

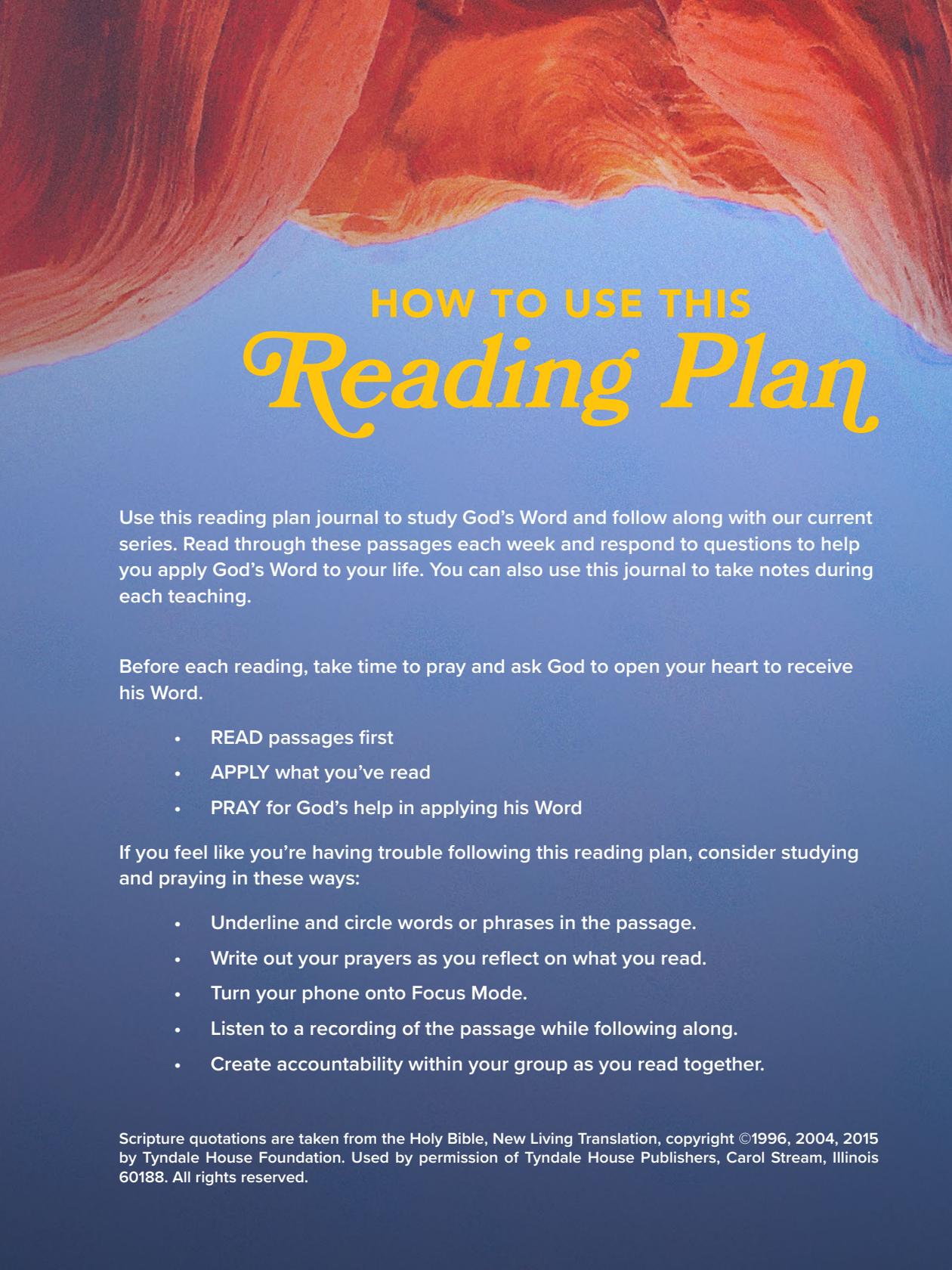
¹₃₂ John

BELIEVE. LOVE. OBEY.

Name:







HOW TO USE THIS *Reading Plan*

Use this reading plan journal to study God's Word and follow along with our current series. Read through these passages each week and respond to questions to help you apply God's Word to your life. You can also use this journal to take notes during each teaching.

Before each reading, take time to pray and ask God to open your heart to receive his Word.

- READ passages first
- APPLY what you've read
- PRAY for God's help in applying his Word

If you feel like you're having trouble following this reading plan, consider studying and praying in these ways:

- Underline and circle words or phrases in the passage.
- Write out your prayers as you reflect on what you read.
- Turn your phone onto Focus Mode.
- Listen to a recording of the passage while following along.
- Create accountability within your group as you read together.

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Week 1 1 JOHN 1:1–2:11

Pre-reading Context: Who is the author? Who is he writing to? He says “We”— who are “we”?

Author: John—one of Jesus’ apostles. In fact, he was part of Jesus’ inner circle that experienced and saw the transfiguration and post-resurrection Jesus.

We: John’s proximity and relationship with Jesus adds weight and responsibility. Based on what John has experienced, he feels like it is his duty to tell others what he’s heard.

DAY 1: 1 JOHN 1:1-7

¹We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. ²This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. ³We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

⁵This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

CROSS REFERENCE | Fellowship with Jesus and Other Believers

As we read we want to consider the whole narrative of the Bible. There are very helpful connections with what we read and other authors writing to other believers. Many times authors say similar things, but in different ways to address their audience.

- Philippians 1:5
- 1 Peter 5:1
- 2 Peter 1:4

REFLECT

1. What is John's main purpose in this opening (vs. 1-4)? What words would we use to describe our own faith? 1 John 1 communicates a personal, desperate, intentional faith.

2. List examples of fellowship with God and other believers. This seems like a sweet offering John is presenting. Do we share this excitement and joy in fellowship?

3. John gets serious quickly in verse 6. What is the difference between living in darkness and living in the light? What's the cost of saying we have fellowship with him but walking in darkness?

DAY 2: 1 JOHN 1:8 - 2:11

⁸If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

¹My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. ²He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

³And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. ⁶Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. ⁷Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. ⁸Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.

⁹If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. ¹⁰Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. ¹¹But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

CROSS REFERENCE | [Live as Jesus Lived](#)

- [John 15:4-10](#)

REFLECT

1. John says we all have sin. He also writes and urges us not to sin. What is your response today as we consider the sin in our lives?

2. Jesus is our advocate because of our sin. How does Jesus advocate for us? What did he do?

3. Re-read verse 6. This verse is faith in action—not just learning and understanding. Write out 3-4 ways Jesus lived. Reflect on what your life actually represents.

DAY 3: JOHN 8:2-20

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

¹³ The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

¹⁴ Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

¹⁹ Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” ²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE WEEK 1

READ | 1 John 1-2:11

¹We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. ²This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. ³We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

⁵This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

⁸If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

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³And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. ⁶Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

⁷Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. ⁸Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.

Week 2 ¹ JOHN 2:12-17, 2:21 - 3:10

This Week: We will see hallmarks of enduring faith and steadfast love.

DAY 1: 1 JOHN 2:12-17

¹²I am writing to you who are God's children

because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus.

¹³I am writing to you who are mature in the faith

because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.

I am writing to you who are young in the faith

because you have won your battle with the evil one.

¹⁴I have written to you who are God's children

because you know the Father.

I have written to you who are mature in the faith

because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.

I have written to you who are young in the faith

because you are strong.

God's word lives in your hearts,

and you have won your battle with the evil one.

¹⁵Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

DAY 2: 1 JOHN 2:21-29

²¹So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. ²²And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. ²³Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

²⁴So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. ²⁵And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

²⁶I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. ²⁷But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.

²⁸And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.

²⁹Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children.

DAY 3: 1 JOHN 3:1-10

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. ²Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. ³And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. ⁵And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him. ⁶Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.

⁷Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous.

⁸But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. ¹⁰So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

REFLECT

1. We are children of God. Do you see God as your Father? What barriers impact your view of God as your Father?

SMALL GROUP GUIDE WEEK 2

READ | 1 John 2:12-17, 2:21-3:10

¹² I am writing to you who are God's children
because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus.

¹³ I am writing to you who are mature in the faith
because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.

I am writing to you who are young in the faith
because you have won your battle with the evil one.

¹⁴ I have written to you who are God's children
because you know the Father.

I have written to you who are mature in the faith
because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.

I have written to you who are young in the faith
because you are strong.

God's word lives in your hearts,
and you have won your battle with the evil one.

¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷ And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

²¹ So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. ²² And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist.

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²⁴ So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. ²⁵ And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

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¹See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. ²Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. ³And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God.

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REFLECT | What can you learn about God's character from the passage we just read?

Discuss the reading plan from this week.

- What did you learn about God, yourself, or the world?
- What questions arose as you spent time in Scripture?
- Where did you feel personally challenged or encouraged?

Week 3 ¹ JOHN 3:11-24

This Week: Big idea = life together (whoever loves God must also love his brother)

DAY 1: 1 JOHN 3:11-17

¹¹This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹²We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. ¹³So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

¹⁴If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.

¹⁵Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

¹⁶We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?

CROSS REFERENCE | Cain and Abel

- Genesis 4:1-16



DAY 2: 1 JOHN 3:18-24

¹⁸Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. ¹⁹Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ²⁰Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

²¹Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. ²²And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

²³And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. ²⁴Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

DAY 3: LUKE 10:25-37

²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

²⁷ The man answered, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹ “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³² A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

³³ “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

³⁶ “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

³⁷ The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

REFLECT

1. Eternal life—this seems to be the question this man wants an answer for. He appears to know biblical teaching, but he believes that he will be able to accomplish what it takes for eternal life. Since we are all sinners and fall short of God’s standard, what is the only answer to the “eternal life question” he asks?

2. The man speaking with Jesus asks a series of questions ending with, “who is my neighbor?” Jesus responds in a way that tells him how he should be loving people rather than whom he should love. Write out ways the Samaritan displays love.

3. Maybe it’s easy for us to love some people and hard to love others. Maybe there are people we’re not even considering when it comes to showing love. In your circles (school, teams, organizations, groups) who is someone you could show active love to? Is there someone “unseen” that you need to go out of your way for?

SMALL GROUP GUIDE WEEK 3

READ | 1 John 3:11-24

¹¹This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹²We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. ¹³So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

¹⁴If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. ¹⁵Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

¹⁶We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?

¹⁸Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. ¹⁹Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ²⁰Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

²¹Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence.

²²And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

²³And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. ²⁴Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

REFLECT | What can you learn about God's character from the passage we just read?

Discuss the reading plan from this week.

- What did you learn about God, yourself, or the world?
- What questions arose as you spent time in Scripture?
- Where did you feel personally challenged or encouraged?

MOVE | How should you respond to what you read?

1. Have you been in a situation like the one in verse 13—where Abel is despised by the world (and ultimately killed) for doing what is right in God’s eyes? Tell us about it.
 - Where were you tempted to compromise your faith or what you knew was right in order to fit in/gain approval/be liked/not make a scene/not be disruptive etc?
 - If you haven’t found yourself in this situation, what in your life needs to change in order for you to look different from the culture around you?

2. Read verse 19. How often do you think about the idea of standing before God and being accountable to him? What feelings arise when you think about this?
 - What might these feelings indicate?

(We all have an incorrect and partial view of God, which means we have to identify the ways our thoughts about him are not aligned with how he would describe himself in Scripture. We are working to identify the lie and counteract it with truth.)

Week 4

1 JOHN 4:1-21

This Week: We are focusing on security in Christ. How do we know if we have faith in God? Security is found by believing in and trusting Christ as our Savior.

DAY 1: 1 JOHN 4:1-15

¹Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. ²This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. ³But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

⁴But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. ⁵Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. ⁶But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

⁷Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹²No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

¹³And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

¹⁴Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.

REFLECT

- 1. Can we tell the difference between Biblical truth and misleading or false teaching? Verse 6 highlights that Christians hear and respond to biblical teaching a certain way.

- 2. How does Scripture’s definition of love create tension for you when you hold it up to the culture’s definition of love?

- 3. Verse 12 has a robust idea for us: Though we have never seen God, his LOVE is made visible when, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we love others. How are you making his love known?

DAY 2: 1 JOHN 4:16-21

¹⁶We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. ¹⁹We love each other because he loved us first.

²⁰If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? ²¹And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

REFLECT

1. Circle every time you see the word love in verses 16-21. Why do you think John found it necessary to speak so frequently about love?
 - Take a moment and pray with “love” in mind.
 - Pray for your brothers and sisters—Christians you are close to.
 - Thank God for his continual love for us. Remember that he willingly sent his Son to die for us while we were still sinners.
 - If you’ve read this far and have doubt or don’t know if you’ve lived this life—pray that God would take away your sin and fill you with himself.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE WEEK 4

READ | 1 John 4:1-21

Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. ²This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. ³But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

⁴But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. ⁵Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. ⁶But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

⁷Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

¹²No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

¹³And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

¹⁴Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. ¹⁹We love each other because he loved us first.

2. Read verse 18. Where in your life have you not fully experienced God's perfect love?

(Think through the lens of harms done to me, harms done by me, and brokenness of the world.)

- What are you afraid of being honest with God about because you are fearful of the consequences?
- What lies do you believe about God's character that cause you to want to hide from him? What work do you need to do in order to replace the lie with the truth?

3. Who is someone in your life that you need to move towards in love?

- What is your gameplan for this?

(Maybe you need to apologize to someone, make amends, forgive someone, etc. Think outside the box of "doing my chores without complaining" or "helping out a parent more.")

Week 5 ¹ JOHN 5:1-21

This Week: Big idea = Children of God

DAY 1: ¹ JOHN 5:1-21

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. ²We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. ³Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. ⁵And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony. ⁷So we have these three witnesses— ⁸the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree. ⁹Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his Son. ¹⁰All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son.

¹¹And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

¹³I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. ¹⁴And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. ¹⁵And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.

¹⁶If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it. ¹⁷All wicked actions are sin, but not every sin leads to death.

¹⁸We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them. ¹⁹We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.

²⁰And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.

²¹Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

REFLECT

1. In following God, we must align our will to his will. How do you need to align yourself with God's will? What areas of your life do you need to trust him with?

2. In what areas do you want to grow in knowing what God's Word says? Search the Scriptures, pray, and ask God to show you more of who he is. See the example below on how to look up what God's Word says.



DAY 2: ROMANS 6:15-23

¹⁵ Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶ Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. ¹⁷ Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. ¹⁸ Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

¹⁹ Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹ And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. ²² But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

REFLECT

1. Think about your life over the past few years. Has there been a difference in your life, your faith, your actions as a response to following Jesus? Verse 20 starts a question of who you **were**, but then points to who you **are** now. Write out a few ways that you've grown and changed as a result of what Jesus has done in your life.

2. We must realize the cost of our sin. The Old Testament law referred to here required a specific punishment for disobedience and sin—death. God chose to provide a free gift as a way to bring us back to him and cleanse us of our wrongdoings.

- Take a second and think through the reality that your specific sin has a cost.
- Have you experienced benefits from walking in holiness?

DAY 3: EZEKIEL 18:14-32

¹⁴ “But suppose that sinful son, in turn, has a son who sees his father’s wickedness and decides against that kind of life. ¹⁵ This son refuses to worship idols on the mountains and does not commit adultery. ¹⁶ He does not exploit the poor, but instead is fair to debtors and does not rob them. He gives food to the hungry and provides clothes for the needy. ¹⁷ He helps the poor, does not lend money at interest, and obeys all my regulations and decrees. Such a person will not die because of his father’s sins; he will surely live. ¹⁸ But the father will die for his many sins—for being cruel, robbing people, and doing what was clearly wrong among his people.

¹⁹ “‘What?’ you ask. ‘Doesn’t the child pay for the parent’s sins?’ No! For if the child does what is just and right and keeps my decrees, that child will surely live. ²⁰ The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent’s sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child’s sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness. ²¹ But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my decrees and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die. ²² All their past sins will be forgotten, and they will live because of the righteous things they have done.

²³ “Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live. ²⁴ However, if righteous people turn from their righteous behavior and start doing sinful things and act like other sinners, should they be allowed to live? No, of course not! All their righteous acts will be forgotten, and they will die for their sins.

²⁵ “Yet you say, ‘The Lord isn’t doing what’s right!’ Listen to me, O people of Israel. Am I the one not doing what’s right, or is it you? ²⁶ When righteous people turn from their righteous behavior and start doing sinful things, they will die for it. Yes, they will die because of their sinful deeds. ²⁷ And if wicked people turn from their wickedness, obey the law, and do what is just and right, they will save their lives. ²⁸ They will live because they thought it over and decided to turn from their sins. Such people will not die. ²⁹ And yet the people of Israel keep saying, ‘The Lord isn’t doing what’s right!’ O people of Israel, it is you who are not doing what’s right, not I.

³⁰ “Therefore, I will judge each of you, O people of Israel, according to your actions, says the Sovereign Lord. Repent, and turn from your sins. Don’t let them destroy you! ³¹ Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O people of Israel? ³² I don’t want you to die, says the Sovereign Lord. Turn back and live!

REFLECT

1. What is the main idea of this passage in Ezekiel? What is the redemption the author speaks of?

2. Based on the passage above:

- Does God like to see wicked people die?
- Is God just for saying wickedness needs to be punished?
- If we live an unrighteous life, what is the end?
- If we turn from unrighteousness, what is the promise we see here?

3. Is it possible for us to achieve or earn eternal life? The answer to this is the reason why God sent his son Jesus for us. Even all our effort comes up short in the end, so Jesus lived a perfect life to provide a way for us to be with God.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE WEEK 5

READ | 1 John 5:1-21

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony. So we have these three witnesses—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree. Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his Son. All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son.

And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.

If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it. All wicked actions are sin, but not every sin leads to death.

We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them. We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.

And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.

Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

2. Read verse 20. Do you have a personal relationship with the true God of the universe? How do you know?

- What do you think the word fellowship means? What does fellowship with both Jesus and his people look like in your life *right now*? What does Scripture say this *SHOULD* look like?

3. Read verse 21. Scripture is very clear that if you are a child of God, you are called to stay away from anything that might take God's place in your heart. What are you personally bent towards placing above God (idolizing) in your life?

(Rather than the classic answers of: "sports, relationships, etc.," narrow down the core motivator within these surface level expressions to something like power, respect, success, comfort, control, affirmation, or approval. Ex: "I am bent towards anything that makes me feel powerful. I've seen this flesh itself out in wanting to be the best at my sport, and in who and why I want to date.")

Week 6 2 JOHN 1:1-11

This Week: Christ calls us to live the truth. To live the truth, we must know the truth of what God’s Word says.

DAY 1: 2 JOHN 1:1-3

¹This letter is from John, the elder. I am writing to the chosen lady and to her children, whom I love in the truth—as does everyone else who knows the truth— ²because the truth lives in us and will be with us forever. ³Grace, mercy, and peace, which come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ—the Son of the Father—will continue to be with us who live in truth and love.

1 JOHN 3:18-19

¹⁸Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. ¹⁹Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.

JOHN 14:15-17

¹⁵“If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

REFLECT

1. Read 2 John 1:3 again. Do you believe that God provides you with grace, mercy, and peace? What barriers, fears, or questions might be keeping you from believing this absolute truth?

DAY 3: MATTHEW 22:37-39

³⁷ Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

LEVITICUS 19:18

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

REFLECT

1. John 2 reminds us of the commandment in the Old Testament, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus reminds us of this commandment as well. Identify people in your life who are your neighbors.

Week 7 ³ JOHN 1:2-12

This Week: Big idea = Generosity, an overflow of love.

DAY 1: 3 JOHN 1:2-12

²Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit. ³Some of the traveling teachers recently returned and made me very happy by telling me about your faithfulness and that you are living according to the truth. ⁴I could have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.

⁵Dear friend, you are being faithful to God when you care for the traveling teachers who pass through, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶They have told the church here of your loving friendship. Please continue providing for such teachers in a manner that pleases God. ⁷For they are traveling for the Lord, and they accept nothing from people who are not believers. ⁸So we ourselves should support them so that we can be their partners as they teach the truth.

⁹I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, refuses to have anything to do with us. ¹⁰When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the evil accusations he is making against us. Not only does he refuse to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.

¹¹Dear friend, don't let this bad example influence you. Follow only what is good. Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God.

¹²Everyone speaks highly of Demetrius, as does the truth itself. We ourselves can say the same for him, and you know we speak the truth.

REFLECT

1. Look back at the three people John speaks about in this passage.
 - How does John describe/address Gaius (the friend)?
 - How does John describe/address Diotrephes?
 - How does John speak of Demetrius?

2. John writes to encourage Gaius in the ministry he's doing and the level of hospitality they show to Gentiles.

- What are characteristics of Christ-like hospitality?
- Think personal ministry—what are ways you can show hospitality to others?

3. As you finish reading today, take a few minutes to pray.

- Pray and thank God for people like Gaius—someone who is steadfast in faith and selfless in how they lead people.
- Pray and thank God for John—for using John as a messenger to help us be holy, help us be accountable for our life we live, and show us a way we should live as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Pray for God to work in you and through you—to help you be holy and communicate to others the gift of grace we have received.

DAY 2: LUKE 6:46-49

⁴⁶ “So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say? ⁴⁷ I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. ⁴⁸ It is like a person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it stands firm because it is well built. ⁴⁹ But anyone who hears and doesn’t obey is like a person who builds a house right on the ground, without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins.”

1 CORINTHIANS 4:14-21

¹⁴ I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. ¹⁶ So I urge you to imitate me.

¹⁷ That’s why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.

¹⁸ Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again.

¹⁹ But I will come—and soon—if the Lord lets me, and then I’ll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God’s power. ²⁰ For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power. ²¹ Which do you choose? Should I come with a rod to punish you, or should I come with love and a gentle spirit?

REFLECT

1. Jesus compares building a house the right way, in a way that will last, with doing what he’s called us to do in obedience. John pulls from this same idea in 1 John 3 as he describes his joy when he sees “his children” living obedient lives.
 - When we hear teaching, or receive guidance or direction, how do we instinctively tend to respond?

DAY 3: JONAH

1, 2, and 3 John intertwine the themes of love and obedience—to love God is to obey him. Jonah is an example of someone who heard clear direction from God and decided to disobey. As we hear from God, we have a choice to either obey or disobey. Jonah’s disobedience had direct consequences. As you read today, think about the fact that God calls us to obey and there are consequences for our disobedience.

JONAH 1:1-4

¹The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ²“Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.”

³But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish.

⁴But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart.

JONAH 1:9-12

⁹Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.”

¹⁰The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the Lord. “Oh, why did you do it?” they groaned. ¹¹And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, “What should we do to you to stop this storm?”

¹²“Throw me into the sea,” Jonah said, “and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault.”

JONAH 1:15-17

¹⁵Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! ¹⁶The sailors were awestruck by the Lord’s great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

¹⁷Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

JONAH 2:1-4

¹Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from inside the fish. ²He said,

“I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble,

and he answered me.

I called to you from the land of the dead,]

and Lord, you heard me!

³You threw me into the ocean depths,

and I sank down to the heart of the sea.

The mighty waters engulfed me;

I was buried beneath your wild and stormy waves.

⁴Then I said, ‘O Lord, you have driven me from your presence.

Yet I will look once more toward your holy Temple.’

JONAH 2:10

Then the Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach.

JONAH 3:1-5

¹Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time: ²“Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you.”

³This time Jonah obeyed the Lord’s command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. ⁴On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: “Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!” ⁵The people of Nineveh believed God’s message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow.

JONAH 3:10

When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.



REFLECT

1. Praise God for the storm and the fish! As Jonah is living in disobedience, God sends a storm to wake him up and a fish to save him from certain death. We see a response of obedience after Jonah's rock bottom moment.

2. As Jonah obeys, God moves. Think about who is waiting on our obedience.
 - Is there something we're delaying obedience in?
 - Do we actually believe God could use us to accomplish his purpose? Why or why not?
 - Who are people around us that would benefit from our obedience?

