

January

30 Days of Prayer

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HOW TO USE **THIS PRAYER GUIDE**

The **2021 January** prayer guide is a compilation of entries from last year – the best of the best, if you will.

Our focus for the month of January is our relationship with God. It is God's deepest desire that we get to know Him and His will for our lives. Learning how to **Love God** and **Love Others** helps us fulfill the first two commandments and our goals as a church.

Get ready to follow God's perfect plan for this new year!

ALL PREVIOUS **PRAYER GUIDES**
ARE LOCATED ON OUR WEBSITE AT

WWW.RICHLANDCREEK.COM

Pressing Forward

Key Scriptures: *Philippians 3:13-14 "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

In this passage, Paul is writing to the Philippian church about his own pursuit of Christ to encourage the believers to have the proper understanding in their sanctification. Paul uses the analogy of a runner, pressing forward to the goal ahead and not looking back. Just like the runner, believers should also look ahead, as we continually grow over time, in our pursuit of Christ-likeness.

The new year is typically a time for "resetting"- a fresh start where many make resolutions pertaining to health, lifestyle, family, behavior, work, prioritizing etc. However, often, these newly created habits are broken within months if not weeks. Brothers and sisters, while it is certainly good to have healthy goals, as believers, we don't want our pursuit of holiness to be fleeting but rather **constant**. Our focus on the Lord should be above any other goal.

This past year, church leadership identified **eight discipleship goals** to better equip us as disciples of Christ. These goals help us in following the commands of Jesus in Matthew 22:34-40 of Loving God and Loving Others. *We love God in His Word, in prayer, in our witness and in our worship. We love others through our community, ministry, generosity and while on mission.*

Church family, we encourage you to think on these things as you set goals for the new year. Our prayer is that the body of Richland Creek Community Church will be disciples of Christ who live their lives in obedience to God until we see him face to face.

Questions to Consider: Are you pressing forward in pursuit of holiness? Is there anything in your life holding you back from growing in Christ-likeness? Do you have a plan in place for prioritizing Bible study and prayer time in your daily life?

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, as the new year begins, help me to prioritize you in my life, above anything else.
- Thank you for showing us through your Word what a disciple of Christ looks like. I pray that I will be obedient to your calling for my life.
- Read Matthew 16:24-25.

It All Begins With The Gospel

Key Scripture: *Romans 5:8 But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Good news is hard to come by lately. Covid, unemployment, and a divided country dominate the headlines. While you may not find good news in the media, there is good news in God's Word. As a matter of fact, the word **"gospel"** means **good news**.

The gospel is the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ. The Bible depicts human beings, all human beings (Romans 3:23), as in revolt against God, and therefore under His judgment. The Bible calls this revolt sin. Sin is rejecting or ignoring God. All people sin in their words, deeds, and motivations (1 John 1:10). Sin separates mankind from God because it breaks fellowship with our creator God. Despite our efforts to restore fellowship with God on our own we cannot (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The Bible tells us the punishment for sin is death. Romans 6:23, *"For the wages of sin is death..."* But although God stands against us in judgment because of our sin, God also offers us forgiveness and eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). Christ bore our sin on the cross—in our place. What God requires, as payment for sin, God provides in His Son Jesus. Moreover, Jesus is raised from the dead on the third day and has conquered sin and death.

What must we do to be saved from sin, death and eternal separation from God? Jesus' offer of salvation is received by faith as we repent of our sins and turn to Jesus. 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* When we repent and trust in Christ, relationship with God is reestablished. This free gift of salvation is available to all who will call upon the name of Jesus.

Questions to Consider:

Do you believe Christ is who the Bible says He is (Mark 16:16)? Have you trusted in Christ's life, death, and resurrection as the payment for your sin? Who do you know that doesn't know this good news?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, open my eyes and ears to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Give me an open and repentant heart to believe the gospel and receive Christ as Lord and Savior.
- Pray for God to free lost friends and family from the slavery of sin. Begin praying for opportunities to share with them what God has done in Christ.

In His Word

Key Scriptures: *2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Last year during our assessment process, we were reminded of the truth of being defined by the Word. The Bible is God's heartfelt message to us. It is what He wants us to know about Him and how He wants us to live for Him. It serves both as a cautionary tale and as a hopeful promise for each of us. The entire narrative of Scripture focuses on God's love for us, our disobedience to Him, His promised rescue through His Son Jesus Christ, and His plan for us as His followers.

Studying God's Word is how we get to know Him better. We grow closer to Him as we read, study, and apply His truth in our lives. As disciples, and as a church family, our lives must be defined by His Word. Our leadership team worked diligently to define biblically what a growing disciple is at Richland Creek, teaching who a disciple should be, what should they know, and what they should do.

We encourage you to pray for your own personal discipleship, as well as the corporate discipleship within our church family. Also, please pray for your church leadership as we seek to ensure our discipleship process is defined by the Word.

Questions to Consider:

Is my life defined by God's Word? How is studying God's Word important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify I am under the authority of God's Word in every area of my life.
- That I understand that to know God's Word fully, I need to study it carefully and obey it rigorously.
- That I will develop a regular habit of studying God's Word on my own and with other believers.
- That we would teach the Bible in our homes, leading our families well in truth and love.
- That our church would continually be defined by His Word.

In Prayer

Key Scriptures: *Philippians 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

Last year, in our assessment process, we identified the crucial need to be devoted to prayer. Prayer is how we praise God in thankfulness, turn to Him in repentance, and ask Him in anticipation. It is humbling our own thoughts and will to align with His. It is a continuous circular conversation with our heavenly Father, through faith in the Son, and facilitated by the Spirit.

Prayer is not merely something we do, but an outpouring of who we are in Christ. It demonstrates our utter dependence upon God. An active prayer life is something to be desired, but also something desperately needed. Prayer is our personal communication with God, as well as our corporate voice of unity in Him.

It has been an exciting season in the prayer life of Richland Creek with the monthly prayer services and prayer guides. The Spirit is moving and has already accomplished much. We look forward with you all in great anticipation to our next steps and beyond as we grow into a church family truly and completely devoted to prayer.

Questions to Consider: Am I devoted to prayer? How can I pray for our church family, church leadership, and our community? How is prayer important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify as a child of God who needs to pray, privately and alongside others.
- That I understand that as I pray, I am not changing God's mind about circumstances, but allowing Him to align our thoughts with His.
- That I will develop a regular private prayer habit that incorporates praising God for who He is, repenting of sin, giving thanks for His blessings, and humble asking for His provision.
- That our families would pray together regularly.
- That as a church we would be devoted to prayer with corporate prayer strategy.

In Our Witness

Key Scripture: *Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

When someone places their faith in Christ, the most amazing exchange occurs. Christ takes their sins, putting them on Himself having died on the cross as suitable payment for the judgment they deserve. He also gives His righteousness in the person of the Holy Spirit, helping believers live for Him. This is true for all Christians, whether or not they are gifted as evangelists.

We are all not only capable, but also commanded, to give witness of Jesus and how He transformed our lives. Of course, we could all benefit from the help of others who have been walking with Christ longer than we have. They probably know more Scripture than we do. They likely have shared the gospel more than we have. They may also have shared their personal testimony more often.

As disciples of Christ we are commanded to help make other disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Our leadership team continues towards a strategy that will equip and encourage each of us to be prepared at any time to share the gospel and our testimonies. God is glorified when we share the gospel and tell how Christ has transformed our lives. Through His Word and our witness other lives can be transformed as disciples of Christ.

Questions to Consider: Do I know how to share the gospel and my testimony of faith? How can I help equip and encourage others in evangelism? How is my witness important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify evangelism as a command of Scripture, both of the church corporately and of each believer personally.
- That I understand the Good News of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- That I will develop a clear and simple gospel outline and personal testimony that can be shared at any time.
- That I will help encourage, equip, and enlist others in evangelism.
- That I will pray for lost people by name I know regularly and fervently
- That our leadership team would develop and implement a systemic strategy to engage the congregation in personal evangelism.

In Our Worship

Key Scriptures: *John 4:23-24 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

As stated above in John 4:23-24, we should seek to be true worshipers. We can worship God as His children saved by the work of Jesus and, filled with the Holy Spirit. We can worship God as His followers in the truth He reveals through His Word. Worship is our response to a holy, loving, just, merciful, and faithful Father. It is the overflow of a grateful heart, forever thankful for the grace given through Christ.

It can be hard to define worship, since everything we do as Christians should be done to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). It is our hearts and minds that determine and define worship for each of us. An inwardly or improperly focused heart and mind can lead to idol worship or misguided worship. We also must resist the cultural norm of measuring ourselves and each other based solely on works. Remember, a disciple of Christ is who we are and not what we do. Our works are the result, not the cause, of lives transformed by Christ.

When we are right with God through faith in Christ, we are able to glorify Him with our lives. We can glorify Him at home, work, school, church, the athletic field, or wherever else we are. God has created us to worship Him, and our mission is to bring Him glory. As a church, we can enthusiastically embrace this mission together.

Questions to Consider: Is God the highest priority in my life? How can I glorify God with my life? How is worship important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify the Triune God as the highest priority of my life.
- That I understand that everything I do should be an act of worship in response to God's love for us and an expression of our love for Him.
- That I will develop a regular habit of worship, through private devotion and in church gatherings.
- That I will worship in spirit and in truth.
- That I will embrace my faith as who I am rather than what I do.
- That our leadership would identify a dedicated full time Worship Pastor to bring before the congregation.

Through Church Community

Key Scripture: *1 John 1:3 "...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."*

God not only created us to have a relationship with Him, but also with one another. In this season of "social distancing" the value of community and fellowship with each other are more apparent than ever. To be clear, the context here is not merely hanging out or passively observing others as they participate. We are talking about interaction designed to intentionally build each other up, hold each other accountable, and produce holiness.

Before we can consider what that kind of interaction looks like, we must first think about the answer to this question: "Why would we do it?" As Christians we are compelled by the grace and love shown to us by Jesus to reach out and share these with others. Jesus fostered community focused on God's mission throughout the Gospels. Whether He was with one disciple or many thousands, the community was always about the mission.

We see this concept carried on by the early church as recorded in Acts, as well as in many of the Epistles. With an understanding of "why" we can then clearly see that each of us and all of us are the "who." Now it is time for us to move toward the "what" and "how" questions, focusing on God's mission as we love one another through church community and fellowship.

Questions to Consider: Do I identify as a member of the body of Christ and our church? How can I love others through church community? How is church community important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify as a member of the covenant body of Christ, that is, the church.
- That I understand the biblical commands for loving one another and their implications for my life.
- That I will develop a regular habit of meeting with other believers for the specific purpose of mutual building up in the faith and accountability in spiritual growth.
- That our church community would grow in quality, leading to quantity.
- That I will embrace my role within our church family, however God directs.
- That our leadership would intentionally foster an environment of loving care for our church family.

Through Our Ministry

Key Scripture: *2 Corinthians 5:18 "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."*

John 13:1-17 contains one of the greatest examples of ministry in all of Scripture. Here we read that Jesus loved the Apostles by washing their feet. This is an incredible act of service as this was an undesirable, even disgusting, task. Feet tend to be stinky to begin with, plus there would have been the added filth of wearing sandals in a desert climate. It is no wonder that Peter was surprised by what Jesus did, even doing his best to try to stop Him.

Verses 14-15 tell us plainly why Jesus did this: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." Jesus showed love in a very practical, clear, and memorable way to the Apostles. He gave them an example to follow, keeping the focus on God's mission.

As we follow God's mission individually and as a church, we strive to not only follow Christ's example of mercy, love, forgiveness, but also Christ's example of service. When we truly love God, we can also truly love one another. Christ sacrificed everything for us and we glorify Him when we sacrifice for each other through ministry.

Questions to Consider: Do I identify as a member of the body of Christ and our church? How can I love others through church community? How is ministry important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify as a servant, following in the footsteps of our Lord.
- That I understand my own spiritual gift(s) and my indispensable role as part of the body of Christ.
- That I will develop a regular habit of serving in church ministries, employing my spiritual gift(s) for the good of others, and caring for fellow believers.
- That I will love others by ministering to them.
- That all ministry areas at Richland Creek would align with God's mission.
- Pray for all Creek Pastors, Elders, Deacons, staff, ministry area leaders, and servant teams.

Through Our Generosity

Key Scripture: *2 Corinthians 9:7 "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."*

Mark 10:17-22 contains an interesting encounter between Jesus and a rich young ruler. To paraphrase the account, the ruler asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Christ's response was to keep the commandments, which the ruler said he had done from an early age. Jesus then instructed him to sell what he had and give the proceeds to the poor, and then come follow Him. The ruler did not abide Christ's words, but instead went away saddened.

Jesus knew this man had great earthly possessions and was not willing to let go and "take up the cross" (verse 21). This man had treasures on earth, but not in heaven. He was about accumulating resources for himself rather than the mission of God. His heart was focused on the material rather than the eternal.

We are merely stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. He grants us this stewardship in order to bring glory to Himself. Our hearts and minds must remain focused on the Provider rather than on the provision. Generosity is an outpouring of our love for others because of the love God poured out for us. Whether by using our time, talents, or treasures we show love to others by sacrificially giving of these for their benefit.

Questions to Consider: Do I identify as a steward of all that God has entrusted to me? How can I love others through my generosity? How is generosity important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify as a steward, and never an owner, of my time, talent and treasure.
- That I understand biblical giving is both a command and a privilege, and should be done joyfully.
- That I will develop a regular habit of financial giving, to my church first and also to God's kingdom agenda.
- That I will love others through my generosity.
- That through our generosity, the church budget would grow to provide greater kingdom impact.
- That our church leadership would operate with humility, integrity, and transparency regarding God's resources.

While On Mission

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

The above passage is famously known as “The Great Commission.” Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples their marching orders. It was exciting to see this in action in our Sunday morning series in Acts last year. The clarity and simplicity of this command underpin the enormity and importance of the task. God’s desire is that all people would follow Him as disciples.

Discipleship is not incumbent upon race, geography, language, age, culture, wealth, or anything other than faith in Christ. The gospel is the gospel no matter what, and salvation is equally offered to all. Even as Christians it is extremely difficult for us to see the rest of the world the way God does, though it is impossible for us to do so without Christ.

We can show God’s love to others by intentionally and sacrificially engaging our communities and the world with the gospel. God’s mission will always be for all people.

Questions to Consider:

Do I identify my responsibility to make disciples among the nations? How can I be involved in our missions efforts at Richland Creek? How is being on mission important to my discipleship?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify my responsibility as a church member to make disciples among all nations.
- That I understand God’s heart is for all peoples to worship Him, from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
- That I will develop a plan to be involved in the church’s cross-cultural mission efforts by praying, giving, and going to support this mission. That I will pray for our missionaries and their families.
- That I will pray for our upcoming mission trips.
- That our church leadership would prayerfully and continually seek God’s direction in mission partnerships, planning, and provision.

Abide In Christ

Key Scriptures: *John 15:4–5 "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*

1 John 2:6, "Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

Think of a tree. There are branches that are attached and dependent. Apart from the trunk, the branch withers and dies. Think of a flower on a vine. When the flower is permanently connected to the vine, the flower receives life-giving nourishment. To be unattached is to be separated from life-giving sustenance.

Our dependence is not on ourselves, other people, or the material world. Our dependence is on God. And God is alive and personal. When we are abiding in Him, we draw life, strength, grace, and peace. Abiding is a choice based on the truth that God's Word brings. God's Word tells us that our Savior is the source of strength, comfort, and everything else we need for life.

Concentration camp survivor and author Corrie ten Boom once described it this way: *"Connected with Him in His love, I am more than conqueror; without Him I am nothing."*

Questions to Consider:

Are you abiding in Christ or yourself? What does it look like for you to "abide in Christ" in your life? What eternal things are you accomplishing when you are "abiding" in Him?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, thank you for my salvation, which is the foundation for our relationship. Help me now to daily abide in You to cultivate an intimate, growing relationship with You.
- Pray and meditate on Gal 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Iron Sharpens Iron

Key Scriptures: *Proverbs 27:17 "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."*

1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals." This verse is a pretty well-known verse as it points to some of God's instructions given to us regarding relationships.

Context surrounding Scripture is crucial to a proper understanding of it. Why is the illustration of iron used in this verse? In Old Testament times, one iron blade would be used to sharpen another until both blades became more effective. There were no other tools or sharpening devices back then. It took time and persistent effort to achieve the desired sharpness. However, if left alone, both blades would become dull and eventually useless. You see, they needed each other to be effective in their work.

The same is true in the life of a believer. God did not intend for us to do His work alone, nor can we. Through salvation, God adopts us into a community with other believers to pursue relationships that are rooted in Him. Transparent, godly friendships hold one another genuinely accountable—allowing another to see, identify and address areas of weakness in your life with the ultimate goal of pointing you to look more like Christ. Friendships such as these are refining to the believer and equip you in a closer walk with the Lord.

Questions to Consider:

Think on your biblical friendships. Do you surround yourself with "iron" to sharpen you and hold you accountable? Or do you allow yourself to be surrounded by bad company?

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, thank You for the beautiful gift of friendship You have given us. Allow my life to be refined and filled with biblical friendships full of accountability and love where You are at the center.
- May I have proper motivation and a willing heart to allow others to see my weaknesses so they can encourage me to look more like You.

The Mind of Christ

Key Scriptures: *1 Corinthians 2:14–16* "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

Psalms 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer."

New beginnings can be a wonderful thing. Many people seriously evaluate home organization skills, homeschooling methods, business practices, fire escape plans, and even relationships, etc. To be sure, those items that affect daily life do need some attention. But we often find our worth and value in them. Identity (or who we are) is easily tied to what we do, what we own, people we love (or who loves us), and even where we live.

Not so with the believer. Our identity is in Christ. That means that our worth, value, purpose and even citizenship is in Christ. As believers, we are to no longer find our identity in worldly things. God desires that we know who we are—In Him. And the way that I know who we are and know Christ Himself is to study His Word more.

You can know the mind of Christ. Not only that, 1 Corinthians 2:16 says that "you have the mind of Christ." We as the church of the living God of the universe have the mind of Christ. How can that be? It can be because you have the Bible; you have the mind of Christ revealed to you in the form of Scripture. Therefore, jump in and read it daily. Meditate on it. Don't be distracted by daily pressures of life. Make time to put Christ first in your day.

Questions to Consider:

Do you realize you can know the mind of Christ by continually reading His Word?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask the Lord to deliver you from distraction.
- Ask the Lord to help you set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Col 3:2).

God Desires a Relationship

Key Scriptures: *John 20:26-27 "And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."*

Matthew 18:12-14 "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

The Bible doesn't have much to say about the Apostle Thomas, but what it does say is quite amazing. He is called "the twin," which may simply mean that he had a twin sibling. Many think it may be a reference to the duality of his nature: sometimes very strong in his faith, other times very skeptical. It's no wonder the term "doubting Thomas" was derived from his character. One of the best examples of this in Scripture is in John 20. The risen Lord had already appeared to the other apostles, but Thomas was not with them and had yet to see Him. When the others told them they had seen Jesus, Thomas said he would have to see Jesus for himself and even touch the wounds from the nails and spear to believe. Knowing Thomas very well, Jesus did exactly that in John 20:26-27. In response, Thomas gives one of the clearest testimonies of belief recorded in Scripture: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus showed His love and care for Thomas on an extremely personal level. While Jesus is the Savior of the world, He is also the Savior of the individual. God desires an intimate relationship with each and every person and has made that possible through His Son. Even if we, like Thomas, have doubts, we can all take faith in the unchangeable character of God.

Questions to Consider: Do I have doubts about God? What can I do to grow closer in my relationship with God? How can I help others who have doubt?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for His immutable character (James 1:17).
- Pray for those in your life who are lost.
- Pray to grow closer in your relationship with God.

He is Forever Faithful

Key Scriptures: *Job 19:25 "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth."*

Romans 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

The story of Job is quite an interesting read. God grants Satan permission to torment a person, the only stipulation being death is not an option. During the episode Job's wife pleads with him to curse God, eventually leaving him to die alone. His friend's counsel is similar, suggesting that Job has been wicked. In the midst of counsel, Job replies confidently that his "Redeemer lives." Job questioned but never cursed God because Job had a confident expectation of the future—a future founded on a promise. Job knew God's promises were guaranteed.

Believer, a resounding truth is that God can never break His promises. He has given many, including an inheritance to all who trust in Jesus. In our lives we will have troubles, fears, or anxieties, but our end is not the same as those who do not believe. We too have a confident expectation of the future, one where we dwell with our Savior, fulfilling the promise given.

Questions to Consider:

Have you ever wondered if God will do what He said He would do? Do you have fears that are keeping you from believing in God's promises? Have you memorized any promises given to us by God?

Prayer Prompts:

- Remember the promises you have been given and memorize Matthew 6:25-34 and Romans 8:28.
- Thank God for always fulfilling His promises.
- Ask God to help you remember the promises He has given.

Following His Plan

Key Scripture: *Esther 4:14 "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

Esther was an ordinary Hebrew woman who became extraordinary through her obedience to God. Even though God is never mentioned by name in the Book of Esther, His sovereignty is at the forefront at every step of this incredible story. Consider for a moment the uniqueness of a young Hebrew woman becoming the queen of Persia. King Ahasuerus had hundreds of potential queens to consider, with likely most of these ladies being Persians. Also consider the unlikeliness of Esther being there to be considered at all. Esther and her family were part of the Babylonian captivity and stayed in Assyria rather than going back to their homeland. She shouldn't have even been in Assyria in the first place.

We know that God had a unique plan for Esther: He would work through her to deliver His people from death. But Esther had to trust God and obey His plan, which she did even in the face of her own potential death. Esther 4:15-16 goes on to state that Esther called for prayer and fasting as she prepared to address the king. Like Esther, God has a unique plan for each of us. Like Esther, we must seek God's will through prayer and act in obedience to Him.

We have a unique set of circumstances of our own at Richland Creek. Our current season of transition could very well be our "such a time as this." It is a time to call out in prayer, trusting fully in God's Word. It can also be a time to obediently embrace the role God has for you within His church. God can still accomplish the extraordinary using ordinary people like us!

Questions to Consider:

How can I know God's plan for me? What role do I fill in our church ministry? How can I pray for our church family, our church staff, and our community?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for His plan of salvation through faith in Jesus.
- Pray for wisdom to discern how to serve God and people.
- Pray for our church family, staff, and community during our transition.

A Disciple of Christ

Key Scriptures: *Matthew 16:24-25 "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"*

The word disciple means "follower," or in the biblical context of Christianity, "follower of Christ." This was both spiritually and physically true for disciples when Jesus walked the earth. For us today it is a spiritual truth, but one that should alter every aspect of our physical existence. The above verses from Matthew 16:24-25 get at the heart of what being a follower of Christ is all about. In fact, this concept is so fundamental to discipleship that it is also found, in the other Gospels (Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24, John 12:25-26).

Trusting in Christ as Savior requires a denial of self, and so does following Him with our lives. The phrase "come after me" has the connotation of closeness or intimacy with Christ. The taking up of our own cross speaks of sacrifice and service. Charles Spurgeon states in his commentary: "As our Lord, to fulfill His destiny, must sacrifice Himself, so also must every one who would be His follower." We are to love God and love others, serving Him first and others second rather than ourselves.

Losing our lives for His sake is an intentional, ongoing process. This is often referred to as "dying to self." Truly focusing on Christ and eternity brings unity and life, while focusing on temporal things, desiring to accumulate and hold on to what the world has to offer, brings separation and death. John 8:31-32 states "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" Note the words "believed" and "abide." To be a disciple of Christ requires faith; also faith is required for us to live according to His Word. The biblical lifestyle of discipleship is purposeful, continual, and transformational. Simply put, a disciple of Christ is who you are, based on what you know, leading to what you do.

Questions to Consider: Am I a follower of Christ?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I identify as a disciple, or follower, of Jesus Christ.
- That I understand that discipleship is an intentional, ongoing process and that I develop a regular habit growing in all areas of discipleship in my life.

The Goal of Discipleship

Key Scriptures: *John 17:3-4 "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."*

Motivated by love and in submission to the Father, Jesus finished the work the Father sent Him to do. He made God known, demonstrated what it looks like to faithfully walk in His ways, and secured forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life for all who believe in Him. In accomplishing all of this and more, what was the goal of Christ? According to John 17, His ultimate purpose in all that He did was to glorify God.

As we consider the goal of discipleship, should we not obediently follow the example Jesus set for us and make disciples for the very same purpose?

We glorify God when, motivated by our love for Him, we obediently follow His command to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). As Mark Dever put it, "God's love for us starts a chain reaction. He loves us, then we love Him, then we love others."

We glorify God when we acknowledge that it is His Spirit working in and through us for our good and for the good of others. Any fruit that results from discipling is a product of His power and grace. Romans 11:36 states, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen"

Growing in Christ-likeness as we learn to follow Jesus is how we become mature disciples, but we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal as we accomplish the work He sends us to do—to know Christ and glorify Him.

Questions to Consider:

Am I growing in Christ-likeness and helping others to do the same? Do I seek God's glory or my own? How might Christ's example be an encouragement?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name! Praise Him for all that Jesus accomplished on our behalf, and for the way He is working in and through you for His glory.
- Pray that your love for Christ will abound more and more. Pray that your love for Christ will motivate you to honor Him with obedience to His command to "make disciples."

What is the Christian Testimony

Key Scripture: *Psalm 71:15–18 "My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come."*

Everyone has a story. This is a common saying that we hear often in our society these days. There are triumphs and tribulations that have molded a person into who they are today; countless stories that usually promote self-help, self-reliance and self-victory. Do you see a common theme here? The focus is on self!

As believers, the Christian testimony is a story our gracious and merciful God has given us, to tell of His saving work in our lives. A story that should consume us with joy and the desire to share this good news with others! Though this story involves ourselves, it should always point to the One who has saved us.

Each believer's testimony is a beautiful picture of how life looked in brokenness, despair and separation from a Holy God, to the moment of the effective gospel call in their lives that led them to conversion when they placed their faith and trust in the work of Jesus Christ, therefore, being redeemed, justified and adopted by the Father. It is only in and through Him that we can proclaim this story. But the Christian testimony doesn't stop there. It is also about life after conversion and the regeneration that takes place in a believer's life. This change of heart is described in Ezekiel 36:26 when God says, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

Questions to Consider:

Recall the details of your salvation. What is your personal testimony? Does it point to the One who saved you?

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, thank you that because of your saving work in my life, I have a personal testimony.
- Help me to have a good understanding of the gospel and my personal testimony so that I can share this good news with others.

What is Prayer

Key Scripture: *Matthew 6:9 Pray then like this; "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name."*

Prayer is simply talking to God. It is personal communication with God. Yet, prayer doesn't always seem so simple—or easy. Perhaps this could be due to our misunderstanding of what prayer is and why we pray.

To be sure, prayer (along with Bible study) are vital to cultivating a relationship with God. Nothing is more important in our daily walk with God than these two disciplines. And yet many are negligent in both. More than a few of us are subsisting on silence from God and with God. R.C. Sproul rightly remarked, *"If Christ could make a complaint it would be my bride never talks to me."* Why is that?

It may be that we need to remind ourselves to whom we are talking, what we are doing, and why. God is our Father. Isn't that how Jesus tells us to pray in Matthew 6:9? Jesus' Father is our Father. Moreover, we know God our Father is all powerful and all knowing. What an astonishing position we have with Him! By calling Him Father, we declare we are His child and, therefore, in relationship with Him. Can you fathom that we are in relationship with the one true God who is all powerful and all knowing?! But what relationship can survive without communication?

Undoubtedly, no relationship can withstand silence. Moreover, whether we realize it or not, we need God. In prayer, we make known that we are needy and He is generous; we are creature and He is creator; we are sinful and He is Holy. Yet, sometimes our lives go well enough that we mistakenly believe in our own self-sufficiency. Consequently, we see no need to pray. And herein lies the problem: prayer is not merely a means whereby we get things from God. He is not some cosmic celestial being we go to only when the bottom drops out. Prayer then is not solely getting things from God, but rather we get God Himself. Friend, your heavenly Father desires genuine, intimate relationship with you.

With a corrected perspective, prayer becomes delight, not drudgery. We are putting before Him our praises, confessions, thanksgivings, and needs. Indeed, the aim of prayer is to seek God's glory over and above God's gifts. That is our chief aim: to glorify God forever. But without recognizing who God is and why we pray, we are left to play with prayer like some bored toddler who's grown tired of yesterday's toy.

Prayer Prompt:

- Pray through Psalm 86 paying special attention to verses 1-10.

Praying the Scriptures

Key Scripture: *Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

Author Don Whitney has a marvelous little book called **Praying The Bible**. He begins his book with the following words, *"Since prayer is talking with God, why don't people pray more? Why don't the people of God enjoy prayer more? I maintain that people—truly born-again, genuinely Christian people—often do not pray simply because they do not feel like it. And the reason they don't feel like praying is that when they do pray, they tend to say the same old things about the same old things."*

Sound familiar? Can you relate?

In truth, praying about the same things is not the problem. The rhythm of our prayer lives tends to be fairly consistent: jobs, finances, spouses, children, friends, loved ones, prayer requests and kingdom-related prayers. These categories remain steadfast for most of us. The problem, according to Whitney, is not that we "pray about the same old things; rather it's that we say the same old things..."

What are we to do? How can we revitalize our prayer life? Who can help us breathe new life and words into our prayers? Consider the Scriptures. We have at our finger tips a vast treasury of truth, wisdom, prayers and instruction. Indeed, what we have before us are the very words of God. What if we learn how to pray through a passage of Scripture?

By taking Scripture into our prayers we are using the words and thoughts inspired by God, transforming them into prayer, and then offering them back up to God where they originated. In this way we will never be "saying the same old thing" nor will we run out of things to say.

A few words of caution as we embark on praying the Scriptures. First, realize we are not turning isolated verses into a prayer. Rather, we are praying the meaning of the verse in context. Why? The meaning of individual verses is controlled by the verses that come before and after. In other words, context is crucial. Context helps the reader understand what a verse means. We want to be praying through the meaning of the text, not just repeating words. Also, we need to investigate the meanings of words to fully understand what the passage is saying. Words don't have meanings, they have ranges of meanings and we need to do the work of learning what those meanings are.

Prayer Prompts:

- Consider Psalm 119:17-18 and Proverbs 2:1. Pray God's Word back to Him praising the very Words of God.

What Love is...

Key Scripture: *John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are my disciples that you Love one another."*

Jesus said that one way the lost world will know if we are truly His disciples, His real followers, is how we show love toward each other. This love isn't based on anything to do with us -- not our emotions, not our preferences, not our circumstances. It is based on the Gospel. Our example, to love one another, is the example of God Himself who gave us His Son that we would be saved from sin and death. (John 3:16, Romans 5:8) Based on this greatest of all examples, we are compelled to truly, biblically, love one another.

As we, as a church, go through this transition, we must prepare ourselves to move forward in the process of finding the lead pastor God has prepared for Richland Creek Community Church. First, we must examine ourselves and remove anything that doesn't adhere to the Word of God, and we must put on what the Word tells us to obey. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to walk in love and unity.

This month we will apply the Word to ourselves in prayer and allow God to transform us in the image of His Son. This is of utmost importance; we must be serious in our repentance and obedience as we move forward as the church of God in Wake Forest, NC.

Questions to Consider:

Do I love others based on who they are and how they treat me, or do I love others based on who Christ is and what He has done for me?

Prayer Prompts:

- God, remind me again how much you love me. Show me my life of sin and how You saved me through the sinless life, atoning death, and powerful Resurrection of your Son.
- Open my eyes, ears, and heart to the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that I would understand true biblical love, that I may love others in such a way that lost people would ask for the same love.

What Unity is...

Key Scriptures: *Ephesians 4:1-6 "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

One definition of the word unity is "singleness or constancy of purpose or action." In our culture there are many ways this can be achieved. One is through performance, or simply doing your job or part while being uninvolved in the bigger picture. Another is through incentive, where the promise of reward or fear of punishment are used to gain the desired results. Yet another is compliance, when the agreement is forced, manipulated, or threatened and dissent is disregarded. If you've experienced any of these you can attest that these are not truly unifying at all. They are merely ways to get something done.

Now, let's look at these same three things in view of the above passage from Ephesians. First, our performance is not what is important. Our focus is always on the bigger picture of God's mission and what Jesus has already done. Second, while God does promise rewards for His glory, our works are the outpouring of His grace toward us and not a result of anything we accomplish. Third, God does not force or manipulate compliance to His Word or His mission. We have free will, and each of us is of equal importance to Him. While not forced to do so, we can agree on His Word as the only source of truth in our lives.

Unity in the context of the church is about oneness: one God with one message. It means oneness of mind, heart, and accord. It's an overarching agreement on the biggest things that join us together, allowing us to focus far less on littler things that may divide us. It's being on the same track, in the same train cars, going in the same direction. Simply put, biblical unity is indispensable as we follow God and His mission for our church. Read Ephesians 4:13.

Questions to Consider: What is my role in the body of Christ? How can I use my spiritual gifts to serve others? How can I help promote and maintain unity within our church?

Prayer Prompts:

- That I understand that unity within the body of Christ is all about glorifying God and not about getting what I want.
- Pray for unity among our church leaders as they serve and lead.

Fruit of the Spirit

Key Scriptures: *Galatians 5:22–24* "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Luke 6:44, "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush."

The imagery of fruit in Scripture is frequently used to illustrate cause and effect relationships. In Galatians 5, the fruit, or result, of the indwelling Holy Spirit through faith in Christ should be as obvious as apples on an apple tree. But unlike apple trees, we are all sinners, and the fruit we produce is not always what God desires in our lives.

There is a battle of "flesh vs. Spirit" inside of us. Paul acknowledges this in Galatians 5:17, "*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*" He even goes on to spell out some of the fleshly fruit in verses 19–21. Take a moment to contrast these to the Spiritual fruit in verses 22–24. Now take a moment to press your life up against these Scriptures.

The Bible teaches that a tree is known by its fruit (Luke 6:44). Through the next nine days we will examine each of the nine attributes of the fruit of the Spirit, giving biblical definitions and helpful prayer prompts. Our prayer for you is that the fruit in your life would bring glory to God as we follow His mission together.

Questions to Consider:

Have I truly "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" through Christ?

Are there specific attributes in verses 22–23 that I struggle with and may need help?

Prayer Prompts:

- Confess to God and repent of "the lust of the flesh."
- Pray that God would grant wisdom and discernment as you seek to follow His Spirit and will.

The Deeds of the Flesh

Key Scriptures: *Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Galatians 5:25 "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

The Spirit versus the flesh battle rages in every believer, and it is beneficial to understand both components in this struggle. We are encouraged to "walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16; 25) and not the flesh. The term "walk" is present tense, or a continuous and habitual way of life. Walking in the flesh is another way of saying we want what we want, and we are the gods over our lives.

The deeds listed in 5:19-21 are divided into three general areas: sex, religion, and human relationships. Immorality, impurity, and sensuality are sexual sins. The desire of the flesh is for illicit sexual activity driven by the lust of our own hearts. This includes all things pornographic, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and prostitution. Idolatry and sorcery are considered religion. Idolatry is the worship of false gods or anything we love more than Jesus. Sorcery is speaking toward witchcraft and pharmaceuticals. The remainder focus on human relationships, which will be individually addressed in days 22-30 of this guide. These are the bad fruit that can manifest visibly in our lives.

Today ask God to reveal to you any fleshy desires that may be keeping you separated from Him, or that are hindering your growth in discipleship. Review Galatians 5 on your own, with your spouse, or with your family.

Questions to Consider: Am I walking in the flesh or in the Spirit? Is there anything I love more than Jesus?

Prayer Prompts:

- If you haven't already done so, pray to God for salvation from sin and death through faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ.
- Confess to God and repent of sexual, religious, or human relational sin.
- Pray that God would strengthen you in areas of temptation. The Responsibility of the Believer

The Responsibility of the Believer

Key Scriptures: *2 Timothy 4:3-4 "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*

It is very easy in our day and time to find whatever kind of teaching we want to find. The masses gather every Sunday to hear a message that brings hope and inspiration for their time of doubt and trouble. People are drawn to positive messages because it often creates a desire to change and be a better person. Positive messages are not the enemy, but we are in trouble when the messages that we subject ourselves to do not take into consideration the full counsel of God's Word. We must strive to be taught the Word of God in its totality.

As believers it is our responsibility to examine the teaching that we hear by pressing it up against Scripture to see if it is correct. This means that we must know the Bible well enough to know when something does not align with it. In our day and age there is simply no reason we should not know the Bible. The Bible is confrontational and demands a response despite our personal preference. It demands that we deny ourselves and follow Him as our Lord, which is not an "ear tickling" thought.

The Bible does not allow for us to pick and choose which topics we deal with in our lives. It does not allow for a feeling-based religion where we pick what we listen to based on our feelings. How a preacher uses the Word of God should be a major factor in determining whether one should listen to him or not. A preacher who is always positive runs the risk of not preaching the whole counsel of God's Word.

Questions to Consider:

Is the preaching I listen to faithful to the Scripture? Do I desire to be shaped by the Word of God or to have my ears tickled? Do I press the words of the preacher up against the teaching of the Scripture?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray and ask God if you desire to be shaped by Him more than you desire to feel good about yourself.
- Pray that the Lord will help grow your desire for the truths of His Word.

The Plumb line

Key Scriptures: *John 18:37-38 "Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate said to him, 'What is truth?'"*

Pilate poses an important question. What is truth? The world's definition of truth is fluid, but the fact is that truth isn't something that can be intellectualized. *"Truth is truth, even if no one believes it. A lie is still a lie, even if everyone believes it."* (Author Unknown)

As we take information in throughout the day, we must evaluate and interpret what we see, hear, and read (even at church) to determine what is true. Defining truth rightly is essential, especially in matters of faith and practice, because the only way to recognize what is false is to know the truth.

By His grace, God provided a plumb line—a standard of absolute truth.

John MacArthur writes, "When Jesus said of Himself, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life...', He was thereby making a profound claim ... that all truth must ultimately be defined in terms of God and His eternal glory. Truth cannot be adequately explained, recognized, understood, or defined without God as the source. Since He alone is eternal and self-existent, and He alone is the Creator of all things, He is the fountain of all truth."

Our plumb line is Jesus Christ and His inerrant, infallible Word—the Bible. This is the standard against which we can measure everything and measure we must! Truth Incarnate stood before Pilate. Though Pilate questioned the false information he received from the Jews, in the end, Pilate considered the truth was not important. Consequently, Pilate gave the Jews what they wanted (see John 19). Knowing the truth matters!

Questions to Consider: Is my definition of truth God's definition of truth? Do I evaluate and interpret what I see, hear, and read according to God's standard? If not, what might be the consequences?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, forgive me for the times I fail to use the plumb line of truth you've provided.
- Father, please help me to grow in my knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures, that I might rightly measure all things and recognize what is false.

To Seek His Will

Key Scriptures: *Philippians 4:19 "And God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

Read Jeremiah 29:13, James 4:8, Matthew 6:33

Scripture teaches us that our heart's desire is for the Lord because we were made to be His. However, our sin—that is, the evil desires of our hearts—leads us away from God and chases the worldly desires of our flesh. James says, "Our worldly passions are at war within us" (James 4:1). We "ask for things but do not receive them because we ask wrongly spending it on our passions" (James 4:3). There it is! We don't get what we want from God because we don't ask for the correct things! Our motivation comes from lust, greed, and covetousness. These are not the things that bring honor and glory to God but rather passions that come from an evil heart bent on self. Paul writes in Romans 8:5, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh."

So how should we ask? How should we form our prayers for the benefit of our church? Jesus gives us the answer, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Of course, He is not talking about new cars, houses, or wealth. Jesus is saying that by seeking God's will, we can be sure to receive God's provisions. Why would God do this for us? He loves us through His grace and mercy. The extent of that love is summed up in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

Today let's ask of God with a right motive. As a church, let's pray that God's will be done for Richland Creek. Let's find God by seeking Him with all our hearts.

Questions to Consider: How can I come before God, asking Him correctly for the things that my heart truly desires? How can I look to seek God's kingdom before my own needs are met?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God will help us to put away all lust, greed, and covetousness and seek Him and His kingdom with all our hearts.
- Pray for one another as we struggle with our own worldly desires.
- Pray that we draw closer to God and seek Him more than a new pastor.

To Have Spiritual Wisdom

Key Scriptures: *Colossians 1:9 "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."*

Colossians 1:3 "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."

Paul is with some fellow brothers in Christ, and we learn their names in chapter 4. They are overflowing with joy and prayer about the good news they have heard regarding the faithfulness, growth, and fruit that is transpiring in Colossae. Paul and his companions are in constant prayer for their new brothers and sisters in Christ, not only for their new and growing faith in Christ, but also for their continued growth in the knowledge of His will.

This knowledge is not just a knowledge one gains by reading a book or through wisdom of time. This knowledge, as one commentator wrote, is super knowledge. A knowledge that can only be given by the Lord. A knowledge that is precise and correct.

Oh that our Pastor Search Team will be filled with the knowledge of God's will and not their own will or understanding. As we pray for this knowledge, we are also praying that we and others will have submission to our Lord. Through submission and abiding in Christ (like we prayed yesterday), we and this team will be filled with spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding of what our King will have us do.

Questions to consider:

Have you prayed for the knowledge of God's will for your life, or are you running after your own will? Are there times in your life when you know that the knowledge you have is from God and not something you have gained on your own?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that the Pastor Search Team will be filled with the knowledge of God's will for Richland Creek Community Church.
- Pray that the team will be filled with wisdom and understanding that only God can provide.
- Pray that the spiritual maturity and wisdom the Pastor Search Team portrays, is that which can only be given by the Lord, through the prayer of His church.

To Have Passion and Boldness

Key Scriptures: *2 Timothy 4:1-5 "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*

Earlier in this letter, Paul affirmed for Timothy God as the source of Scripture and Scripture's usefulness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In Matthew, Jesus says the Word of God is the source of man's spiritual life. Since the Word of God is holy, the matter of preaching the Word is no small thing. Using courtroom language in 2 Timothy 4:1, Paul testifies of these truths to Timothy and all future pastors.

We can only love and desire the Word by God's grace. The world will reject it. And even Christians, at times, will struggle to desire it when it convicts. The temptation exists for a pastor to appease us. A pastor faces the world that hates the Word, and generations that call themselves Christians, but deny truth. He faces his ego, pressure to put numbers above God's Word, and pressure to not offend. When a pastor gives in and carries this weight with him to the pulpit, he no longer preaches the Word of God, but his own version of truth, attempting to make everyone happy.

A lead pastor who loves the Word will know to leave that weight at the foot of cross, will make no compromises to truth, and will preach and teach it in the face of affliction, suffering, or persecution. As believers, we need Scripture and the gospel preached boldly by a man who loves God more than he fears man.

Questions to Consider: What are the qualities you look for in a lead pastor? Do you listen to walk away feeling better or to expand your understanding of the object of your faith, Jesus Christ?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would increase our next lead pastor's passion for preaching the Word of God.
- Pray that our next lead pastor will boldly proclaim the truth without compromise.

Thank You

We praise the Lord for all those who contributed to make this prayer guide possible. We are so grateful for the faithful servants who have dedicated their time and talents to writing this prayer guide.

To God Be the Glory!

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.