

How to Use this Prayer Guide (Vol. 8)

This month we are focusing on praying for three different areas within our church:

- **The Armor of God**
- **Pastoral Qualifications**
- **Love Others Church Community**

It is vital that we seek the Lord in prayer with a humble heart and depend on His guidance and leadership. Our previous prayer guides were designed to build on one another, to prepare our hearts and minds to deliberately and continuously seek the will of God for our church.

Below is a list of our previous prayer guides:

- Vol. 1 - Our relationship with God and others and understanding God's will for our church.
- Vol. 2 - The character of God and putting our faith in His promises which results in our obedience to His Word.
- Vol. 3 - Learning how to pray to God and praying through His Word which gives us a right understanding of how to pray for our church.
- Vol. 4 - Understanding how to Love God and Love Others while gaining an understanding of what love is and how true unity looks in our church family.
- Vol. 5 - Praying for our Pastor Search Team, our Church Family, and our Future Lead Pastor
- Vol. 6 - Love God in Our Witness, The Christian Testimony, and Walking in the Spirit
- Vol. 7 - Love God in Our Worship, Love Others Through Our Generosity, and The Deeds of the Flesh

All previous prayer guides are located on our website:

richlandcreek.com/prayerguides

**Defined by the Word, Devoted to Prayer and
Dependent on the Holy Spirit.**

The Armor of God

Day 1 – Background of Ephesians 6:10-18

Ephesians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.”

The first ten days of this prayer guide will focus on praying about the armor of God. If you are not already aware, you have an enemy whose name is Satan, and he wants to distract you from your faith in Christ and your walk with the Lord.

Paul wrote Ephesians while in a Roman prison. Ephesus was a commercial and religious center in Asia, so believers there were surrounded with distractions from the world. Paul desired to instruct his brothers and sisters on how to walk in Christ-likeness, to stand firm in the truth of God’s Word, and to resist the enemy’s deceptive pull. Unseen spiritual forces are working against us, as well. Unless we know how to fight back, we will fall into temptation every time.

In the coming days, we will discuss each piece of equipment the Lord provides to give His children strength to withstand these attacks. Know this, church family: Satan has a strategy to deceive and disrupt each and every one of us. Do not be deceived into thinking you can fight this battle on your own; but also do not despair, for we are not without hope. According to *1 John 4:4*: “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” The Holy Spirit indwells all believers, and we can have victory over the attacks on our marriages, families, work, and especially our church.

A few months ago on May 3, Dr. Ewart preached on this very passage from Ephesians. He said, “**Satan seeks to discover your fears, distract your focus, and destroy your faith.**” Satan cannot take our salvation, but he will try to divide our minds and distort God’s truth. He will tempt us to doubt, just as he did with Eve at the beginning: Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1) We all now suffer from the consequences of that mistake, BUT through Jesus Christ we have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

Questions to Consider:

Do you realize there is a spiritual battle going on? Are you ready to stand against the attacks that come your way?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, help me to read and memorize your Word daily so that I will have strength when the enemy attacks me.
- Father, open my eyes to recognize the enemy’s lies and direct my mind to the truths of Your Word.

Day 2 – Be Strong in the Lord

Ephesians 6:10 “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.”

Beginning his final charge in Ephesians, Paul takes our thinking back to the early doctrinal chapters. To better understand the power and authority we have in Christ, we must recall Ephesians 1:19-23, “... the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

This ability to stand our spiritual ground is completely from the Lord. The pieces of armor we will cover during the next few days are specific evidences that everything we have are gifts of God's grace. We walk in victory since we are in Christ. Every ounce of strength we think we have is actually a good gift from almighty God. Since this power is from Him, we may have confidence to stand firm in Him.

Questions to Consider:

In which areas of my life do I need to confess a lack of reliance on the Lord's might? What are some examples of God's authority seen in Genesis through Revelation?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask the Lord to help you trust and walk solely in His strength.
- Offer thanksgiving back to the Lord for gifting us with His power. *Ephesians 1:3* “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

Ephesians 3:20-21 “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

Day 3 – Stand Firm, Soldier

Ephesians 6:11 “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

Several times in his letters, Paul uses the image of a soldier going into battle to give us an idea of what it means to follow Christ (see 2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Throughout the Old Testament, when God's people went into battle against their enemies, the Lord made it clear that He was the one who would fight their battles. Similarly, for us as believers to “put on” the armor is to actively trust in the Lord's capable hands to provide as 2 Chronicles 20:15 says, “and he said, ‘Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God’s.’”

Because God fights our battles, we do not have to be anxious or discouraged. Because God fights our battles, no circumstance is too daunting and no situation is out of His control. God has promised to meet our needs and love us beyond measure (see Phil. 4:19 and Rom. 8:37-39).

A simple definition for “stand firm” is “to refuse to change a decision or position.” We can stand firm, knowing that God wins the victories and He alone receives the glory. When our mindset is steady on Christ and what He did, we will know His truth and disregard any lie that Satan may throw at us. We can be confident when we face temptations and trials because the Lord has already defeated Satan. Psalm 24:8 says, “Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty; the LORD, invincible in battle.”

The word “schemes” in the Greek is *methodia*, which is where we get our word for method. Satan is deliberate in his attacks and is not ignorant to our weaknesses. Human history is filled with instances of his destructive deception, and our days are no exception. The full armor of God can strengthen our walk with the Lord and let us lock arms together in prayer and petition.

Questions to Consider:

Are you a threat to the enemy because of your devotion to Christ? In what ways has he schemed in your life this week to distract you from honoring God?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, reveal any deception that I am holding onto in my life that is hindering me from victory.
- Father, I want to have the heart of the psalmist in Psalm 20:7-8.

Day 4 – Our Battle Plan

Ephesians 6:12 “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

God tells us in His Word that He loves us more than anything else He created. This love is evident in God’s plan for our salvation through the sacrifice of His only Son to pay for our sin. We know that through this sacrifice Satan and his armies have been defeated, and the war against sin and death has been won!

But, God’s Word also informs us of some not so pleasant realities. Ephesians 6:12 warns us that there are still evil forces out there doing their best to destroy us and keep us from the life God wants for us. The enemy hates the church and what it stands for, and Satan will try at every turn to make us believe we have no power, no choice but to give up the fight. These evil forces are not “of this world.” They are supernatural and, therefore, cannot be defeated with even the most effective human strategy or weapons.

The good news is—because of God’s love and grace—He has not left us to fend for ourselves. The next five verses describe the armor that protects us from the attacks of the devil. He has also equipped us for these battles with the most powerful supernatural weapon in our arsenal—PRAYER. Daily communication with God makes us strong against these dark forces.

Yes, the war has been won, but we will fight the enemy until Christ comes again. Get your battle plan through Scripture, gear up with the armor of God, and grab your weapon of prayer. God cannot and will not be defeated!

Questions to Consider:

Are you diligently reading Scripture so that you can recognize and be ready to defend against the attacks of the enemy? Are you honing your skill with your weapon of prayer?

Prayer Prompts:

- Almighty God, keep us sober and diligent so that we are never caught off guard by the schemes of the devil.
- Father, thank you for providing us with everything we need for our daily battle against the enemy. Thank you for always being with us as we fight.

Day 5 – The Evil Day Is Every Day

Ephesians 6:13 “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

Paul has just made some very important statements about spiritual warfare. In v. 10 - 12 we are told to be strong by relying on God's strength (v.10) using God's armor (v. 11) against God's enemy (v.12).

Notice Paul has repeated himself in verses 11 and 13. Not only are the commands similar (put on and take up) but also the reasons for the commands are the same— “in order to stand or withstand against evil.” Clearly, Paul is advocating for us to participate in this warfare using the weapons God has provided. But without “taking up” or “putting on” this armor, we are left defenseless against a powerful enemy.

Paul also uses the word “stand” three times (vv. 11, 13, 14). In v. 11 “stand” carries the idea of confirmed or proved; to be firmly established or to determine the quality or characteristic or something by trial or experience. In v. 13 “stand” carries the idea of a forceful offensive stance against an opponent. Paul isn't merely speaking of holding your ground or hunkering down until reinforcements come but rather actively engaging in the resistance against the schemes of the devil—in the evil day. When is that?

Friend, the evil day is every day. Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 5: 8, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” The devil is a liar, a murderer and vigorously working in the world today (Ephesians 2). Moreover, he is calculating, cunning, and shrewd (2 Corinthians 11:14). We are no match for the devil apart from God. We must understand we are in a real battle everyday against the spiritual forces of wickedness. This battle is not won in our own strength, or with our own weapons but only with the strength and armor provided by our Savior.

Questions to Consider:

A good soldier stays awake and “sober,” with his armor already on, ready at all times for the battle that is coming. If you belong to Christ, this means putting on the armor of God daily so that you are prepared when Christ returns. Are you wearing the armor God has provided you? Are you actively standing and resisting in this evil day? Whose strength are you relying on to resist the schemes of the devil?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask God for help as you purposefully stand and resist in this evil day.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you commit Scripture to memory and then to bring to mind passages of Scripture when you most need them.

Day 6 – Unwavering Truth

Ephesians 6:14 “Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,”

“To stand firm” in this passage means to be immovable or unwavering. The way someone stands firm is by knowing and standing on the truths of God’s Word. “Girding up your loins with the truth” means that one is ready to stand and defend the truths of the Scripture when the time comes. When the time of attack comes it is God’s Word that you must stand on lest you be swayed. This is similar to what Jesus is speaking of in Matthew 7:24-27 when he describes the person who builds his life on a firm foundation. The one who does not obey the Lord and His Word stumbles and falls. It is important that one solidify within their heart the truth of God’s Word so that they will stand in the day of trouble.

To “put on the breastplate of righteousness” is to guard your life by living according to the instruction of the Lord. You take on the righteousness that Christ has given you and then live your life in a righteous manner. Putting on the “breastplate of righteousness” protects the most vital and vulnerable parts of your body. It is imperative for you to put on Christ’s righteousness in order to protect the most vital and vulnerable parts of your life.

Truth and righteousness work together to produce an unwavering follower of Jesus. One who stands on the Word of the Lord and lives their life according to His Word will be found a faithful follower of Jesus. When the day comes and the enemy attacks it is both truth and righteousness that will keep you from failing. Practically speaking, when you put away truth or righteousness, you become susceptible to all sorts of attacks from the enemy. Truth and righteousness guard you from temptation and potential destruction.

Questions to Consider:

Am I standing firm because of the truths of God’s word or am I wavering in my faithfulness because I am swayed by my doubts?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would help you to solidify within your heart and mind the truths of His Word.
- Pray that God would help you to be ready to stand firm when the enemy attacks.
- Pray that you would be unwavering in your devotion to Him so that you will live in a righteous manner.

Day 7 – Being Prepared

Ephesians 6:15 “and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace,”

Although shoes are the third item on Paul’s list, we often put our shoes on last. In this case, shoes are more important than a fashion accessory that we throw on to get out the door. Likewise, shoes are often not worn when just lazing about, but rather we put them on (this is what “shod” means) when setting out for a destination.

This verse first stresses the importance of preparing ourselves. Paul tells us to put on the gospel of peace. Just as in any journey this soldier wants to make sure he is ready for the battle that is ahead. Likewise, we need to prepare our hearts and minds with God’s Word and prayer in order to battle sin well. We must be prepared when facing the temptations of life.

More than just preparing ourselves in general, Paul addresses what we are preparing. We often talk about sharing the gospel with others, but we must first understand the gospel for ourselves, especially as it pertains to peace. God started by creating humans who lived in peace with Him. However, our sin brought enmity between us and God. Even still, our God loves us so much that He made a way back to Him through His Son Jesus Christ. It is only through believing in Jesus, as both the Son of God and Son of Man, and turning from our sins that we can accept this way back to God. This restores peace with God.

There is a bit of irony putting the gospel of peace in the context of a set of armor for war. Putting on shoes that are prepped with the gospel of peace is for ourselves and for others. These are to remind us to live in peace with God and man. Shoes also insinuate you are going somewhere; therefore, make sure your feet take you with the gospel in your heart and on your lips. We go to war, but with peace on our feet. This is the life God has called us to do. That is how we bring God glory, by sharing the peace of the gospel with ourselves and others.

Questions to Consider:

Do you understand how the gospel is peace? Do you prepare yourself regularly by dwelling on the gospel as peace? Do you take the gospel to others?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask God to renew the peace of the gospel in your heart and mind.
- Ask God to show you with whom you can share the gospel of peace and ask for boldness to do it.

“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Isaiah 52:7

Day 8 – Faith in God’s Truth

Ephesians 6:16 “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”

The writer of Hebrews under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit defines biblical faith as: *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is to believe that God never lies, that His Word and everything contained in it are true. His prophecies and promises are true. And in His sovereignty, all things God has said past, present, and future will come to pass exactly as He has said it. This is the faith of Abraham who knew God would keep His promise that from the seed of Isaac a great nation would come forth. As Hebrews 11:17-19 states, *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.”* He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. Abraham offered up Isaac, knowing that God would not lie about His promise that *“in Isaac your descendants shall be called.”* Faith is believing God.

The fiery darts of the evil one are lies. As we go through the circumstances of life, the lies of the devil and his demons come at us as doubts and discouragement; however, knowing God’s Word and believing God is true extinguishes every lie of the devil. For example, you may be in these circumstances: you may be losing your job, you may be losing your house, maybe you have cancer, or maybe you are in great suffering. The fiery darts start to come at you, and you hear in your mind: *“God doesn’t love you,” “God has forgotten about you He has forsaken you.”*

But we know God has promised in His Word, *“God has demonstrated His Love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). God loves you so much Jesus died for you. If you ever doubt God’s love, look to the Cross in all the pain and beauty. God has promised in His Word *“I will never leave you or forsake you”* (Matthew 28:20). God has promised us a home in John 14:1-3, and God has promised us life beyond disease in Revelation 21:4. I don’t need to know if I will keep my house; I don’t need to know if I will heal from cancer. What I need to know is that God loves me, that God will never leave me, and that God has a place for me with Him forever. This *“Shield of Faith”* quenches every lie of the devil.

Questions to Consider:

Do I take every circumstance I am in and apply the Word to it? Do I believe that no matter my circumstances God is enough?

Prayer Prompt:

Father, remind me that you are my shield, that it is faith in you that destroys the lies of Satan (Psalm 91:4-5).

Day 9 – Final Weapons

Ephesians 6:17 “and take up the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

People wear helmets for many reasons. Some to ride a bicycle or motorcycle, some to participate in sports, some to work construction. All helmets have the same purpose: protect your brain and soften blows to the head. The brain is the seat of our emotions, thoughts, and decision making process.

In the above verse, Christians are called to put on the helmet of salvation. Paul is not saying the Ephesians need to be saved again, but to remember the hope they have in their salvation—the hope that they “will not perish, but have eternal life” with Christ (John 3:16). If you are a Christian, you will receive blows to your faith and emotional discouragement, but your helmet of salvation will protect you from being knocked out by wrong thinking and will keep your hope in Jesus, not yourself.

While swords are not common today, they are mentioned in the Bible frequently. A sword may be used as an offensive or defensive weapon, meaning it could be used to defend oneself or to attack someone else. Throughout this passage, Paul reminds Christians to be on guard against “the evil one.” We are told to take the “Word of God” or “the sword of Spirit” (the Bible) to be ready to defend our minds and to attack Satan.

In Luke 4, Jesus used the Bible to defend Himself from the temptations of Satan. When Satan misquoted and twisted Scripture, Jesus not only guarded Himself with, but also used the Bible to attack Satan and his lies. Jesus was able to use the “sword of the Spirit” because He knew it through and through. So, if the “Word of God” is truly the weapon of the Christian, then we must be in the Word. We must study, memorize, think about, and read the Bible. It is only then that we will be able to use our sword in withstanding attacks of the evil one.

When we remember the eternal hope we have in salvation and the weapon we have in the Word of God, our fight against Satan will not be one that we fear, but one we are ready for.

Questions to Consider:

Do you take hope in your salvation? Would you be able to use the Bible to defend yourself against an attack of Satan? What do you need to change to prepare for the battle?

Prayer Prompts:

- Take time to thank God for the Bible (Hebrews 4:12) and for the hope we have in Christ Jesus for salvation.

Day 10 – Perseverance and Petition

Ephesians 6:18 “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

In the previous verses, Paul instructed believers with the necessary tools to equip them for spiritual battle—the breast plate, the shoes, the shield, the helmet and the sword. He ends with the final weapon needed for battle—prayer. In this verse, we will see that Paul is giving guidelines for an effective prayer life.

When reading Scripture, we want to pay close attention to the entire text so that we don’t miss anything. Paul uses the word “all” four times in this one verse. First, Paul doesn’t say with some prayer and at some times. He says with all prayer and at all times to pray in the Spirit. Paul wants the believers to know that prayer should be a consistent, daily habit in their lives. We don’t pray once and then stop—we are persistent in praying. We are reminded of this in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 when God’s Word instructs us to “Pray without ceasing.” Prayer is talking to God and remembering that He is God! Prayer is a command from God, which expresses our trust and dependence on Him and is transformative in the life of a believer as we pray His will, not our own.

Second, the word “petition” is used twice in this verse. Webster’s dictionary defines “petition” as a meek and humble earnest plea for something significant or specific. Paul urges believers to bring all requests to the Lord, not only for just themselves but for all of the saints (the body of believers). Here we see Paul using the word “all” again.

Paul closes this passage by assuring believers that through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they have the powerful tool of prayer to help defeat life’s spiritual battles.

Questions to Consider:

Is your prayer life consistent and persistent? Are you praying for all things, at all times, in the Spirit?

Prayer Prompt:

- Lord, help me to apply this daily in my life: *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* Philipians 4:4-7

DAY 11 – Introduction

1 Peter 5:2-4 “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

These are historic times at the Creek. God continues to guide us through the uncharted waters of transition and the COVID-19 pandemic, and we have recently begun our Pastor Search process. During the search process it is important for us all to keep in mind the biblical qualifications for a pastor. 1 Peter 5:2-4 is a great place for us to start as the passage shares a solid definition of how a pastor is to function.

First, a pastor is a shepherd of a flock. He cares for the people, humbly serving God and them. We see the shepherding illustration throughout Scripture, specifically applied to God the Father in Psalm 23 and Jesus, God the Son, in John 10. A pastor serves as an extension of this idea of personal care. Second, a pastor is an overseer of what God has entrusted to him. This verse continues to tell us how he should oversee: with willingness, enthusiasm, honesty, and humility. Third, a pastor must have integrity of character, being an example to others. He is to be authentic in word and deed, truly walking in the Spirit.

Over the next 9 days we will delve into the pastoral qualifications as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Through this passage we will see the required characteristics of the man described in 1 Peter 5:2-4. Identifying this man for our church is a vital part as we continue to follow God and His mission.

Questions to Consider:

How is a pastor like a shepherd? How are we like sheep?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have wisdom, discernment, and patience.
- Pray for God’s called shepherd to be identified in His timing.
- Pray for all of our pastors and ministry leaders.

Acts 20:28 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

DAY 12 – A Desire to Serve

1 Timothy 3:1 “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.”

In the New Testament, the word translated in the above verse as “bishop” also can mean “overseer,” “elder,” or “pastor” and is used interchangeably. Therefore, if a man desires to serve as a pastor, he desires a good work. The desire of his heart is an indispensable part of serving the Lord and people as a pastor.

We often refer to this desire of the heart as a “calling.” This is not simply someone wanting to be a pastor, or thinking it would be a good job to have. This desire is given by God through the Holy Spirit. It is accompanied by a willingness to serve, along with tremendous humility. There is an eagerness to serve, tempered by peace and patience. There is thirst to lead others on God’s mission, accompanied by overwhelming compassion for the lost and hurting.

It is indeed a good work, but one that is impossible for any man to accomplish under his own giftedness, charisma, knowledge, or experience. The work of shepherding is only possible under the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. The desire or calling to this office must come from God.

Questions to Consider:

How can a man’s “calling” as a pastor be evident to us? Why do you think Paul says that this is a “faithful saying”?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have wisdom in determining desire or calling.
- Pray for God’s call to be crystal clear in the heart of our next pastor.
- Pray for all of our pastors to be refreshed and strengthened in their calling to serve.

Ephesians 4:11-12 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

DAY 13 – Blameless

1 Timothy 3:2 “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.”

What does “blameless” mean in this verse? The meaning here is crucial as the remaining pastoral qualifications continue in great detail to further define this concept. Literally, it means “not able to be held” in a criminal sense. This does not mean sinless, of course, but that there is no valid accusation of offense that can be made against him. The imperative “must be” presses on the necessity of this quality in a pastor’s life.

As previously noted in 1 Peter 5:3 on Day 11, a pastor needs to be an example to others. He is not expected to be perfect, but should be above reproach. Of course, someone could still put forth an accusation, but the idea here is that it would soon be found baseless. This applies not only to how a pastor leads and serves the church, but also to how he leads his family. In fact, it applies to every aspect of his life.

God sets an extremely high bar for those who lead His people. Even though God knows all pastors are sinners, He calls them to live in a manner that not only glorifies Him, but also encourages others to do the same.

Questions to Consider:

What do you think it means for a person to be blameless? Why is this a necessary qualification for a pastor?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have discernment in determining blamelessness.
- Pray for God to convict the heart of all who desire to be our pastor, revealing any valid accusations or sinful patterns in order for them to repent.
- Pray for all of our pastors to live blameless lives.

Titus 1:7a “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God”

DAY 14 – Of Good Behavior

1 Timothy 3:2 “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach”

Now we begin to elaborate on blamelessness by examining the character of the man who would be a pastor. The Greek word translated as “good behavior” in the above verse means “orderly.” Order is a characteristic of God, and a man living a chaotic life would struggle mightily in trying to lead a church or ministry. He would be distracted, impatient, unorganized, and impetuous. His chaotic character would soon create chaos for everyone else.

“Husband of one wife” here conveys the idea of a “one-woman man.” There should be no adultery or infidelity in his current life. “Temperate” means the ability to think clearly and to react without high emotions. “Sober-minded” speaks to a disciplined character, holding the things of God in highest priority. “Hospitable” comes from a Greek compound word that means “love of strangers.” A pastor must have compassion for others and a heart for the lost. We will examine “able to teach” in detail on Day 15.

These phrases are all illustrations of good behavior, or living an orderly life. We must remember that this order comes from God. A pastor’s habits, schedules, and tasks should reflect this Godly order. Psalm 37:23 tells us, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way.”*

Questions to Consider:

What do you think a life ordered by God looks like? Why are these things necessary qualifications for a pastor?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have discernment in determining “good behavior.”
- Pray for God to convict the hearts of all who desire to be our pastor in these things, causing any who live chaotic lives to withdraw from the search process.
- Pray for all of our pastors to be encouraged and strengthened to continue to live orderly lives for the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

DAY 15 – Able to Teach

1 Timothy 3:2 “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach”

If you think back to your days in school, you’ll almost certainly remember at least one teacher who not only connected with you, but connected you with the subject they taught. They were dedicated to what they did as a teacher. They prepared well and really cared about the students. They were able to teach. But what does that mean as a pastoral qualification?

This is different. Someone can be a good teacher of theology or math, while not being able to teach God’s Word effectively. This is because teaching Scripture requires studying Scripture, and both require the Holy Spirit for understanding. It is not enough to simply build up knowledge of God and the Bible. Teaching and preaching Scripture is led by the Spirit, not by our minds.

Teaching and preaching are the primary tasks of a pastor. The ability to communicate God’s truths with clarity, conviction, and compassion is given by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was often called “Rabbi,” meaning teacher, by His disciples. A pastor’s teaching should point to Jesus, the ultimate teacher.

Questions to Consider:

How can we know if someone is able to teach? Why is being able to teach a necessary qualification for a pastor?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have discernment in determining the ability of a pastoral candidate to teach.
- Pray for God to build up the teaching ability of our next pastor.
- Pray for all of our pastors to be equipped and energized by the Spirit as they teach.

1 Timothy 4:6 “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.”

DAY 16 – Gentleness

1 Timothy 3:3 “not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous”

In our May Prayer Guide, we defined gentleness in “The Fruit of the Spirit” as submission, or the idea of strength under control. Here we see gentleness as a pastoral qualification. This ties into the idea of living an orderly life from Day 14.

When we think of strength under control, it is under God’s control. A pastor is called to walk in the Spirit with humility.

We also see five “not” phrases here. These five phrases are not random, but are often the ones that present the strongest temptation and the toughest struggles. “Not given to wine” is not only a warning against drunkenness, but also a reminder to be unimpaired in mind and judgment. It also serves as a caution against any addictive behavior patterns. “Not violent” and “not quarrelsome” implores a pastor to react with patience and to remain calm at all times, seeking unity in the Spirit. “Not greedy for money” and “not covetous” warn against personal gain and acclaim through ministry. These can take hold in a prideful heart when God is not the focus.

A pastor must be fully in submission to God in order to be gentle. A shepherd submitted will care for the sheep well, humbly serving the flock. An overseer submitted will lead well, valuing the input of those he leads. A pastor submitted will minister well, loving God and loving people.

Questions to Consider:

Am I fully in submission to God? Why is gentleness a necessary qualification for a pastor?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have wisdom in determining gentleness.
- Pray for our next pastor to be fully submitted to God, humbly serving with gentleness.
- Pray for all of our pastors to submit all things to God and to serve with gentleness.

Philippians 4:5 “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.”

DAY 17 – Leading His Family

1 Timothy 3:4 “one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence”

The above verse is one of the more controversial qualifications, but it really doesn't need to be so. The first part—“one who rules his own house well”—is qualified by the rest of this verse and is expanded upon in the next verse (we will cover that tomorrow). The idea of ruling here refers to this man fulfilling his role as the spiritual head of the family, which means he is in submission to Christ (building on what we read yesterday). If married, he exhibits sacrificial love for his wife and treats her with honor. His marriage is a reflection of his relationship with Christ and how he would lead.

And now the sticky part: “having his children in submission with all reverence.” We do not take this to mean his children must have faith in Jesus in order for him to be a pastor. This would rule out any man with very young children, which we do not believe is God's intention. While a father is not responsible for his children's faith in Christ, he is accountable for how he leads his children and how he shares and models his faith to them. His children should be respectful of him and their mother, as well as toward other children and adults (as is age appropriate). There is much to learn about a man by studying his children.

God gave us the institution of family as our primary vehicle of discipleship, fellowship, and community. A pastor's marriage should be a picture of Christ and the Church. A pastor's relationship with his children should be a picture of Christ's adoption of us by grace and His discipline in love.

Question to Consider:

Why is “ruling your own house well” a necessary qualification for a pastor?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have wisdom and patience in examining candidates on how they lead their families.
- Pray for our next pastor to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and to lead his children well for Christ.
- Pray for the marriages and parenting of all of our pastors to glorify God.

Colossians 3:18-20 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.”

DAY 18 – Leading the Church Family

1 Timothy 3:5 “for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?”

The concept behind the above verse seems simple enough: if a man does not lead his own family, how can he be expected to lead the church family? It is simple indeed, but not necessarily easy when we consider all that goes into leading a family in a godly way. We looked at marriage and parenting yesterday and will now extend those ideas in other ways.

The most important thing to consider here is how he leads his family in discipleship. After all, if a man is not leading his family in the ways of God, it would be foolish to think he would or could lead others who are not his family. Another area to look at here is stewardship. How does this man manage the family resources? How much debt does he carry? This will give insight on how he may manage the resources of the church. Yet another aspect is how he and his family spend their free time. Is their schedule out of balance? Are they focused more on worldly things? This may show how he will direct others to spend their time.

The analogy of a church congregation being a family is fundamental to our function. Our church truly is a family, united by the love and sacrifice of Christ. A pastor must first and foremost lead his own family well before he can lead the church family.

Questions to Consider:

What other ways could the way a man leads his own family impact his ability to take care of the church family? How can I grow closer to others in our church family?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have discernment when considering how candidates lead their families and, therefore, how they may lead the church.
- Pray for our next pastor to lead his family well, exercising biblical discipleship, stewardship, and time management.
- Pray for all of our pastors to glorify God in how they lead their families and serve our church family.

Joshua 24:15b “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

DAY 19 – Not a Novice

1 Timothy 3:6 “not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

The Greek word neophutos, translated as “novice” in the verse above, means “newly planted.” Think of a newly planted seed for a fruit tree. We wouldn’t expect to see fruit growing for quite some time. This is the idea here in reference to the qualifications for a pastor.

This means in part that a pastor should not be a recent convert to Christianity. Although no time table is given here, it can take several years for spiritual fruit to grow. It further means that a pastor needs to be spiritually mature. This maturity may be best defined by the fruit of the Spirit as written in Galatians 5:22-25. Observing this spiritual fruit usually takes some time. 1 Timothy 3:6 also warns us of the danger a novice pastor will bring. Pride often leads to a fall, and this type of fall does great damage not only to the novice pastor but also to those he has wrongly led. The strong wording of “the same condemnation as the devil” brings to mind the cautionary passage of Ezekiel 28:11-19.

A pastor must be spiritually mature, walking with the Lord in all of the 8 Discipleship Goal areas. Fruit takes a season, or even many seasons, to grow. Spiritual fruit is a sure sign of spiritual growth.

Questions to Consider:

Why is not being a novice a pastoral qualification? How can I grow in my own spiritual maturity?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have wisdom and knowledge in determining spiritual maturity.
- Pray for our next pastor to be spiritually mature, bearing Kingdom fruit.
- Pray for all of our pastors to continue their spiritual growth.

John 15:4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

DAY 20 – A Good Testimony

1 Timothy 3:6 “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

We have seen in our July Prayer Guide the importance of our testimony in sharing the Gospel. In the above verse, we see testimony applied in a different way as a pastoral qualification. The term translated “good testimony” can also mean “good reputation” or “beautiful witness.” This is specifically to those outside of the church family, or Christianity in general. If we were to ask a candidate’s neighbors about him, what would they say? Do they respect him, even if they don’t agree with him? Do they know where he stands?

Pastors, and all Christians for that matter, have to interact with a fallen world full of hardship and hardened hearts toward God. Does this man work like a jackhammer on those who disagree? Do his neighbors even know that he is a Christian? A pastor must navigate our world with love, wisdom, discernment, gentleness and compassion that only comes through the Holy Spirit. Again, we see the warning of “the snare of the devil.” We also see falling into reproach, which means he isn’t blameless. That would take us back to 1 Timothy 3:2 and likely back to the drawing board for the Search Team.

As we can see, all of these qualifications fit together to biblically define what a pastor is and what he does. Much like the fruit of the Spirit, this is an “all or nothing” proposition. We can all be so very thankful that God spells these qualifications out for us in His Word for His glory!

Questions to Consider:

Why is it important for a pastor to have a good testimony outside of the church? How can I improve my own testimony among my neighbors?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Pastor Search Team to have wisdom, knowledge, and insight in determining the candidate’s testimony outside the church.
- Pray for our next pastor to have a beautiful witness among those outside the church.
- Pray for all of our pastors to live in a manner that reflects God to those outside our body.

Titus 2:15 “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”

DAY 21 – Introduction

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.”

From our Discipleship Goals on “Love Others Through Church Community”: We will love others through intentional relationships for encouragement, accountability, and holiness both corporately and individually. The intentionality of these relationships is key to our discipleship as a church community, or family. The above verse spells out this intention very well.

First, we must have fellowship with the Father through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Our sin has broken our fellowship with God and forgiveness through faith in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection is the only way to reconcile our relationship. God intends us to have fellowship with Him in this way. Second, we see the intentional desire for us to share Christ with others so that they may also be forgiven and experience fellowship with God. Third, there is an intentional invitation for others to have fellowship with us. It is an invitation to live together for Christ as a family. This is why we love others through church community.

Over the next nine days we will consider how we love others through church community here at Richland Creek. In doing so, please bear in mind these three questions based on our Discipleship Goals regarding Church Community:

Questions to Consider:

Do I identify as a member of the covenant body of Christ—that is, the church? Do I understand the biblical commands for loving one another and their implications for my life?

Have I developed a regular habit of meeting with other believers for the specific purpose of mutual spiritual growth and accountability?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our church community to be intentional and God honoring.
- Pray for God to strengthen me to share the Gospel with others and to invite them into fellowship.

Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

DAY 22 – The Joy of Fellowship

1 John 1:4 “And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

In our May Prayer Guide series on “The Fruit of Spirit” from Galatians 5 we defined “joy” as hope in God’s promises. Joy is determined by our position in Christ rather than in our circumstances. This is not fleeting temporal happiness, but an eternal hope that guides us in the Spirit. Our church community is meant to be a source of encouragement in this joy.

In a world where circumstances and situations seem to be constantly and rapidly changing, where can we turn for hope? Science, medicine, politics, and social media give little hope and no real joy. We can turn to God and to each other for the joy of hope. God is unchanging and worthy of our trust. He is the only source of truth. His promises are certain, here on earth and through eternity in heaven. We can take comfort in Him and, therefore, be able to comfort one another. In the midst of this pandemic, our joy and hope in the Lord can be contagious.

Church Community is part of God’s plan for how we are to love one another. We can love others through encouragement, edification, rebuke, mourning, and much more through the joy of fellowship. The joy we derive from hope in God’s promises not only connects us with Him, but also connects us to each other.

Questions to Consider:

Do I have hope in God’s promises? Do I share my joy and hope with others?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to increase my joy in God’s promises.
- Pray that I would share the joy and hope I have with others through church community.
- Pray for those I know who are hurting or sick to be comforted and encouraged.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?”

DAY 23 – Walking in Light

1 John 1:5-7 “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

There’s an old saying that goes: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.” Imagine hopping in your car and just driving with no destination, GPS, or map. Your whole family is riding with you, plus your closest friends are following along in their cars. When your kids ask, “Are we there yet?” you could answer however you like because you don’t know where “there” is. This would not be the best way to take a trip, nor is this concept a good way to love others through church community.

We are called to “walk in the light.” God is that light and we are to live according to His truths, while also helping lead others to do the same. If we are walking in darkness, outside of His truth, we do not have fellowship with Him. And as in the trip analogy anyone joining us on this journey would also be heading into darkness. Our fellowship must be in the light, centered on God and His truths. If we follow anyone or anything other than God, we are certain to end up lost and in darkness.

Real church community focuses on God’s Word and shines a light on our sinfulness. It encourages us to repent and walk in the light of God. It allows us to love one another in a Christlike way.

Question to Consider:

How do I know if I am following God’s direction?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I would walk in the light of God’s truth, repenting of sinful patterns that lead to darkness.
- Pray that I would love others and help lead them to follow God, having fellowship with Him and other believers.

1 John 2:10 “He who loves his brother abides in the light.”

DAY 24 – Walking in Love

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love is not something best kept to ourselves. Love yearns to be obvious. It is to be expressed, shared, and celebrated. In the above verses, Jesus gives a new commandment to His followers: “love one another as I have loved you.” The love of Jesus was very obvious: He lived a very public sinless life and died a very public death to be the sacrificial payment for sin. His love was sacrifice. This same love toward one another should also be obvious.

Don’t miss this: Jesus is saying that all will know that you are His disciples if you love one another. If you ever wished there was a way to tell if someone was really following Christ or not, this is the way. This is not to say that a disciple will never get angry or sin against another person; rather, it is a permanent, reliable, and discernible way of life.

Loving others through church community begins with faith in Christ’s love and redemptive work on the cross. The sacrificial love that puts others before ourselves is absolutely vital in becoming disciples who make disciples. With this, it will be obvious to all that we follow Jesus.

Questions to Consider:

Do I love Jesus before myself? Do I love others before myself?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I will walk in the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.
- Pray that I sacrificially love others before myself, putting their needs first.
- Pray that I will grow in my discipleship through church community.

Jude 20-21 “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

DAY 25 – Gathering Together

Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Looking at the verses above, they may be more pertinent than ever to Richland Creek in this COVID-19 season. They also have never been more challenging to us all. How can we all assemble if we can't all meet in the same place at the same time? How can I stay connected to our church community from home? In this unique time, and in the post-pandemic future, it is imperative for us to stay connected to God and each other.

The reasons for the importance are at the beginning and end of this passage: “consider one another to stir up love and good works” and “exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching.” Church community should stir up our love for one another and good works, such as evangelism, benevolence, prayer, and so on. Exhorting, or encouraging, one another is like a cool breeze on a 95-degree plus summer day. It refreshes our souls and strengthens our minds to focus on God. And yes, “the Day” when Christ returns in glory is approaching; it is closer today than yesterday.

Take advantage of all the ways to connect during this season. There are Zoom virtual Life Groups, streaming worship services, video testimonies on social media, and more. Take time to make a phone call or send a text or email to see how someone is doing. Gathering together may continue to look different for a while longer, but our love for one another need not change.

Question to Consider:

How can I gather together with other believers during this season?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I will gather with other believers, either in person or virtually.
- Pray for God to show me who I can reach out to in this season.
- Pray that I would stir up love and good works within our church community.

Acts 2:44 “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common”

DAY 26 – Growing Together

Philippians 2:1-2 “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

It can be easy to see and measure the growth of plants. Most plants will grow toward the sun because that is how God created them to grow. There is unity of purpose and direction as they grow together. God also desires that we would grow together with unity of purpose and direction. However, unlike plants, we get to decide these things. Growing together as disciples of Christ is a significant part of church community.

Growing together requires us to be like-minded, grounded in God’s truth to shape our thought process. “Having the same love” means trusting in Christ and experiencing His sacrificial love for us, while also demonstrating that love to others. “Being of one accord” means that because our hearts and mind are aligned with God and His truths, our direction and actions will also be aligned. Think again of a plant growing toward sunlight; its roots are firmly planted and its leaves take in carbon dioxide, enabling the very tip of the plant to reach toward the sun.

“Fellowship of the Spirit” is always rooted in God and His Word. We are planted together as a church community, growing closer to Him and to each other as disciples. We can love one another in encouragement and edification by growing together in the Lord.

Questions to Consider:

How am I growing in my relationship with God? How am I growing together with other believers?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I will grow closer in my relationship with God.
- Pray that I will seek to grow together with other believers.
- Pray that I would encourage and edify others as they grow.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other”

DAY 27 – Studying Together

Romans 15:4-6 “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Life Groups at Richland Creek are such a valuable and necessary part of church community. Studying God’s Word together is a rich and fruitful addition to our own personal study. What a blessing to hear from teachers committed to sharing what God has laid on their hearts! What a joy to hear the input of fellow students in considering the text! Most of all, what a privilege it is to develop authentic relationships with others in order to be a disciple and to disciple others!

Studying God’s Word primarily helps us to know Him and to understand His promises and plans. This is true both individually and corporately; however, there is an extra element when we do this together. There is a unity of spirit, heart, mind and even speech when we study together. It is in these smaller groups that perhaps the most meaningful and beneficial discipleship will take place. As we really and honestly get to know one another, we open up to true brotherhood and sisterhood. Our love for Christ and each other can truly link us together.

Loving others through church community is regularly born and nurtured in our Life Groups of all ages. The connections made through studying together unify and challenge us to grow as disciples of Christ and as a church family.

Question to Consider:

Am I studying the Bible on my own and as part of a Life Group? How can studying together help me grow as a disciple?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I will study the Bible on my own and as part of a Richland Creek Life Group.
- Pray that I will seek unity of spirit, heart, mind, and speech.
- Pray that I would encourage and invite others to join a Life Group.

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”

DAY 28 – Praying Together

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Rejoicing all the time. Praying all the time. Giving thanks in everything. How are we doing with these three things? Well, maybe we do them some of the time. Life is busy, and it can be truly difficult to find a reason to rejoice or give thanks, especially during this pandemic. This may be the case, but it is the will of God for each of us. Praying together is an excellent way to love others through church community.

Praying with and for others demonstrates that we love them, not just that we say we do. Through faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit we can pray as often as possible, knowing that God hears us. When we pray together, we are uniting our hearts and aligning with God’s will. There is something about hearing the prayers of others that further tears down the walls between us. There is a vulnerability there that pulls us closer to each other and to God.

We encourage you to pray regularly with your family and your Life Group. We also welcome you to join us for monthly prayer services (usually the 4th Sunday of the month) and to download these monthly prayer guides to assist you as you pray. Praying together is a blessing and a privilege for our church family.

Questions to Consider:

How is my prayer life? Do I pray with and for others?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I identify as a child of God who needs to pray privately and with others.
- Pray that I understand that as we pray, we are not changing God’s mind about circumstances, but allowing Him to align our thoughts with His.
- Pray that I develop a regular plan of private and corporate prayer.

Colossians 4:2 “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving”

DAY 29 – Serving Together

Galatians 6:9-10 “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Do you want to know how to find out what really makes a person tick? Serve with them! Serving together in ministry can bind people together in a way that, at times, even goes beyond a Life Group. There is something special about applying the things we are studying in Life Groups and hearing in sermons in an immediate, visceral way. To truly love others through church community we need to serve together.

On one level, ministering to others has great benefit as part of our personal discipleship. After all, every Christian is gifted and called to serve within the church (1 Corinthians 12). Yet on another level, serving as part of a team builds upon our own discipleship by partnering with others for a shared goal. It is in many ways a picture of the “one accord” concept in Philippians 2:1-2 and Acts 2:1. There is also an incredible sense of fulfillment that comes through serving God and people. If you are part of a Creek ministry, you know what that is like.

Please prayerfully consider how you can serve the Lord and our church family. Some of our regular opportunities are on hold in this pandemic season, but we look forward to them coming back stronger than ever soon. Join us as we love others through church community by serving together. You will be glad you did!

Questions to Consider:

How does God want me to serve Him and people? What are my spiritual gifts?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I identify as a servant, following in the footsteps of Jesus.
- Pray that I understand my own spiritual gift(s) and my indispensable role as part of the body of Christ.
- Pray that I develop a regular plan of serving the Lord and people, for God’s glory.

1 Corinthians 12:7 “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all”

DAY 30 – Accountable Together

Proverbs 27:17 “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”

These days we are wearing masks to keep our germs to ourselves and to protect others. They may be uncomfortable at times, but right now they are necessary. However, sometimes we may wear a different kind of mask—one that keeps our lives to ourselves and protects others from seeing who we really are, one that is oddly comfortable and that seems necessary. That mask is the facade of pride, the inauthenticity of character, and the shield of shame and judgment. Loving others through church community requires authentic accountability.

As Christians, we need to be authentic with one another. We are called to live as Christians, rather than to casually live like Christians. We all need others to hold us accountable. This starts at home with your spouse if you are married. It is also wise and beneficial to have a few other same gender believers with whom you can be open and genuine on a regular basis. This level of trust has to be earned and be reciprocal; therefore, it can take some time to develop. Authentic accountability can greatly help us stay on track in our discipleship, encouraging us in our strengths and challenging us in our weakness.

Please prayerfully consider to whom you would be accountable and who might be accountable to you. Iron does sharpen iron, and an authentic disciple will sharpen an authentic disciple. Accountability demonstrates how much we love one another.

Questions to Consider:

Who am I accountable to? How can I be trustworthy?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that I understand that I am accountable to God for my sins.
- Pray that I would identify and pursue accountability partners in order to grow as a Christian.
- Pray that I would live as a Christian, rather than like a Christian.

Romans 14:12-13 “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.”

Thank You

We praise the Lord for all those who contributed to make this prayer guide possible. To God be the glory!

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

This Month's Writers:

Kimberly Brown

Lauren Dove

Stef Dowd

Julia Siegart

Claudine Snyder

Joy Styers

Pastor Jim Gillespie

Pastor Stephen Moye

Pastor Steve Sweeney