficulty in looking to the future was that I was trying to survive in the present! It was hard in those early years to even think of making any long-term financial investments.

Years later, I began a new journey, a journey as a young Christian. I did not think much about investing at that time either. However, along the way, God has revealed a few things to me on the subject of investing and the following passages have been instrumental in reshaping my investment thinking.

Matthew 6:19–21 says, ***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

In 2 Peter 3:10, we read, ***“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”***

I learned from these Scriptures that God was wanting me to turn from investing in earthly things and begin investing in the eternal. Earthly

treasures eventually rot and if my investments are stored up in a bank somewhere, chances are all my desires are in there too.

Secondly, Peter makes it clear that on the ***“day of the Lord,”*** the final day of His great judgment, all earthly investments, including the Earth itself, will be burned up and destroyed! The old saying “here today, gone tomorrow” can be appropriately applied here.

It has taken a while, but God has certainly changed my investment strategy. I am convinced that the best investment of my time, money, and resources, is in the spreading of the Gospel. The return is eternal.

The word Gospel means good news and who would not want to invest in spreading some good news! However, to understand fully just how good the good news really is, a person must stand it alongside the bad news. The bad news is that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are deserving of God’s eternal wrath. The Gospel is good news because it communicates to us that we can be saved from God’s wrath by placing our faith and trust in the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross for the penalty of our sin and enter into eternal life!

“Return on investment” is a term that is often used in financial circles. I am thinking that when I invest in sharing the Gospel and someone receives it, repents, and asks the Lord to rescue them, that is a pretty good return on investment.

# READY TO SUFFER

---

## REACH, DEVOTION 4

John Stone

**“As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

2 Timothy 4:5

Imagine for a moment that God Himself appeared to you, led you to a seat, and gave you a private screening of your future. Nervousness grows into anxiety and anxiety to fear, fear to horror as time after time you see yourself laughed at, spit on, punched in the face, whipped, beaten with wooden rods, smashed with rocks until unconscious, and eventually, after years of imprisonment, executed.

The Apostle Paul, the writer of the letters to Timothy, knew what it would cost him to follow Christ; he was shown his suffering in advance (Acts 9:16). Each city he traveled to held another beating, more mocking, and ridicule. However, it also held more people that needed to hear the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:9-10) and that was more important to him than avoiding pain and suffering. By faith, he pressed forward.

Like Paul, we as followers of Christ have been called to suffer for His cause and to make Him known to an unbelieving world. When Jesus tells us to take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24) we can know in advance what is coming. We will be ostracized by our family (Mark 10:29), endure ridicule, mocking, and slander (Matthew 5:11), lose our homes, possessions (Hebrews 10:34), and even our lives (Romans 8:36). Beyond these physical things, we are trapped in sinful bodies as part of a broken, fallen world. Our spirits are oppressed by the corruption that surrounds and the sin that so easily ensnares us. We long for our Creator to make things right.

Yet, God did not just leave us to suffer with no hope. In His mercy, He also revealed the wonderful result if we trust in His promises and persevere to the end: life unending in glorified bodies, free from sinfulness, and forever in perfect fellowship with our Redeemer.

Difficult times, persecution, and other hardships will come and we need not be unprepared. God has given us everything we need in His Word. May we never lose sight of our calling: Called by Christ to suffer but one day soon called home to be with Him. What a glorious day that will be!

***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”***

Romans 8:18

# IT IS NOT ABOUT US

---

## REACH, DEVOTION 5

Mark O'Connor

It is not about me. It is not about you. In my short time in ministry, I have had the opportunity to be a part of many baptisms. The natural next step after coming to understand Jesus as your Savior is to decide to let the world know that you are a new creation and your life is going to look different from here on out. While I am appreciative that I was able to be a part of that experience, it was in no way about me. Mark did not lead them to be baptized, it was the Holy Spirit. Mark did not have any part of their salvation; it was Jesus alone who gets the recognition and glory. My word had nothing to do with the process at all, it was the Holy Spirit that took care of everything.

We see in 1 Corinthians chapter one that Paul is addressing the same issue in the church in Corinth. In verses 11-12, Paul mentions that he is hearing of factions in the church, ***“For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’”*** The church has lost sight of what is truly important and Paul calls them out on it. He questions in verse 13, ***“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”***

Paul goes on to say that he was glad that he was not involved in more baptisms so that his name could not be lifted over the name of Jesus. Then he comes in with a haymaker. I am going to do something a little out of character for me. I want to give you the next verse in two different readings of this passage. One will be the ESV, which is the translation we use for most teaching. The second is

called The Message. It is a highly paraphrased Bible translation that I rarely teach from but I like how it reflects this verse. The verse is 1 Corinthians 1:17. In the ESV, we read, ***“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”*** The Message records, ***“God didn’t send me out to collect a following for myself, but to preach the Message of what he has done, collecting a following for him. And he didn’t send me to do it with a lot of fancy rhetoric of my own, lest the powerful action at the center - Christ on the Cross - be trivialized into mere words.”***

Paul was making it clear that it was not about him. As much as you want to make it about you, I am sorry, but it is not about you. We are not meant to make a following for ourselves. We are called to create a following for Him. It is for Jesus. If you still find your faith tied to a person outside of Jesus, it is time to stop looking in and start looking out or up.

We who know the Lord need to get the word out about Him. Our cliques and groups that are always showing the world our backs need to stand up and turn around. You need to show the world your face, your open arms welcoming those who need to hear the Gospel. It is not about our “Christianese” or fancy words. It is plain and simple about what Jesus did for us on the cross. Nothing less will suffice in our message and if our message is not about the need for Jesus that the world needs so desperately, we are missing the mark.

# HARD WORK

---

## REACH, DEVOTION 6

Debbie Gabbara

All my life I have been motivated to work hard and do my best. I remember being about 15 years old and telling my dad about something that I wanted. He was quick to find a way for me to work to earn the money so that I could buy it. It did not come easily or quickly, but my hard work paid off. My dad was an awesome man who led by example. He was a hard worker and excelled in his work positions. He was kind and generous with my sister and me, but he also raised us to know that money did not grow on trees (I think we have all heard that one) and that hard work and responsibility would take us far in life. Of course, he was right. I have been blessed to have many wonderful instructors in my life. I have tried to work hard and be a good employee. Throughout most of my career, I was in positions where I was given the opportunity to manage, teach, and lead others to succeed.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 (NLT), we read, ***“Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”***

It was always easy to work hard, it was not always easy for me to share the Gospel with others. I spent years out of the will of God. Fortunately, by the grace of God, I have spent more than twice as many years seeking the Lord and telling of His gracious forgiving love. Even when we do not know Scripture well, we can always tell of what God has done for us!

As we read through Scripture and see verses like this one in 2 Timothy, we find Paul teaching and leading Timothy as he urges him

to see himself as a worker who seeks to please God and to be one ***“who correctly explains the word of truth.”***

Timothy had spent years learning from Paul as they traveled and preached the good news of Jesus. Here Paul is encouraging and instructing Timothy to pass on the truths of the Gospel. Paul reminds Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel. The truth may not always be easy to hear but it is always a firm foundation.

Paul penned these words in 2 Timothy 2:19 (NLT), ***“But God’s truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and ‘All who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil.’”***

Just as God puts special people in our lives, God put Paul in Timothy’s life. Paul’s instruction to Timothy was that he was to be a man who would be a witness to Christ’s love by the example of his life. Paul wanted Timothy to be able to carry on in the work of the Great Commission in a responsible and effective way without getting caught up in things that would hinder his progress.

I had a wonderful dad who taught me to work hard. God, the Father, left us a manual that teaches us all we need to know to find Jesus, the Savior. It is up to us to turn away from evil, be a good worker, and to know the Scripture so that we can boldly explain the truth of the Gospel to those around us.



---

LESSON TWO

# GATHER

PASTOR JAYSON COMBS

---

An elderly woman walked into the local country church. The friendly usher greeted her at the door and helped her up the flight of steps.

"Where would you like to sit?" he asked politely.

"The front row please," she answered.

"You really don't want to do that," the usher said, "The pastor is really boring."

"Do you happen to know who I am?" the woman inquired.

"No," he said.

"I'm the pastor's mother," she replied indignantly.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

"No," she said.

"Good," he answered.

1. What was the most awkward gathering you have ever attended?

---

---

---

2. How would you define what the gathering of the church is?

---

---

---

3. What specifics would you say are biblical mandates that we do as the church gathers together?

---

---

---

Today I want to challenge you on what it means to "Gather." Sometimes when we think of the word gather, words like group, church building, Sunday morning, and corporate worship come to mind. Yes, these are all wonderful things that we do as a church

together. They are wonderful and important! However, gathering as a church is so much more. We need to look to the Word and hopefully, you will be challenged in expanding your thoughts of the gathering of the church.

Acts 2:42-44 says, ***“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”***

4. What gathering events happened in the early church?

---

---

---

If you think you can do church on your own, you just do not get what the church is.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, we see, ***“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.”***

God does not just call His church to come and be, but to go and do. As I have worked in the church for over 20 years now, I have seen so many times instead of the church being moved to go and serve, the people in the church go to the church building and find a staff member and then say something like, “I think this is something the church should do or take care of.”

5. Why do you think that has become a struggle for the followers of Jesus?

---



---



---

God is telling the church that it needs to minister to people with problems. So if you are in the church, you must go help people with problems. The wonderful thing about that is all of us have our own problems. Therefore, the church is a group of people caring for each other's problems.

Here are 4 ways the church gathers together to help people with problems.

- Gossip about them.
- Tell the pastor to go take care of it.
- Abandon those people with problems.
- Go to a different church where people do not have problems.

Okay, so I am writing this and laughing, but the truth is this is what happens.

There are real answers to how to gather as a church from 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15.

### 1. ***"Admonish the idle."***

This means to come alongside those who are headed in the wrong direction and give them the truth. The word ***"urge"*** here in the Greek literally means "to come along." It means to help. The word ***"idle"*** means those with an actively rebellious attitude. To admonish means to give warning against danger.

## LESSON TWO | GATHER

6. How do you see the church doing this? (Again remember the church is not just staff and programs.)

---

---

---

7. What are some ideas about how you can do this?

---

---

---

### **2. "Encourage the fainthearted."**

This means to comfort and console those who are worried, scared, and timid in their faith.

8. How do you see the church doing this?

---

---

---

9. What are some ideas about how you can do this?

---

---

---

### **3. "Help the weak."**

The weak are those who doubt, those who struggle with their past sins. It is those who need the strength to get over sin.

10. How do you see the church doing this?

---

---

---

11. What are some ideas about how you can do this?

---

---

---

**4. *"Be patient with them all."***

The Lord knows His people and says we must have patience.

12. How do you see the church doing this?

---

---

---

13. What are some ideas about how you can do this?

---

---

---

**5. *"See that no one repays anyone evil for evil,  
but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone."***

Do not repay evil to those in the church who have paid you evil. If you are in the church long enough you will experience evil from another believer. Experiencing evil from the world is one thing, but from another believer hurts to another level. God says to always seek good for them.

## LESSON TWO | GATHER

14. How do you see the church doing this?

---

---

---

15. What are some ideas about how you can do this?

---

---

---

This is what a healthy church is going to look like. This is how a healthy church is going to gather together. The gathering of the saints is not just a Sunday morning thing. The church should be gathering throughout the community every day.





# RIGHTS

---

## GATHER, DEVOTION 1

Pastor Caleb Combs

I love America. I love the rights we have in America. I am forever grateful for the men and women who have sacrificed so much so that I can have these freedoms. I am thankful that God has placed me in this country; I am free. I think bred in every American is the idea of personal rights, and we do not like people telling us anything different. I, much like you, do not like being told what to do. I am also quick to respond with something along the lines, "I have my rights!" I can remember trying that as a kid when told to do something I did not agree with. I shouted, "I have my rights!" which was quickly met by my parents as, "You have the right to obey." It did not work out very well for me.

The concept of rights is something that we as Americans have trouble laying down. I myself can tend to convolute my American rights with my walk with Christ. Now before you stop reading and angrily bunch me in with the anti-American cancel culture group, we need to remember that I said I love America and I believe God has enormously blessed us, but our American citizenship is different than our spiritual identity. Our priorities as Americans are different than our spiritual priorities. Just as the Bill of Rights, Constitution, and each Amendment clearly spell out those rights and priorities as Americans, the Bible spells out what should be our spiritual priorities.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 9, the Apostle Paul is having a conversation about rights and freedoms. Is it not crazy that they were having similar conversations 2,000 years ago? Paul shows us as Christians what our priority should be. In 1 Corinthians 9:12b, Paul says, ***"Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure***

***anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.***” Though Paul understood that he had the right to monetary support from the churches, he laid it aside for a greater goal. By doing so he shows Christians that our ultimate priority and mission is the Gospel and seeing it change people from the inside, save them from their sins, and free them from the bondage of hopelessness that comes with that sin. Even if it gets in the way of our benefits, this must be our mindset.

What exactly is this Gospel that I am talking about? The Gospel simply translated is “the good news.” You may have been in church all of your life or only a few times and have heard this term and wondered, “What does this mean?” The good news of the Gospel is that God created a perfect world with nothing bad in it. He created a perfect man and woman and had a perfect relationship with them. Despite the perfect world in which they lived, they chose to disobey God’s command and do what they wanted. Because of this, their perfect relationship with God was broken, sin entered the world, and every person ever born was and is born into that bondage (Romans 3:23). The punishment for that sin is death (Romans 6:23). God saw our brokenness and sin and still desired to save us and so He sent His perfect son Jesus to die on a cross in our place (John 3:16). Jesus died so that we could have life. God now offers that free gift of life to whoever would ask and receive it (Romans 10:13). The Gospel is as simple as realizing our sin, desperate need for a Savior, and receiving that free gift of salvation that was paid for by Jesus. How incredible is that! It is not just good news, but the best news!

I do not want to offend you, and I realize that by bringing up our “rights” I may have already done so. I love you and would never want to do that! However, Paul is really clear that for us as Christians, the priority of the Church is not our rights and the benefits that come from them. While I encourage you to stand up for candidates and

political systems you believe in, and I am so grateful to have this freedom, if these rights get in the way of the Gospel, we need to reprioritize. We are to lay them down. I know that is hard, and not something we like to do. Paul continues in this conversation and closes it powerfully. In verses 19-23, He writes, ***“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”***

There are two phrases I want to leave you with. The first is ***“that by all means I might save some.”*** What an incredible mindset. I lay down my rights when I need to so that maybe one person may see and experience the changing power of the Gospel. The second phrase should be our priority as Christians, ***“I do it all for the sake of the gospel.”*** As a believer, are you doing everything for the sake of the Gospel? I am not sure I can answer that question with a solid yes. It is convicting! It is challenging. It is transforming. I encourage the Church to realize our number one priority is the call to the Gospel. It is not just in the church building or when we are gathered with our Growth Communities, but every single day with every action, exchange, and interaction we have. We need to do everything we can to advance the Gospel, regardless of what it may cost us. May God continue to bless the United States of America, but more importantly, may He use His followers to reach the world with His wonderful good news!



# LIFE OF WORSHIP

---

## GATHER, DEVOTION 2

Holly Boston

The hallmark of a religious person has always been going to church on Sundays. Some denominations would say, “Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights, and every time the doors are open.” Over the years, I have asked many women if they have a personal relationship with Christ and the response I have often gotten is something like, “Yes, I have always believed in God. We went to church every Sunday when I was a kid.” At the risk of being ridiculed and showing my age, one of my favorite shows has always been “The Waltons.” It was one of the few shows we could watch and not be concerned about language or content. This Baptist family regularly attended church. However, one of the sub-themes of the show was that everyone went but the dad, John Walton. The family was always dressed to go in their Sunday best, while John sat at the family table with his coffee and paper. Olivia, the mom, would always ask him to come and Grandma (his mom) would say: “It wouldn’t hurt you to get some religion.” As a young believer, I came to the conclusion that John must not know Christ or he would have the desire to gather with the saints and worship his God. Yes, attending church has and always will be the mark of a believer.

What would happen if we could not go to church? Do not worry, there will always be churches to attend. Or would there? On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national emergency that would begin a national quarantine due to COVID 19. We were unable to attend church for the better part of three months. Prior to that, I spent most of my time talking with ladies about accepting Christ as their Savior and then gathering with the saints. Yet, now what? How will we worship? How will we encourage one another and receive the encouragement we need to live for Christ?

God used the quarantine (Romans 8:28) to grow me and the ladies I serve with by teaching us several truths. The first is found in 1 Corinthians 3:16, ***“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”*** Paul was teaching the people of Corinth that they are God’s church, not a building. As long as there are believers, there will be God’s church.

The second truth that we learned is found in James 1:27, ***“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”*** Through our inability to gather on Sundays, God taught us that true religion is caring for people. Orphans and widows were the neediest of their culture. During the quarantine, the need was overwhelming. We learned to gather, worship, and encourage in new ways. To encourage the lonely, we often met in front yards to visit. We worked tirelessly to navigate technology so we could gather over Zoom, pray together, and study God’s Word. Ladies went grocery shopping for those with compromised health, visited with people shut in at retirement communities through windows, and prayed in the parking lot of hospitals when we were unable to go in to see people. Though the church was closed, we gathered, we encouraged, and according to scripture, we worshipped.

The third truth we learned during the quarantine is Luke 6:38, ***“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”*** As we gave, God filled us with the peace, joy, and strength we needed to handle our own struggle and meet our own needs.

I want to reference John Walton again. In one of the episodes, John Boy asks his dad why he does not go to church. I cannot quote the dad but he tells his son that he thinks God is more concerned about

how we live and treat others. Now, I do not know if John Walton knew Jesus and I do believe attending church is an important part of our lives as Christians, but it sounds to me like Mr. Walton knew something about James 1:27. Believer, true worship is caring for others.

Romans 12:1 adds, ***“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”***

May we live a life of worship.



# WITHOUT EXPECTATION

---

## GATHER, DEVOTION 3

Keaton Washburn

If you have attended a church for any period of time, you have most likely seen the greeting or welcome time. It is either that time when you feel really awkward (if you are like me) or it is that amazing time of the gathering where you finally get to talk to the people near you. It is when they ask you to stand up, turn around, and greet the people near you. At the church where my parents attend, the greeting time goes on for almost five minutes. People are walking up and down the aisles, checking in one another, telling jokes, and it is a beautiful symphony of semi-organized chaos. Even though I felt a bit awkward when I was part of their greeting times, it was so encouraging when someone I had not seen in a while came up to me and asked how I was doing and let me know how good it was to see me. It was such a small gesture, but it went a long way.

Now, the goal of this devotional is not to advocate for longer greeting times here at The River, but to show the difference that even the small gesture can make. I want to take you to Acts 20:35. Luke is writing, following the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. He is recording the words of Paul, ***“In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*** Paul is looking back to the words of Jesus. This passage has been used at times to encourage Christians to give financially to the work of the Lord, but that is not my goal here.

Paul was a tentmaker. He made and sold tents as he went about his missionary journeys so as to not be a burden to any of the churches

where he was ministering. Rather than requiring churches to pay him a certain amount to come, he would work and provide for himself so he could go as he pleased and minister to the places that might not have been able to “afford” him. In this, he had the freedom to go wherever the Spirit called him. This principle of giving rather than receiving can be seen throughout Scripture. Yet, how does this apply to gathering and 1V1?

As I shared in the opening, the greeting time at my parents’ church was a blessing to me so many times. It is not because the people there were looking for me to come to them, but because they came to me and gave their encouragement and love. They understood the blessedness of giving without expectation. Today, give to someone else, your “one,” by reaching out and encouraging them without an expectation of them reaching out to you. God can take such a small gesture and do more with it than you could even imagine!

# COMMITMENT

---

## GATHER, DEVOTION 4

Mitchell Holmes

**Y**ou often hear the phrase, “The church is not a building, the church is a group of people.” While this is true, it does not begin to cover the scope or the depth of commitment that it takes to be a part of the church and to work together as the body of Christ. Ultimately, the church is a family with a common goal. As with any family, sometimes it can be difficult to work together and support one another. Families know each other and they know better than anyone what their brothers and sisters daily struggles are. Families see behind the scenes and are brutally aware of each other’s faults. As a church family, sometimes we can get so focused on reaching the world that we forget other vitally important aspects of our spiritual walk with Christ, such as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, it says, ***“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.”*** One thing that stands out to me immediately is the use of the word ***“brothers”*** at the beginning of the passage. The use of that word indicates that the following passage, and the call that Paul gives, is directed at us, fellow believers and members of the family of Christ. As a family, it can be hard to support one another sometimes, and Paul knew this so he wrote us a guide to use to aid us in the difficult process of supporting our brothers and sisters. The passage goes on to tell us that it is our job to do several things.

First, we are to warn those who are idle or those who are not following through with their responsibilities. As the body of Christ, we

all have expectations placed on us, such as the expectation to use the spiritual gifts that God has given us to serve, or the responsibility to tithe. When we ignore or forget about our duties, it can be easy to become complacent and miss the bigger picture and forget who is at the center of it all. It is our duty as the church to empower each other and help one another to remember our purpose so we do not become idle.

Second, we are to encourage the fainthearted. The Greek word for fainthearted means to “speak alongside” or offer support and comfort. Paul is directing us to offer support and aid those who need a gentle push to do new things, whether that be beginning to volunteer in a new ministry or evangelize to those around them.

Third, we need to help the weak. What this means is that we need to support those who are fragile in their faith. Often times, those who are fragile in their faith are more susceptible to temptations and sin and it is our job as a family to form a close relationship with those who need aid and provide instruction and encouragement towards glorifying God and away from sinfulness.

Fourth, we are expected to be patient with everyone. As anyone with an annoying sibling can attest, it is difficult to be patient, especially with those we are closest to. Paul encourages us to be slow to anger and ready to forgive our Christian family as often as needed.

Lastly, we are told not to pursue retribution when we are wronged by one another. There is nothing as painful as being hurt by family and it can be easy to respond in an emotional fashion but Paul tells us that it is important to be slow to anger and quick to forgive.

# BREAK THE SILENCE

---

## GATHER, DEVOTION 5

Josh Thayer

**H**ave you ever felt alone? It is like you are on an island, but not a tropical island. There is no sun and it is rainy, cold, and dark. You feel goosebumps crawling up your arms and the wet dense sand between your toes. The cold moist wind is blowing right up the sleeves of your shirt. There is a heavy weight right in the middle of your chest, not physically of course, but metaphorically because you have something in your life of which you are ashamed. It is something you feel that you can never crawl out from under and something that nobody could ever relate to.

What I just described is sin. It is more than just a physical act against God. It is a lot more emotionally torturous than most people think because when you are in the midst of sin you cannot see clearly. You cannot think clearly, and you feel alone. This is exactly what the devil wants you to feel. His goal is to make you feel completely separated from God, your friends and family, and even yourself. Once you are separated, you feel helpless and you do not know what to do and you do not know what to say. You fear being judged and outcast from everyone you care about.

What if I told you that there was a way out? What if there was a lifeboat coming to shore to save you and bring you home? What if there was a way to break the silence and bring joy back into your life? The key is that all you have to do is tell someone what you are going through. It sounds really easy when you read it. Believe me. I know for some of you when you read that you swallowed and gulped the biggest fear you have ever felt. It is terrifying to be completely vulnerable in front of a peer and let them know of all your shortcomings. It is important to know what we were called to as believers.

Galatians 6:1-2 says, ***“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”***

If you read that as I did, you would notice one big line right in the middle of those verses, ***“should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”*** For those of you that are going through something in your life, we want to be there for you and walk with you through whatever it is. We want to restore you. Can you imagine what that feels like? Try to remember the feeling you had before this sin weighed heavily in your life. Remember what it was like to be free? It is like taking a giant weight off your chest and finally being able to take the biggest breath you have desired for so long. We want to be gentle in the way we handle any situation as a believer, as to make sure we do not look down on you and make you feel any less than you are. At the end of the day, we will all struggle with something in our lives. Nobody is perfect and we all have shortcomings. God has called us as believers to do good to everyone, especially those who believe in Jesus!

Galatians 6:10 adds, ***“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”***

So, let someone in your life. The one thing we cannot do as believers is guess. We will never know the full extent of what you are going through unless you tell someone. We cannot help unless you shut down the silence and open up to the feelings of joy. Once you break the silence, you will be on your first step to joy and freedom and you will not be alone. You will have a community of people closest to you walking with you. This is what God wants for your life. He will always

be for you and never against you. He wants the best for you every moment of every day. All it takes is breaking the silence. You can do it. You are not alone. God has empowered people in your life to restore you with gentleness and love.



# DECISIONS

---

## GATHER, DEVOTION 6

Ferdinand Sanders

***“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”***

Romans 15:1

On any given day, it is estimated that the average adult makes approximately 35,000 remotely conscious decisions. Researchers at Cornell University estimate that we make 226.7 decisions each day on food alone.

The decisions we make in a given day vary on a scale of importance and impact. Choosing to set (or not set) your alarm, what we choose to eat, which route you take to work, and many more decisions impact us and carry varying levels of “consequences.”

If you are anything like me, most of these decisions (quite possibly all) are run through a filter of, “How does this impact me?” It is helpful to peel back another layer; I would also venture to say that I (we) will favor whichever side of decisions that favors us more, or “costs” us less (and I am not just talking strictly about money). I am not here to say that this thought process is inherently evil, but I would say that it is human nature.

If you think of yourself as a “nice, good or thoughtful” person, I would hope that a handful of your approximately 35,000 daily decisions are done for the good of others. I mean, Jesus did list “loving your neighbor as yourself” as the second greatest commandment. Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind makes for a great start (ok, the best start), but there is more that we are called to do.

Jesus got right to the point when He challenged the disciples (and us) with these words recorded by Luke and Matthew, also known as “The Great Commission.” **“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’”** (Luke 9:23).

These words challenge our very human nature, the sometimes subconscious and sometimes conscious tendencies or instinct to put ourselves first. We are called to deny ourselves daily, tending to the neighbors at our right and our left. He continues in the next verse, **“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”**

This goes against the very framework of our flawed selfish nature. You mean I have to give up my life in order to save my soul? That is a little more than just a monetary cost!

In closing, I would like to leave you with the idea that decisions are not made as a result of a process of the mind, but rather of the heart. When it comes to the decisions that we make each day, who is it that we are choosing to serve? Then if and when we do choose to serve our neighbors, what are our intentions? These might be tough questions to reflect on or to answer. Jesus is calling us to first love Him with everything we have, and secondly to love our neighbor as we would ourselves. In reality, these are the first two decisions that we face each and every day.



---

LESSON THREE

# GROW

PASTOR RANDY “DOC” JOHNSON

---

*LifeWay* has documented, “Most American churches now have fewer than 100 in weekend worship attendance.” This stat was pre-COVID.

1. What are some advantages and disadvantages of a smaller church?

---

---

---

2. What are some advantages and disadvantages of a larger church?

---

---

---

Jesus' main reason for coming to Earth was to provide the opportunity for salvation. Mark 10:45 says, ***“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** Jesus came to die so we could live. He came to pay the price for our sins (something we could not do on our own). With this said, evaluate how He spent His time.

3. When and how often did Jesus spend His time and energy on larger crowds?

---

---

---

4. With whom did Jesus spend the majority of His time? Why?

---

---

---

There are several answers to this question. Obviously, He daily and even nightly spent endless hours with the Heavenly Father. Another valid answer would be the twelve disciples. This is interesting as one might think He would constantly choose to be with twelve men when thousands needed Him. However, there is another possible answer. Jesus invested in three specific disciples.

Luke 8:50-52 describes the healing of Jairus' daughter, ***"But Jesus on hearing this answered him, 'Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.' And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, 'Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping."***

Luke 9:28-29 describes the transfiguration, ***"Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white."***

5. Who did Jesus take with Him on special occasions?

---

---

---

I found it interesting that Jesus chose these three men – Peter, John, and James. Later, we see how prominent Peter and John are in the early church, but I have wondered why John's brother (James) was invited instead of Peter's brother (Andrew). Either way, Jesus specifically chose to speak into the lives of individuals. He did speak to the crowds, but the majority of His time was built on sharing life.

The key to spiritual growth is discipleship, mentoring, and a one to one intentional relationship. This was Jesus' model and was also applied by Paul. Although he seemed to be a lone wolf, he seemed to have others around him (Barnabas and Silas). While he served the Lord, he kept others nearby.

My favorite verse on growth is 1 Thessalonians 2:8, ***“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.”***

6. What two things did Paul share with the Thessalonians?

---



---



---

7. What does it mean to share “our own selves?”

---



---



---

Paul lived his life investing in other lives and he taught others to do the same. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy about one of the keys to ministry, ***“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”***

8. What model is being described here?

---



---



---

Philippians 4:9 adds, ***“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me - practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”***

9. How did the Philippians know about the Christian life and growing in the Lord?

---

---

---

Later, we read about fellow believers helping another believer named Apollos. Privately, intentionally, and personally they reach out to him as recorded in Acts 18:24-26, ***“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”***

10. What is described here?

---

---

---

Throughout Scripture, it is clear that we need each other. Evangelistically, large events are helpful, but they are most effective when a relative or friend invite them and explain the Gospel to them. Even gatherings are best viewed as a group of individuals instead of a crowd. It is a group that needs each other and has each other's back. Finally, this is how growth works. It is individuals intentionally investing in others one to one.

11. Who has helped you in your spiritual journey and growth? How?

---

---

---

12. Who are you intentionally helping grow in the Lord?

---

---

---

13. Who has God placed in your circle of influence whom you should reach out to and help grow in the Lord? How will you do it?

---

---

---

I like Francis Chan's observation, "We reduce discipleship to a canned program, and so many in the church end up sidelined in a spectator mentality that delegates disciple making to pastors and professionals, ministers and missionaries."

14. What are the strengths and weaknesses of programs?

---

---

---

One to one is the key to growth. Actually, as we help others, we end up growing ourselves and experiencing a deeper joy in the Lord.

"Making disciples of Jesus is the overflow  
of the delight in being disciples of Jesus."

David Platt

“Until you have given up yourself to Him  
you will not have a real self.”

C.S. Lewis

# MIRROR JESUS

---

## GROW, DEVOTION 1

Sierra Combs

If you are familiar with the New Testament in your Bible, you have heard of Jesus' disciples. The four gospel books center around Jesus and the twelve men who dropped everything to follow Him. They started their walk with Jesus as uneducated, ordinary men, and eleven of them ended their lives completely transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. God used them to help spread the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. He used them to write down His words that have miraculously stayed preserved through millennia. Jesus also used His last spoken words to His disciples before ascending to Heaven with a command for them to go out and make more disciples, "teaching them to observe all that He had commanded" (Matthew 28:19-20). Discipleship is not only important, but it is necessary.

Much like the disciples of Jesus, our spiritual lives should have similarities in how they begin and end. Before we meet Jesus, we are spiritually blind and dead. However, when He saves us, we are brought to new life! We leave our baggage behind, He opens our eyes to the things of God, and seals us with His Helper (the Holy Spirit). From there, we begin our journey walking with Jesus. Friends, it is a journey. Even though God wipes our sin-filled slate perfectly clean upon salvation, that does not mean we will be 100% perfected the instant we are spiritually reborn. It is a process of purification - growing and becoming more like Christ, and it is called sanctification. We are called to constantly and consistently renew our minds through Scripture; after all, if Jesus is our master and teacher, and we are His disciples, there is no better way to learn than to read and follow His Word! When we let His teachings flow through us and change the way we think, act, and react, we will become more like Christ, and

we please our Heavenly Father. As followers of Jesus, He needs to be the number one authority over our lives. He is our teacher, we are His disciples. If this is not true in your life, you need to stop right now and fix that. If you have truly given your life to the Lord, He has to be #1 in your life. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I am not saying it is easy - the Bible tells us that we have to die to our flesh daily. Like the 12 men who originally followed Jesus, we also have to “drop our nets,” leave the world behind, and follow Him. It is not an easy road but it leads to unimaginable joy and blessing. I encourage you to stop right now and ask God to realign your heart to His ways and His plans. You will not regret it!

Once we have the God-first priority aligned and well-practiced, it is important to realize that it should not end there. The awesome thing about the global Church is that we have so many spiritual brothers and sisters who share the same heart and desires as us. God has given every one of His children unique and specific gifting and talents to use to help build up the body of Christ (the Church) and to reach the world. If you are a new believer, it is so important that you find a trusted and wise man or woman who can help disciple you in the ways of Christ and the teaching of His Word. The Bible alone is surely sufficient for our growth, but God also provides people to help. The apostle Paul is a great example of this. He wrote much of the New Testament, which is comprised of letters written to different churches throughout the Middle East and Asia, as well as letters to specific people. Throughout all of them, Paul encourages, teaches, builds up, and lovingly corrects when things are not looking so good. God specifically equipped Paul to disciple and teach countless men and women in His ways. In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul closes with this statement, ***“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me - practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you”*** (Philippians 4:9). Paul spent time with these people. Mirroring Jesus, he taught them in word and action.

He was not asking them to practice the things and actions of himself, but of Jesus. He ends with quite a promise - if you take what you learn about Jesus by hearing and receiving, and then put it into practice, God's peace will be with you. Yes, Lord! I want Your peace! I encourage you, no matter how "seasoned" of a believer you are, to find someone who can help you in your growth process. There is no limit to spiritual growth and intimacy with the Lord! It is a wonderful, life-long journey! If you need help finding a wise and trusted teacher and mentor, please reach out to us. We would love to help connect you!

By now you might be thinking that the process is coming to its end, but guess what, there is one more step! Looking again to Matthew chapter 28, Jesus tells His disciples that it is now their job to go out and make more disciples. That command was not just for them, but for us as well. Once you have become a disciple of Jesus, it is so important that you learn and practice God's ways so that you can be sanctified, purified, and look more like your Savior. That will bring great joy to your life. Yet, do not just leave it at that. Take what you have learned and go find someone else to help! Guide them through the Bible and show them how it has transformed your life! If every believer in the world took to this process (growing, learning, and then passing that to someone else) it would be an endless and extremely powerful chain. This command is not just for the pastors and leaders of your church. It is for every believer!



# BREATH OF FRESH AIR

---

## GROW, DEVOTION 2

Philip Piasecki

***“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.”*** 1 Thessalonians 4:1

Having tough conversations with people is hard. It is something that none of us enjoy doing, but something that we will all have to do in our lives. The majority of Paul's letters in Scripture are him having tough conversations with different churches. He is explaining to them how what they are doing is wrong, how they are disobeying the Lord, and how they forgot what he had taught them. The list could go on and on. However, this verse, what a breath of fresh air it must have been for Paul to write this verse. He gets to write to them and tell them, “Hey! You guys are following after the Lord, keep doing it!” I can imagine him sitting there celebrating that they were growing spiritually.

I am sure that when Paul first started teaching the Thessalonians there were some hard conversations that he had to have with them, but eventually, they got it and their relationship with the Lord started to grow in an incredible way. As believers, we should all have people in our lives that we are investing in by showing them the way that the Bible teaches us to live our lives. Those conversations are not always going to be easy, but my prayer is that they eventually will lead to true growth in that person's life. There are so many things that I still struggle with in my walk with the Lord, but there are definitely things too that people who invested in my spiritual growth can look back at and say, “Hey, good job! Keep doing what you are doing.” I

am so thankful for that. We have to have tough conversations, but those many times can lead to an incredible celebration of growth in someone's life.

Also, I am sure Paul could have started his letter off by pointing out some sins that the Thessalonians were still struggling with, after all, it is not like they were perfect, but instead, he takes the opportunity to encourage them and celebrate how they are walking after the Lord. We need to take this example and apply it to our close Christian relationships. Encourage one another. Tell someone that you see how they love the Lord, and encourage them to keep after it! You never know when someone may be in need of some spiritual encouragement, so be looking for opportunities to share that encouragement when you can. One on one discipleship can be as simple as an encouraging word from one believer to another.

# MOTIVES

---

## GROW, DEVOTION 3

John Rigg

**H**ave you ever tried to do something nice for someone and they question your motives by asking you the question; “What is in it for you?”

How does that make you feel?

If you are like me, it makes me feel like they do not trust my motives. It is like they believe I must be getting something out of this, or I would not be willing to do something for them. All too often this is how people respond, and I am sure if we were ready to admit it, we too have reacted in this way.

The Apostle Paul had a great love for the believers that lived in the city of Corinth and he was ready to give all he had, both monetarily and physically, for their benefit. However, they were unwilling to unconditionally accept Paul's love and accused him of having an alternative motive. It is as if they were saying, “No one does that! What is in it for you?”

In 2 Corinthians 12:15, we read, ***“I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?”*** This statement by Paul is small in length but great in love.

First, Paul says he will ***“gladly spend and be spent.”*** The word ***“spend”*** is translated from the Greek word *dapanaō* which means to expend and to incur a cost (in a good sense), or to waste (in a bad one). Likewise, the clause ***“be spent”*** derives its meaning from *ēkdapanaō* which means to expend (wholly), exhaust, or spend.

So, what is Paul saying? He is saying that it brings him great pleasure to incur costs or to completely exhaust himself and his resources for the benefit of the Corinthian believers. Please notice that his labors were not just to ensure that they would live a comfortable life, but that their souls would reap the benefit of his efforts. Certainly, Paul's concern for those he loved could include the salvation of their souls, but it is also likely that he is also investing in the growth of their souls as well. There were many vices that the young Corinthian believers needed to repent from and grow out of and Paul was willing to ***“gladly spend and be spent”*** to help them get there.

Can we say the same of ourselves?

Can you think of someone you know that is struggling as they grow in their faith?

What can we do to help them?

Chances are, we will incur costs. It may cost us some of our time, resources, or both. The possibility exists that they may not even understand our motive and ask us the question, “What is in it for you?”

Nevertheless, do we love others enough to ***“spend and be spent”*** for the growth of their soul?

Paul did it, and he did it ***“gladly.”***

# THANK YOU, COACH

---

## GROW, DEVOTION 4

Keaton Washburn

When I was in high school, I went to a small Christian school. In my senior year, we got a new basketball coach. Our coach happened to be the superintendent's husband, but that did not matter to all of us on the team. To us, he was just the new guy who was our coach. I cannot remember how exactly it started, but all of us began calling him "Coach." We would do it at practice, throughout the school day, and even in the psychology class that he taught. He was always just "Coach." However, I have to admit, he was not the best basketball coach. We went on to lose every single basketball game that season, which, sadly, was not out of the ordinary for my school.

Coach always seemed to like me. He appointed me and another senior as the captains of the team. However, it went beyond that. Coach always took opportunities to go out of his way to encourage me, to lovingly call me out when I was falling short, and to praise the abilities and giftings that God had placed in me. He pushed me to do things I never thought I was capable of doing. While those are all good things that I am thankful for, the reason I tell you this is that Coach still does those things to this day. When I preach, he watches the video and is one of the first people to encourage me in the giftings God has given me. A relationship that began as a basketball coach and player has become a discipleship where he continually points me to Christ. I had no idea when I graduated that Coach would still be in my life seven years later. He saw something in me and has stuck by my side this whole time.

In 2 Timothy 2:1-2, the Apostle Paul is writing to his protégé, Timothy. Speaking of enduring hardships, he says, ***"You then, my child, be***

***strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.***” He does not tell Timothy to look to his own strength, but to be strengthened by the grace that is found in Christ Jesus. Paul understood that Timothy could not endure hardship or preach the Gospel on his own. So, Paul told him to entrust the Gospel message to faithful men who would teach it. In the church today, so many Christians are so caught up in themselves that they miss the incredible opportunity to entrust the Gospel message to people younger than themselves. If you are a follower of Christ, have you ever entrusted the Gospel to someone younger than yourself? Have you seen gifting in someone and encouraged them in it, then stuck by them?

I am so thankful that Coach saw something in me and has stuck by me as I learn what it means to be a follower of Christ! Thank you, Coach!

# ESCALATOR

---

## GROW, DEVOTION 5

Debbie Kerr

***“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” 1 Thessalonians 2:8***

Do you have a spiritual mentor? Are you mentoring a younger believer? Do you realize how important spiritual mentoring is to our spiritual growth? By definition, a spiritual mentor is someone spiritually more mature than the mentee. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul was writing to the people of Thessalonica about the need to lead others in love and by example. The Bible teaches that when we are born again we are like newborn babies that can only tolerate and desire the simple things of Scripture. The Bible calls it the “milk of the Word.”

If we are left to ourselves, it will be difficult to grow to maturity where we can tolerate the meat of the Word. Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus loved this body of believers so much that they were committed to sharing the Gospel with them and pouring themselves into them so they could grow in their faith. Salvation is the first step of the Christian life but it does not end there, it is the beginning of a lifelong journey with Jesus. Growth requires time in the Word, prayer, corporate worship, and the example of mature believers. Once we begin to grow in our faith and in the Word we should begin to serve. Children's ministry is often a great place to start as we are learning along with them. In order to grow it is also vital to surround ourselves with stronger, mature believers. As we learn and grow we should desire to mentor someone younger in the faith. Weekly gatherings are vital to our growth but we cannot eat one meal a week.

Can you remember a time where you were so spiritually on fire that you could not wait to serve and share the Gospel? That is a great feeling but we cannot exist on our feelings alone. We need the encouragement and example of stronger believers. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, ***“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord.”*** The Thessalonians were growing in their faith because Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had spent time with them teaching them the deep things of God. They were compelled because of their great love for them. No man is an island. We need each other to encourage and help one another. It may sound scary but that is how every mature believer began their walk with God. The Christian life is like riding a spiritual escalator, we are either growing up or growing down, there is no resting platform!

# IMITATION

---

## GROW, DEVOTION 6

Justin Dean

**A**s a Student Director, oftentimes I do not get a chance to meet the parents of a student until after I have already spent time with their child. One thing that is always interesting to me is seeing how similar many students are to their parents. I see similar mannerisms, vocabulary, morals, and even humor on some level. Every time I see this in a student, I get really nervous for when the day comes for me to be a parent. It reminds me of 2 Thessalonians 3:7 and 9, ***“For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you... It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.”***

We naturally imitate those we are in close proximity to, especially those we admire. So, if we want to see ourselves grow, we need to surround ourselves with people we can imitate to grow. You might be saying, “Well Justin, I cannot pick who I am in close proximity with. I cannot change my family, co-workers, or roommates. So how am I supposed to shift who I am imitating?” You may not be able to change those things, but that does not mean you cannot be more proactive about placing godly people in your life. You have to seek out places where you can imitate those people who you know have a solid foundation in Christ. This is something that you have to actively do, and cannot be something left to the backburner.

Ephesians 4:22-24 adds, ***“To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”***

You have to actively put off and put on a renewed spirit and new self. It takes active steps to grow, and the first step in ensuring strong and stable growth is making sure that those you imitate have a strong relationship with the Lord. That might mean you need to join a Growth Community and regularly meet with the leader of that group. It could mean serving in a ministry at the church and observing the head of that ministry and how they follow God. It could mean finding an experienced, wise Christian to mentor you and meet with you regularly. Do not become passive about who you allow yourself to imitate. Imitate those that will push you to truly grow in your relationship with Christ.



---

LESSON FOUR

# CORRECTION

PASTOR ROY TOWNSEND

---

I really enjoy the premise around the TV show *"What Would You Do?"* It is a hidden camera show where the hosts watch how ordinary people react when these ordinary people are confronted with situations that require them to say and do something or to walk by and mind their own business. I am often amazed by how many people choose not to get involved.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you wonder if you should say something? This can be a difficult question to answer, "Should I say something about how someone is eating, sleeping, working, using money, or raising a family?" Wow, these may seem like landmines that could explode if you step on them. "I wonder if I should say something?" These are words that can tear you up inside.

1. Please list a time when you were wondering if you should say something. What happened next? Did you say something?

---



---



---

Most of my situations involve other people's children. I can attest that all of us can get a little defensive about our children, including myself. However, time and time again, I would find myself with some knowledge of how a child was behaving or performing, and then I would wonder if I should say something to the child or their parents.

2. Have you ever had to confront someone else's child about their behavior? Did it go well?

---



---



---

Matthew 18:15-17 says, ***"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to***

***you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”***

In these verses, God is defining His instructions on discipline and godly order within the local assemblies of the church. The principle is pretty clear that we as brothers and sisters in Christ are to go alone and try to bring our brother or sister in Christ to repentance. We are not to tell their sins and transgressions to the world.

3. Why do we not follow through on this principle of going alone to a brother?

---

---

---

4. Why do we want to tell everyone else about the problem?

---

---

---

In Galatians 6:1, we read, ***“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”***

This verse takes it to the next level. If our brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, we need to restore them. We are to help them own their sins and then put things right. The goal is to help them seek forgiveness. We are to forgive!

5. What does it mean to restore something or someone?

---

---

---

In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, it further states that we need to forgive a man upon evidence of his repentance, ***“Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure - not to put it too severely - to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”***

6. What does forgiveness mean?

---

---

---

We need to forgive. Colossians 3:13 makes this clear, ***“Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”***

We need to realize that nobody will be happier than the Father at the repentance of His child. We see this in the picture of the Father in the Prodigal Son. Luke 15:20-24 states, ***“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed***

*him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."*

7. What would you do if you were the father?

---

---

---

8. Why is it so important for us to forgive?

---

---

---

We need to care about the spiritual growth of other believers, and when confronting them we must speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15 reads, ***"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."*** Moreover, 1 Peter 4:8 reads, ***"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."***

9. What is involved with speaking the truth in love?

---

---

---

You may be thinking, okay, but what if your brother will not turn toward repentance? What if he lies or will not admit his wrongs? What would you do then? We go back to Matthew 18:16, ***"But if***

***he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.***” The Scriptures are clear. We have a duty to confront and lovingly speak the truth. So, what do we do if he will not listen to the witnesses? Further in verse 17, it states, ***“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*** We cannot just walk away from something that is so important to the spiritual condition of a brother.

John MacArthur points out, “The idea is not merely to punish the offender, or to shun him completely, but to remove him as a detrimental influence from the fellowship of the church, and then to regard him as an evangelistic prospect rather than a brother.”

Basically, we need to pray for the salvation of a brother that refuses to turn away from sin. We need to concern ourselves with the outline that God has given to us in His Word, and it all starts with our willingness to go one-on-one in confronting sin. I have one question for you, “What would you do?”



# WITHOUT WRINKLE

---

## CORRECTION, DEVOTION 1

Roger Allen

**M**atthew 7:1 says, ***“Judge not, that you be not judged.”***

How often have you heard this said? Both from within the church and from those on the outside, it is a phrase echoed often. The indignation in a person's voice after being called out for some perceived sin is palpable and resounding to the ear. Backed into a corner, these words of condemnation become fighting words. With no place for retreat, all there is left is a defensive wall. Self-preservation is a very real instinct and one that is hard to overcome. While the accuser's intent can be one of care and concern, their approach has prevented an honest dialogue within the conversation. Pushed back on their heels, the accused has no other choice, but to fight back. So it has been for many years in the world of Christianity. Our accusations have brought darkness to those who see little light in this world. We must be careful about pronouncing sentence on someone of which we have no authority. Let our light shine to those who have no knowledge of our Savior.

In 1 Corinthians 5:12, we read, ***“For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?”***

What is this? Here we find Paul telling us to leave non-believers alone. We have no authority over those outside the church, but the responsibility to judge fellow believers. The church of Corinth at this time was plagued with the sins of the world within its walls. Sexual immorality, bickering, pride, arrogance, and other transgressions were commonplace. Influenced by the culture around them, they had

become numb to the decadence by which they were surrounded. They began to see this as normal as it began to creep into the church. Considered an international city, the outside influences were many and varied. This boastful bunch began to look the other way as incest had made the way into the church. Instead of dealing with what was thoroughly disgusting, they hid their head in the sand to protect their dignity. Paul had his work cut out for him.

Ephesians 5:11 adds, ***“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”***

Church discipline is messy. It hurts but is a necessary heartache for a church to carry on the mission to which it has been called. Exposed to the light, the darkness of sin fades and no longer is able to create havoc in the body of Christ. We have been called to defend the very reputation that the church stands for with humility and love. We are to examine those who call themselves believers and in the same way, examine ourselves. If we say “we love the body of Christ,” should we not also be willing to defend it? Paul’s call for action was a defensive action to protect what he loved. Allowed to fester, sin will become an ever-increasing stench to those who are seeking a Savior. Appearing as the world, but cloaked in the robe of arrogance, we could never finish the mission Christ has set before us. Just as He was willing to die for us, we should want to defend that which was ordained by God so that He can present us “without blemish.”

As Ephesians 5:27 says, ***“So that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”***

# NEVER TOO LATE

---

## CORRECTION, DEVOTION 2

Philip Piasecki

**“A**nd he said to his disciples, *‘Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.’*” Luke 17:1-4

My daughter is almost five years old, and my son will turn three later this year. Molly’s favorite thing to do is to tell Ander when he is doing something wrong. Her justification for it is, “Well I want to be a good big sister.” We have been working on explaining that being a good big sister can mean just playing with him, and keeping him safe. It does not mean correcting every little thing that he does. It is in our nature as humans to want to correct one another, and scripturally we see that it is important for fellow believers to hold each other accountable to what Scripture says. For many of us, we read **“if your brother sins, rebuke him”** and cannot wait to follow that Scripture, but then we struggle with **“if he repents, forgive him.”**

When there is correction and repentance there must be forgiveness. One of the biggest issues I see in the church is people carrying around past hurts, not willing to forgive, and move on. If someone sins against you and they apologize and ask for forgiveness, Scripture commands us to forgive that person. It goes as far as to say that they could sin against you seven times in a day, ask for forgiveness each

time, and you must forgive them. This is so difficult to do as sinful humans. We would rather hold on to our hurt, instead of releasing it. When we withhold forgiveness we do more harm to ourselves than anything. Our example of forgiveness is the Lord, He is willing to forgive any that come to Him and ask for it.

How many times each day do you sin against God, yet He still forgives. When we withhold forgiveness, we become bitter, and when we are bitter we become ineffective for the Gospel. I have seen so many people derailed in their walk with the Lord because they have unforgiveness they cannot release. If someone is currently coming to your mind today that you need to forgive, take that step today, and reach out. It is never too late to forgive and move forward effectively in the mission of the Gospel.

# BRING YOUR BROTHER BACK

---

## CORRECTION, DEVOTION 3

Patrick Bicknell

**J**ames 5:19-20 says, *“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”*

When we are adopted into God’s church, through faith in the blood of Christ, we all become children of God. This passage of Scripture is such a beautiful example of how we are supposed to watch out for our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are a couple of things in this verse, and the verses prior to this, that show us how we are to be on the watch for the family of God.

First, it may sound simple, but we are to be on the watch for our brothers and sisters in Christ. In order to be able to see someone wandering from the truth, we need to be watching and caring for them. This does not mean that you look on their life with judgment waiting for them to slip as a little brother might do to his older brother. For example, when I was younger, I would watch my older brother and wait for him to do something wrong so that I could say, “Ha! You messed up and now I am going to tell mom.” This is not the type of watching we are to do. Rather we are to make sure that the evilness of this world, those preaching false doctrines, and the sinful nature that is in all of us does not overcome those who say they are in Christ. When we are watching our brothers’ lives with a caring and loving heart and we see them wander from the truth that is found in Christ, we are to stop them and bring them back. If we truly are found in Christ and we truly love others as Christ loves us, we will never allow them to wander away from the truth and into darkness.

Secondly, prayer is essential for the correction of those found in Christ. A couple of verses earlier in James 5:16, it says, ***“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*** Not only are we to be on the watch for our brothers and sisters and confront them lovingly when they wander from the truth, but we are to pray for them fervently when they do so. James discusses Elijah when talking about the power of prayer and how he fervently prayed for the rain to stop and it did. That is how we are to pray when we see followers of Christ struggling and moving away from His truth. That is how we strengthen the body of Christ and build up the church, by watching out for our brothers with a loving heart, and fervently praying for them all the time.

# I AM NOT YOUR ENEMY

---

## CORRECTION, DEVOTION 4

Pastor Patrick Rowland

**“If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”** 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

In his second letter to the Church at Thessalonica, Paul writes what seems to be a very severe and harsh warning. What was the reason for this warning? Was it false worship, immorality, sexual sin, or murder? Those are all terrible, but that is not what Paul is seeking to correct in this church. In verse six, Paul says, **“keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness.”** Why warn against idleness? The foundation of many sins is a mindset of idleness.

In the Church at Thessalonica, there was a growing group of people that had refused to do any work contributing to the community. They had refused to learn a trade and work while living off the contributions of the rest of the community. Their mindset was looking for the return of Jesus sensing work as a waste of time. It was a mindset that was contradicting the teachings of Jesus, as well as what Paul had taught and modeled for these young believers. Thus there was the need for correction.

When discipline is needed with a child, a parent must use the filter, “Does the punishment fit the crime?” In this case, if we focused on the degree of the discipline (**“have nothing to do with him”**), we could miss an important teaching. This group of people are fellow Christians and we must be willing as well as open to correction from our fellow Christians. Paul’s instructions were not for the purpose of shaming, but for change.

In Paul's previous letter to the Thessalonians, he concludes it, ***"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:11). At the core of our relationships within the church, we are to love and encourage one another which should also be at the core of our correction. Keep in mind if we receive a form of correction from a brother that it comes from a place of love for you. In the same way, if you are sending correction it should come from a place of building them up, not shaming them. The purpose is not to be right, it is to be encouraging. They are not the enemy.

# LET GO AND LET GOD

---

## CORRECTION, DEVOTION 5

Pat Bedell

I grew up in a small town in northern Michigan with a population of less than 5,000. I was raised in a Catholic environment, but I never really knew the Lord and what it meant to live for Him. I also attended the public school system from day one which even in a small town, had a large demographic of students of different backgrounds. While in class, it was relatively easy to pick out the troublemakers in the class. They were the ones that were sent to the office regularly, parent phone calls to their home, detentions, and suspensions. Do not get me wrong, I have fulfilled my fair share of detentions and corrective disciplines, but once I had learned my lessons, I rarely found myself in that behavior again.

Fast forward ten years and I am in high school when peer pressure and social status are important. The same kids that were troublemakers in elementary school just happen to be the same troublemakers in high school and the choices they have made are rubbing off on others. Instead of causing trouble in class, now they are trying alcohol and drugs. Unfortunately, it is disobeying the ones that love you most and neglecting the real friends you once had. It really was a blessing that I never found myself in that crowd, but to see the same story in a biblical manner, magnified the blessing that much more.

In the book of Titus, the Apostle Paul is giving us a guideline on how to treat people. He says to be trustworthy, kind, and speak evil of no one. He also noted that we were once foolish, disobedient, and unworthy sinners until the grace and mercy of God saved our souls. One of the hardest parts of this chapter is the moment where we are told to give up our pursuit of someone's faith. Titus 3:10 says, "As

***for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.***” For me, there were only a few friends of mine that fell into the dark and would not stop trying to illicit me into the same sin. It was hard for me to do, but I had to let go and let God. I did not entirely give up on my pursuit of these old friendships. Luckily, we have the privilege to pray and talk to God about these souls and pray that He does a work in their life that we are incapable of doing.

I am a firm believer that you are who you surround yourself with. If you surround yourself with sin, you will sin. If you surround yourself with people who encourage and lift you up, you will be encouraged to be the best version of yourself and the person that God wants you to be. I encourage you all to take a look at your closest friends and family and see what they are pouring into your life. Make a concise decision on whether to pursue their walk with Christ or to pray for them and to let go and let God.

# UNITY

---

## CORRECTION, DEVOTION 6

Jill Osmon

**R**aise your hand if you are a rule follower? I wish we could add emojis in our devotions because I would definitely use the girl with her hand raised emoji. I follow the rules for a variety of reasons, but a huge factor is I do not like being reprimanded, the conflict is soul-crushing. What is both horrifying and amazing is that God gives us a blueprint on how to handle conflict. I say horrifying because we have to learn how to have conflict, but amazing because God teaches us what healthy conflict looks like and it takes something dark and uncomfortable and creates something beautiful and strong.

As I was writing this devotion, I had a conversation with one of my best friends about how thankful we were that our friendship was unafraid of truth, true refining through honest and loving conflict. It made me think about the closest friendships I have in my life and how each one has had a form of truth, conflict, and some pretty difficult and awkward conversations. The conflict has produced strong, biblical, and lovely friendships in my life, which seems a bit backward. So why does conflict produce strong friendships?

Matthew 18:19-20 says, ***“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*** As I was reading Matthew chapter 18, it dawned on me that these verses, which are usually reserved for describing the Church are more about Jesus right in the middle of the pursuit of unity. God knows that conflict is difficult, but we cannot shy away from it. Instead, be comforted with His presence during our conflict.

This is not to say that conflict and reconciliation always turn out stronger relationships. I also have former friendships that did not survive the conflict and attempt at reconciliation. Does this stop me from pursuing healthy relationships? No, but what it does show me is that when it is healthy and right, God is there pushing for unity in our relationships and even in a larger view, the Church. Unity is a precious gift from God, one not to be squandered by hurt feelings or unsaid conflict but pursued in the presence of God. Let that be our prayer and pursuit, unity in our relationships, and in the body of Christ. Oh, how we need unity in our world today, because that is where we find Jesus among us.



---

LESSON FIVE

# GIVING

PASTOR RANDY “DOC” JOHNSON

---

Andy Warhol is credited with the statement about everybody wanting his own 15 minutes of fame. Joe Rogan has observed, "People want their 15 minutes and are willing to do anything to get it."

1. What are some of the funniest or craziest 15 minutes of fame you have seen in others?

---

---

---

2. In what way have you had 15 minutes of fame?

---

---

---

3. How can 15 minutes of fame be harmful?

---

---

---

4. How can 15 minutes of fame be helpful?

---

---

---

Public recognition goes by several names: limelight, hype, prominence, fuss, commotion, spotlight, eminence, glare, center stage, top billing, public notice, recognition, notability, and notoriety. I realize that more concepts can be added to the list. It is natural for us to want to be accepted, valued, and to feel good about ourselves. Unfortunately, we all too often seek this from others when we should seek it from God. This lesson is about our lives being real between us and the Lord.

Matthew 6:1-6 lists three of the ways that our lives should be more focused on God than on someone else's opinion.

### 1. Our actions should be for God's approval.

Matthew 6:1 says, ***"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."*** This verse is very straightforward. People can be tempted to do something nice because they have an ulterior motive. They want to be liked and might even go out of their way to make sure others see what they did and "just happen" to bring it up in conversation.

5. Is it wrong to do something nice if someone else will see it?

---

---

---

James 4:17 says, ***"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."*** It is important to realize that the issue is not about who is watching. The topic is to always do the right thing because of Who is watching.

"The measure of a life, after all,  
is not its duration, but its donation."

Corrie Ten Boom

### 2. Our giving should be for God's approval.

Matthew 6:2-4 says, ***"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give***

***to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***” It is interesting how often the Lord talks about money and giving. I think He realized how important (or too important) it would be in our lives and He wants to protect us from ourselves.

Alex Cook was a “successful” financial planner who sold his company, “retired,” and now strives to help Christians better manage their finances. He wrote, “It often surprises Christians when they discover just how much the Bible talks about money. In fact there are more than 2300 verses on money, wealth and possessions. Jesus spoke about money roughly 15% of his preaching and 11 out of 39 parables. It was his most talked about topic.”

Henry Drummond adds, “The most obvious lesson in Christ’s teaching is that there is no happiness in having or getting anything, but only in giving.”

6. Is it okay for money to be an important part of our thoughts and conversations? Why and why not?

---

---

---

John Wesley said, “Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.”

7. What do you think of that quote?

---

---

---

Matthew continues in chapter 6 verses 19-21 saying, ***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

8. What are some ways in which we can lay up treasures in Heaven?

---

---

---

### 3. Our prayers should be for God's approval.

Matthew 6:5-6 says, ***“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*** We have discussed giving in our actions and finances, but prayer can also be viewed as a way of giving. We are giving God our time, worship, and full control.

9. How are we giving these items to God in prayer?

---

---

---

10. What else can or do we give God in prayer?

---

---

---

Public prayer should be shorter and not showy. Private prayer should be constant. I love the statement by Corrie Ten Boom, "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"

11. What do you think she means?

---

---

---

"God made all of His creation to give.  
He made the sun, the moon, the stars,  
the clouds, the earth, the plants to give.  
He also designed His supreme creation, man, to give.  
But fallen man is the most reluctant giver  
in all of God's creation."  
John MacArthur



# “MINE”

---

## GIVING, DEVOTION 1

Sierra Combs

Currently, as I sit to write this I am seven months pregnant with my third child, during a global pandemic, a recession, in an extremely divided and intense country, and in the presidential election year 2020 (which has been memorable, to say the least). There were rumors of murder hornets a few months ago that thankfully seemed to fizzle out. Everything else has been pretty insane. If there was a time to not be pregnant, this would probably be it. Every day is another reminder that the world has lost its mind and chaos abounds.

Sometimes when I am overwhelmed and fearful, it seems like the human race is in a runaway train speeding down a hill towards destruction, and we are just getting closer and closer to the crash. In reality, that picture is not far from the truth for those who do not know the Lord. It is a scary and sobering thought. I am so thankful to know that my Savior has lifted me from that train and has me safe in His arms. I hold to this truth and remind myself of it constantly, and probably a little more constantly now in this crazy year with a baby on the way. If you have children, you likely know what I am talking about. It is one thing to worry about yourself, but when you have a child, the love is so unexplainably intense that you (or at least I) worry so much more on their behalf. I think of my kids, and know I would do anything for them. It is both wonderful and horrible at the same time. Nothing has tested my faith more than being a parent, responsible for three precious lives. I just want to wrap them up in a bubble and keep them safely to myself.

Maybe you do not have children, or you do but do not struggle with the related fear as I do. Whether you relate or not, I am sure that

there is at least one thing in your life that you possess that you cannot imagine having to let go of or release control. Perhaps it is money, your career or talent, or a relationship with a spouse, friend, or parent. It is something that you feel that you have worked so hard to build up or gain, and losing it would be absolutely detrimental. What is most important to you?

This year has really challenged me and brought many things in my heart to light that I was not even aware of them existing. Faced with a global health crisis early in the year made me fear for the health and safety of those I love. Faced with the possibility of an extreme recession or depression, I found myself worrying about the possibility of losing our income, house, or whatever. Faced with the election coming up in November, I find myself worrying about what things will look like when it is over, regardless of who wins. I am thankful to the Lord that He quickly squashed the murder hornets because that may have just put me over the edge (insert laugh emoji here).

Thankfully, through all of this, I know that the Lord is sovereign and in control of it all. If He was not, I would not be able to sleep at night. When I find myself consumed with fear about any of these scenarios, I can easily find comfort in the Word. There are so many amazing passages that I could share but when it comes to this matter, I think it is important to get to the heart of the issue - putting too much value in things that we view as "ours." My kids are "mine," my money that I earn from my job is "mine." The talent that I possess and get to share with others is "mine." The list could unfortunately continue. When we view everything we have as "ours," it is pretty easy to get possessive of it and extremely fearful to lose it. However, in reality, none of it is truly ours. Everything we have been given and blessed with is from the Lord. He is the One who created your children and gave them to you! He is the One who gave you your gifts and abilities! He is the One who lined up your career and has provided for you financially.

One passage in Scripture that always helps remind me of this is 1 Chronicles chapter 29. In this chapter, we find King David setting aside his gold, silver, jewels, and every precious thing so that his son could build a temple for the Lord and all of His glory. I think in today's value it was something like 35 million dollars. Can you imagine? That is a ton of money. However, David cheerfully gave and encouraged his people to give regardless of the cost. In verse 14 (NLT), he says, ***"But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!"***

David understood that every single thing that he possessed was given to him by God, and because of that, it should be our joy and privilege to give back to Him. When I remind myself of this truth, I can let go of any fear that I may have because I know that the Lord is not only in control, but He loves me and has an amazing plan for my life. It is up to me to give up any idea of control that I might have and to trust Him. His ways are better than mine. He loves my kids even more than I do. He has a plan for my kids, my talents, abilities, finances, and relationships. The Lord has given us so much. It is now our turn to joyfully give back to Him and watch Him use it for incredible things!



# PT CRUISER

---

## GIVING, DEVOTION 2

Larry Gabbara

In the Bible, people gave various gifts to God, for various purposes. People had a duty to give, both for the work of God and to help the poor. We see in Scripture that God's people gave a tithe, which was a tenth of their income. Not to give the tithe, was to cheat God.

Although it was a duty to give these gifts, God wanted His people to give with glad and grateful hearts, so He made wonderful promises to His people if they obeyed Him. He would show His kindness to them; they would see that a blessing would come from Him.

In my early years when I went to church with my family, when the basket was passed for donations, my parents would drop something in the basket. As an adult I did the same, I would drop in five or ten dollars. I knew that I was expected to give to the church, but had no idea what the Bible taught about giving.

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

Tithing was a difficult principle for me to learn as a new Christian. I really struggled to believe that God would ask me to give the first 10% of my income. I was ok with five or ten dollars, but 10%? My wife would try to help me understand what it meant to tithe and showed me different Scriptures including Luke 6:38, ***“Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”*** I also spoke to our pastor

about it; he too gave me Scripture to read and explained to me that I needed to pray about it. My wife had also been telling me to pray about it.

A few weeks later the pastor and I spoke again about tithing, he asked if I had been praying about it. I said yes, I then asked him, "Should my tithe from our paychecks be "net or gross?" He just laughed at me and said, "Just give from your heart!"

I still did not understand tithing, but I wanted to obey what the Bible taught, so from that time and going forward, I started to tithe. Sometime within that year, I was at a work conference in Baltimore. They gave away many prizes throughout the conference. On the last day of the conference, they gave away the grand prize. It was a brand-new PT Cruiser. This was the year that they first introduced the car. God blessed me, and I won the car!

There were about 10,000 people in attendance. In my excitement, I called my wife and told her about winning the car. The first thing she said was "I told you that you cannot out-give God!" That is so true!

I am not saying God will give you a new car, but He will meet your every need.

Giving should come from the right heart. Each Christian should give out of obedience. What we give will look different for each one of us. God looks at the heart that gave it.

***"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***  
Matthew 6:21

# GLORY FROM GOD

---

## GIVING, DEVOTION 3

Patrick Bicknell

One of the easiest things to fall into is pride. The recognition from the world that we can receive may seem like an amazing thing. Hearing people say how great you are, how awesome it is that you do what you do, and wanting to hear these things is not completely bad. However, the struggle that so many people have is that they seek only the glory that can come from people and not from God. John 5:44 says, ***“How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”*** How are we supposed to serve the Lord out of the right heart if all we are seeking is the glory that comes from people? To go even further as the text suggests, how can we even believe in Jesus if all we seek is the praise of people?

The main reason for our existence is for the glory of God alone. We are to believe in the words of Jesus for the glory of God. We are to serve him only for the glory of God. We are to give only for the glory of God. Everything that we do is supposed to be only for the glory of God. This text in John chapter 5 is such a convicting piece of Scripture for me. When I read these words it causes me to examine myself. Why do I serve? Why do I give? Why have I surrendered my life to Jesus as Lord? If the answer to any of these questions has anything to do about me, then I may be missing the point as to why Jesus came down to this earth and died on the cross. Jesus says, ***“How can you believe”*** if you ***“do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”***

My hope is that you read these words in the book of John and examine your own life. Do you truly believe in Jesus and have a

personal relationship with Christ? As John says in chapter 20 verse 31, ***“But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*** The words written in this book are there so that we may believe. Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart and ask you if the life you are living for Christ is for His glory or the glory that you receive from people.

# SHUT THE DOOR AND OPEN YOUR HEART

---

## GIVING, DEVOTION 4

Pastor Patrick Rowland

I am a fan of personality and gift testing. I have done them all: DiSC, Myers Briggs, Enneagram, and Strengths Finder. I am a high I-D, ENTJ, 3 Wing 2, and the top 5 strengths are Belief, Responsibility, Significance, Futuristic, and Analytical. If you are familiar with these tests you would know that I am wired to get things done. I can be addicted to achievement and the recognition that comes with it. These tests have helped me understand who I am and be comfortable with that. They have also helped me understand that what is a strength God blessed me with can also be a weakness leading to unhealthy behaviors.

Being wired for achievement and motivated by recognition has at times in my life lead me to use my gifts of execution for self-promotion. Being recognized for your accomplishments by others is not wrong, nor should it be discouraged. The core issue with a motive for recognition is self-seeking promotion. Though today's social media platforms have permitted and expanded this characteristic, it is not a new problem. Jesus recognized over 2,000 years ago the potential flaw in humans. It was one of the first things he talked about in the very early days of His ministry. The famous "Sermon on the Mount" is recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7 as Jesus' first sermon which covered many topics. For our purposes we need to zero in on Matthew 6:6, ***"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."***

Whether it is praying, worship, giving, serving, or any of the spiritual disciplines taught in the Bible, they are personal, not promotional.

God is more concerned about the work He wants to do in you and through you than He is with the response you receive from others. The actions of our own hearts must be driven by the recognition of the Heavenly Father not by attaboys, likes, and reactions. Jesus commands us to “shut the door” on the recognition of others and to open our hearts to the work He wants to do in us.

# GOD AND YOURSELF

---

## GIVING, DEVOTION 5

Pat Bedell

For those of you that know me, you know that I have been blessed to be a musician. I remember when I was in 2nd grade, Mr. Duvall had a piano in his classroom, and one day during our “free time,” I walked over and began playing. To me, I was just practicing and having a good time, but to my teacher and my fellow classmates, they seemed amazed that someone knew how to play piano at such a young age. I was filled with euphoria after receiving so much praise and acknowledgment. That was when I realized that I was going to have a lifelong struggle with pride.

One of the greatest desires of humankind is to be accepted by others. We long for connection and relationships and we were designed this way by God. Some will go out of their way to get attention from others. We all know someone that tries to “one-up” you after you tell a story and it is simply to receive praise and acceptance from you. It takes a lot of discipline and multiple moments of self-evaluation to keep yourself in check trying to be prideful of what you have done and achieved. Pride can also set in when you are working for the Lord. Whether you are a volunteer, part of the staff, or one of the board members of the church, it is easy to get caught up in the accomplishments of the church. Whether it is putting together an awesome program, building a stellar backdrop, or playing an amazing set for worship, it is easy to pat yourself on the back.

In Matthew chapter 6, there are some guidelines given to help guide God's people in the way they conduct themselves in their worship to the Lord. Matthew 6:3-4 says, ***“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,***

***so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***” God wants you to give to the cause with no intention of receiving praise for your generosity from others. Matthew 6:6 adds, ***“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*** As I have studied this chapter, it seems that if you want to further His Kingdom in a healthy manner, you must do it with the mindset that you are only doing so in the eyes of God and no one else. Matthew 6:17-18 says, ***“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*** Do not tell or boast of your fasting habits. God will not reward your efforts of fasting if you do so in a sinful manner.

I interpret these guidelines in a very simple way that has helped me overcome some of the most difficult struggles of pride in my life. When you are trying to worship and praise God in your walk of faith, do so in the mindset that it is just God and yourself in the room. When we worship, we sing and play to an audience of One. When we give our tithes and offerings, we give to the one true God. When we fast, it is to remind us how faithful God is in our lives and that we need to display true humility in the eyes of our Father alone. I encourage you all to do a self-evaluation and to make sure the way that you worship God is done in a healthy manner and that it is done in a “God and Yourself” way.

# SACRIFICIAL WORSHIP

## GIVING, DEVOTION 6

Shawna Johnson

***“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on.’”*** Mark 12: 41-44 (NIV)

This is an interesting concept. The rich people put in larger amounts, so how is it that this woman put in **“more?”** The woman gave **“more”** because she sacrificed more. She felt it. She gave **“all she had to live on.”** Still, she trusted God. The rich people gave larger amounts, but may not have had to sacrifice or potentially even think about what to give.

This concept translates to more than just finances.

Mark 14:3-6 (NIV) says, ***“While he [Jesus] was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, ‘Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.’ And they rebuked her harshly. ‘Leave her alone,’ said Jesus. ‘Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to***

*me.”* To others, what these women did with their money and their possessions did not make sense. For them, it was an act of worship.

Do we worship with our money, possessions, and time? Do we worship when it might inconvenience us, or make us uncomfortable? Or, do we only do it when it fits into our schedule?

I would encourage all of us to take a moment and really try to imagine giving the way these ladies gave. While we do not necessarily have to give up all we own or donate an entire year's wages, imagine what God could do with us if we trusted Him with everything we have?





# OUR MISSION

Matthew 28:19-20: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”***

## REACH

At The River Church, you will often hear the phrase, “we don’t go to church, we are the Church.” We believe that as God’s people, our primary purpose and goal is to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to reach the world in your local communities.

## GATHER

Weekend Gatherings at The River Church are all about Jesus, through singing, giving, serving, baptizing, taking the Lord’s Supper, and participating in messages that are all about Jesus and bringing glory to Him. We know that when followers of Christ gather together in unity, it’s not only a refresher it’s bringing life-change.

## GROW

Our Growth Communities are designed to mirror the early church in Acts as having ***“all things in common.”*** They are smaller collections of believers who spend time together studying the Word, knowing and caring for one another relationally, and learning to increase their commitment to Christ by holding one another accountable.

The River Church  
8393 E. Holly Rd. Holly, MI 48442  
[theriverchurch.cc](http://theriverchurch.cc) • [info@theriverchurch.cc](mailto:info@theriverchurch.cc)

---