

How to Use this Prayer Guide (Vol. 9)

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

Days 1-4: Praying for the Pastor Search Committee

Days 5-21: How to Discern Biblical Teaching and Doctrine

Days 22-30: What We Believe and Why: Ordinances vs. Sacraments

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
- Vol. 8 - The Armor of God, Pastoral Qualifications, and Love Others Through Church Community

All previous prayer guides are located on our website at
www.richlandcreek.com

Day 1 – Spiritual Wisdom & Understanding

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.”

Now that the Pastor Search Committee has been selected it is important to keep these “Creek Family Members” in our prayers daily. As it states on the website from the team, “As we begin to search for our lead pastor, we are confident God has already chosen this man and that our role is to faithfully execute the responsibilities given to us. Rest assured our team will be defined by the Word, devoted to prayer, and dependent on the Holy Spirit as we conduct this search.”

Over the next few days we are going to pray specifically for each person serving on the committee. Just as Paul prayed for his brothers and sisters in Christ, we too need to follow his example. We are to pray for growth in Christ but also for growth in the knowledge of His will. This knowledge can only be attained by spending time in His Word - as we grow to know who He is and how He desires us to walk. We must remember that His Word is profitable for teaching truth, for rebuking sin, for correcting errors, and for training us to walk in godliness (2 Timothy 3:16).

The MacArthur Study Bible defines the following: **Knowledge** is not an inner impression or feeling but only truth revealed in the Bible. **Wisdom** is the ability to accumulate and organize principles from Scripture. **Understanding** is the application of those principles to daily living.

Church family, let us pray that our Pastor Search Committee is filled with the knowledge of God’s will and not their own will or understanding. As we pray for this knowledge, pray also that we all will be submissive to our Lord. Through submission and abiding in Christ (John 15), we will be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding of what our King Jesus would have us to do.

Pray for committee members: Dave Howe and Sandra Carpenter

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that the committee members will be filled with the knowledge of God’s will for Richland Creek and the future pastor.
- Pray for them to remain unified in mind and purpose. That God would grant them joy and clarity in the work they are undertaking.

Please download the Pastor Search Committee prayer card from richlandcreek.com or pick one up at the church office.

Day 2 – Walking Worthy of the Lord

Colossians 1:10 “That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Paul prays that this church would walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him. To “**walk worthy**” is a New Testament concept that Paul brings out in other letters to the churches (Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 5:10, and I Thessalonians 4:1). He is calling believers to live in such a way that is consistent with truths of scripture revealed in the life of Christ Jesus. Walking worthy refers to our daily conduct and behavior which should identify us as the Lord’s imitators. Jesus was obedient by loving God the Father and loving others.

Philippians 1:27a states, “*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.*” John MacArthur describes worthiness this way; “Believers are to have integrity – to live consistent with what we believe, teach, and preach.” As we move forward in the process of seeking out a pastor, may we be devoted in prayer for our brothers and sisters that God has placed on this committee, and for them to continue to walk worthy and please Him.

Church, we are to be “fruitful in every good work.” This is representative of a righteous life. When we are defined by God’s Word it will overflow into every area of our lives. Applying the principles of scripture will lead you to produce “fruit” that is pleasing to God.

The Bible identifies spiritual fruit as: leading people to Christ (1 Cor. 16:15), praising God and being thankful (Hebrews 13:15), giving financially (Romans 15:26-28), living a disciplined life (Hebrews 12:11), and displaying Spirit-filled attitudes (Galatians 5:22-23). Church family, let us pray that we all bear these fruits, and encourage each other through accountability to produce fruit pleasing to our Lord.

Pray for committee members: Johnny Hayes and Ashley Porter

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that they would continue to be men and women of integrity and Christ-likeness and would walk in the Spirit in everything they do.
- Pray for a consistent life that is defined by His Word. Pray for their meetings to be fruitful and productive.

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Day 3 – Strengthened with All Might

Colossians 1:11 “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.”

Paul prays that they be “strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might,” and this power that he speaks about is the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead. God has given every believer this power through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes about this power in another letter to the church in Ephesus.

“First, Paul prayed that God, whose resources are limitless, would grant believers inner strengthening in their present experience. As a result of this empowering, Christ would become fully at home in their lives with access to each area of their lives and as the governing fact in their attitudes and conduct. Paul’s second petition was based on the fact the believers have already been placed in the body of Christ, being rooted and grounded in love. He prayed that they might be empowered to grasp the immensity of Christ’s love and to know that love in their personal experience.” (Ephesians 3:16-19, NKJV Study Bible Notes)

It is important to understand that ALL believers have this resurrection power within them. The word for “power” in this text means to be strengthened or to make strong. We are only strengthened through God’s provision of power which enables us to live this Christian life because of the Spirit who lives in us. What does this power look like in a believer’s life? It’s not just miraculous healing or dramatic answers to prayer, but more often it’s when a believer is **steadfast** (bearing up difficult circumstances) and **patient** (bearing with difficult people) that we experience God’s mighty power in our lives. An example of God’s power can be seen in your work environment when you remain steadfast and patient; it’s only God’s strength and sustaining grace that empowers you in your weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Pray for committee members: Ricardo Sanchez & Claudine Snyder

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for the committee members to have perseverance and patience as they depend on the Lord’s power in their lives individually and as a team with joy in their hearts.
- Pray for them and their families to remain spiritually strong by being defined by God’s Word, devoted to prayer, and dependent on the Spirit.

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Day 4 – Joyously Giving Thanks

Colossians 1:11b-12 Joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

These days it is sometimes difficult to “joyously give thanks,” to keep positive and hopeful despite the negative culture we live in. Having joy cultivates within us Christ-like thinking toward others.

“Most people define joy as a feeling of happiness when you are smiling and laughing a lot. And, they think that happiness comes from “good happenings.” Good happenings mean everything is going your way, turning out right. You have lots of money and are healthy and are very successful in work or school. Right? But, what happens if things are not so good? Your family is stressed financially. You may be struggling in work or school. Your relationships are fraying. You or someone close to you is very sick. Can you really have joy then? In the Bible, joy is a deep, inner gladness regardless of circumstances going on around you. That means whether you are rich or poor, sick or healthy, successful or struggling, you can still have a feeling of gladness or pleasure deep down inside.”(Bible.org)

Paul brings out that we have been “**qualified**,” and this word in the Greek means “to make sufficient,” “to empower,” or “to authorize.” We are qualified through the finished work of Jesus Christ, and this can only be received once we place our faith in His work for salvation. Our inheritance is made available at once and is not something to be earned. We live in God’s presence all the time and have complete access to Him. What a humbling picture of God’s grace in our lives, that He has forgiven us guilty sinners, and we are qualified through Christ to receive blessings beyond what we deserve. (Romans 5:8)

Pray for committee members: Jacob Siegwart, Melissa Peters, and Robert Jernigan

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for the committee members to remain grateful in the midst of challenging times and to remember it is God who empowers us to live this life.
- Pray for their protection from the enemy and his deceptive tactics to mislead and create division.

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DAY 5 – TRUE OR FALSE?

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.

Day 6 – What Exactly is a False Teacher?

Galatians 1:9 “As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

False teachers have been around since the earliest days of the church. There are numerous New Testament books that warn about false teachers. The church today is no different. How do we know a false teacher from a true teacher? The only way to know the truth is to study the truth. We must know what we believe and why we believe it. This is why the spiritual discipline of Bible Study is so important. If you understand the truths of Scripture you will be able to discern when a teacher is saying something that goes against those truths.

False teachers will contradict the Scriptures, sometimes even in a very subtle way. Danny Akin, President of Southeastern Seminary, says false teachers have what he calls “heretical math”—adding to, subtracting from, multiplying, or dividing the gospel—as their common denominator. False teachers will most often contort the Trinity, the incarnation, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection in such a way that they contain a grain of Biblical truth, but a grain that has been greatly distorted. We need to make sure we understand these foundational doctrines so we will know when we are being deceived. Always make sure Jesus is at the core of what’s being taught. False teachers want followers who glorify them. True Gospel teachers want followers who glorify Christ.

Questions to Consider:

Is what you are hearing leading you into a deeper relationship with Christ or back into the world? Are you hearing about sin and salvation or are you being led to focus on what the world offers, a life of health, wealth, prosperity, and living life your way? Are you digging into the Word daily so you will know when you are being deceived or do you take everything you hear at face value?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for Bible Study to become a priority in your life.
- Pray for discernment to know what is true doctrine and what is false doctrine.
- Pray for all of our pastors and leaders that they will rightly handle the Word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

Day 7 – What Does A False Teacher Sound Like?

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 will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

False teaching often sounds legit. Much like counterfeit money or fake merchandise, they look good, come cheap, and do great harm. So it is with false teaching. The teachers are quick to acknowledge God, Christ, and some basics of the faith. Yet, beneath the surface lurks falsehood. Tim Challies writes, “It is quite rare that we are presented with fraudulent teaching that contradicts the most important teachings of Scripture. More often we are faced with issues of lesser importance than the major tenets of the faith. If we look only for false doctrine that contradicts the first-order doctrines, we may allow countless lesser errors slip through.”

Popular false teachers such as Steven Furtick, Joyce Meyers, Jen Hatmaker or Joel Osteen are polished, friendly motivational speakers who mix together some truth with much flagrant heresy. Their audiences reach millions who unknowingly accept all that they spew forth. What do these teachers sound like? They sound like “music to your ears.”

Many times, false prophets or preachers appeal to the natural human desire to be successful, healthy, happy, and financially secure. The most prevalent topics of false teaching seem to fixate on health, wealth, prosperity, materialism (i.e., happiness in material goods), relativism (i.e., truth is subjective—who’s to say what is true?), “me-ism” (i.e., everything is about me) and last, but not least, expressive individualism (i.e., you be you, follow your heart, be true to yourself). All of these cater to, well—you! Your wants, your needs, and your desires.

Moreover, they overthrow and undermine the Cross. Instead of announcing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the means by which we are saved, they characterize God as solely loving, kind, and generous. Well, God is all of those things but not solely those things. God has other character attributes as well, many of which are overlooked or rejected. God then is depicted as the means by which we thrive, prosper, and overcome.

Tragically, false teaching is far too commonplace. One author writes, “If you cannot identify any voices you hear as false, it’s not because you aren’t being exposed, but because you’re falling for it in some way.” We all bear responsibility for the information we hold to and pass on. Be warned: the more we understand what is right, the more we’ll be able to spot what is false.

Questions to Consider:

Does the teaching you listen to make you feel better about your sin? (Rom 16:17) Do the teachers you listen to contradict God's Word? (1 John 4:1) Do you see God as the provider for prosperity?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, help me recognize false teaching. Grant me understanding as I read your Word that I might know what is true. Pray your way through Psalm 119.

Day 8 – What Does a False Teacher Do?

Matthew 7:15-16 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?”

Notice that false prophets do not come disguised as sheep, but they come disguised as shepherds whose goal is to lead the flock astray from the True Shepherd and His Word. Jesus describes them as ravenous wolves. Wolves are known and feared for their stealth and viciousness when they kill, often killing more than they can eat.

False teachers creep in to destroy and devour by teaching false doctrine. They are greedy and deceitful. They tell enough of the truth to make the plumb line appear to be level at a first glance; however, when you get the level out (the truth of God's Word), you see it is out of plumb. If you build your theology on this line, it will never be straight but always out of level with God's Word. It will not stand when the winds and rain come. Peter tells us 2 Peter 2:3 that in their (false teachers') greed they will exploit you with false words. And Jude tells us in verse 19 that false teachers “are the ones who cause divisions, are worldly minded, devoid of the Spirit.” False teachers will try and fracture the Church.

Questions to Consider:

Will you be able to recognize a false teacher? Are you studying God's word so you are equipped to protect you and your loved ones from the ravenous wolves?

Prayer Prompts

- Thank you, Lord, for revealing to us who you are in your Word; thank you for providing us with godly pastors and teachers who want to teach us the truth of your Word.
- Pray for wisdom and you read and study the Word. (James 1:6)
- Read and Pray through Psalm 1:1-3

Day 9 – The True Teacher

1 John 4:2-3 “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”

We know that Jesus is the only way to salvation and that one must confess Jesus as Lord in order to receive eternal life. Jesus Himself proclaims that He is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus teaches that there is no way to obtain salvation but through Him and that one cannot go around Him and obtain salvation another way.

In our passage today we have the Spirit of God as being identified by the proclamation that Jesus is exactly who He says He is. He is God, born in the flesh, and the Spirit of God cannot and will not deny Himself.

The false spirit or the false teacher will deny that Jesus is God and that He is the only way to salvation. It is easier to determine a false spirit when it openly denies Christ than it is when the false spirit teaches something that sounds good and right. It is important to remember that the Word of God must be our standard for truth when determining whether a spirit or teacher is false. We must press the content and the outcome of their teaching up against the Scripture and determine if they are from God. A true teacher will always exalt Jesus and proclaim Him in accordance with the Bible.

Questions to Consider:

Do I know the Scriptures well enough to know what it says about who Jesus is? Do I affirm that He is God? Do I know the Scriptures well enough to determine if the teaching I hear on a regular basis is true or false? Have I been persuaded by any false teachers?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray and ask the Lord to help you know and love His Word so that you will be equipped to determine what is true and what is false.
- Pray and ask the Lord to protect you from false teachers.

Day 10 – What Does a True Teacher Sound Like?

Titus 1:9 “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

Within the qualifications of a pastor, we see a three-fold focus on the Scriptures: an unwavering grip on the precious truth of God as seen in His Word, bold preaching on sound doctrine, and correction of those who teach contrary to the Bible.

There is unyielding courage both in his teaching of biblical truth and in his defensive protection of the flock God has entrusted to his care—both positions founded on the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. He humbly tends to the soul of the Christian instead of seeking popularity or position for himself. He elevates the whole counsel of God publicly, not because it's popular or pleasant, but because it's the biblical thing to do (Acts 20:19-27). He willingly expounds on the tensions of difficult passages. And, this commitment to all of Scripture may lead him to endure suffering for speaking truth (2 Timothy 4:3-5). Yet, this teacher does not shrink back. He counts it all joy to be afflicted for the name of Jesus.

God's glory and the congregation's eternal good are priorities. A preacher loves his flock more as he loves God most (Matthew 22:37-39). This teacher of sound doctrine wants his flock so well fed by the Word, so well equipped, that they know when they hear false teaching since their ears have been tuned to perceive it. The hearers, then, are mature and able to also teach and defend the truth of Scripture.

Questions to Consider:

Do I value sound doctrine? Do I complain or appreciate when a pastor teaches on a difficult book or topic? Why? What does this reveal about my true desires? How would I know the difference between a true and a false teacher?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our pastors to have daily, focused time in the Word.
- Pray that our church would have a bold commitment to teaching the entire Bible.
- Pray we would be equipped through our personal and corporate times in Bible study so we may know sound teaching.

Colossians 1:28 “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

Day 11 – A Reliable Source?

2 Peter 2:1-3a “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.”

In Peter's second letter to members of his flock, he reminds his readers of the imminent return of our Lord. To give his readers confidence in Christ's return, Peter reminds his readers of the sources from which they have learned: the apostolic witness and the prophetic word (1:16-21). Having commended these reliable sources, Peter briefly shifts his focus to talk about an unreliable source: false teachers. It seems not all teachers are equal; while the apostolic witness and prophetic writings had their authority based on revelation from God, these false teachers rest on a foundation of personal gain. Therefore, it is essential to beware of false teachers.

There are multiple consequences to listening to false teachers. Here and now, false teachers scandalize the gospel. At the surface, what they teach may appear to be biblical, but a more in-depth look often reveals that these teachers are teaching blasphemy, exploiting their listeners, and leading them astray from the true gospel. Over time, listening to false teachers leads to destruction. When listeners hear this perverted gospel over and over, it can cloud their judgment and prevent them from ever believing the true gospel, which results in their own destruction.

So what should we do? We must take everything that we hear and hold it up against the standard of God's Word. We must pray for clarity in our understanding of the gospel. And we must be on guard against false teachers.

Questions to Consider:

Do I often take what I hear and compare it to the standard of God's Word? Am I careful about who I let influence my thought life? Do I have a real desire to understand God's Word?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for God to give you discernment as you sit under the teaching of others.
- Pray for a desire to meditate on God's Word.

Psalm 119:18 “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

Day 12 – The Responsibility of the Believer

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 is most likely 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.

Day 13 – The Plumb Line of Biblical Doctrine

John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 8:32 “And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.”

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.”

John 17:17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

In these passages Jesus clearly refers to Himself and His Word as the truth. The standard for truth is Jesus Himself, and all things should be examined through the lens of His Word. It is common for people to desire truth and people have been known to look for truth in all sorts of places. The Bible is a fascinating book, and many people have challenged the truths of God’s Word, only to find that it is true and that it stands even under the most intense scrutiny. Jesus and His Word have never been wrong, and they will never be wrong. Whenever we desire to hear truth, we must use the Word of God as the standard for determining truth. We cannot expect to know the kind of truth that sets us free apart from knowing Jesus Himself.

Many people have searched for truth their whole lives only to find themselves confused and disappointed. There are many who claim to have found a sense of truth but remain unsatisfied. Jesus is the kind of truth that satisfies the soul and leads to eternal life. It is the kind of truth that brings security and contentment. The Word of God is intended to be the “plumb line” for the believer.

Questions to Consider:

Do I live like Jesus is the standard of truth? Do I live like Jesus’ words are true? Do I find my source of truth in the Word of God or in the world?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would help you love and trust His Word.
- Pray that God would help you abide by the truths of His Word.
- Pray and ask God to help you determine if you believe something to be true that is indeed false.

Day 14 – What Does False Doctrine Sound Like?

2 Corinthians 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

Our flesh easily redefines riches in our own terms and diminishes God’s grace. A popular heresy—the prosperity gospel—tells us that we need more than God and that we deserve worldly goods if we rightly ask (James 4:3). This falsehood focuses on us in this finite life, instead of on God, His kingdom, and eternal life.

Anytime a Christian thinks himself worthy of good things based on merit, he is living out the deceptive doctrine from the health and wealth fake gospel. It’s easy to fall prey since false teachers use Scripture, appealing to our deceitful desires. We want to only say a prayer or do good deeds, expecting God to give possessions, position, or good health. Yet, in this we’re implying that if I give to God, I get from God—thus becoming an idolater of self. We must remember the whole context of the Word, obey it, and be on guard against man-centered, works-based thinking.

If we believe we deserve ease, we set aside Jesus’ example and the whole counsel of God. Remember truth. God is the giver of life, and salvation is a gift (Genesis 1; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:23). We will face trials and should be joyous in them (John 16:33; James 1:2-4). We have a living hope and an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-7). We are blessed by the Comforter’s presence and peace (2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Philippians 4:6-9; Matthew 28:20). And, if we are given earthly things, they’re entrusted to us so we may cheerfully give (2 Corinthians 8:1-15).

Questions to Consider:

Do I give the impression to non-Christians that life will be easy after salvation? Am I satisfied with God or do I want stuff from God? Do I pursue God’s kingdom or my own?

Prayer Prompts:

- Praise God for our eternal hope in Christ.
- Pray for God’s kingdom’s expansion, and His will to be done.
- Pray for contentment in Christ and a desire for holiness through every trying circumstance.

1 Timothy 6:5b-6 “...who are depraved in mind and deprived of truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Day 15 – What Does False Doctrine Do?

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

This is one of the most piercing passages in the Bible. Imagine living your life serving others, doing all of the “good” things, and you meet Jesus, and He says, “Depart from me.” There are many who preach a name and claim it gospel. Jesus is portrayed as a “ticket out of hell” or a genie in a bottle to perfect health and financial wealth. The true gospel is stripped of its focus on eternity and reduced to a means by which everyone can experience his or her best life now. The focus is on self-satisfaction and on fleshly desires. This is in direct opposition of what Jesus teaches us in Mark 8:35 as we are to die to our selfishness and live in obedience to God’s Word. Read John 14:15.

False teachers often fail to teach the truth of Scripture. For example, as children of God we will experience suffering. Many false teachers teach the exact opposite of this. Paul tells us in Philippians 1:29, “*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake.*” My friends, we should not be surprised when we experience trials and suffering. But the good news is that it is for a short time on this side of eternity. When Jesus walked on earth, He suffered many things, including the rejection by the ones who claimed to love Him. Why should we be surprised when we suffer some of these same things? We can rejoice that we have a Savior who knows how it feels to be rejected, beaten, hungry, and homeless. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Jesus, our high priest, is fully God and fully man, who left His throne to reveal God to us in the flesh. The good news of the gospel tells us there is nothing we can do on our own to save ourselves. Jesus paid the price in our place when He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for **our sins**, was buried, rose three days later and now sits at the right hand of God.

Questions to Consider:

Are you worshipping the Jesus of the Bible? Will you know false teaching when you hear it? How can you be sure?

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank you, Lord, for your grace and mercy by giving us your Word. May we be doers of the Word and not just hearers.
- Lord, grant us discernment and guide us with your Holy Spirit to protect us from false teaching. Open our eyes that we may see wonderful things from your Word.

Day 16 – First, Second, and Third Importance Doctrines

1 Corinthians 15:3 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”

Doctrines are the teachings of our faith that come from God’s self-revelation in Scripture. Doctrine can be sorted into categories or levels of importance; hence, Paul’s use of the phrase “first importance” in the above verse. The ability to understand as Paul has, those doctrines which we must defend and firmly uphold, and those doctrines we can give latitude to disagree on.

Dr. Al Mohler explains these categories or levels as first, second, and third order/importance doctrines. **First-importance** are doctrines that are fundamental to the Christian faith. These doctrines center on the Gospel. Examples: the person and work of Christ and Biblical authority. **Second-importance** are doctrines necessary for the ordering of the local church which do not define the Gospel. Example: gender roles, baptism, and communion. **Third-importance** are doctrines that create fruitful theological debate, but do not threaten the fellowship of the local congregation. Example: the timing and sequence of Christ’s return.

Without a clear understanding of this ordering, all doctrines may be seen as a point of conflict with church members. We are called to defend and uphold the Gospel truths. Yet, in all doctrine, we must speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:11-16). Unity is no small matter. As one author puts it, **“Part of the way the world is to believe that Jesus is really God’s Son is because of the unity or oneness between Christians.”** Indeed, it is the very means by which God’s people reflect the love of God (John 17:23). So we have two fundamentals we must uphold: doctrine and unity.

We must uphold the very core beliefs that herald the Gospel. We must patiently and compassionately hold firm to the truth of Christ’s atoning death, burial, and resurrection. In everything regarding doctrine we must demonstrate humility, grace, and love.

Questions to Consider:

Does it matter what you really believe as long as you believe in Jesus Christ? (Gal 1:6-9) How can you begin today learning more about the doctrines of your faith? (Psalm 119:9)

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would give you a desire to invest time and energy in learning more about what the Christian faith teaches.
- Pray that you would utilize resources from trusted pastors and scholars as you grow in your understanding of Biblical doctrine.

Day 17 – Learning Biblical Doctrine

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

Often when we speak about Biblical doctrine suddenly people think of a seminary. You may picture a lovely campus with rustic buildings and rich history. But, what if instead of thinking about an institution, your first thought of studying doctrine is in a church where people are faithfully reading the Word of God together. The truth is that the people of God can learn doctrine by reading the Word, with the aid of the Spirit, and in community with faithful believers.

Doctrine is codified beliefs within the church. According to 2 Timothy, Scripture is God-breathed. God is perfect and righteous; thus, the Scriptures are perfect and righteous. The Word is profitable for teaching and training in righteousness. The Word of God builds a foundation, and it forms a lens through which all believers see. Biblical doctrine comes from the Bible. If you want to learn more about the Lord Jesus, look in the Scriptures.

We don't study the Word on our own. Every person who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ has been indwelt with the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26, Jesus says, *“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”* The Holy Spirit teaches and illuminates believers. The Lord has equipped believers with His Word and His Spirit so that we can learn biblical doctrine.

We can also learn Biblical doctrine in community. While reading the Scriptures we also can speak to other believers and learn from one and another. Other believers can be an extra set of eyes on the Word, seeking the Lord to understand the Scripture more.

Questions to Consider:

Are you learning sound doctrine from your time in God's Word? Are praying for understanding before and after reading the Word of God? Are you in real discipleship relationships that seek to grow in the knowledge of Jesus and His Word?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask the Lord for a continued desire to study His Word.
- Ask God to open your eyes to see and understand what you have read and studied.
- Ask the Lord for community that seeks to spur one another on to good works.

Day 18 - Why Make the Effort to Learn Doctrine

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

In addition to learning doctrine for the purpose of defending our faith against false teaching, we study doctrine because it cultivates a love for God that, in turn, produces love for others. In the verse above, Jude expresses “keep yourselves in the love of God.” The fundamental way Christians can remain in God’s love is by studying His Word and growing strong doctrinally while also being persistent in prayer. Jude repeatedly urges that Christians need to understand doctrine to “contend for the faith” as well as grow in our understanding and love of God and, subsequently, our love for others.

In the article “6 Great Reasons to Study Doctrine”

Tim Challies states “Your love for God is limited by your knowledge of him, so that you can really only love him as far as you know him. As the depth of your knowledge grows, so too does the depth of your love. This is why the study of doctrine cannot be the pursuit of dry facts, but facts that lead to living knowledge of God and growing love for God. When you know doctrine, you prepare yourself to live in ways that express love to him and others.”

We need to read and study “the whole counsel of God” in order to begin to understand doctrinal issues. Unless our study involves every portion of Scripture, we will never know who He is and what He expects from us regarding our walk with Him.

Questions to Consider:

Are you studying doctrine solely for the purpose of attaining knowledge? Or, are you studying the whole counsel of God so that you know Him better, and in turn, know what is expected of you as a believer?

Prayer Prompts:

- God, help me to put You first as my motivation to study Scripture and doctrine.
- Father, push me to search for truth and purpose in Your Word.

1 John 4:7-8 “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Day 19 – Consider the Consequences

1 Timothy 6:3-5 “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.”

Paul’s words here to Timothy echo those of the prophet Isaiah, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20, NKJV). If someone exhibits a pattern of teaching things not found in Scripture, we must understand that it is because they are not of God. To avoid falling prey to such teachers, we must know Scripture, use Scripture to develop sound doctrine, and press everything we hear against that healthy standard. If we don’t, we are more likely to be led astray by false doctrine.

When we are not careful and listen to false doctrine, we are likely to suffer present and future consequences. In the present, consequences could include division, quarreling, controversies, slander, and evil suspicions. We, too, need to hear the warning from the prophet Isaiah given to those who would not heed the Word of God and, instead, turned to other “spiritual” means. “They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness” (Isaiah 8:21-22, NKJV). Adherents to false doctrines or “spiritual” things not founded in Scripture are eventually given up to their thoughts and drive themselves into the darkness that their wrong thinking has created. Read and meditate on Isaiah 8:11-22.

Questions to Consider:

Do I study the Word with a desire to understand it? Do I allow Scripture to influence my thought life? Do I practice what I have learned in Scripture?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for God to give you understanding of His Word.
- Pray for this understanding to move into practice.

DAY 20 – The Responsibility of Believers

Acts 17:10-12a “The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed.”

The Bereans trusted in the authority of the inerrant, infallible Word of God and measured everything they heard against it. The Scriptures were their plumb line and source of truth. The Bereans studied the Scriptures diligently, daily searching and examining them. They took the initiative themselves and actively sought to determine if the teaching they heard was true—a task that requires time and effort.

The Bible reveals who God is and what He came to do—that we might know Him and know what to believe. As Christians, we bear a responsibility to seek out the truth and grow in our faith, but desire is not enough. We must intentionally invest time and effort to learn and understand what God’s Word teaches. We ought to read and diligently examine the Scriptures, daily, to help us distinguish between true doctrine and false doctrine.

If we don’t know who the God of the Bible is, how can we rightly worship Him? If we don’t rightly understand God’s Word, how can we rightly apply it to our lives? If the Bible is not our standard of truth, how can we recognize false doctrine? If we don’t know what we believe, how can we make disciples or effectively witness to others about the Christian faith? We can learn much from the Bereans.

Questions to Consider:

Am I committed to intentionally building a foundation of truth by examining the Scriptures daily? Do I press the Biblical teaching I receive up against God’s Word?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, I pray that I will value your Word as the Bereans did. Please help me to manage my time wisely in order to make reading and studying the Scriptures a priority.
- Father, your Word is truth. Please help me to grow in my knowledge of you and my understanding of what the Bible teaches about the Christian faith.

DAY 21 – Introduction

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Today we begin ten days of prayer regarding ordinances and sacraments. As we begin, it is important that we understand the basic differences between the two. While these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they in fact have very different meanings and applications.

The key to both is the role of God’s grace. Ordinances are symbols or signs of His grace already received through faith in Christ, while sacraments are usually seen as a means of imparting God’s grace. Sacraments involve a supernatural work of God toward man, while ordinances involve an act of obedience of man toward God. We believe the Bible teaches that God poured out His grace toward us through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, and that there is nothing further we can do to earn more or greater grace.

With this understanding in mind, we will prayerfully examine our two ordinances of communion and baptism over the next nine days. We will delve into the meaning, symbolism, and function of these as ordinances and not sacraments. Along the way, we will also point out some of the more prevalent false teachings encountered with each. Our hope is to not only equip you to discern and respond to false teachings, but also for you to rest assured in the grace God has imparted to you through His Son.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for imparting His grace toward us through Jesus.
- Pray for clear understanding of the difference between ordinances and sacraments.
- Pray for discernment, wisdom, and patience when responding to false teaching.

2 Corinthians 12:9 “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

DAY 22 – Communion Meaning and Methodology

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”

In the above verses, the English word “communion” is translated from the Greek word “koinonia.” This word is also often translated as “fellowship.” It is important to note that this word reflects an ongoing, interactive relationship. This relationship involves our participation as part of a community, specifically as a church community. This word also includes the idea of knowing exactly what it is that joins us together in unity. For the church in Corinth then and for Richland Creek now, it is Jesus Christ that joins us together in communion.

The ordinance of communion can also be known by other names: The Lord’s Supper; The Lord’s Table; The Eucharist (simply meaning “giving thanks”). It is a fellowship of our church family by which we gather together to remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an act of worship and obedience rather than an imparting of additional grace. The unified participation is meant to not only draw us closer to God, but to each other.

At the heart of communion is the central truth that the body and blood of Christ were given to each of us and to all of us. It is deeply reflective and impactful, personally and corporately. We are united together as we remember His death, burial, and resurrection through this ordinance.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for giving us fellowship with Him through Christ.
- Pray for clear understanding of the ordinance of communion.
- Pray for unity of heart, mind, and accord in our church family.

1 Corinthians 1:9 “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

DAY 23 – The Last Supper, Passover, and Communion

Luke 22:14-16 “When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’”)

The ordinance of communion is likened to a reenactment of the Last Supper. Jesus broke the bread and poured the cup with the Apostles the night before His death, instructing them to remember His sacrifice. We observe communion in much the same way, remembering the broken body and shed blood of our Savior. It is also very significant that the Last Supper was an observance of the Passover.

This took place on the night the Passover lamb would be slaughtered. Christ was signifying His role as the once and for all Passover lamb. His sacrifice would pay for the sins of humanity for all times. Even though many still observe the Passover to this day, there is no need for further sacrifice to pay the debt of sin in our lives. Some missed that truth then, and many still miss it now, waiting for a Messiah who has already come.

Communion is symbolic of the Last Supper and the Passover. In the above verses, Jesus also promises us that He will partake of the Passover supper again in heaven. He also promises us a place at that table through faith in Him. As we partake of communion, we remember all that Jesus has done for us and look forward with great anticipation to our future with Him.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for sending Jesus as our sacrificial Passover lamb.
- Pray for clear understanding of the connections between the Last Supper, Passover, and communion.
- Pray for those who are still waiting for a Messiah to accept Jesus as the Christ.

1 Peter 1:18-19 “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

DAY 24 – The Communion Elements

Luke 22:19-20 “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”

The two communion elements of unleavened bread and a cup containing grape juice or wine have stood for generations. While there have been some slight alterations to reflect our culture and time, such as offering a gluten free option, it is basically unchanged. Also unchanged is what these elements represent: the body and blood of Christ, respectively. We believe that these elements are purely symbolic as we remember Christ’s sacrifice for us.

The elements are what they are, and do not somehow become the actual body and blood of Christ. This belief is known as transubstantiation. There is no biblical basis for this concept, and it seems rather absurd in light of the above verses from Luke. Jesus did not offer His body to eat and blood to drink to the Apostles at the Last Supper. The bread and wine did not supernaturally become flesh and blood, but are instead representative of these things. Remember, communion is an ordinance and not a sacrament.

Jesus offered a “new covenant” for us through His death, burial, and resurrection. We are promised forgiveness of sin and eternity in His presence. The communion bread is symbolic of His sinless life, His body broken by death, and His resurrection. The cup symbolizes His atoning blood, poured out for the remission of sin. Let us partake of these elements in obedience and worship to remember His matchless love for us.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks for the “new covenant” God has given us through Christ.
- Pray for clear understanding of the communion elements and what they represent.
- Pray for discernment, wisdom, and patience in interactions with others who believe that communion is a sacrament.

John 6:35 “And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger; and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’”

DAY 25 – Communion Frequency and Participation

1 Corinthians 11:26-27 “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

Since we believe communion is an ordinance and not a sacrament, how often should we observe it and who should participate? Well, the Bible is only clear on the “who” part of communion. As far as the frequency, some take the language of 1 Corinthians 11:17-20 to suggest that it should be every time our church comes together. We believe that the frequency of communion is not mandated biblically and is therefore open to interpretation. We choose not to observe this every Sunday partly because we are cautious to avoid this important act of worship and obedience becoming rote or routine.

The Bible is very clear about who should participate in communion. First and foremost, communion is meant for those who have placed their faith in Jesus. Secondly, the “unworthy manner” in verse 27 above covers much spiritual ground: unrepentant sin, unforgiveness toward others, without prayer or self-examination. Christians who partake unworthily are still under God’s grace, but open themselves up for judgment and chastisement concerning these unworthy things. Of course, this judgment and chastisement is meant for reconciliation.

However often we observe the ordinance of communion, we are proclaiming Christ’s death, even until His return. We are to examine our own hearts, minds, and motives before coming to the Lord’s Table. In this, we honor and glorify the Lord for saving us from sin and death.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks for the ordinance of communion and for our church family.
- Pray for clear understanding that there is no biblical mandate for the frequency of communion and the liberty to apply this differently among churches.
- Pray for clear understanding that communion is for believers, and that we are to examine ourselves before participating.

1 Corinthians 11:28 “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

DAY 26 – Baptism Meaning and Methodology

Acts 8:36-38 “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water; and he baptized him.”

The Greek word baptizo in the New Testament means to submerge or immerse, and in this context, to do so in water. This is not describing a sprinkling or pouring of water, but a complete covering. Acts 8 not only tells us about the practical meaning and method of baptism, but also who is qualified.

When the Ethiopian asks “What hinders me from being baptized?” Philip answers with the biblical qualification for baptism: “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” Baptism is not a part of our salvation; it is a part of our sanctification or discipleship. Baptism is to follow a true conversion to faith in Jesus. This is why we do not believe that infant baptism is biblical. This is why we also encourage those who are unsure if they were saved before a previous baptism to be baptized again with assurance of their faith.

The same Greek word for baptism can also refer to the process of dying fabric. Think of a dull, bland fabric being immersed in a rich and colorful dye. When the fabric is brought back up, it has been transformed. This is a good and memorable illustration of how we are transformed the moment we place our faith in Christ, and how baptism is a picture of that moment.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for giving us the ordinance of baptism.
- Pray for clear understanding of what baptism means and how it is done.
- Pray for the lost people in your life to come to faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, and for God to prepare you to share the Gospel with them.

Ephesians 4:4-6 “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.”

DAY 27 – Water Baptism vs. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Mark 1:7-8 “And he preached, saying, ‘There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

John the Baptist was sent to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Matthew 10:10). Part of his mission was to perform water baptisms, which would take on greater meaning after Christ’s resurrection. Water baptism is an ordinance, not a sacrament. There is nothing supernatural about the water or being immersed in it. No additional grace is imparted to us through the baptismal waters. God’s grace has already been given through faith in His Son Jesus. So, what does John mean when he says, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit?” This is important to grasp as false teaching about this leads to confusion.

This type of “baptism” is referring to salvation. When we trust in Christ, we are covered or sealed by the Holy Spirit. In this sense we are immersed in the Holy Spirit, our sins forgiven and our eternity assured. This can be confused with the term “filled with the Holy Spirit” and can lead to false teaching. This term most often refers to the Spirit working in someone before the giving of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 2. It does not mean or imply that someone can obtain a greater form of grace or somehow be “more saved” than others. False teaching on this can also lead people to believe that they have to have a readily observable supernatural gift or ability (often speaking in tongues) to truly be saved.

Water baptism is an outward, visible representation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurs the moment we trust in Christ. It is an ordinance of obedience, worship, and identification as children of God.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for sealing us with Holy Spirit.
- Pray for clear understanding of water baptism and baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for biblical wisdom and patience in our conversations with others regarding baptism and any false teaching.

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

DAY 28 – Christ, Our Pattern in Baptism

Matthew 3:13 “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.”

Jesus began His public ministry in a very public way when He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. If we had any doubts about whether baptism was salvific (leading to salvation) or if it imparted additional grace, those doubts are erased here. Jesus is sinless, so water baptism cannot be salvific. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s grace, so water baptism cannot add further grace.

John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized, and Jesus responded by saying, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Baptism for Jesus was part of God the Father’s plan for Him. It was a piece of the larger puzzle that was necessary to complete. The Son honored the Father through obedience, giving us a pattern to follow and imitate.

Christ is our pattern as we live our lives for Him. It is good for us all to strive to be more like Him. While we cannot do most of the things Jesus did, baptism is one of the things we can do as He did. We can observe this ordinance through obedience, knowing that it is part of God’s plan for us, and that He is glorified through it.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for giving us Jesus as our pattern to follow.
- Pray for clear understanding that baptism does not save us from sin or impart additional grace.
- Pray for biblical understanding and endurance as we seek to live for Christ in all we do.

Matthew 3:16-17 “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

DAY 29 – The Symbolism of Baptism

Romans 6:4 “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

There are 3 main things baptism symbolizes. First, and most obvious, is Christ’s baptism (see Day 28). We can be baptized in the same way as Christ was, going completely under the water and then rising back up out of the water. This is done in obedience and identifies us with Him.

Second, baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The immersion into the water is a picture of His death and burial. One is lowered into the water with assistance by simply letting their knees relax, trusting the baptizer and the water to do the rest. They are fully covered, or buried, by the water. When they rise back up, they again are trusting the baptizer and the water to raise them. This is a picture of His resurrection to life.

Third, baptism symbolizes our salvation. The moment we trust in Jesus, He takes our sins upon Himself, dying over 2000 years ago to pay our debt with His blood. Also at that moment, He gave us the Holy Spirit as our seal and helper. Going under the water is a picture of our dying with Christ as our sins died with Him. Rising up from the water is a picture of the “newness of life” as we became a new creation. Baptism is a reflection of our transformation in Christ.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for how baptism symbolizes so much about Jesus and how He transforms our lives.
- Pray for clear understanding of all that baptism symbolizes.
- Pray that our lives would be worthy reflections of God’s love and grace toward us.

Romans 6:10-11 “For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

DAY 30 – Baptism and the Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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.”

We believe the Bible teaches that baptism is a part of our discipleship, or sanctification. The concept of being disciples who make disciples is core to who we are as a church. We recognize baptism as an ordinance and not a sacrament. We also recognize it as a command from Jesus Himself.

The Great Commission verses above are Christ’s marching order for His disciples. They are just as true now as they were right before He ascended to Heaven. We are commanded to share the Gospel all over the world, to baptize believers, and to continue in discipleship. Baptism is an outward expression of the inward grace we have been given. This expression is sometimes seen as a bridge between salvation and discipleship. While this can certainly be true, we must understand that baptism is not needed for salvation and does not have to immediately follow a profession of faith. It should follow at some point as we trust the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As a church, truly loving God and loving others requires obedience to His Word and all He commands. God has poured out His grace toward us all through His Son. Nothing we do, say, or believe can earn us additional grace. We must follow as He leads in obedience, trusting Him in all things for His glory.

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for the Great Commission.
- Pray for clear understanding of salvation, baptism, and discipleship.
- Pray that we would obediently follow God’s commands, trusting in Him for all things.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

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.”

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