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(Rev. 01/08/2012)

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
A 2012 Spiritual Growth Plan.....	1
Above All—Loving God With All Our Hearts .....	1
January .....	2
Week 1 January 1 - 7.....	2
Weekly Planning Guide.....	2
Daily Reflections .....	3
Weekly Devotional - Blessed Are the Meek (Matthew 5:5) .....	6
Week 2 January 8 - 14.....	8
Weekly Planning Guide.....	8
Daily Reflections .....	9
Weekly Devotional - Origins of True Happiness (Matthew 6).....	12
Week 3 January 15 - 21.....	14
Weekly Planning Guide.....	14
Daily Reflections .....	15
Weekly Devotional - A Life-Changing Passage (Matthew 11:28-30).....	18
Week 4 January 22 - 28.....	20
Weekly Planning Guide.....	20
Week 4: January 22-28 .....	20
Daily Reflections .....	21
Weekly Devotional - A Big Question (Mt. 16:26) .....	24
Week 5 January 29 - February 4 .....	26
Weekly Planning Guide.....	26
Daily Reflections .....	27
Weekly Devotional - Be Prepared (Matthew 21-25) .....	30
February.....	32
Week 6 February 5 - 11 .....	32
Weekly Planning Guide.....	32
Daily Reflections .....	33
Weekly Devotional - Introducing Acts (Acts 1) .....	36
Week 7 February 12 - 18 .....	38
Weekly Planning Guide.....	38

## Table of Contents

Daily Reflections .....	39
Weekly Devotional - Only 57 Cents (Acts 4:34-35) .....	42
Week 8 February 19 - 25 .....	43
Weekly Planning Guide .....	43
Daily Reflections .....	44
Weekly Devotional - Wherever They Went (Acts 8:1-4) .....	47
Week 9 February 26 - March 3 .....	48
Weekly Planning Guide .....	48
Daily Reflections .....	49
Weekly Devotional - Are You in Good Hands? (Acts 13-17) .....	52
March .....	54
Week 10 March 4 - 10 .....	54
Weekly Planning Guide .....	54
Daily Reflections .....	55
Weekly Devotional - A True Encourager (Acts 20) .....	58
Week 11 March 11 - 17 .....	60
Weekly Planning Guide .....	60
Daily Reflections .....	61
Weekly Devotional - Past and Future (Acts 23-27) .....	64
Week 12 March 18 - 24 .....	66
Weekly Planning Guide .....	66
Daily Reflections .....	67
Weekly Devotional - Paul's Introduction to Romans (Romans 1:1-17) .....	70
Week 13 March 25 - 31 .....	72
Weekly Planning Guide .....	72
Daily Reflections .....	73
Weekly Devotional - Does God Work In All Things? (Romans 8:28) .....	76
Additional Resources .....	77
100 Key Scriptures for Bible Study .....	77
God's Eternal Plan .....	81
Contact Us .....	82



# Introduction

## A 2012 Spiritual Growth Plan

### Above All—Loving God With All Our Hearts

1. **Daily** – These booklets contain a plan to read through the entire New Testament in a year (allowing weekend days for catching up on any chapters that might be missed). There is also space for prayer requests and reflection on each day's reading.
2. **Weekly** – Each week includes a devotional article written by a Graymere member that focuses on a text in that week's readings. We encourage families to set aside time once a week for a family devotional, using these devotional articles as guides. Don't worry about the devotional being a certain length of time, just read the article as a family, discuss the passage of scripture mentioned, and pray together. It will be encouraging to see how our families grow!
3. **Monthly** – Each month will provide us a different passage of scripture to memorize. We will be going over these passages on Sundays, and our Pew-Packers sessions will review the memory verses with our children. By the end of the year, we will all have twelve passages of scripture memorized.
4. **Quarterly** – Each quarter, we will select a book that helps us focus on that quarter's theme, and we will make it available for a discounted price. This will help us grow spiritually and help our families develop their Christian libraries. Sometimes we need motivation to read books that are spiritually encouraging. If you read one of these books each quarter, you will have four books on your shelf by the end of the year that you will have read.

Each booklet will also contain dates from our congregation's calendar as an added reminder about what is coming up for Graymere. Resource pages are also included, which are selected to help us grow spiritually and reach out to others evangelistically. Let's make it a goal in 2012 to grow closer to God and deeper in our knowledge of His Word.

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

# **January**

**Week 1 January 1 - 7**

**Weekly Planning Guide**

**Week 1: January 1-7  
Coming Up This Week...**

**This Week's Prayer List**

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### **Matthew 22:37-40**

And He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (NASB)

Link to audio version of Andrew's sermon [Why Put Love Above All](#)

**January 2, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 1

#### Daily Reflection

1. How is Jesus' lineage a proof that He is the Christ?
2. What are some of the qualities of a good husband seen in Joseph?
3. Why was Jesus' being born of a virgin necessary in order for Him to be the Savior of the world?

**January 3, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 2

#### Daily Reflection

1. How is Jesus' birth a fulfillment of the prophecy in Micah 5:2?
2. Why might Herod the Great have been so troubled by the birth of the Christ?
3. At birth, there was no room for Jesus at the inn. What can you do in order to make more room for Jesus in your life?

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**January 4, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 3

**Daily Reflection**

1. What was the purpose of John's baptism?
2. Why was Jesus baptized?
3. Can you identify the three distinct persons of the godhead present at Jesus' baptism?

**January 5, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 4

**Daily Reflection**

1. What applications can you make from Jesus being tempted immediately following His baptism?
2. What are some ways we can deal with temptation?
3. What can you do in order to be a fisher of men more effectively?

**January 6, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 5

**Daily Reflection**

1. How would you describe the daily habits of a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness?

2. In what ways are Christians the salt of the earth?

3. In what ways are Christians the light of the world?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Weekly Devotional - Blessed Are the Meek (Matthew 5:5)**

By Jonathan Winchester

Matthew 5:1-11 is often referred to as the “Be-Attitudes” because the Lord is encouraging us to make these attitudes a part of our lives. The Lord says in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Practicing meekness is often easier said than done. Some think that meekness is something you either have or do not have; however, this Be-Attitude can be learned and developed in our lives.

### **WHAT IS MEEKNESS?**

In order to understand meekness, it is helpful to understand what it is not. Meekness is not: arrogance, pride, haughtiness, being a loud-mouth, or even silence. Meekness is more closely associated with: gentleness, humility, modesty, self-control, and mildness. The illustration frequently offered is that meekness is like a tamed stallion which allows the rider to ride upon its back, and foregoes its right to buck the rider off; meekness is strength under control.

But what is a biblical definition of meekness? Meekness is being satisfied with what you have. “The meek shall eat and be satisfied...” (Psalm 22:26). Meekness is a willingness to submit to and be guided by God’s Word. “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9). Meekness is receptiveness to God’s gift of salvation. “...the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isa. 61:1). Meekness is seeking after God and righteousness. “Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zephaniah. 2:3).

### **WHY DO I NEED TO BE MEEK?**

When is the last time you heard someone say, “The secret to success in this life is meekness”? Our society says the exact opposite of what Jesus is teaching. Our world says the more you push and the louder you express yourself, the more likely you are to succeed. However, God’s Word reveals that meekness is an attribute of strength, power, and authority.

I need to be meek in order to receive God’s Word. “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). I need to be meek in order to be saved. “For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; He will beautify the meek with salvation” (Psalm 149:4). I need to be meek in order to please God. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10). I need to be meek in order to defend truth. “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). I need to be meek in order to gain

others for Christ. “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

Does the Lord observe strength under control in my life? What are some changes, additions, or subtractions that need to be made in my life in order for meekness to be a trait of my life?

**Thought Question:** What are some practical ways in which I can exhibit meekness in my interactions with others?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 2 January 8 - 14**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 2: January 8-14 Coming Up This Week...**

- January 12: Columbia School of Preaching begins. These classes will meet every Thursday night from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. until March 29th. The subjects will be Revelation and 1 Corinthians. David Morris and Andrew Phillips will be teaching.
- January 13-15: Evangelism University in Savannah, TN (Youth Group)  
This event features class sessions designed to help our young people learn how to share God's message with others. Let's be praying for this weekend.

## **This Week's Prayer List**

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Matthew 22:37-40

And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (NASB)

January 9, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 6

#### Daily Reflection

1. What do we learn about prayer by reading Jesus' model prayer?
2. How does Jesus tell His disciples they should fast?
3. What are some of the things they worried about in the 1st Century that we still worry about today?

January 10, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 7

#### Daily Reflection

1. 7:1 is often used out of context. What does it mean to keep from judging others?
2. In this chapter, we read the Golden Rule. How does that affect the way we deal with others?
3. Why did Jesus teach as one "with authority"?

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**January 11, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 8

**Daily Reflection**

1. Why did Jesus tell the leper He healed not to say anything to anyone?
2. Remember, Matthew was written primarily to a Jewish audience. Why would it be important that Matthew indicates that Jesus was fulfilling scripture in verse 17?
3. In the ancient world, the sea represented chaos. Why is it significant that Jesus has control over nature?

**January 12, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 9

**Daily Reflection**

1. Matthew was called by Jesus from his practice of tax-collecting. Why didn't the Jews like tax collectors?
2. What emotions would you feel if you had been there to see Jesus raise a girl from the dead?
3. If the fields are still white unto harvest today, what does that mean for Christians?

**January 6, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 10

**Daily Reflection**

1. The names of the apostles are listed at the beginning of this chapter. Why do you think Peter, Andrew, James, and John are listed first?
2. Why do you think Jesus sent out the apostles with no silver or gold?
3. What does it mean to “take up your cross” and follow Jesus?

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## **Weekly Devotional - Origins of True Happiness (Matthew 6)**

By Jerry Kirk

In our world today, we want everything fast--fast food, fast cash, fast cars, fast. . . You name it. We want it now! Many motivational plans include rewarding participants. Goals are obtained by giving rewards periodically. The same is true with promotional advertising. Airline carriers give rewards to good customers that frequent their services, and the "catch name" of one of the most successful airlines, Southwest, is "RAPID REWARDS"-- or fast reward. Why? It works! In Matthew 6, Jesus, in the "Sermon on the Mount" talks about rewards, choices, and trust.

### **REWARDS**

Jesus discusses three good things: 1) Benevolence (giving), 2) Prayer, 3) Devotion to God (fasting). In the same text, He also warns about misplaced motives. If these "good" things are done for self-glorification, then the result will be rewarded fast--glory of man. Jesus, of course teaches this is contrary to what our goal should be--we should seek God's glory.

### **CHOICES**

Isn't it nice that God has given us permission to choose? We are not robots. Our choices are (Matthew 6:24): God or man, God or self, God or the world. The only requirement is we must CHOOSE, we cannot have both (Joshua 24:15; 2 Corinthians 6:14ff; 1 John 2:15). We choose, and with these choices, we bear responsibilities. We reap the consequences, good or bad. Samson chose to reveal the source of his strength to Delilah, and the consequences were severe. Nadab and Abihu disobeyed God by offering strange fire and lost their lives.

On the other hand, Peter, Andrew, James, and John chose to follow Jesus. The ultimate reward? Heaven. Paul chose to talk to Ananias and then to follow Christ. We are constantly faced with choices. Each decision should be made in view of our eternal salvation.

### **TRUST**

Lean not on your own understanding, but trust in the Lord (Proverbs 3:5). Lyrics of a familiar song says, "Trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey". God takes care of His creation (Matthew 6:26-30).

We understand, then, God will take care of us. Don't sweat the small stuff—clothing, food, habitation. God will take care. We need to keep our focus on our eternal reward, heaven (Matthew 6:33). We should trust in God, giving our troubles to Him. The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5-6).

Rewards? Yes, I want one! Now? Of course . . . but be careful. This thinking may not lead to the correct long term reward. Good things come to the patient (Romans 2:7). Be patient. Though our culture tells us we want it now, "Grab for all the gusto you can get" . . . be patient. Do not become tired and quit (Galatians 6:9). Keep pressing toward the mark (Philippians 3:14) and receive the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8).

What does this mean to me today? We are always longing for something better. As we review history, we see that men have sought the fountain of youth, greater material gain, a better way of life for succeeding generations. How about rewards? Yes, we seek rewards! The greatest reward is a home in heaven. We can choose that reward! Imagine, it has not been predetermined which individuals will receive the reward and which will not (Joshua 24:15). The greatest comfort we can have is knowing that God will take care of His children (Matthew 6)--that's trust. We can sing, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey".

Determine now to: 1) Seek the greatest reward--heaven. 2) Be thankful for the God-given gift of choice. Let's follow Joshua as he said "for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah". 3) Trust in Jesus. He loves us so much that He gave his life for us. Salvation can be ours when we trust and obey.

It is easy for us to get caught up in the life's daily saga and lose our focus of heaven. Focus on heaven—it is something we must all work toward. There are times when we fail to make the right choices, but God is merciful and quick to forgive us. I want that ultimate reward! Don't you?

**Thought Question:** What are some daily choices we can make to serve God?

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## **Week 3 January 15 - 21**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 3: January 15-21 Coming Up This Week...**

- January 15-21—Panama Mission Trip  
Let's be praying for all the souls that will be touched by this campaign, as well as for the safety of our members on the trip.

## **This Week's Prayer List**

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Matthew 22:37-40

And He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (NASB)

January 16, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 11

#### Daily Reflection

1. Why do you think John would begin to wonder about Jesus?
2. Why did some call Jesus a "friend of sinners?"
3. How does it make you feel to imagine the "rest" that Jesus can provide?

January 17, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 12

#### Daily Reflection

1. What Old Testament individual does Jesus mention when He is talking about the Sabbath?
2. How were some claiming that Jesus was casting out demons? What is His response?
3. What is the "sign of Jonah?"

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**January 18, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 13

**Daily Reflection**

1. Why did Jesus use parables to teach people?
2. What did the Parable of the Weeds teach?
3. Why was Jesus' message rejected at Nazareth?

**January 19, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 14

**Daily Reflection**

1. Why did John the Baptist die?
2. What is the significance of having leftover baskets of food after the feeding of the 5,000?
3. In the ancient world, the sea represented chaos. Why is it significant that Jesus was in control over the elements?

**January 20, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 15

**Daily Reflection**

1. What commandments did Jesus say the Pharisees were guilty of breaking?
2. What did the people do on account of all of Jesus' miracles?

3. Why do you think the disciples were wondering how to get enough food for 4,000 people when they had already seen Jesus feed 5,000?

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## Weekly Devotional - A Life-Changing Passage (Matthew 11:28-30)

By Martin Jobe

Matthew 11: 28 – Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Many people in our culture recreate during the summers. “Recreate” literally means to “create again” or be renewed. Sometimes we recreate so hard that we need a vacation to recover from our vacation. We are such busy people, and we’re very tired. We punch the clock at work, and then try to squeeze in tread milling, golf, and carrying the kids to soccer practice. Consequently, we like the idea of sitting down in front of the TV at the end of a difficult day and resting. And, if we stopped reading at the end of verse 28 in our text, this lesson would be complete. In fact, our favorite topic for Sunday sermons from the pulpit might very well be “How To Rest More Effectively.” However, the problem with that thinking should be obvious – nothing in God’s Kingdom would ever get done!

God doesn’t call us to rest. At no point in the scriptures does He suggest that our final goal is to lie down and become inactive. Hence, even though we are probably reluctant to do so, we must continue our reading in verses 29 and 30 of the text, where we find words like “yoke”, “learn”, and “burden” – all of which indicate work.

Those who vacation in Florida will notice the following state slogan on billboards: “The rules are different here!” The same can be said for God’s Kingdom – things are different indeed. Even in rest, we must be active. In His Kingdom, He gives us the opportunity to do more amazing things than anywhere on earth. We have the privilege of spreading God’s message. However, we must never forget the following:

**It takes effort.**

Consider the work of the apostles in Acts 8: 1, 4 – “...a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were scattered. And those who had been scattered went about preaching the Word.”

**It takes commitment.**

How much? In Matthew 22: 37, we are told to “...love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Jesus said we should count the cost before starting the journey.

In Matthew 10: 34-39, He teaches that we cannot do things with family or at work that dishonor God.

**We are to reach out for all.**

In Acts 6: 7, we are told that "...the Word of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly..."

And in 2 Peter 3: 9, the Lord states clearly that He "...does not wish for any to perish."

In conclusion, we are instructed by our Lord to avoid inactivity. We must not stop in sharing His Word, and in doing our part to proclaim that the God who loves this world is still here, and is still active, and is still reaching out to save every individual on this planet. And, in doing so, we have no fear or worry, because all our burdens will be set aside. And when our tasks on this earth are finished, we can follow Paul's example in Philippians 3:14, and "reach out for the upward call of God." Then, and only then, will we find the ultimate rest with our Lord in Paradise.

**Thought Question:** In discussing our commitment to the Kingdom of God, we were referred to the 22nd chapter of Matthew, where we found the "great and foremost commandment." What is that commandment?

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## **Week 4 January 22 - 28**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

#### **Week 4: January 22-28**

## **Coming Up This Week...**

- January 29—Greatest Command Day  
This Sunday, Dr. Ed Gallagher from Heritage Christian University to help us kick-off our theme for the year. We will also have a potluck after the evening service, so bring a friend!

## **This Week's Prayer List**

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Matthew 22:37-40

And He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (NASB)

January 23, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 16

#### Daily Reflection

1. Why do you think Jesus described the attitude of the Pharisees as "leaven?"
2. What was the "rock" on which the church was going to be built?
3. What does it mean for someone to "take up his cross" to follow Jesus?

January 24, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 17

#### Daily Reflection

1. Why is it significant that Moses and Elijah were at the transfiguration?
2. What image does Jesus compare faith to in this chapter?
3. How did Jesus provide money for the temple tax?

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**January 25, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 18

**Daily Reflection**

1. What example does Jesus use to describe humility in this chapter?
2. What process does Jesus say should be followed when you have a dispute with a fellow Christian?
3. What does the parable of the unforgiving servant teach us about forgiveness?

**January 26, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 19

**Daily Reflection**

1. How did Jesus respond when He was questioned about divorce and remarriage?
2. What did Jesus say that the rich young ruler still lacked?
3. Why were the disciples shocked when Jesus said it would be hard for the rich to enter into Heaven?

**January 27, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 20

**Daily Reflection**

1. Was it fair for the master in Matthew 20 to pay each worker equally? Why or why not?
2. What did the mother of James and John ask Jesus? How did He respond?

3. Why were the apostles upset about this question?

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## Weekly Devotional - A Big Question (Mt. 16:26)

By Andrew Williams

After his team had been humiliated in a 51-0 loss to Notre Dame, former USC head football coach John McKay came into the locker room and saw a group of beaten, worn-out and thoroughly depressed young football players who were not accustomed to losing. He stood up on a bench and said, "Men, let's keep this in perspective. There are 800 million Chinese who don't even know this game was played."

Sometimes with a simple statement, our perspective can drastically change. In Matthew chapter 16, Jesus asks a question that challenges our perspective and our priorities. In verse 26, He asks, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Obviously, this is a rhetorical question and we know how we ought to answer it. But do our priorities and our actions truly reflect what we know to be true? Many times, the physical and temporary things of this life are given precedence over the spiritual and eternal things. While it is certainly easy to let the things of this world block our view of the proper perspective, all too often, our thoughts and our time reflect priorities that are out of order.

If we reflect how we spend our time during a given week, we might find that our priorities are misaligned and that we are "exchanging our soul" for things of this world.

Consider how much time and thought you dedicate to things such as your career or recreation. Do we give preference to these and other things above our soul? Socrates once said, "I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to your soul."

We know that our life is a vapor and vanishes after only a short time (James 4:14). The apostle Paul also gives a good metaphor in 2 Corinthians 5:1 when he says that our earthly body is a tent and we have a building from God, a house not made with hands which is eternal. C.S. Lewis said it well when he said, "You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body."

A soul is of more value than anything in this world. A soul is more valuable in terms of permanency, as it will exist for eternity, while all things of this world will certainly pass away. In terms of cost, no greater price has been paid than the blood of Christ that is required to redeem one soul. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ testifies that there is nothing of more value than a soul.

So when asked if there is anything that you will exchange for your soul, remember that the One who is asking the question is the One who has redeemed your soul.

**Thought Question:** What are some things we are often tempted to give in exchange for our soul?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 5 January 29 - February 4**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 5: January 29 - February 4 Coming Up This Week...**

- February 4—Annual Friday Night Singing  
Christians from several congregations participate in this singing. This night of praise will be uplifting!

## **This Week's Prayer List**

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Luke 6:45

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." (NASB)

January 30, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 21

#### Daily Reflection

1. How does the cursing of the fig tree compare to the eternal judgment of a Christian who never produces?
2. What lessons about faith and prayer can be drawn from Jesus' lesson of the fig tree?
3. What does the parable of the two sons reveal about those who are most receptive to Him?

January 31, 2012

Today's Reading: Matthew 22

#### Daily Reflection

1. What can you do in order to reach out to those in the "highways and hedges" with the Gospel?
2. What do Jesus' comments about Caesar and taxes reveal about our responsibility toward government?

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3. What steps can you take in order to live out the “Great Commandment” in heart, soul, and mind?

**February 1, 2012**

Today’s Reading: Matthew 23

**Daily Reflection**

1. What are some of the actions and attitudes of the Pharisees which we should try to avoid?
2. Why should men not wear the titles mentioned by Jesus?
3. How should we respond to those proclaiming the Word of God?

**February 2, 2012**

Today’s Reading: Matthew 24

**Daily Reflection**

1. How long will the Word of God endure?
2. What does Jesus say that no one, except the Father, will know?
3. Who does Jesus say will be saved?

**February 3, 2012**

Today’s Reading: Matthew 25

**Daily Reflection**

1. What comparisons can you make between the Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Judgment Day?
2. What will the Son of man do to the sheep and the goats?
3. What kinds of deeds are mentioned as being done by the faithful while on earth?

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## Weekly Devotional - Be Prepared (Matthew 21-25)

By Bob Brewer

The Boy Scouts of America have a wonderful motto: "Be Prepared." No specific thing is indicated as to what they will be taught, but they will learn to be careful and avoid dangerous situations. They will be provided with guidance concerning how to apply themselves in times of uncertainty. The young men who are truly dedicated to scouting, will reach for the highest levels the organization offers. This, in turn, better prepares them to deal with life issues.

As I read the account Matthew wrote about some of the events in the last week of the life of Jesus, the lessons He taught and the warnings He gave, I see a strong admonition to be prepared. At times the lesson is to perform; at other times to be patient, and at still other times to produce. The fig tree in Chapter 21 failed to produce, and one of the sons in another parable failed to practice as he knew he should. The wicked husbandman failed to present what was due to the master of the vineyard. The guests who refused the wedding feast invitation failed to participate. They only focused on their own personal interests. The one who did attend the wedding feast refused to put on the wedding garment available to him. He was trusting in his own righteousness.

No clearer lessons could have been presented to those pretentious scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke the seven woes in Chapter 23. They were those who "say and do not." To hear Christ's plaintive cry about their refusing his invitation to come to him shows the depth of love He felt for them and how He wants all to escape impending doom. He looked back on the city of Jerusalem, knowing He would not come again seeking their acceptance of the salvation that could be gained only through Him.

The finality of the words that Jesus spoke on that occasion ("Behold your house is left unto desolate") are words applicable to each of us if we refuse to do the things He taught. They tell of the desolation awaiting all who refuse to obey by coming to Him.

Matthew's account goes on to show that even Christ's closest followers can easily be enamored by the material things of this life. The apostles speak to Jesus about the beauty of the temple. Jesus uses their comments to teach them about the fleeting nature of things of this world. His apostles then ask Jesus two big questions. The first question is "When will these things be?" This was asked in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus tells them it will not be immediate but would come in that generation. It did happen in 70 AD. The second question is, "What will be the sign of Your coming?" In reply, Jesus warns them of the dangers of false teachers that will come trying to lead men astray. He then emphasizes the importance of being ever watchful and alert. His return will be unmistakable in its happening. He will come again to judge the world. Every eye will see Him!

In summing up His answer, He tells them that no man, no angel, nor even the Son knows when the end will come. Only the Father in Heaven knows. How foolish of those who try to predict the time! More parables are told stressing the necessity of being prepared. This section of Matthew's account gives us a picture of rewards for the prepared and punishment for the unprepared. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins clearly shows the time to prepare is before the bridegroom (Christ) comes. There will be no time left to prepare then.

**Thought Question:** Are you prepared?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

# **February**

**Week 6 February 5 - 11**

**Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 6: February 5-11 Coming Up This Week...**

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Luke 6:45

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." (NASB)

**February 6, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 26

#### Daily Reflection

1. What is significant about this woman anointing Jesus' feet with perfume in that culture?
2. What prophecy does Jesus make about Peter? How does he react?
3. How were the opponents of Jesus attempting to accuse Him in this supposed "trial."

**February 7, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 27

#### Daily Reflection

1. How do Peter and Judas react to their similar situations differently?
2. How did Jesus answer the questions of Pilate?
3. How did the sign above Jesus on the cross read?

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**February 8, 2012**

Today's Reading: Matthew 28

**Daily Reflection**

1. Who were the first people to discover that Jesus was raised from the dead?
2. What story was widely spread among the Jews to explain away the resurrection?  
How did it get started?
3. What are the key components of the "Great Commission?"

**February 9, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 1

**Daily Reflection**

1. What instructions did Jesus give to the apostles?
2. What message does the angel give the apostles as they are still looking at the sky?
3. How is the apostle who will replace Judas selected?

**February 10, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 2

**Daily Reflection**

1. How did the people react when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, giving them the ability to speak in tongues?
2. What Old Testament passages does Peter reference in his sermon?
3. How did these new Christians take care of each other during this time?

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## Weekly Devotional - Introducing Acts (Acts 1)

By James England

This chapter puts in perspective two things: an introduction to the book of Acts and specific preparation the apostles were to make for the great events of Pentecost and Jerusalem in Acts 2. Aren't you impressed with how the book of Acts begins where the gospel of Luke ends? In the gospel of Luke we have a record of the earthly ministry of Jesus. In Acts we have a record of the heavenly ministry of Jesus.

Consider this summary of this interesting chapter:

1. Verse 1 - Both Acts and Luke have the same writer (Luke 1:3), possibly Luke the beloved physician.
2. Verse 2 - Jesus giving the great commission to the apostles.
3. Verse 3 - Strong emphasis is given to the resurrection of Jesus, when He "presented Himself alive" during a forty day period of "many infallible proofs."
4. Verses 4-5 - Jesus commanded the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. "...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." This was to make them witnesses of Jesus (verse 8).
5. Verses 6-7 - Reference to the apostles regarding their misunderstanding the nature of Jesus' coming kingdom and Jesus' brief response to them.
6. Verses 9-11 - Records the account of Jesus' ascension into heaven from Mt. Olivet, and the two angels say, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."
7. Verses 12-14 - Explains the assembly in the upper room of the 11 apostles (Judas deceased) with certain women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' brothers, and with other disciples. The number was about a hundred and twenty (verse 15).
8. Verses 15-26 - These verses deal with appointing an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot. Matthias was selected (verse 26).

Observe these valuable qualities which characterized those preparing for the great events of Pentecost:

1. Unity (verse 14) - "These all continued with one accord..." Same mind, same spirit, same purpose, one heart, one soul.

2. Prayer (verse 14) - "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." - James 5:16
3. Respect for Scripture (verse 16) - Several scriptures from Psalms were referred to "concerning Judas," and they "had to be fulfilled."
4. Trust in God (verse 24) - They trusted the Lord, prayed and left the final results to Him. "And they prayed and said, 'You O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two you have chosen...'" What a lesson for us!

We face many situations and decisions in life which are difficult. What better can we do than trust God and pray that His wisdom will determine the final outcome? What a blessing!

**Thought Question:** Are the qualities mentioned in Acts 1 part of my life?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 7 February 12 - 18**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 1: February 12-18 Coming Up This Week...**

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Luke 6:45

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." (NASB)

**February 13, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 3

#### Daily Reflection

1. What did the lame man expect to receive from Peter and John?
2. Where does Peter stand up to preach?
3. How does Peter describe Jesus to his listeners?

**February 14, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 4

#### Daily Reflection

1. Why were the rulers, elders, and scribes upset with the teaching of the apostles?
2. How do Peter and John react when told to stop preaching?
3. Why was there not a needy person among the Christians in Jerusalem?

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**February 15, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 5

**Daily Reflection**

1. What did Ananias and Sapphira do that was sinful?
2. Who does Peter say they have lied to?
3. Why did the apostles rejoice at the end of the chapter?

**February 16, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 6

**Daily Reflection**

1. What problem arises in this chapter?
2. What are the qualities of the men found to serve in this new capacity?
3. How does verse 15 describe Stephen's face?

**February 17, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 7

**Daily Reflection**

1. How does Stephen begin his sermon before the high priest and those who opposed him?

2. What does Stephen say at the end of the chapter that upsets many of those around him?

3. What were Stephen's last words? What words do they remind us of?

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## Weekly Devotional - Only 57 Cents (Acts 4:34-35)

By Rusty Pettus

In 1886 there was a church in Philadelphia that was growing to the point that people could not get into the building. Children would come for Bible school but were turned away. One of the girls who would wait in line hoping to get into Bible school was Hattie May Wiatt. The minister saw little Hattie one day and told her that one day they would build a place big enough to hold all the little boys and girls who wanted to come. This was actually only a dream and the minister knew that they didn't have the money. Sometime later the minister was asked to visit Hattie as she had become ill. She died but left the church 57 cents to build a place large enough so people wouldn't be turned away.

The minister was deeply moved and decided to turn his dream into a reality. He preached the next Sunday and shared the story of Hattie May and sold the 57 cents to members for \$250. Later 54 cents were returned to the church. The church would then buy a house next door to expand room. As they continued to grow they wanted to buy a lot to build a new church. The person wanted \$30,000. They had no money but offered him 54 cents as a down payment. He accepted. This church acted on faith in God and continued to grow and have audacious goals. They would go on to create Samaritan Hospital and Temple University as they continued to reach out and care for people in their community. It all began by one girl giving what she had: faith and 57 cents.

The book of Acts is filled with stories of situations and problems that are overcome by men and women of God who responded in faith and allowed God to do great things through them. In Acts 2 we see that 3,000 people become Christians and many of them are poor. By Acts 4 there are now 5,000 Christians and more poor people. It would be easy to believe that there was no way to deal with this issue. It is easy for us to believe that we can't help all the poor, the hurting, and the lost. But the church did the unthinkable; they acted with faith and gave what they could. Because of this Luke could write, "There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need." (Act 4:34-35)

In faith, one girl gave 57 cents that inspired others to trust that God could move mountains. What problems, hurts, and injustice do you see in Columbia? Are they bigger than God? What could God do in Columbia with 57 cents and men and women who believed and trusted that God could use Graymere to show His glory?

**Thought Question:** How can you give what you have to serve God in our community?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 8 February 19 - 25**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 8: February 19-25 Coming Up This Week...**

- February 26 - Coat Drive (Preparations this week)  
Let's be praying that this annual effort can bless the lives of many.

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Luke 6:45

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." (NASB)

**February 20, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 8

#### Daily Reflection

1. What is Saul of Tarsus doing at the beginning of this chapter?
2. What does Simon the magician desire in this chapter, and why does he want it?
3. What passage is the Ethiopian reading? What question does he have?

**February 21, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 9

#### Daily Reflection

1. What message is Saul given on the road to Damascus? How do his companions react?
2. What does Saul do immediately after becoming a Christian?
3. How did Saul get away from those who were seeking to kill him?

**February 22, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 10

**Daily Reflection**

1. What kind of person was Cornelius?
2. How does God show Peter that the gospel was open to the Gentiles?
3. What kinds of barriers did Peter cross just by going to the house of Cornelius?

**February 23, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 11

**Daily Reflection**

1. How does Peter describe the actions of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household?
2. Who did the Christians in Jerusalem send to Antioch?
3. What prophet is named as the one who predicted a great famine?

**February 24, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 12

**Daily Reflection**

1. How many soldiers were guarding Peter?

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2. How do the Christians react when Rhoda tells them that Peter is at the door?

3. How did Herod die?

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## Weekly Devotional - Wherever They Went (Acts 8:1-4)

By Nathan Owens

I was always very close to my grandfather. Many of the most special memories I have of him came on our summer days together. We would regularly go fishing at a one acre pond on the farm where I grew up. We would spend the entire day catching dozens of catfish and bass. We knew the exact spots to go, the exact bait to use and the exact time of day to try. After a day at our pond I felt like a professional fisherman. The curious thing was that when we tried other lakes and ponds my luck wasn't quite the same. I would often leave totally defeated and discouraged, wondering why I ever fished at all.

The church in Acts 8 was experiencing a time that we might not quite understand. They were being persecuted to the point of driving the entire church apart. The efforts of those persecuting these Christians was clear, to destroy the church. I can't help but put myself in that situation and wonder what I would do. My first instinct would be to hide my family and protect them whatever the cost. But as I read Acts 8 I'm amazed at the early Christians' reaction. Acts 8:4 says, "they preached the word wherever they went." Wow, that's a tough pill to swallow when I look at my own life. Can we say that we are preaching the word wherever we go?

There are numerous excuses we can come up with to avoid missionary work. Many times these are legitimate. We have jobs and families to attend to and provide for. Time is a valuable thing these days. But evangelism does not have to be practiced on foreign soil exclusively. We have opportunities around us every day. Acts 1:7-8 says that we are to be God's witness throughout this world. I would venture to say that many of us have trouble being God's witness here in Columbia. I challenge and encourage you to take every opportunity you have each day to go fishing in our local pond. Reach out to people at your job, in your family and in our community. Do your best every single day to do your part in growing God's church and bringing souls to Christ. Be bold! Be courageous! Put yourself out there for Christ, He did it for you. Let's work together to make Graymere a congregation known for preaching the word "wherever they went."

**Thought Question:** What can we do to spread God's Word wherever we go?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 9 February 26 - March 3**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

# **Week 9: February 26- March 3 Coming Up This Week...**

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Psalm 119:10-11

"With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."

**February 27, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 13

#### Daily Reflection

1. According to verse 4, who was guiding Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey?
2. What message does Paul preach in the synagogue?
3. In verse 45, why did some of the Jews begin to contradict Paul?

**February 28, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 14

#### Daily Reflection

1. How did the people at Lystra react when Paul healed the lame man?
2. When the Jews convinced the crowd to turn against Paul, what do they do to him?
3. What did Paul do immediately after being left for dead?

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**February 29, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 15

**Daily Reflection**

1. What were some men from Judea teaching Christians?
2. What conclusion do the apostles come to after their conference in Jerusalem?
3. Why did Paul and Barnabas disagree?

**March 1, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 16

**Daily Reflection**

1. Who begins accompanying Paul in this chapter?
2. Why do Paul and Silas get put in prison?
3. What are Paul and Silas doing in prison in the middle of the night?

**March 2, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 17

**Daily Reflection**

1. In verse 7, how do the Jews accuse Paul and Silas of challenging Caesar?
2. Why are the Jews in Berea described as being noble?

3. How does Paul relate to his audience in the sermon on Mars Hill?

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## **Weekly Devotional - Are You in Good Hands? (Acts 13-17)**

By Greg Philpott

Paul and his companions have bold resolute posture when it comes to the mission that God has placed before them. In Acts 14:8-13, Paul is preaching to people in Lystra when he sees a lame man. Paul speaks to the lame man and heals him. All the people in the area were astonished because they knew this certain man had been lame since birth. All the people thought that Paul and Barnabas were Greek gods because they had the ability to heal. Paul and Barnabas would not let the people worship them and make sacrifices to them. They told the people that their power came from the one and only true "God." The people did not understand and by the end of the day, they stoned Paul. But even after Paul was stoned and left for dead, Paul gets up and goes back to the city and preaches even more. Physically, mentally, emotionally—there is only so much a person can take, but miraculously, Paul continues on to the next town the next day.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas angered many people once again and were thrown into prison. Even in prison Paul and Silas were praying and singing to God while all the other prisoners listened. At midnight, an earthquake came and all the prison doors flew open. Even though the way was clear, none of the prisoners escaped so that the prison guard would not get into trouble and not kill himself. In the end, the prison guard and his entire household became Christians through baptism.

Paul and Silas were not afraid of what might happen to them. Paul and Silas knew who they were and they knew where their heart was. They knew exactly what their mission was, and they did not have any problem paying the price for it. They had come to expect the worst. They would go wherever God led them, and whatever happened, they knew it would be ok. They were beyond this physical world because they had placed their hearts beyond the reach of any mortal man, and that is a beautiful thing.

Where have you placed your heart? To place your heart out of the reach of any mortal man is to place it fully with all trust in the One who made it. God is the only one who can heal our hearts. God is the only one who can protect our hearts. The hardest thing we have to do is to give our hearts to God 100%. If our heart is not 100% in God's hands, then it is in the world's hands. Who runs the world? The devil does. If God does not have our heart 100%, then the devil has hold of it. Just as Paul knew that nothing would get in his way of preaching God's Word, is there anything that gets in your way of obeying God's commands and living a faithful Christian life?

How can you better give God 100% of your heart?

What, in this world, is keeping hold of part of your heart?

How can you help your family members give 100% of their hearts to God?

**Thought Question:** Where have you placed your heart? Are you in “good hands”?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

# **March**

## **Week 10 March 4 - 10**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

## **Week 10: March 4-10 Coming Up This Week...**

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Psalm 119:10-11

"With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."

**March 5, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 18

#### Daily Reflection

1. Who does Paul meet at the beginning of the chapter? What does he have in common with them?
2. What message does God give Paul in verses 9-10?
3. What did Apollos learn in this chapter?

**March 6, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 19

#### Daily Reflection

1. Why are the people in Acts 19 baptized again?
2. What kinds of miracles were being performed by God through Paul?
3. Why does a riot start at the end of this chapter?

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**March 7, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 20

**Daily Reflection**

1. In this chapter, when do we see Christians gather to worship?
2. What happens to Eutychus in this passage?
3. What warnings does Paul give to the Ephesian elders at Miletus?

**March 8, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 21

**Daily Reflection**

1. What did Philip's daughters do for the Lord?
2. Why did James and the other brothers in Jerusalem rejoice?
3. Why was Paul arrested?

**March 9, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 22

**Daily Reflection**

1. What language did Paul use to defend himself in Acts 22?
2. How did they respond to Paul's defense?

3. What does Paul reveal at the end of the chapter?

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## Weekly Devotional - A True Encourager (Acts 20)

By Laray Rector

We live in a world that is constantly changing around us. The economy is in turmoil. Nations struggle for independence. The pace of life seems to only get faster. In the midst of so much uncertainty, it is easy to become a little discouraged. At times all of us need someone to lean on; someone to “pick us up”. It seems that when we need it the most, God provides us with an encourager. William Arthur Ward once wrote, “Flatter me and I may not believe you. Criticize me and I may not like you. Ignore me and I may not forgive you. Encourage me and I will not forget you.” People who “lift us up” make lasting impacts on our lives.

Barnabas is the first name that comes to our mind when we think of a New Testament encourager, but Paul also provides a great example for us. In Acts 19, Paul arrives in Ephesus as part of his third missionary journey. He spends more than two years there teaching and preaching; his words confirmed by many miracles. Acts 19:20 says the message spread widely and grew in power. Paul’s preaching disrupted the commerce at Ephesus and the end result was a riot. When the people settled down and the rioting ended, Paul decides to continue his journey to Jerusalem by way of Macedonia. Paul calls together the disciples whom he has grown to love and encourages them (Acts 20:1). As his travels continue, he encourages all the believers in the towns he passes through (Acts 20:2).

Eventually, Paul ends up at Troas. He stays only a week there, but makes the most of his time, preaching until early in the morning even on the day of his departure. Paul decides not to go back to Ephesus; however, he cannot miss one last opportunity to encourage them. He calls for the elders to meet with him at Miletus. His words to the Ephesian elders give us valuable insight in how we can encourage others.

He begins by recalling his struggles and trials. When others see us bravely overcome obstacles in our lives, they are encouraged. Paul then challenges the elders to lead the church that Christ died for. We encourage others by placing the same value on the church as God does. Finally, Paul entrusted them to God and His Word. Bringing God’s word to others, which is able to convict, convert and to build them up may be the most important work of encouragement we could ever do.

Acts 20 closes with Paul’s farewell prayer with the Ephesians. They wept bitterly as he left. Paul encouraged them and we can be certain they never forgot him. Let’s strive to be the people who “lift up those around us.” We too will benefit. Proverbs 11:25 says, “He who refreshes others, will himself be refreshed.”

### Thought Question:

In Acts 20:28, Paul states that the church was purchased by the blood of Christ.

How does that motivate us to love the church?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 11 March 11 - 17**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

# **Week 11: March 11-17 Coming Up This Week...**

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Psalm 119:10-11

"With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."

**March 12, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 23

#### Daily Reflection

1. Where did God tell Paul that he would take his message?
2. How many conspired together to kill Paul?
3. At the end of the chapter, where is Paul placed?

**March 13, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 24

#### Daily Reflection

1. Who did Paul defend himself before in this chapter?
2. What kind of understanding did Felix have about the Way?
3. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison?

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**March 14, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 25

**Daily Reflection**

1. To whom did Paul make his defense after Felix?
2. Who was accompanying Agrippa?
3. What accompanied their arrival?

**March 15, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 26

**Daily Reflection**

1. How does Paul describe his conversion?
2. What did Felix say to Paul after his defense?
3. What kept Paul from being set free, according to Agrippa?

**March 16, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 27

**Daily Reflection**

1. What did Paul tell everyone about the voyage once it seemed to be dangerous?
2. When things became desperate, what message does Paul give them all from God?

3. What did the soldiers plan to do to the prisoners? Who stopped that plan from coming to fruition?

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## Weekly Devotional - Past and Future (Acts 23-27)

By Dwayne Fulks

As the end of the Book of Acts approaches, many readers begin to lose interest. To some it appears to be a jumble of names, places and disconnected events. To others it might seem to be a “comedy of errors” as Paul’s ministry moves headlong toward disaster. The story moves from successful and robust missionary journeys to a man wrapped in Roman chains. Paul, the great preacher, now finds himself a helpless prisoner of the Jewish and Roman legal system. Appearing first to the Sanhedrin and then to Felix, Festus and Agrippa, Paul seems determined to be offered up to Rome.

Long before his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul told the Ephesian Elders that the days ahead of him would be filled with hardship and even prison (20:23). Even when Paul knew that disaster awaited him, he boarded a ship and set off to Rome. (27:10) Paul makes it clear that he was being led by the Spirit. He appeared to be confident that whatever doors were being opened to him, were being opened by God and he was willing to go even if it would lead to his death.

Paul approached these upcoming challenges with great confidence. Through the book of Acts, we watch as Paul sees success grow out of adversity time and time again. He recounts many of those observations as he speaks to these officials in the last few chapters of Acts. Memory of how God had directed his steps gave him great confidence that he would be used as an instrument of God in the future. He declares this as he speaks to Agrippa “But I have had God’s help to this very day,…” (26:22).

Often we are led to places in our lives that we would rather not have gone. We may be led to move to a different place because we lost our job or we have lost a loved one. These events all seem so disastrous and disruptive. Looking backwards through time, most of us have had that experience. We see the hand of God in our lives. Maybe those events brought our spouse to us or put us in a special place to minister to others. Confidence is in short supply when our future is in question. In spite of seeing God moving in our lives in the past, counting on him seems difficult as we look at uncertainty. Just as Paul went to Rome anticipating a bad outcome, he still remained confident that outcome was God’s will. He had witnessed God’s victories in his life in the past and had no doubt that God would have victory in the future.

As the end of Paul’s life approaches, he reflects with great confidence that “there is now a great crown of righteousness laid up for me” (II Tim 4:8). The confidence in that statement comes from a lifetime of memories of God using him for His purpose.

As we approach the end of our times on this earth, we will indeed have to trust the promises that our Lord has made. May God bless us with good memories of the past as we approach our lives with peace in looking forward to our future.

**Thought Question:**

Can you think of events in your past that assure you that God will see you through in the future?

*(Rev. 01/07/2012)*

## **Week 12 March 18 - 24**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

# **Week 12: March 18-24 Coming Up This Week...**

- March 22nd: Columbia School of Preaching ends.

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Psalm 119:10-11

"With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."

**March 19, 2012**

Today's Reading: Acts 28

#### Daily Reflection

1. What did the people on Malta think when Paul was bitten by a venomous snake? Was Paul harmed?
2. Who was the chief man of the island that showed hospitality?
3. What is Paul doing when the book of Acts concludes?

**March 20, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 1

#### Daily Reflection

1. Why did Paul long to see the Christians at Rome?
2. How does Paul describe the gospel?
3. According to Paul, when it comes to the existence of God, why is everyone without excuse?

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**March 21, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 2

**Daily Reflection**

1. What does Paul tell both Jews and Gentiles in this chapter?
2. According to verse 16, how will people be judged?
3. In verse 24, what happens when people who boast in the law break the law?

**March 22, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 3

**Daily Reflection**

1. In verse 8, what have some charged Paul with saying?
2. What psalms does Paul quote in this chapter?
3. Read verses 23 and 24. Why should they always be read together?

**March 23, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 4

**Daily Reflection**

1. What was counted to Abraham as righteousness?

2. What promise was given to Abraham?

3. How is Abraham's faith described in this chapter?

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## **Weekly Devotional - Paul's Introduction to Romans (Romans 1:1-17)**

By Dennis Stephen

Paul had never set foot in Rome, so far as we know, until after this epistle had been written. If this is the case, a word of introduction was certainly necessary for this letter to be received as the Word of God. In the first seven verses, Paul described his relationship to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while in verses 8-15 he pursued his relationship with the Romans to whom he wrote.

### **Paul's Relationship to the Gospel (v. 1-7)**

As even a casual reading of the account of the conversion of Saul will reveal, Paul was not an apostle of Jesus Christ by his own initiative. Rather, he was an apostle by divine appointment. He was 'called' and 'set apart' (v. 1). The Gospel which Paul preached was not one of his own making. It was the message which was in fulfillment of all that the Old Testament prophets had promised (v. 2). The object of the Gospel was the person, Jesus Christ, who came as the Son of God and the sin-bearer of the sins of the world (v. 3-4). The incontestable proof of His authenticity was His resurrection from the dead.

The scope of the Gospel which Paul preached was universal (v. 5-7). The Jews wanted to keep the Gospel to themselves. They wished to make it exclusively Jewish. Paul's primary calling was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (v. 5). Paul's concern for the salvation of the Gentiles explains, in part, his interest in writing to the Roman saints.

### **Paul's Relationship to the Romans (v. 8-15)**

Since Paul had not yet visited Rome, it was necessary for him to pave the way for this epistle by expanding on his relationship to his readers. He had a deep and abiding concern and interest in the spiritual well-being of these Romans. This was indicated by his prayer life (v. 8-10). Paul greatly rejoiced in the fact that the faith of the Romans was being broadcast throughout the world. Although he did not know many of them personally, he did know of them, even by name, and unceasingly prayed for their growth, and for the privilege of visiting them.

Why, then, had Paul not yet visited this city? Not because he had no desire to do so, and not because he had not attempted to visit these saints. The only reason was that thus far God had prevented him from carrying out his intentions (v. 13-15). As we know from later events in the life of Paul, God did intend for Paul to visit Rome, but in a way which we would never have expected. He spent time in Rome as a prisoner.

### **The Theme of Paul's Epistle (v. 16-17)**

In Romans 1:16-17 he introduced the theme of his epistle. We might summarize this theme in this fashion—the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the Righteousness of God Revealed. In verse 16 Paul wrote: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The reason that Paul was not ashamed of the gospel is because it has the power to deal with the problem of sin and provide a person with a right standing with God – a feat impossible on their own.

**Thought Question:** Can you list several ways the gospel positively affects your life?

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## **Week 13 March 25 - 31**

### **Weekly Planning Guide**

# **Week 13: March 25 - 31 Coming Up This Week...**

## **This Week's Prayer List**

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## Daily Reflections

### This Month's Memory Verse

#### Psalm 119:10-11

"With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."

**March 26, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 5

#### Daily Reflection

1. How have we obtained access into God's grace?
2. According to this chapter, at what time did Christ die for us?
3. Adam is mentioned in this chapter as a "type" of the one who is to come. Who does that description reference?

**March 27, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 6

#### Daily Reflection

1. Do we continue to sin just so that we can receive more grace? Why not?
2. How is baptism described in this chapter?
3. In verse 23, what is the wages of sin?

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**March 28, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 7

**Daily Reflection**

1. The "old way of the written code" and the "new way of the Spirit" are both described here. Which is the New Covenant way?
2. Describe the struggle Paul tells us about in this chapter.
3. Who could deliver Paul from that situation?

**March 29, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 8

**Daily Reflection**

1. As Christians, what should we "set our minds on?"
2. What does it mean for us to be children of God?
3. How does Paul say that Jesus and the Holy Spirit help us when we pray?

**March 30, 2012**

Today's Reading: Romans 9

**Daily Reflection**

1. In the first few verses, why did Paul have such anguish in his spirit?

2. How does the potter and the clay imagery help us understand our relationship to God?

3. What kind of righteousness had the Gentiles attained? How is that different than the Israelites Paul discusses? How do you think this would have affected both the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome?

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## **Weekly Devotional - Does God Work In All Things? (Romans 8:28)**

By Roger Riddle

I know that many of us have read this verse and thought that we know what it says, but if you are like me, you may have misunderstood exactly what God is saying through the apostle Paul. We see the part that says “all things work together for good to those who love God.” What we hear or perceive is “only good things happen to those who love God.” Now you may say, no, I do not read it that way, but ask yourself honestly, “Do I feel it that way?”

Often we ask the question “How can this be happening to us?” It could be sickness, loss of our livelihood, loss of a loved one or any other catastrophic personal event and we look at it as if it is “God’s fault.” Romans 8:28 does nothing to guarantee that we will not have tough times and hardships. We as human beings are going to have speed bumps in the road of life and must realize that not everything that happens in life is going to be good. Unfortunately, there has been, is, and will be a great deal of evil in the world so long as the world continues. We are not immune to suffering and experiencing setbacks from time to time; however God is able to turn every circumstance around to work toward our ultimate good.

God does not tell us that everything will always be easy, but He does tell us that if we fulfill our promise to Him, then He will honor His covenant with us. The issue is, who can be a part of this promise? We can, if we love God and are “called according to His purpose.” Being “called” means we are part of the body after we receive Christ. We have the proper mindset and proper perspective to deal with life’s speed bumps. We trust not in the earthly treasures that beckon, but in the potential of a home in Heaven with God. We accept what happens here in life because God is with us in everything that happens, good or bad!

### **Thought Question:**

Where does our focus need to be; on what happens to us today or what lies in store for us at the end of our journey?

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# Additional Resources

## 100 Key Scriptures for Bible Study

From *Family of God* by Batsell Barrett Baxter, pgs. vii-ix.  
Used by permission of Gospel Advocate

1. Matthew 16:13-18 – Peter’s confession of Christ
2. Ephesians 5:22-32 – Analogy of marriage and the church
3. John 3:16 – God’s love for the world
4. Acts 10:34-35 – No respecter of persons
5. Matthew 28:18-20 – The great commission
6. John 14:1-3 – Preparing a home in Heaven
7. 1 Peter 2:5, 9 – Christians are living stones, a royal priesthood
8. Matthew 13:3-53 – Christ’s parables
9. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 – The church is like a body
10. Daniel 2:44 – God’s kingdom to be established
11. 1 Corinthians 3:11 – Christ, the foundation
12. Mark 9:1 – The kingdom to begin soon
13. John 17:20-21 – Christ’s prayer for unity
14. Acts 4:8-12 – Salvation in no other name
15. 1 Peter 4:14-16 – Suffer as a Christian
16. Matthew 21:23 – Christ’s authority questioned
17. Matthew 10:19-20 – The Holy Spirit to guide the apostles
18. Galatians 1:8-9 – Danger of falling away
19. Romans 3:10, 23 – All are sinners
20. 1 John 1:8, 10 – Those who claim no sin are deceived
21. Ephesians 2:8-10 – Salvation by grace through faith
22. 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 – Reconciliation with God
23. Romans 1:5, 16:26 – The obedience of faith
24. Matthew 7:21, 24-27 – Importance of doing God’s will
25. Acts 2:37-41 – Conversion of 3,000 on Pentecost
26. Acts 8:35-39 – Conversion of the Ethiopian
27. Acts 10:1-2, 11:13-14 – Conversion of Cornelius
28. John 3:3-5 – The new birth

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29. Romans 6:3-7 – Baptism like a burial and resurrection
30. Matthew 1:21 – Christ came to save sinners
31. Luke 19:10 – To seek and save the lost
32. John 14:6 – The way, truth, and life
33. Matthew 9:35-38 – The harvest is plenteous
34. Romans 10:13-15 – Whosoever will may come
35. Acts 1:8 – The apostles to be witnesses of Christ
36. Acts 8:4 – They went everywhere preaching
37. Hebrews 5:12-6:3 – Importance of spiritual development
38. Ephesians 4:11-15 – Growing spiritually
39. Acts 20:17, 28 – Elders, bishops, presbyters, overseers
40. Hebrews 13:7, 17 – Elders are to lead and rule
41. Acts 4:13 - Effects of association with Christ
42. Hebrews 12: 6-11 - The value of discipline (suffering)
43. Luke 4:18-19, 21 – Christ the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy
44. Luke 14:12-14 – Concern for the sick, maimed, poor
45. Luke 10:25-37 – The good Samaritan
46. Matthew 25:31-46 – The judgment scene
47. James 1:27 – Care for widows and orphans
48. Titus 3:1 – Ready for every good work
49. 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13 – Qualifications of elders and deacons
50. Titus 1:5-9 – Qualifications of Elders
51. John 4:23-24 – Worship in spirit and in truth
52. Isaiah 6:1-9 – The essence of real worship
53. Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14 – To the praise of God’s glory
54. Matthew 17:1-5 – The transfiguration
55. Romans 1:16 – God’s power of salvation
56. 2 Corinthians 4:7 – Treasure in earthen vessels
57. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 – Preach the word
58. Luke 6:12 – Christ prayed all night
59. Matthew 26:36-44 – Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane
60. Acts 2:42 – Christian worship
61. Matthew 6:5-13 – Christ’s model prayer
62. John 14:14 – Pray in Christ’s name
63. Matthew 21:22 – Pray in faith

64. John 15:7 – Abide in Christ, Pray
65. James 5:13-18 – Guidelines for prayer
66. 1 Corinthians 14:15 – Pray and sing in spirit and truth
67. Ephesians 5:19 – Making melody with the heart
68. Colossians 3:16 – Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
69. Mark 14:12-16, 22-25 – Institution of the Lord’s Supper
70. 1 Corinthians 11:23-30 – The Lord’s Supper
71. Acts 20:7 – Breaking bread on the Lord’s Day
72. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit
73. Matthew 6:19-33 – Seeking first the Kingdom of God
74. 1 Corinthians 16:2 – Give on the first day of the week
75. Acts 2:2-4 – The apostles filled with the Holy Spirit
76. Matthew 10:8 – Freely ye received, freely give
77. Acts 2:44-45 – Christians had all things in common
78. Galatians 6:2, 10 – Bear one another’s burdens
79. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 7-9, 12 – Giving; the sincerity of your love
80. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 10 – Giving; sow sparingly, reap sparingly
81. Psalm 24:1 – The earth is the Lord’s
82. Luke 6:38 – Give, and it shall be given to you
83. John 16:7-8, 12-13 – Christ will send the Holy Spirit
84. 2 Peter 1:21 – Inspiration; moved by the Holy Spirit
85. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 – Spiritual things with spiritual words
86. Acts 1:4-5 – Baptism of the Holy Spirit
87. Acts 8:18 – Laying on of the apostles’ hands
88. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 – Miraculous gifts will cease
89. Acts 5:32 – The Holy Spirit given to Christians
90. Romans 8:9-16 – The indwelling of the Holy Spirit
91. Galatians 5:22-23 – The fruit of the Spirit
92. John 20:30-31 – Signs (miracles) to create faith
93. John 13:34-35 – Sign of a Christian; love one another
94. 1 John 4:7-8, 11, 20-21 – God is love; love brethren
95. 2 John 9-11 – Departing from Christ’s teaching
96. 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13 – Withdrawing fellowship
97. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 – Have no company with the disorderly
98. 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1 – The outer man; the inner man

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99.1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – The Lord’s Second Coming






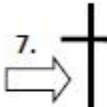


100. 2 Peter 3:3-13 – The destruction of the world

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# God's Eternal Plan

**Evangelizing Your Community by Stafford North, pg. 38. Used by permission.**

Here is a way of spreading the message that many, even in other countries, have found to be effective. The distinctive thing about this method is that it uses ten very simple pictures, which anyone can draw, to make the points memorable. With each drawing you use one sentence to capsule the meaning of the drawing and then refer to one or more passages of scripture to present the teaching of scripture on the point.

1.  **G**  
God and His people are in fellowship.  
*Genesis 3:8*
2.  **?**  
God gave us the power to choose.  
*Genesis 1:27, 2:16, 3:2-3*
3.  **S**  
People choose to sin.  
*Genesis 3:6, Romans 3:23*
4.  **G**  
**SIN**  
Sin separates us from God.  
*Isaiah 59:2, Romans 6:23*
5. **P or F?**  
Will God punish or forgive?  
*Ezekiel. 18:20, 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 3:26*
6.  **6.**  
God sent Jesus to die as a sinner.  
*Jn. 3:16, 2 Cor. 5:21, Is. 53:5-6, Eph. 3:11, Rom. 5:8*
7.  **7.**  
We must choose the cross.  
*John 3:16, Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:8-9*
8. **F+O**  
Faith Plus Obedience  
*Ja. 2:24, Rom. 10:9 Lk. 13:3, Mk. 16:16, Acts 2:38, 22:16*
9.  **G**  
God takes away our sin and restores us to fellowship with Him. *Acts 2:38, 22:16, John 14:23, 2 Corinthians 5:18*
10.  **10.**  
God puts us in Christ  
*Galatians 3:27, Acts 2:47, 1 Corinthians 12:13*

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## Contact Us

### Graymere church of Christ

1320 Trotwood Ave.

Columbia, TN 38401

Phone: (931) 388-4796

Email: [graymere@graymere.com](mailto:graymere@graymere.com)

[Contact Us Online](#)

Please visit our [website](#) for more information about our congregation and services.

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