

ALIVE!

A 40-day devotional journey through the
Book of ACTS

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Preparations for this 40-day journey

The Book of Acts is a book of the history of the early church. Jesus established the church as His presence on this earth until He returns. Acts, written by the Gentile doctor Luke (who also wrote the Gospel of Luke) chronicles the empowerment and growth of the early church. A very proper understanding of the Book of Acts would simply be, “the acts of the Holy Spirit.”

These devotions were primarily from my journal entries while reading devotionally through The Book of Acts. Often the first person will be used because they are my unedited, for the most part, personal thoughts on particular passages in Acts.

The purpose of this 40-day journey through the Book of Acts is to help you see how God brought the church alive through the Holy Spirit, how God grew the early church, and how God worked through many different individuals in that process. My hope is also you will see how dependence on the Holy Spirit brings a church to life and enables it to serve to the glory of God. In these next 40 days you will be reading portions of a chapter, and some days an entire chapter a day in the Book of Acts. For each day there will be scripture references for you to read and reflect on. The 1st day of this journey begins on a Monday and the 7th day ends on a Sunday. And throughout this study Monday will always begin another week in this journey building up to Sunday. Each week’s sermon will be based on the week’s reading. At the beginning of each week you will also be presented with a prayer sheet for a specific prayer focus to pray during that week.. At the end of each week’s devotional study (Sunday) you will also be challenged to go to the last page of this devotion and write down one specific prayer item that you will commit to working on in this new church year.

Here are some challenges for you in these next 40 days:

1. Set aside at least 30 minutes each day to  read,  reflect, and  pray as you read through Acts. Use this material as your devotional material for the next 40 days.
2. Ask God to speak to your heart every day and commit to be obedient to what you feel God leading you to do, or what the devotion challenges you with.
3. As much as your work schedule allows which you may not have any control over, and not your leisure schedule which you probably have great control over, commit right now, you and your family, to be in every worship service, Sundays and Wednesdays, and Sunday School for these next 40 days.
4. Pay attention to the end of each week. On Saturday you will be challenged to prepare yourself for worship the next day. On Sunday, make every effort to do that morning’s devotion BEFORE you come to worship. You will be supplied with a note taking sheet for each week’s sermon.

PREPARE. Come to every worship service with Bible, pen, and paper in hand prepared to read, listen, study, and apply the word of God.

PRAYER FOCUS FOR WEEK ONE

One lost person or family: _____

Pray they will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will give you to opportunity to share the gospel with them in this next 40 days.

One church member or family who is disconnected from the church:

Church members who have intentionally disconnected themselves from the fellowship of the church have had their fellowship broken. Regardless of the reasons they do not come any more, we must strive to love them back to the church family and restore their fellowship.

Pray that God will mend any hurts they may have.

Pray that God will restore them to the fellowship of the church.

Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them back in these next 40 days.

Your pastor:

1. Pray that God will continue to strengthen him during his weekly sermon study time.
2. Pray that God will protect he and his family from the attacks of Satan.
3. Pray that God will use him to lead the church to the glory of God.
4. Pray that God will use *you* to follow his leadership and encourage him.

WEDNESDAY, July 27, Day 1

 **READ: Acts 1.1-11**

4. *Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised, which, He said, you heard of from Me.*

“Wait”. That’s the hard part when it comes to serving the Lord. So often we want to charge out there and do something when often God says, “Don’t just do something—stand there!” Times of waiting on God are times of growth for His children. He may want us to learn something during that time of waiting. Our part is to serve Him for His glory until He reveals the next step, then we can move on.

☉REFLECT:

READ:

Psalm 27.14. According to this verse, what two qualities does it take to wait on the Lord? _____

How can you exhibit these two qualities? _____

Psalm 40.1. How does the psalmist write about waiting on the Lord in this verse? _____

“Patient” waiting on the Lord does not mean inactivity, it means to continue to serve the Lord faithfully while you are waiting on His answer to prayer.

✝**PRAY:** Ask God to help you serve Him faithfully as you wait for His answer to your prayer(s).

**IT’S WEDNESDAY NIGHT, DON’T FORGET ADULT AND YOUTH BIBLE STUDIES AT
6:30 P.M.**

THURSDAY, July 28, Day 2

 **READ: Acts 1.12-26**

14. *These men with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer along with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

I am continually amazed at the many references to, (1) the prayer life of the early church, and (2) their unity of mind and heart. The early church was not perfect and they had their own issues such as circumcision. But one could learn a great lesson from the early church when it comes to both prayer and unity. These two characteristics, along with a total dependence on the Holy Spirit, were the keys to the rapid expansion of the early church. And yet today we scratch our heads and wonder why our churches are in decline.

 **REFLECT:**

READ:

Philippians 1.27: What was Paul's desire for the Philippian church? _____

How can you help be a part of Paul's desire in the church today? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to help you be an active part in being of, "one mind and one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

FRIDAY, July 29, Day 3

 **READ: Acts 2.1-36**

32. *This Jesus, God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.*

The content of the 1st century sermons was simple: the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. God used those sermons in a powerful way. We can learn a lot from the 1st century sermons – keeps the main thing the main thing – Jesus crucified and raised for our sins. This is the message of the church, the only message the church has, and that message has not changed in 2,000 years.

☉REFLECT:

READ:

1 Corinthians 2.1-2: What decision had Paul made when it came to his preaching? _____

What impact should Paul's decision make in your life and in the life of the church? _____

How can you help the church stay focused on this main message? _____

✝**PRAY:** Ask God to help you be active in being part of the church's main message of the gospel.

SATURDAY, July 30, Day 4

 **READ: Acts 2.37-47**

43. *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe, and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.*

Have we lost our sense of ‘awe’ when it comes to God and His presence in His church and among his people? When we gather for worship, are we going through the motions or do we come anticipating God to show up and do something? We need to bring back the awe of God, the majesty of God, the awesomeness of God in our worship; and that means God has to do a work within us.

 **REFLECT:**

READ:

Psalm 33.8: What does the psalmist tell us about our reaction to God? _____

How can you make Ps. 33.8 and Acts 2.43 a reality in your own worship of God? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to help restore in you the awe and majesty of His person.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Prepare your heart and your family to be in worship tomorrow.

SUNDAY, July 31, Day 5

 **READ: Acts 3.1-10**

10. *And they were taking note of him as the one who used to sit at the beautiful gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

A lame man was made to walk again by the power of God. No less of a miracle takes place when we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. And when people see the change that is caused within us, that is what draws others to the Lord. And that's what makes the difference, changed lives, lives transformed by the power of the gospel. Transformed lives are the most powerful testimonies for Christ. When people see lives that have been transformed it makes all the difference in the world. And this is the church, a community of people whose lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel.

☉REFLECT:

READ:

Luke 19.8-10: What were the signs in the life of Zaccheus that he had been transformed by the power of God?

How can you be part of demonstrating the truth of a transformed life through the church in our own community?

✠**PRAY:** Ask God to help you live a life that has been transformed by the power of His gospel.

Go to the last page of this devotion and write down ONE PRAYER CHALLENGE you will commit to work on in this new church year for WEEK ONE.

PREPARE. Bible, note sheet, pen, willing heart – ready to worship this morning and this evening!

SERMON NOTE SHEET

Title: _____

Text: _____

Notes: _____

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS SERMON TO MY LIFE THIS WEEK?

PRAYER FOCUS FOR WEEK TWO

One lost person or family: _____

Pray they will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will give you to opportunity to share the gospel with them in this next 40 days.

One church member or family who is disconnected from the church: _____

Church members who have intentionally disconnected themselves from the fellowship of the church have had their fellowship broken. Regardless of the reasons they do not come any more, we must strive to love them back to the church family and restore their fellowship.

Pray that God will mend any hurts they may have.

Pray that God will restore them to the fellowship of the church.

Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them back in these next 40 days.

Our deacons: Larry Weger (chairman), Dave Hill, Gail Hall, Jim Bowen, Doug Forbes, Pat Johnson, Quinn Bowen

Pray that God will give the deacons a heart of compassion and love as they serve the church.

Pray that God will protect them and their families from the attacks of the enemy as they serve.

Pray that God will give them a heart for the lost.

Pray they will support the pastor as he leads the church.

Pray that God will use *you* to encourage and support the deacons in their ministry.

MONDAY, August 1, Day 6

 **READ: Acts 3.11-26**

16. *And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.*

We must always be quick to give God the glory for all He has done and is doing. It is never about us, never about me, but always about God and His glory. We go wrong when the focus is taken off God and put on us. We have to be very careful to always give God the glory for everything. Satan will try to puff us up by flattering words from others about what *we* have done, and we have to be quick to back up and give God the glory for it all.

☉REFLECT:

1 Corinthians 3.5-7: How does Paul describe his ministry to the church at Corinth?_____

How can you either as an individual or as part of the church make sure God is honored in all you do?_____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you make sure you give God the glory for all He has done and is doing.

TUESDAY, August 2, Day 7

 **READ: Acts 4.1-31**

13. *Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

They had been with Jesus—that’s the key! Education and training are important but they will never take the place of spending time with Jesus. Jesus *makes* the difference because Jesus *made* the difference.

⊕REFLECT:

Luke 10.38-42: What is the main difference between what Martha was doing and what Mary was doing? _____

What do you think the difference is between, “church work” and the, “work of the church?” _____

How can you keep from getting so wrapped up in, “church work” that you forget, “the work of the church?” _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you not get so bogged down in church work that you lose focus on the work of the church.

WEDNESDAY, August 3, Day 8

📖 READ: Acts 4.32-37

34. *For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostle's feet and they would be distributed to each as they would have need.*

The early church took care of its own because they were so interconnected with one another. This is the true essence of biblical fellowship. But today we are segmented and isolated. We are connected digitally but isolated personally, and this is not the biblical definition of fellowship. We'll never know what is going on in the lives of the church until we begin to understand what true fellowship is all about.

☉REFLECT:

Philippians 4.15: How was it possible for a poor church like the one in Philippi to give over and above what they had to the meet the ministry needs of Paul? _____

Ephesians 4.28: What did Paul write about the purpose of work? _____

How can God's provision in your own life enable you to help meet needs through the church? _____

✝️**PRAY:** Ask God to help you be an active part of helping meet needs within the church.

**IT'S WEDNESDAY NIGHT, DON'T FORGET ADULT AND YOUTH BIBLE STUDIES AT
6:30 P.M.**

THURSDAY, August 4, Day 9

 READ: Acts 5.1-16

14. *And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number.*

God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was saving people, and adding to the church daily. This is a great example of what man can do and what only God can do. Man can proclaim the gospel but only God can save and add to His church. God has not put any of us in charge of results but He has called and equipped us to do what He has tasked us to do – and in that we must be faithful.

 REFLECT:

1 Corinthians 3.6: What did Paul understand about serving the Lord? _____

How can you be an encouragement to your fellow church members with the truth of 1 Corinthians 3.6?

 PRAY: Ask God to help you not to get discouraged when you do not see ministry and spiritual results you think you should be seeing. Ask God to help you gain a proper perspective on serving Him.

FRIDAY, August 5, Day 10

 **READ: Acts 5.17-42**

20. *Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this life.*

The apostles were arrested and jailed for preaching the gospel in public. The Lord sent an angel to them while in prison and gave them this powerful exhortation: go, stand, speak . . . the whole message of this life. There is not a more powerful command for the public proclamation of the gospel anywhere in the Bible. This is the calling of the church. To go, to preach, to proclaim the whole message of this life. If the church does any less, less than preach the whole message of the whole word, then the church has disobeyed the call of God.

☉REFLECT:

Isaiah 45.22: What was God's message through Isaiah? _____

How can you be a part of making sure this is the core message of the church? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you be part of making sure Isaiah 45.22 is the heartbeat of the church.

SATURDAY, August 6, Day 11

 **READ: Acts 6.1-15**

4. *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

The apostles were meeting needs in the church, which could be done by others. But still there were needs not being met. Because they were busy in meeting needs they couldn't focus on what they were called to do. They were not saying they were above serving, they simply were serving where they had not been called in order to meet needs. When the church is using the gifts God has so wonderfully bestowed on each of its members then the pastor and other ministers can concentrate on their calling. But when it doesn't get done, either the pastor is pulled in many directions or ministry just doesn't get done. Knowing what God has called us to do is critical to effective ministry.

☉REFLECT:

1 Corinthians 12.7: What do you think the phrase, "for the common good" means? _____

How *should* this be realized in your life? _____

✝**PRAY:** Ask God to help you know how He has gifted you and to help you put that gift to work through the church for His glory.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Prepare your heart and your family to be in worship tomorrow.

SUNDAY, August 7, Day 12

 **READ: Acts 7.1-60**

54. *Now when they heard this they were cut to the quick and they began gnashing their teeth at him.*

The proclamation of the gospel always brings a reaction. I have heard two quotes on the preaching of the gospel that tell the same truth in a different way:

• When I finish preaching I want people to either be mad, sad, or glad; if they stay the same I haven't done what God has called me to do.

• When you are confronted with the truth of the gospel you have to do something about it.

This reaction is the result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Verse 51 tells us many who are hard hearted and stiff-necked will resist to the point of open rejection. Others will repent and cry out for salvation as in Acts 2.38. The proclamation of the gospel always demands a response, hence the need for an invitation.

 **REFLECT:**

1 Corinthians 5.20: What do you think it means to, “be reconciled to God?” (Hint: think of a gluing back together a piece of pottery that has been broken.)

Why is reconciliation such an urgent plea? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to help you pursue reconciliation in your own life.

Go to the last page of this devotion and write down ONE PRAYER CHALLENGE you will commit to work on in this new church year for WEEK TWO.

PREPARE. Bible, note sheet, pen, willing heart – ready to worship this morning and this evening!

SERMON NOTE SHEET

Title: _____

Text: _____

Notes: _____

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS SERMON TO MY LIFE THIS WEEK?

PRAYER FOCUS FOR WEEK THREE

One lost person or family: _____

Pray they will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will give you to opportunity to share the gospel with them in this next 40 days.

One church member or family who is disconnected from the church: _____

Church members who have intentionally disconnected themselves from the fellowship of the church have had their fellowship broken. Regardless of the reasons they do not come any more, we must strive to love them back to the church family and restore their fellowship.

Pray that God will mend any hurts they may have.

Pray that God will restore them to the fellowship of the church.

Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them back in these next 40 days.

Our youth ministry

Pray that God will strengthen and guide Dave Jones, our youth pastor, as he leads and ministers to our youth; and that God will protect he and his family as he studies to teach the youth each week.

Pray that the youth who come to Bethel will see and experience the transforming power of God through the members of Bethel.

Pray that God will use our youth in a mighty way for the glory of God.

MONDAY, August 8, Day 13

 **READ: Acts 8.1-24**

4. *Therefore those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.*

The early church had a mission – to share the gospel with the world. “Those who had been scattered” were not pastors, they had not been to seminary, they didn’t need a conference or a convention to tell them what to do; they simply followed the Lord’s commission. Their love for Him and their transformed hearts were all they needed to share Christ, a great lesson for the church today.

 **REFLECT:**

Amos 7.14-15; Luke 5.27-28: The backgrounds of Amos and Matthew could not have been more diverse: Amos was a farmer and Matthew a tax collector. Yet what was the one key fact about their lives that makes them similar? _____

Should the call of God on your life be any different today? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to help you be obedient to the call of proclaiming the gospel through your life.

TUESDAY, August 9, Day 14

 **READ: Acts 8.25-40**

40. *but Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.*

Philip kept preaching the gospel. A major hallmark of the 1st century church was a lifestyle of sharing Christ. Whether it was Phillip, or the other apostles as they traveled, or those scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8.4), the 1st century Christians shared the gospel everywhere they went. This is why it is essential the gospel be the core reason for everything the church is involved in.

☉REFLECT:

Revelation 7.9-10. What do you think is the one key fact all those around the throne of God had in common? (verse 14 is a clue)_____

Isaiah 52.7: Are there any special qualifications given in this verse for those who, “bring good news?”

✝**PRAY:** Ask God to help you be faithful in finding ways to proclaim the gospel to those around you.

WEDNESDAY, August 10, Day 15

 **READ: Acts 9.1-25**

15. *But God said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel.*

God took the chief antagonist against the church and transformed him into a powerful agent of the gospel. The key is – a chosen instrument. All Christians are chosen instruments of God; chosen out of this world, chosen to salvation, chosen into the family of God, and chosen to carry the message of salvation to the nations. Who we are is not half as important as what God can do through us.

• God called Moses to lead the nation of Israel out of slavery, and Moses had killed a man in anger (Ex. 2.11-12);

• God used a harlot named Rahab to help the Hebrew spies in Jericho and she became part of the family line of Jesus (Josh. 2.1; Matt. 1.5);

• God healed a demon-possessed man and sent him to be an evangelist in his own home town (Mark 5.19-20);

• God found an unethical man named Zaccheus up in a tree and saved him (Luke 19.8).

Who you are and what you have done are not half as important as what God can do through you.

✝ **PRAY:** Ask God to help you focus on His call on your life instead of what you believe are your limitations and your past.

IT’S WEDNESDAY NIGHT, DON’T FORGET ADULT AND YOUTH BIBLE STUDIES AT 6:30 P.M.

THURSDAY, August 11, Day 16

 **READ: Acts 9.26-43**

26. *When he came to Jerusalem He was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of Him, not believing that he was a disciple.*

We are all sinners with a past, we all come to Jesus with baggage. How sad that some so-called “Christians” will not let others be saved, will not trust their conversion because they know how they were before God transformed their life. Shame on any of us who would have that kind of contempt for the grace of God.

☉REFLECT:

John 8.10-11: What is one great lesson we can learn from Jesus when a woman caught in adultery was brought to Him? _____

How can you make sure the grace and forgiveness of God are key characteristics of your life and church? _____

✝**PRAY:** Ask God to help you model His grace and forgiveness that He has demonstrated in your own life.

FRIDAY, August 12, Day 17

 **READ: Acts 10.1-23**

15. *Again a voice came to him a second time, “what God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.”*

Peter didn't want to eat of the animals he had been taught were unclean. But God told him that it was He – God – who would determine clean and unclean, and to go ahead and eat. We must follow the Spirit's lead when it comes to ministry. Often we'll pick and choose where we want to go, when we need to pray for God's leading where He wants us to go. When we go in God's direction, we know He has already been there at work.

☉REFLECT:

Matthew 6.10: When we pray for God's will to be done, are we praying for *God's will* to be done, or are we praying for *our version of God's will* to be done? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you to make sure you are being obedient to His will and not trying to pick and choose what suits you.

SATURDAY, August 13, Day 18

 **READ: Acts 10.24-48**

33. *So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.*

The pastor is the messenger equipped and sent by the Lord with a message for the people. The church is the body of believers brought together by the Lord to hear His word and to live His word and to share His word. The preacher has been commanded to preach His word and the saints have been commissioned to take it, live it, and make disciples with it. If the pastor does what he has been commanded to do, and if the church does what it has been commissioned to do, then the church will be what God intended it to be.

☉REFLECT:

Jeremiah 20.9: How did Jeremiah describe his condition if he did not proclaim the word of God? _____

How should Jeremiah 20.9 be translated in the life of the church today? _____

✝**PRAY:** Ask God to help you realize the priority of proclaiming the gospel to those around you.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Prepare your heart and your family to be in worship tomorrow.

SUNDAY, August 14, Day 19

 **READ: Acts 11.1-18**

17. *Therefore, if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?*

Peter knew God was working in the midst of the Gentiles and he simply joined God in what he was called to do. This is the key to effective work for the Lord, finding where God is working and joining Him in that work.

 **REFLECT:**

Ephesians 3.4-7: How did Paul describe this “mystery” that God revealed to him? _____

How should this “mystery” affect the way a church conducts ministry in the community? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to help you see others with the eyes of Christ.

Go to the last page of this devotion and write down ONE PRAYER CHALLENGE you will commit to work on in this new church year for WEEK THREE.

PREPARE. Bible, note sheet, pen, willing heart – ready to worship this morning and this evening!

SERMON NOTE SHEET

Title: _____

Text: _____

Notes: _____

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS SERMON TO MY LIFE THIS WEEK?

PRAAYER FOCUS FOR WEEK FOUR

One lost person or family: _____

Pray they will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will give you to opportunity to share the gospel with them in this next 40 days.

One church member or family who is disconnected from the church: _____

Church members who have intentionally disconnected themselves from the fellowship of the church have had their fellowship broken. Regardless of the reasons they do not come any more, we must strive to love them back to the church family and restore their fellowship.

Pray that God will mend any hurts they may have.

Pray that God will restore them to the fellowship of the church.

Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them back in these next 40 days.

Our Sunday School and *your* Sunday School teacher: _____

Pray that God will give your teacher and your class a heart for the nations.

Pray that God will protect your teacher and his/her family from the attacks of the enemy as they study to teach each week.

Pray that God will use *you* to encourage and support your Sunday School teacher through regular attendance each week.

Pray that God will use your class to reach the lost for the glory of God.

MONDAY, August 15, Day 20

📖 READ: Acts 11.19-30

29. *And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.*

The church was made aware of a need and they determined to meet it as they were able.

Throughout the Book of Acts we read where the early church met needs among their own congregation as they had the opportunity. They took care of their own. A powerful testimony to the watching world today, where the Lord's church takes care of its own and those around them as a demonstration of what Christ has done for them on the cross.

🕒 REFLECT:

2 Corinthians 9.6-7: What is the general principle in giving that Paul explains here? _____

How can you use 2 Corinthians 9.6-7 to help you be a powerful witness to the provision of God? _____

✝️ PRAY: Ask God to help you be a, “bountiful giver” for His kingdom purposes, and to help others do the same.

TUESDAY, August 16, Day 21

📖 READ: Acts 12.1-25

5. *So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*

The word, “fervently” means eagerly, earnestly, without ceasing, continually. The picture is clear: the early church prayed for Peter’s release; they prayed earnestly, they prayed eagerly, they prayed without ceasing. We pray daily for many different reasons – to thank God, to praise Him, to bring specific requests before Him, and those are all valid and are biblical. But do we engage in fervent prayer? Do we, as a church, gather to pray in earnest, eagerly and continually for a specific need, for powerful worship services, for people to be saved? When the power of fervent prayer is recaptured by the church, God will bring revival to the church.

🕒 REFLECT:

Ephesians 6.18; 1 Thessalonians 5.17. How can the church make these two verses of Scripture a reality in its life? _____

How can your own personal prayer time be enhanced through, “fervent prayer?” _____

✝️ PRAY: Ask God to help you be a solid prayer warrior for His kingdom.

WEDNESDAY, August 17, Day 22

📖 READ: Acts 13.1-43

2. *While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

As so often happens, while we are serving the Lord, while we are involved in the work the Lord has called us to, the Holy Spirit may call us to other work. What we do not understand is that while we are serving and ministering to the Lord, He is preparing us for other work. God has designed us to grow and go, not to sit and soak and sour.

Notice what Luke wrote, “the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me . . . ‘ The work of the Lord is set apart work, the work of the Lord is spiritually-charged work, and the work of the Lord is sacred work – for His purposes only. When we grasp the enormity and importance of what it means to serve the Lord then the call and the service make more sense.

🕒 REFLECT:

Ephesians 2.10: What are at least five important truths this one verse of Scripture teaches us about our part in God’s plan? _____

What would happen if every church member lived the reality of this one verse? _____

What about in your own life? _____

✚ **PRAY:** Ask God to help you live the reality of Ephesians 2.10 through your own life.

IT’S WEDNESDAY NIGHT, DON’T FORGET ADULT AND YOUTH BIBLE STUDIES AT 6:30 P.M.

THURSDAY, August 18, Day 23

 **READ: Acts 13.44-52**

45. *But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul and were blaspheming.*

There will always be those who oppose the gospel. There will always be those who either don't care to hear the message, are indifferent to the message, will be polite with you but disregard it, and then there are those who will get belligerent about it. We have to constantly remind ourselves it is not us they are mad at, it is God; they are not rejecting us, they are rejecting God. We have been called to proclaim the gospel and live the gospel, and for some it becomes very convicting so they don't want to be around it. And what's amazing is that God is always faithful and His word never fails.

☉REFLECT:

Luke 9.1-6. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do in the case of those who would not receive them?

How should you respond to those who reject you when you try to witness to them? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you to be faithful in witnessing even when that message is rejected.

FRIDAY, August 19, Day 24

 READ: Acts 14.1-28

3. *Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the Lord of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.*

The disciples (1) spoke the word, (2) spoke the word with boldness, (3) relied on the Lord, and (4) were used of God to perform signs and wonders. And the key here is they relied on the Lord. Jesus told His disciples, ‘apart from Me you can do nothing’. When we try to serve the Lord in our own strength we will accomplish nothing for the Lord; when we rely on Him and His power much will be accomplished.

 REFLECT:

John 15.5: What is the promise God made to the disciples about relying on Him in ministry?

What do you think the key ingredient is between a “fruitful” ministry and an “unfruitful” ministry?

 PRAY: Ask God to help you rely on Him as you minister in His name.

SATURDAY, August 20, Day 25

 **READ: Acts 15.1-35**

5. *But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Law of Moses."*

The Pharisees didn't understand the grace of God to all men. Anytime we try to add to the finished work of Christ we are saying the cross and the grace of God are not sufficient. The power of the cross is its simplicity and its completeness; it's nothing we can do because it has already been done.

 **REFLECT:**

John 19.30: What do you think this cry of Jesus on the cross signified? _____

Why do you think it is so hard to trust in the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to help you trust in the sufficiency of the finishes work of Christ and not try to add anything to it.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Prepare your heart and your family to be in worship tomorrow.

SUNDAY, August 21, Day 26

 **READ: Acts 15.36 – 16.13**

16.10. *When we had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

The only ministry that will make an impact for the kingdom of God is spirit-led ministry. When we submit ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit we will go where God is working and we will experience the blessings of God. Spirit-led ministry starts out with the blessings of God as opposed to striking out on our own and asking God to bless what He has not led us to do.

☉REFLECT:

Genesis 12.1-4: What did Abram do in response to God that we find so hard to do today? _____

How many “unknowns” could you think of that Abram may have had questions about, and yet still stepped out in obedience? _____

How can you emulate the examples of both Abram and Paul (Acts 16.10)? _____

✚**PRAY**: Ask God to help you step out in faith and not hesitate because of the unknown.

Go to the last page of this devotion and write down ONE PRAYER CHALLENGE you will commit to work on in this new church year for WEEK FOUR.

PREPARE. Bible, note sheet, pen, willing heart – ready to worship this morning and this evening!

SERMON NOTE SHEET

Title: _____

Text: _____

Notes: _____

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS SERMON TO MY LIFE THIS WEEK?

PRAYER FOCUS FOR WEEK FIVE

One lost person or family: _____

Pray they will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will give you to opportunity to share the gospel with them in this next 40 days.

One church member or family who is disconnected from the church: _____

Church members who have intentionally disconnected themselves from the fellowship of the church have had their fellowship broken. Regardless of the reasons they do not come any more, we must strive to love them back to the church family and restore their fellowship.

Pray that God will mend any hurts they may have.

Pray that God will restore them to the fellowship of the church.

Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them back in these next 40 days.

Our music ministry

Pray that God will use the music ministry at Bethel Baptist Church to draw the church into a more meaningful time of worship.

Pray that God will call out more singers and musicians to serve as part of Bethel's music ministry.

Pray that God will strengthen and protect Dave Jones, our music minister, against the enemy's attacks as he leads our worship ministry.

Pray that God will use Bethel's music ministry in the community to demonstrate the love and grace of God.

MONDAY, August 22, Day 27

 READ: Acts 16.14-40

33. *And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.*

The change was immediate and radical. This guard was charged with guarding prisoners; if they escaped he would be killed for it. And yet when he believed in Jesus he was radically changed. The guard was a prisoner of his sins and he was the one set free!

Salvation is a radical change; if there is no difference in our lives then there has been no change. This is what makes Christianity different from every other religion in the world: changed lives; lives changed and transformed by the power of the gospel through Jesus Christ.

 REFLECT:

John 15.8: What did Jesus say was the, “proof of discipleship?” _____

How have you seen God’s transforming grace in your own life? _____

 PRAY: Ask God to help you bear the fruit of discipleship.

TUESDAY, August 23, Day 28

📖 READ: Acts 17.1-34

2. *And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures.*

Paul's pattern was simply the reality of the Great Commission – as you are going to make disciples. Paul taught and reasoned from the scriptures, and that is what disciple making is all about—teaching and reasoning from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. A church alive to Christ through discipleship is the church that makes a difference for the kingdom of God. As it was Paul's "custom" to go to the synagogue every Sabbath and reason from the scriptures, it should also be the "custom" of the church to have an intentional discipleship program in place to help establish new believers and mature existing believers.

🕒 REFLECT:

2 Timothy 2.2: What is the charge Paul gave to the young pastor Timothy? _____

How can this become a reality in your life today? _____

How can you help make this a reality in the church? _____

✝️ **PRAY:** Ask God to help you make disciples as you grow in discipleship.

WEDNESDAY, August 24, Day 29

📖 READ: Acts 18.1-28

6. *But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”*

Once before Paul had been resisted by the Jews when he preached the gospel (13.46), and he turned to the Gentiles. However, Paul never lost his desire to see his fellow Jews come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our desire should be the same. Regardless of who the person or group is, our desire should be to see all come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. There will be those who reject this life-saving message; our commission is to continue to proclaim the gospel through word and deed, God will do the rest.

🕒 REFLECT:

Acts 20.24: What did Paul consider the purpose of his life? _____

How might Acts 20.24 be translated in your own life? _____

✝️ PRAY: Ask God to help you define His purpose for your life.

TONIGHT IS BACK TO SCHOOL BASH AT ROGIER PARK, 6 P.M.; INVITE YOUR FRIENDS TO COME AND ENJOY THE EVENING!

THURSDAY, August 25, Day 30

 **READ: Acts 19.1-41**

10. *This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.*

Paul was ever the teacher and disciple. When he was run out of the synagogue for teaching and preaching after three months he simply went to another place—a school—and continued for two years. His ministry touched all of Asia, and those who passed through Ephesus, Christians and non-Christians alike, who sat under his teaching, took the word of God with them throughout Asia. We never know the impact of our faithfulness. All God has called us to do is be obedient and He does the rest.

☉REFLECT:

Revelation 2.10: The word was not good for those at the church in Smyrna, but Jesus encouraged them to be faithful. What do you think it means to be faithful in serving the Lord? _____

How have you seen faithfulness to God being a challenge in your own life? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you be faithful to serve Him despite opposition from the world.

FRIDAY, August 26, Day 31

 **READ: Acts 20.1-38**

24. *But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.*

Paul was clear in what God called him to do. Paul was also clear that nothing in his life mattered more than finishing what God had given him to do. Paul is not unique among Christians and their call in life. All Christians have been called to be witnesses and disciple makers, that's the ministry we have all been called into, to the day we meet the Lord in glory. The question is how seriously do we take that call?

☉REFLECT:

2 Timothy 4.5: Paul had some direct words for the young pastor Timothy. What do you think it means in your own life to, “fulfill your ministry?” _____

How important is the fulfillment of one's ministry to the life and health of the church? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you stay focused on the ministry He has called and equipped you to do.

SATURDAY, August 27, Day 32

 **READ: Acts 21.1-40**

13. *Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

Paul, even though warned about being arrested if he went to Jerusalem, knew that was his call, to minister in the name of the Lord and to proclaim His name regardless of the cost. All Christians are called to this. How many of us, if we knew we would be arrested, would still go to church and praise the Lord and worship Him? How many of us would still teach Sunday School class if we knew the next time we did we would be arrested because we were teaching about Jesus?

☉REFLECT:

Acts 14.19-20: What was the reaction of Paul and the disciples when Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead? _____

How have you seen the challenge to faithfulness in serving the Lord become real in your own life?

✝**PRAY:** Ask God today to help you encourage someone that may be struggling to serve Him faithfully.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Prepare your heart and your family to be in worship tomorrow.

SUNDAY, August 28, Day 33

📖 READ: Acts 22.1-30

19. *And I said, "Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in you."*

Our past is past. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are forgiven and released from our sin penalty because Jesus paid our price on the cross of Calvary. Satan will try to drag up our past in an effort to slow us down or make us feel inadequate to serve the Lord. We have to remember that through faith in Christ our past has been forgiven and God has great plans for us. God is the God of today and tomorrow, not the God who wants to keep us stuck in the past.

🕒 REFLECT:

1 Corinthians 15.9-10: What was Paul's assessment of his life when it came to serving God? _____

What conclusion did Paul come to when it came to his past and God's grace? _____

How can you allow your past to hinder you from effectively serving the Lord? _____

✝️ **PRAY:** Ask God to help you remember the freedom and liberty His salvation has given you over your past.

Go to the last page of this devotion and write down ONE PRAYER CHALLENGE you will commit to work on in this new church year for WEEK FIVE.

PREPARE. Bible, note sheet, pen, willing heart – ready to worship this morning and this evening!

SERMON NOTE SHEET

Title: _____

Text: _____

Notes: _____

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS SERMON TO MY LIFE THIS WEEK?

PRAYER FOCUS FOR WEEK SIX

One lost person or family: _____

Pray they will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will give you to opportunity to share the gospel with them in this next 40 days.

One church member or family who is disconnected from the church: _____

Church members who have intentionally disconnected themselves from the fellowship of the church have had their fellowship broken. Regardless of the reasons they do not come any more, we must strive to love them back to the church family and restore their fellowship.

Pray that God will mend any hurts they may have.

Pray that God will restore them to the fellowship of the church.

Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them back in these next 40 days.

Bethel Baptist Church:

Pray that God will give Bethel Baptist Church a heart for the nations.

Pray that God will protect our church from the attacks of Satan.

Pray that God will unify our church to be of one mind and one spirit striving together for the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1.27).

Pray that God will use our church to be actively involved in the community demonstrating the love of Christ for the glory of God.

Pray that God will help Bethel Baptist Church be renewed to love, serve, and worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

MONDAY, August 29, Day 34

 **READ: Acts 23.1-35**

35. *he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.*

All Paul needed was a hearing, and that's all we need. Paul took every advantage to proclaim Christ and so should we. Paul made the most of every opportunity and so must we. The time God gives us is His time to do His work. We must be God's servants so that when we are given a hearing we will be able to respond with the gospel.

☉REFLECT:

Col. 4.2-3: What did Paul ask the church to pray for? _____

How can the church benefit from this type of prayer? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to give you an, "open door" today to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY, August 30, Day 35

 **READ: Acts 24.1-27**

15. *Having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

The message of the first century church is the same message the church has today: the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing takes the place of the preaching and teaching of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. The methods the church may use to proclaim that message will change over the years, but the message must never change.

☉REFLECT:

Rom. 1.16: How did Paul describe the gospel? _____

What happens in the church, and even in your own life, when the primary focus of the gospel is neglected? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you stay focused on the message of the gospel in your life and as part of his church.

WEDNESDAY, August 31, Day 36

 **READ: Acts 25.1-27**

19. *But they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man Jesus whom Paul asserted to be alive.*

Festus may not have understood who Jesus was but Paul had no doubt. He knew Jesus was alive because Jesus appeared to him and saved him. We too must be convinced and convicted of the resurrection of Jesus Christ for that IS the foundation of our faith. No resurrection, no faith. No resurrection, no salvation. No resurrection, no hope. It's the resurrection of Jesus that makes all the difference in the world.

The Jews didn't want to hear it but that didn't keep Paul from proclaiming it. A good lesson for the church today. The gospel message is not popular and doesn't fill the pews. But for a lost world to be rescued from the domain of darkness, the gospel is the only remedy.

☉REFLECT:

1 Corinthians 15.16-17: What did Paul write about the implications of Jesus *not* being raised from the dead? _____

Rev. 3.8: What did the Lord commend the church at Philadelphia for? _____

How have you, or have you ever experienced the message of the gospel being separated from the resurrection of Jesus Christ? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help solidify in your own life the power of the resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

OUR REGULAR **WEDNESDAY NIGHT SCHEDULE** BEGINS TONIGHT:

MEAL: 6 P.M.

TEAM KID, YOUTH BIBLE STUDY, MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDIES, AND ADULT BIBLE STUDIES AT 7:00 P.M.

THURSDAY, September 1, Day 37

 **READ: Acts 26.1-32**

11. *And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme, and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.*

If Paul were alive today he would be branded a domestic terrorist, trying to burn down churches and put Christians in jail. Paul's story, however, is a perfect example of the power of God's grace and forgiveness. No one is beyond the grace of God, it's just that simple. And yet we are the ones that will not allow ourselves, or others that may have had a tough past, to be saved. Or at least we don't think they *can* be saved. When we do this or think this way we put ourselves in God's place – a dangerous place to be.

☉REFLECT:

Luke 23.39-43? At the point of a cruel death, one criminal recognized Jesus for who He really was.

What was the response of Jesus to this convicted man? _____

How would you respond to a Christian who tells you they have a hard time believing God could save someone on death row? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you remember that you were once a condemned sinner, and then praise Him and thank Him because it is His grace that saved you and forgave *you*!

FRIDAY, September 2, Day 38

 **READ: Acts 27.1-13**

11. *But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.*

In life we have two choices: we can either go our way or we will go God's way. Every time, without exception, when we choose our way over God's way we run into trouble. We choose our way because we think we know best. God always knows better.

 **REFLECT:**

Gen. 4.6-7: What was the warning God gave Cain? _____

When have you seen, in your own life, what happens when you decided to go your own way instead of listening to God and going His? _____

 **PRAY:** Ask God to give you an obedient heart to follow Him even when you are tempted to go your own way.

SATURDAY, September 3, Day 39

 **READ: Acts 27.14-44**

23. *For this very night an angel of the Lord whom I serve stood before me.*

Even in the midst of the storm at sea, God used an angel to minister to Paul and to calm the ship's crew through a word from Paul given by God. God is with us in the storms and calm of life, and God may very well want us to proclaim a word of hope and assurance to those around us.

That's the gospel – hope and assurance of the deliverance of God through Jesus Christ. He makes the difference in your life because He made the difference in the world and in my own life.

☉REFLECT:

2 Cor. 1.3-4: How does Paul explain the God of comfort? _____

How have you experienced, “the God of all comfort” in your own life? _____

✝**PRAY:** As you have experienced, “the God of all comfort” in your own life, ask God to help you share that reality in someone else's life that may be struggling.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Prepare your heart and your family to be in worship tomorrow.

SUNDAY, September 4, Day 40

 **READ: Acts 28.1-31**

30-31 *And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.*

Even under house arrest in a city hostile to the gospel, Paul continued to teach and preach the gospel, and no doubt many lives were changed by the power of the gospel. We will never know, this side of heaven, how many lives were touched and transformed by the gospel because of Paul's faithfulness to teach and preach. And we must not get so wrapped up in results that we miss the big picture – being obedient to the call of Christ. I can fall into that trap of worrying about results, and sometimes I do. I have to remind myself I have not been called to produce results, but instead I have been called to be faithful to preach and teach the word; only God can produce results.

☉REFLECT:

Heb.12.1-2: What did the writer of Hebrews challenge his readers with? _____

If you were to, “rewrite” verses 1 & 2 in your own language, taking the words, “we, us, and our” and changing them to, “I, me, and my”, how would that verse read for your own life? _____

✝PRAY: Ask God to help you, “run the race” faithfully that He has set for you.

Go to the last page of this devotion and write down ONE PRAYER CHALLENGE you will commit to work on in this new church year for WEEK SIX.

☑ PREPARE. Bible, note sheet, pen, willing heart – ready to worship this morning and this evening!

SERMON NOTE SHEET

Title: _____

Text: _____

Notes: _____

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS SERMON TO MY LIFE THIS WEEK?

YOUR PERSONAL PRAYER CHALLENGES

At the end of every week you have been challenged to look back over the past week at specific prayer challenges and identify one specific challenge to work on; and you were asked to write that challenge down on its corresponding week. Now that you have completed this devotion look over your prayer challenges and ask the Lord to help you work on these over the next year. As long as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit it is amazing what God can do through us and in us.

Here are the six key steps you have identified that will help renew your commitment to the Lord and His church this year:

1. _____
(Week one, chapters 1.1 – 3.10)
2. _____
(Week two, chapters 3.11 – 7.60)
3. _____
(Week three, chapters 8.1 – 11.18)
4. _____
(Week four, chapters 11.19 – 16.13)
5. _____
(Week five, chapters 16.14 – 22.30)
6. _____
(Week six: chapters 23.1 – 28.31)

You have also been challenged to pray for specific people and specific items during this 40 day journey. For those you have been praying *for* who are lost or disconnected from the church, pray for them again today, then invite them to come to the services this week, beginning tomorrow. Then, make it a point to show up early to worship tomorrow. Spend time at the altar praying *before* the worship service. Make it a point to be at *every* service this week and show up early enough to spend time at the altar in prayer for our church.