

# Faithbuilders Devotional Series

Through the Bible in a Year  
A Daily Devotional

November

Pastors Mike Fast & David Curtis

Today’s passage contains several “all or nothing” kinds of statements concerning a variety of topics. Were you looking for them as you read? For instance, what about relationships in chapter six? Partnerships are limited to just Christians or just non-Christians, never mixing the two. A believing spouse will find he/she has very little in common with a non-believing spouse. What about repentance in chapter seven? Repentance can’t be half-hearted. Paul illustrates it with someone who feels sorrow in getting caught, but not repenting, and it still leads to death (vv. 8-10). What about generous stewardship in chapters eight and nine? Perhaps a lack of generous stewardship comes from not understanding “how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus Christ was. Though He was very rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by His poverty he could make you rich” (8:9). “You will be glorifying God through your generous gifts” (9:13). And what about consistency in chapter ten? Paul defends his apostolic authority on God’s calling and, without bragging, also on his personal track record (v. 8).

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Day 305 – November 1<sup>st</sup>  
Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:39-53; John 18:1-24  
— Betrayed with a Kiss

We need to be reminded of the character of Judas: By his own choice, he betrayed God’s Son into the hands of soldiers (Lk. 22:48), he was a thief (John 12:6), Jesus knew that Judas’ life of evil would not change (John 6:70), Judas’ betrayal of Jesus was part of God’s sovereign plan (Ps. 41:9; Zech. 11:12-13; Matt. 20:18; 26:20-25; Acts 1:16,20), and in the end he committed suicide instead of seeking forgiveness.

In those days, a kiss was a welcome and sign of respect and affection. Judas’ intent was not hidden. In fact, Jesus reprimands him for using such a signal. This sign of friendship and affection was employed with a base and wicked purpose. Yet, here is some food for thought: have you ever been guilty of your external gesture not matching your internal intent or feeling? There is nothing worse than feigned love. Don’t be guilty of pretending to love God or pretending to love anyone else. As with Judas, your true intent will not be hidden from God.

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Day 332 – November 28<sup>th</sup>  
Romans 15-16; 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:4 — Comfort for All

A little girl came home from a neighbor’s house where her little friend had died. “Why did you go?” questioned her father. “To comfort her mother,” said the child. “What could you do to comfort her?” “I climbed into her lap and cried with her.”

It’s not just that God comforts all, but He comforts us in all our troubles (2 Cor. 1), and then beyond that, there is purpose to what we endure. On the other side of trouble and being comforted by God, we are better equipped to comfort and encourage others.

How can we offer comfort to others? Use the Word of God. Ps. 119:52, “I meditate on your age-old regulations. O LORD, they comfort me.” Just our presence can be very powerful. Job 2:11, “When three of Job’s friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him.” Unfortunately, seven days later they felt the need to explain why. We can’t always offer that. Be sincere and thoughtful, Job 21:34, “How can your empty clichés comfort me? All your explanations are lies!”

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Day 331 – November 27<sup>th</sup>  
Romans 11-14 — Mercy for All

“God was merciful to you instead” (11:30b). This is a powerful passage. Mercy became available to those of us who are not Jews only because the Jews refused it (11:30). God then decided to offer it to us—although Israel still remains the chosen—and once that decision was made He would not go back on it (11:29). If you don’t fully appreciate this, you may not fully understand mercy. Mercy is defined as “leniency shown to a guilty person.”

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death. “But I don't ask for justice,” the mother explained. “I plead for mercy.”

“But your son does not deserve mercy,” Napoleon replied. “Sir,” the woman cried, “it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.” “Well, then,” the emperor said, “I will have mercy.” And he spared the woman's son.

“Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are His riches and wisdom and knowledge!” (11:33a)

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Day 306 – November 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Matthew 26:57-27:10; Mark 14:53-15:1; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:25-27 — Undeserved

The scenes displaying the hours of Jesus’ trials and beatings leading up to the crucifixion in “The Passion of the Christ” movie tore at my heart. I wept, feeling that it just wasn’t fair. He shouldn’t have had to go through what He did. The religious leaders who hated Jesus so strongly found people to lie about Him, but they couldn’t even agree with one another. Instead of throwing it out of court, it just escalated into a greater fiasco. People spit on Him and blindfolded Him and beat Him in the face. Our next two day’s readings will expound on more of His suffering as it led up to His crucifixion.

The opposition could not have been stronger, and no one could have been less deserving. The fact that He did not deserve what He went through is the very foundation of the Gospel message. Faultless, Jesus went to the cross for our faults. He didn’t deserve it and He could have avoided it, but He did it for us who needed to make atonement so crucially.

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Day 307 – November 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Matthew 27:11-31; Mark 15:2-20; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16  
— Responses to the Gospel

There are two ways people deal with Jesus and the Gospel, and in this passage, there are two statements that stand out describing both. One has to do with Pilate thinking he can just wash his hands of his responsibilities, and the second has to do with the Jews and their children being willing to take the responsibility for Christ's death (Matt. 27:24-25).

Pilate felt that a ceremonial hand-washing and verbal statement declaring his innocence would relieve him from any responsibility.

However, as magistrate, he was bound to free an innocent man, but he was swayed by the crowd and still led Jesus to His execution. Pilate's response is similar to those who believe that the message of Christ dying for our sins is for someone else, while they themselves believe they are not guilty.

The Jews called down vengeance even to their children, and it came. In less than 40 years, millions perished as their city was overthrown. Even to this day, they live scattered and persecuted. Their response to Jesus and the Gospel was like those who maintain they will take their chances.

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Day 330 – November 26<sup>th</sup>  
Romans 8:18-10:21 — Salvation for All

“Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13). Can we really say “anyone?” Well, God says race doesn't matter. “Jew and non-Jew are the same in this respect.” Money apparently doesn't help. Economic status doesn't matter. But how about the intellectually astute individual? Or the trained priest? Education and vocation don't matter. What about tradition? No. In fact, sometimes it just seems to get in the way. What about the right denomination? Ooh, that's a tough one. No. Not even mentioned. Those who were concerned about following Paul or Apollos just seemed to be missing the point. So what matters?

If we try to add anything to the simplicity of what is mentioned here, we miss the point. The most powerful thing about this passage is that salvation has been made available to every one of us. Each of us stand just as guilty, just as lost, just as filthy, sinful and destitute before the Holy God, but He intervened. Confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead... that's what matters.

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Provide an example of a time you went through something difficult where God came to you with comfort, and then later how you were able to use that experience to comfort someone else.

Now, as honestly as possible, list the things you struggle with as you provide comfort to someone (i.e. empty clichés, talk too much, deduce why they're going through it, etc.).

List as many similarities as you can between being an ambassador for the United States and being an ambassador for God. List the contrasts as well.

Paul said he pressed on. Life takes work and constant commitment and evaluation. "All for God" is a powerful statement. List several areas of your life you could improve in and how.

Day 308 – November 4<sup>th</sup>  
Matthew 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:17-37  
— At the Cross

“[God] cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ’s cross. In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ” (Col. 2:14,15).

This week’s devotional theme has concentrated on the opposition to Jesus Christ. He did nothing wrong, but was hated by more people. The height of opposition was apparent at the cross. Yet, at the cross, He paid our debts. Still, instead of gratitude, He received rejection. However, as the verse above reminds us, Jesus was victorious none-the-less. He accomplished what He set out to do. He conquered death as He promised. He sits now at the right hand of the Father still interceding for us. His work on the cross was permanent, once for all. He interceded for us then and still intercedes. God, through Jesus Christ, reveals His love for us on a regular basis (Rom. 5:8).

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Week 45 – November 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 27:57-28:20; Mark 15:42-16:20; Luke 23:50-24:53; John 19:38-21:25; Acts 1-9

The theme for this week is community. As we transition from reading about the life of Jesus and his ministry to the formation of the early church, we will explore some elements of the community that was so crucial to the spreading of the gospel. I hope that each of you is connected right now to a nurturing Christian community that encourages your faith and strengthens your relationship with Jesus. God designed us to work and function as a part of community and not as lone rangers.

Bible Discussion Guide:

What different types of community are you involved in? (i.e. work, neighborhood, etc.)

Other than in your church, where do you feel the strongest sense of community? What is God calling you to do in that community?

Do you identify yourself with the local church more, or with the universal church more? Why?

Think about the relationships that you have within your church community. Are those relationships stronger now than they were, say a year ago? How about 5 years ago, or 10 years ago?

Week 48 – November 26<sup>th</sup>-December 2<sup>nd</sup>

Acts 20:7-21:36; Romans 8:18-16:27; 2 Corinthians 1-13

This was an interesting week in which to find a theme, but I continued to come across one word that stood out in several passages. The word “all” appears in this section nearly 100 times. “All” can be used a variety of ways; as an adjective referring to “the whole number or amount of or every one of a class; or, completely given to or absorbed by; the greatest possible, every, any, nothing but, only.” Or, as an adverb referring to a “complete degree or to the full or entire extent.” Watch for the variety of ways this word will be used.

Bible Discussion Guide:

What is the difference (perhaps theologically) between teaching that Jesus died for “all” as compared to saying He died for “some?”

Prior to salvation do we really all stand before God the same?

What is the danger in believing we deserve grace and mercy?

Day 329 – November 25<sup>th</sup>

Romans 5:1-8:17 — Submitting to Temptation

“But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give into it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13

The Apostle Paul knew that the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith apart from the law would be difficult for Jewish believers to accept. They would accuse Paul of being soft on sin, and that grace actually encourages sinful living. Knowing this, Paul addressed their concerns in Romans 6, making it clear that the Christian has died to sin and has a new life in Christ. This is balanced by Romans 7:14-25, when Paul discusses the reality of the struggle against sin that every believer endures.

The issue is really one of daily submission. We must daily submit to God’s will and consider ourselves dead to sin (6:11). Otherwise, we’ll find ourselves submitting to temptation and doing the very thing we hate (7:15).

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What can you change or start doing today to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships within your church community?

Do you feel that it is a positive or a negative that there are approximately 39,000 Christian denominations in the world today? Why do you feel that way?

How can Christians maintain community with so much division in the church?

How has conflict been handled before in your church community?

Regarding conflict within a community, there are primarily four types of people. Those who tend to instigate or generate the conflict directly, those who tend to work to be part of the solution, those who pretend it doesn’t exist, and those who abandon the community because they fear the conflict. Which one do you most identify with? Why?

What type of people do you have a hard time accepting as part of your church community?

When have you taken a risk to reach out to someone new or different? How did it work out? If you have never taken the risk, why not?

Do you play favorites with people in church? What can you do to change this pattern?

Day 328 – November 24<sup>th</sup>  
Romans 2 -4 — Justified by Faith

In explaining justification by faith, Charles Ryrie once said, “Imagine a man before a judge who has been given the choice of paying \$100 fine or serving 90 days in jail. He doesn’t have any money, but he does have a family that depends on him. He tells such a heart-rending story that those present, including the judge, collect \$99.95 to help pay the fine. Even though they are only five cents short, the judge orders the bailiff to take the man to jail. Dejected, he walks out of the courtroom, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets where he finds a nickel! Elated, he rushes back into the courtroom and slaps it on the bar before the judge, declaring “I’m free, I’m free!” In his mind, what saved him? The \$99.95, or the five cents.

If we did anything to merit our salvation, we would be forever boasting about it in Heaven. The fact is, we could do nothing so Jesus paid it all.

Because we are justified by faith, we must recognize that we’ve done nothing to secure our salvation. We must submit to God’s plan rather than try to add to the finished work of Christ Jesus.

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Day 310 – November 6<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:12-18; Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-21:25 — One Baptism

The last two years I've had the privilege of leading students from our church on a mission trip to Mexico. Both times I have been able to participate in a baptismal service with our sister church. What a blessing it has been to baptize some of our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters. This experience has impressed upon me the common unity we have with Christians who speak a different language. Last year, after a couple of times of hearing our translator, Paul, translate my declaration of their baptism, I began to, with some difficulty, baptize them in Spanish.

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I realized that it did not matter what language I was speaking in performing the baptism. I was baptizing a child of God and recognizing their membership into the universal Church. For no matter where or when Christian baptism takes place, "we are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

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Day 326 – November 22<sup>nd</sup>

1 Corinthians 14-15 — Orderly Worship

If we all were to share every thought that occurred to us during our worship services, it would be rather chaotic. This problem was precisely what Paul was instructing the church about in 1 Cor. 14:26-40. He wasn't passing judgments on particular gifts or groups of people. His goal was "that everything is done properly and in order" (14:40).

To ensure that worship was orderly, Paul called for submission regarding certain issues in the Church. The submission he called for took on different forms. You were to be silent if there were enough people to share already, you had to wait your turn, and you were to be silent if there was no one to interpret when needed (14:27). Distracting questions were to be asked at a later time (14:35). Messages were subject to evaluation (14:29). No one message was more important than any other (14:30).

The opposite of submission – arrogance – makes it impossible to follow Paul's instructions. Without submission, church services would be chaos. Are you willing to submit to Paul's instructions to avoid confusion in the worship of our Lord and Savior?

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Day 325 – November 21<sup>st</sup>  
1 Corinthians 11:2-13:13 — Body Life

“...you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”  
– Ephesians 5:21

The Church, like our bodies, is a complicated living organism made up of different parts. When all the parts are working together in harmony, it’s a beautiful thing to watch. A church that works well together is like watching Tiger Woods hit a golf ball. Every part of his body works together for the singular purpose of hitting the ball towards the hole. A dysfunctional church is like when I hit a golf ball, hoping that some of the parts will work together towards the objective. It’s not a pretty sight.

For the Church to work as intended, the various people involved must submit to one another. It takes a working-together of those involved for it to function. Agendas and petty differences must be laid aside to focus on the primary objective.

Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 is that every member of the body is equally valuable, important and needed to make the body function. Are you willing to see yourself, including your preferences and unique personality, as one among equals?

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Day 311 – November 7<sup>th</sup>  
Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-2:47 — Relationship

While it is indeed true that it only takes one commonality to generate community, it is also true that community without relationship will die.

Like many couples who get married young, my wife and I lived in a number of apartment complexes during our first couple of years of marriage. Because of our proximity to the other residents, we were a community, but one that lacked relationship. Because of the lack of relationship, the community was of no benefit to us. We now own a home in a quiet neighborhood where we know all of our neighbors by first names. This neighborhood is a far more fulfilling community because of the relationships we enjoy.

In the early days of the church, the believers met together often (Acts 1:14; 2:44). This practice developed the relationships that led to mutual sharing and more satisfying and fulfilling relationships with the Lord. Developing community requires relationship and relationship requires communication.

May you experience genuine Christian community that flows out of authentic relationships.

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Day 312 – November 8th  
Acts 3:1-5:42 — Unity

In January 2007, the International Bulletin of Missionary Research reported that there are now 39,000 Christian denominations today and they project that number to increase to 55,000 by the year 2025. 39,000 denominations! This staggering report makes it hard to believe that the early Christians “were of one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).

I wonder how it is that the church went from this close-knit group of believers to the highly fractured and often dysfunctional group that we are today. Jesus even prayed for our unity (John 17:21), and yet here we are 2,000 years later, Jesus’ prayer going unanswered.

I think the cause of all of this disunity is that we don’t always keep the main thing, the main thing. Hebrews 12:2 says that we are to keep our eyes on Jesus. This has to do with our focus as individual believers, but also as the church. When we take our focus off Jesus and the unity we have in Him, then disunity develops and the community of faith is fractured.

May you keep your focus on Jesus.

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Day 324 – November 20<sup>th</sup>  
1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 — Weaker Brother

I have a pastor friend who told me about how he chose not to watch the horse races at the Oregon State Fair one year because they allowed gambling. His concern was that a Christian brother or sister who struggled with gambling might see him entering or exiting the horse arena and assume he gambled and then be encouraged to violate their own conscience and place bets on the races.

This friend of mine was willing to give up his freedom in Christ to watch the races, with his daughters who love horses no less, because he had a genuine concern for his fellow believer.

Unfortunately, 1 Corinthians 8 is often abused by legalistic Christians attempting to curtail the exercising of genuine Christian freedom. No one can force you to give up your freedom as a believer; however, when you know that your actions will seriously lead a fellow believer into temptation, it is your responsibility to submit to Scripture and give up your freedom in that area.

May you never be a stumbling block to the growth of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

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Day 323 – November 19<sup>th</sup>  
1 Corinthians 4:1-7:40 — Authority

“Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.” – Hebrews 13:17

Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 5 may seem rather harsh, but based on the above verse, we know that Paul is accountable to God for the sake of the church. So Paul is submitting to God’s authority and is then asking the church to submit to the authority given to him by God. The same is true today of the pastors and elders, whom God has placed in the church.

Sometimes I find a resistance in people to submit to the spiritual authority of pastors and elders in the church. I think that this stems from an unwillingness to accept their authority as actually God’s authority being exercised through them.

Are you willing to submit to the authorities (spiritual, paternal, political) that God has placed over you?

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Day 313 – November 9<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 6:1-8:1a — Conflict

As a community grows and develops, it will inevitably change as the needs and demands of the people change, resulting in conflict. In Acts 6, the church was growing rapidly and the first recorded conflict occurs. I think that it is instructive to us, how the church handled this early conflict. There are five distinct steps that were taken that brought a positive solution out of the conflict:

- 1) The conflict was not ignored, but acknowledged by the leadership (6:2).
- 2) The community was involved in the solution (6:3).
- 3) The decision of the leadership was accepted by the community (6:5).
- 4) The ministry of prayer was involved (6:6).
- 5) The gospel continued to expand (6:7).

I am not intending to give you a full explanation of conflict management today. But I do hope that you catch the spirit with which the early church handled this conflict. Remember, if a community is growing, then conflict will arise. It is when a community has become stagnant that there is a lack of conflict.

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Day 314 – November 10<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 8:1b-9:43 — Risk taking

Community can be very messy because it involves people who are unique and come with baggage. The New Testament church was no exception to this rule by any stretch of the imagination. In Acts chapter 9, we see that the church in Jerusalem was unwilling to accept Saul into the community of believers. The risk was too great in their mind and Saul had too much baggage in his background. However, every person that accepts the Lord and seeks to be involved with a church comes with some history and baggage, and fortunately Barnabas believed that the risk was worth taking.

We do not get to pick and choose who God intends to save and include in the church. If we did, the church would end up being a boring collection of people who walk, talk and think alike. Instead, because of God's infinite wisdom, the church includes people of different backgrounds, nationalities, experiences, education and personalities. This can make our relationships messy and it will always be risky to open up to new people.

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Do you find it difficult to accept God's gift of salvation, knowing that you cannot repay him for it?

Do you serve God out of a guilt for your sin and the fact that Jesus had to die for your sins, or do you serve God out of a genuine love for Him because of what He did for you?

What does daily submission to God's will look like in your life?  
What are you doing to help prevent you from submitting to temptation?

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Why do people find it difficult to submit to one another?

Do you see yourself more as a valuable part who serves the needs of a great whole, or as the most valuable part whose desires should be met by a lesser whole?

Do you lay aside your personal preferences for worship or do you complain (either to God or to someone else) that the worship services don't meet your expectations?

Paul's instructions in 1 Cor. 14:26-40 require humility and submission and a laying-aside of personal preferences and agendas. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why or why not?

Can you share an experience when God's plan and timing worked out far better than you imagined?

How are we to balance God's instructions to go and serve (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) with the need to depend on his plan and timing?

Day 315 – November 11<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 10:1-12:5 — Playing Favorites

“If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but say to the poor one, ‘You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor’ – doesn't this discrimination show that you are guided by wrong motives?” – James 2:3-4

In the reading today, Peter's vision makes it abundantly clear that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people regardless of race, creed, gender or any other category that we use to define groups of people. There is no external issue in people's lives that makes them unacceptable to God. It is only our personal sin and our sin nature that makes us unacceptable before a holy God. And there is no sin that cannot be forgiven when we come to Christian faith.

The result of this reality is that we all have the same standing before God. So, if this is true, why do we play favorites in the community of faith? This is what James (2:2-4) warned us against.

So who do you play favorites with? Who do you choose to ignore at church? If God says that they are of infinite value (Luke 12:28), why would you treat them as if they are of no value?

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Week 46 – November 12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>

Acts 12:6-19:20; 1 Corinthians 1-3; Galatians 1-6; 1 Thessalonians 1-5; 2 Thessalonians 1-3

One of the themes that runs throughout this week's passage is that of speaking boldly. The theme is interwoven through a variety of subjects. We have examples of those who spoke the gospel boldly. We have examples of those who confronted others boldly. We have examples of those who boldly had to tackle some difficult issues. I know you will be encouraged and/or exhorted in some area of your life as you read these passages.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Define "boldness."

Do we have the right to "boldly make known the mystery of the gospel?" If you don't think so, how can you explain Paul's phrase, "as I ought to speak?"

Give an example of your being bold with the gospel.

Week 47 – November 19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>

Acts 19:21-20:3; Romans 1:1-8:17; 1 Corinthians 4-16

The theme for this week is submission. I know that this concept can be very challenging to many of you because it does not fit the American cultural value system. However, the need for submission is a Biblical expectation in the life of the Christian. This week will trace some more of Paul's missionary journeys, specifically his third journey and a couple of the letters that he wrote while on that journey. May you be challenged and encouraged this week as you consider the need for submission in your life.

Bible Discussion Guide:

What is your attitude towards those who are in a position of authority over you?

Do you find submitting to authorities difficult or easy? What factors make it more or less difficult?

Can you share an example of a time when you have given up your freedom for the sake of a Christian brother or sister?

Do you think that it is fair for God to ask us to make allowances for our "weaker" brothers?

Day 322 – November 18<sup>th</sup>

Acts 18:24-19:20; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3:23 — Bold Encouragement

Apollos was on fire for the Lord. He knew the Scriptures well and was a gifted speaker. However, he didn't have the whole story. He knew the story from the Old Testament up through John the Baptist's message. More than likely, he was encouraging people to prepare for the coming Messiah. Priscilla and Aquila were mature believers who could sense the passion and heart of Apollos. They saw his potential but also knew he needed some instruction. As Apollos heard about Jesus, he no doubt saw Scripture come alive. With this knowledge, the church at Ephesus sent him west with great recommendations and "he proved to be of great benefit" in evangelizing others. In fact, his new message, using the Scriptures, was fresh and beautiful: "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

Each party demonstrated boldness. Apollos continued preaching the gospel boldly. And, with a certain degree of boldness and compassion, Priscilla and Aquila "took Apollos aside and explained the way of God more accurately," impacting many lives through the changed life and message of Apollos.

My Prayer List:

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I've heard people make the excuse that they do not confront someone because they don't like confrontation. I believe that if anyone "likes" confrontation, they've got a real problem that needs fixed. If our entire nature is confrontational, people will have a real problem listening to us when something seriously needs addressed. Can you continue to expound on the difference between "liking" to confront and "needing" to confront?

Why could it be helpful having a process for resolving conflict?

Should a leader be bold?

Explain why we have increased courage with an increased number of those around who believe the same way.

Are you a bold encourager? Do you actively look for those you can encourage or even mentor?

Day 316 – November 12<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 12:6-14:20 — Speaking  
Boldly

There are some astounding things that take place in today's passage: Peter's escape from prison, Barnabas and Paul are commissioned and sent out, Paul chastises the sorcerer, and the people of Lystra nearly murdered Paul. Yet, running through all those stories is the evidence of men boldly on fire for the Lord. In the face of danger, imprisonment, ridicule and death they still speak the truth boldly. In fact, the phrases "spoke out boldly" and "preaching boldly" even appear in the text (13:46; 14:3).

The apostle Paul made a request of the church in Ephesus that had to do with boldness; "Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6.19-20). The phrase that interests me is the last, "as I ought to speak." The obvious question is, if that is how we should speak the gospel, are we doing so?

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Day 321 – November 17<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 18:4-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28; 2 Thessalonians 1-3 —  
The Power of More

Paul visited Corinth, which even surpassed Athens in importance at the time. According to what he wrote later, he arrived there "in weakness, timid and trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3). On one hand, Corinth, Greece was a refined, splendid and educated place. But on the other hand, it was better known for its wickedness and immorality. The temple to Aphrodite was built on the large hill behind the city and it housed an enormous number of religious prostitutes.

Corinth was a great ministry opportunity, but it was also a great challenge. Paul apparently felt alone in his endeavor as God encouraged him with the words, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! For I am with you, and no one will harm you because many people here in this city belong to Me" (Acts 18:9-10). Elijah the prophet needed the same encouragement. He felt he was alone until God informed him otherwise: "You are not the only one left. I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!" (1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:4). There is boldness and encouragement in fellowship.

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Day 320 – November 16<sup>th</sup>

Acts 17:16-18:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:11 — Ready to Explain

“If you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it” (1 Peter 3:15)

Ten years ago, I stood on Mars Hill at the Areopagus and thought of today’s passage from Acts. Paul walked around Athens, Greece, as he waited for Silas and Timothy. As he walked, he tried to observe the culture. He noticed what they valued, prioritized, believed, etc. As he was there, he “went to the synagogue to debate with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there. He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.”

Some people then took Paul to the Council of Philosophers so they could hear more.

I was once invited to a family’s home for dinner, but what I didn’t know was that they had invited their neighbors and others in order for all of them to ask me questions about God, church, the Christian life and many other things. When given an opportunity to talk about your Christian hope, will you be ready to explain it?

My Prayer List:

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Day 317 – November 13<sup>th</sup>

Acts 14:21-28; Galatians 1:1-3:23 — Confrontation

Several years ago, at a very large public meeting, I challenged the speaker on a point he had made. He spoke about unity and then publicly condemned another member of the group with an accusation that was false. The parents of the accused couple were hurt and left. I felt compelled to say something. I didn’t want to confront one of my peers, but I stood and asked him to clarify his purpose and support his allegation. Following the meeting, I heard from some who supported what I said and others who did not.

Peter was guilty of saying one thing and doing another. At the public meeting, he sided with a group of Judaizers who taught that conditions were to be added to salvation. Paul disagreed and, during the public meeting, challenged Peter. Since Peter’s stance affected everyone at the meeting, Paul felt a public statement among the same group was necessary. The issue was not the love Peter had for the Lord or the love Paul had for Peter, yet sometimes we need to confront others with the truth.

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Day 318 – November 14<sup>th</sup>

Acts 15:1-21; Galatians 3:24-6:18 — Conflict Resolution

Paul and Barnabas “argued forcefully and at length” with a believer teaching other believers something they felt was wrong. As leaders, Paul and Barnabas were obligated to confront those who taught Christians a false teaching. Disciples of Christ must get to a point where they can discern the truth, but if that is not happening, the shepherd or mature leader must step in and protect the other brothers and sisters from deception. There will be times that this reaches a point of conflict, and the passage in Acts 15 reveals how the church in Antioch and Jerusalem resolved conflict. The group of leaders met together to first communicate openly, in order to clarify the argument. Their conversation was productive. Their attitude was one of genuine concern with regard to one another and the topic. Peter, whom had just been confronted by Paul on the very topic being discussed, stood to testify how he had previously believed in error. James stood later and summarized the reports and drew up the decision as he quoted from the books of Amos and Isaiah.

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Day 319 – November 15<sup>th</sup>

Acts 15:22-17:15 — Unpopular Decisions

Without a doubt, we know that Christ is the head of the church and our true Shepherd. Yet we also know that He has appointed some as elders and deacons. As we read yesterday, these are to meet together to ensure that truth is sought and godly direction is kept. As an issue emerges, they look to God and His Word and then make a decision they abide by and, in turn, expect the congregation to abide by (Acts 15:25; 16:4). I can tell you that this is a great responsibility and not to be taken lightly (James 3:1). I can also tell you that their decisions don’t always make everyone happy. Over the years, I have even seen some elders put off making a decision because they knew someone would have a complaint concerning it. Fortunately, that is not the case with the majority I have served with. They carry out the task before them humbly submitting before God. Do we have the same response? Do we humbly submit to those in leadership?

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