

FALL STUDY GUIDE



Northview Life Groups

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WELCOME TO LIFE GROUPS

For 20 years, Life Groups have been a core part of my life. But here's the deal. The secret of a great group isn't the leaders or location. It's not the stage of life, topic being studied or length of discussion—it's *how people show up*.

Life Groups are not about what you get out of your group; it's what you *give*. The more you give, the better the group. This is how you grow. Though you may not have chosen your group on your own, there's a reason you need them. And more importantly, they need you. As we enter another year of Life Groups, I want to challenge you in three ways.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR LIFE GROUP THE BEST NIGHT OF THE WEEK:

PREPARE

The purpose of this study guide is to help you dig into the Bible and reflect on a few questions prior to the sermon and before your group. Take a few minutes to do this each week. Ultimately, this will help you grasp what you are learning so *you are ready to participate* and share with your group.

SHOW UP

I know life is full, and at some point, something unexpected will try to pull you away from your group. Do your best to *make this a top priority*. This doesn't mean you'll never miss a gathering or have perfect attendance; just be committed. Nothing kills momentum more than missing a group.

GO DEEPER

Don't skim across the surface or stay in the shallows. Don't hold back—be honest, vulnerable and brave. All it takes is two seconds of courage to invite your group members into your life and unlock something new in your group. *Step outside your comfort zone* and take the conversation deeper.

I won't sugarcoat it. I know the challenges that come with being in a Life Group. Life is full, and we're often pulled in different directions. There are many things that compete for your time and energy. Please don't make this an add-on or one more thing to add to your schedule.

You need people in your life—and your group needs you. You don't know what's around the corner later this year. You don't know how you might need people close to you, or how your group will depend on you.

RAISE THE BAR AND EXPECT MORE FROM YOUR LIFE GROUP.

Practically, this looks like showing up after a long day. It means cutting plans short or saying no to other opportunities when you don't feel like it. I know adjusting your calendar and ordering your priorities around your group comes with a cost, but the alternative isn't working.

Why am I so committed to this? Because I've seen what God can do and I want this for you. I want your Life Group to be the best night of your week—something you refuse to miss.

Does this sound too good to be true? Trust me. I know this is possible because right now, I'm in the best Life Group that I've ever had. Relationships are real. Conversations are deep. People are committed. And together, we see God working.

This is what I want for you.

As we enter a new season of Life Groups, let's be ready to take new ground and go further than we've gone before. Let's be the kind of people who are committed to each other. This starts by showing up and asking yourself every week—*What can I give?* Get ready. This is going to be a great year.

Eric Carlson

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

While every Life Group has its own unique dynamics, there are Three Essentials for every group. These essentials give each group autonomy while maintaining cohesion across the entire church as we strive to move in the same direction. Use the Three Essentials to guide your time as a group so everyone is ready to participate and knows what to expect.

COMMUNITY: Take 30 minutes to *grow deeper together*.

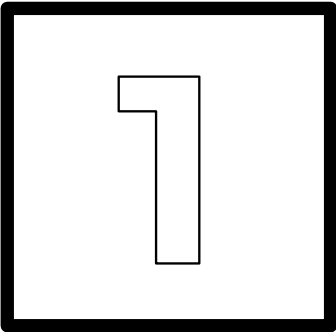
- Take time to talk and catch up from the previous week.
- Use this time to build relationships, follow up from conversations and see how everyone is doing.
- Push your conversations deeper and beyond the surface.

BIBLE: Take 45 minutes to *gather around God's Word*.

- As a group, read the passage out loud and then talk about what stands out in the text. Consider questions, observe details and look for ways to relate to the text.
- Ask each person to share one takeaway from their personal study and then discuss the weekly questions.
- You can also talk about what stood out from the sermon or pick a couple of sermon-based questions to discuss.

MISSION: Take 15 minutes to *go on mission*.

- Share what you sense God asking you to do based on what you read, the sermon or what you discussed.
- Have someone end your time with prayer and focus on any needs that came up within the group.
- Ask God to help you respond to the truths you learned this week and then apply them in your everyday life.
- Confirm the time and location for your next Life Group and highlight what needs to be completed in this study so everyone is on the same page.



THE FIVE MANTRAS

If you walk through the office hallway at church, you will see five wooden signs hanging on the wall. Each sign is a simple statement representing one of our core values. Like a rally cry, these mantras shape every aspect of our ministry.

Though these values were carefully crafted to describe what ministry looks like at Northview, these ideas aren't original to us. This is seen in the example of Jesus in the gospels and the testimony of the early church. Together, we want these five values to be ingrained in every person who calls Northview their church home. As a Life Group, make these mantras a core part of who you are and what you do. **Read these mantras and discuss the following questions:**

WE EMBRACE MESSY GRACE

Ministry is messy, and as believers, we're called to accept one another just as Christ has accepted us. (Romans 5:17)

WE WALK TOGETHER THROUGH EVERY SEASON

Relationships are not an add-on to the Christian life; they're essential to our soul. We need people to walk with us through the ups and downs of life. (Romans 12:15)

EVERYONE IS CALLED TO FULL SURRENDER

There are no shortcuts for growing spiritually. God wants every aspect of our lives to glorify Him. (Romans 12:1–2)

OTHERS OVER ME

Life isn't about you. God wants to use your skills and abilities to serve others and be a part of His kingdom. (Mark 10:45)

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR ONE MORE

We're not okay with people dying and going to hell. We want to remove barriers and make every effort possible to reach one more person with the hope of the gospel. (Luke 15:3–7)

What does it look like to embrace messy grace as a group?

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In what ways can you walk together through every season?
What transitions or challenges are coming up this year?

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Full surrender is difficult, if not impossible, on your own.
What benefits have you experienced by being in a *Life Group*?

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How can your group step out of your comfort zone and serve together? Discuss potential ideas for serving as a group.

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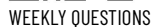
Northview groups are never closed. We believe in one more.
Who is one person or couple you can invite to your group?

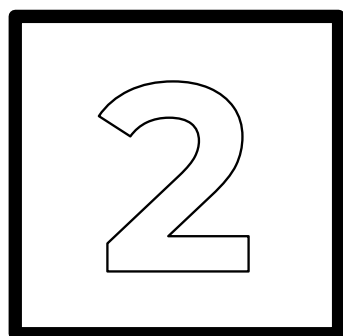
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WEEKLY QUESTIONS





THIS IS WAR

The Christian life is a battle. Though it's an invisible war against the powers of darkness, we live in a daily struggle against the evils of the world caused by sin and Satan. This is why life on earth is hard—often very, very hard.

According to the Bible, we live in enemy-occupied territory. While your street might not look like a ravaged war zone, it's the devil's playground. He is real. He is powerful. And he has one goal—to destroy you.

Satan has centuries of warfare experience. He knows exactly how to hunt you down and hurt you. His tactics are brutal. He's an expert in manipulation, temptation and deception. His methods are ruthless. His hate is overwhelming.

But God did not leave us to fend for ourselves. He gave us His own armor. This is the same armor that Jesus wore on our behalf all the way to the cross. It's durable. It's strong. It's blood-stained and battle-tested. But above all—it works.

Without this armor, we don't stand a chance against the attacks of the evil one. With it, we can stand firm and fight.

The choice isn't whether you will be a soldier or civilian, but whether you will be prepared. The Bible doesn't say, "Bring the armor of God along with you on the off chance that you might need it." No. It says, "You will need it; so put it on."

Every day, we're called to put on the full armor of God—every single piece. This is how we're able to resist the devil, overcome struggles against temptation and defeat sin. This is how we can experience life-giving victory in Jesus Christ.

As we get ready to dive into this 7-week study in Ephesians, we're first going to look at the book of Acts to see how the church of Ephesus began with Paul's initial visit, which nearly resulted in a city-wide riot. From day one, the war was real for the Ephesians. The same is true for us today.

Read Acts 19 and reflect on the following questions.

ACTS 19

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were twelve men in all.

⁸Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

¹³Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."

¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

¹⁷ When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

²¹ After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." ²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

²³ About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. ²⁴ A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. ²⁵ He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. ²⁶ And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. ²⁷ There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

²⁸ When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹ Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. ³⁰ Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. ³¹ Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

³² The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. ³³ The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. ³⁴ But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵ The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? ³⁶ Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. ³⁷ You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. ³⁸ If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. ³⁹ If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. ⁴⁰ As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." ⁴¹ After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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After several years in Ephesus, Paul's ministry was so successful that it nearly caused a riot that could have destroyed the city. Why were these leaders so upset?

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Have you ever been in a city, country or a home that was filled with darkness and felt spiritually heavy or oppressive? Where were you at and what was this experience like?

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Sometimes Satan attacks personally, other times he stirs up a mob mentality to go after your character with chaos and confusion. Have you ever been wrongly attacked or accused of something that wasn't true? How did you respond?

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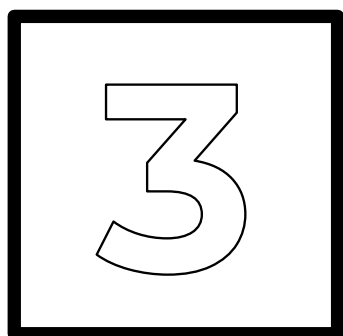
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THE BELT OF TRUTH

The first component that Paul mentions in the armor of God is the *belt of truth*. The belt is the logical place to start because it was the first piece of the soldier's equipment to be strapped on. The sturdy leather belt wrapped around the torso, providing vital protection for all the major organs.

As the first layer of protection, the belt went under the armor to keep the other clothing out of the way. In those days, when people wore long, flowing robes, a belt enabled a soldier to fight without tripping over their outer clothing. Though it tied everything together, a belt's purpose was to provide freedom, so a soldier was ready for action.

To put this in modern-day terms, it's hard to fight if your pants keep falling down and you can't hold them up.

For Paul, a belt wasn't some optional, secondary accessory. It was a strategic and primary focal point of a soldier's armor. According to Paul, the equivalent of a soldier's belt in God's armor is *truth*. This means truth is the first layer of defense when taking a stand against Satan.

A belt is no help if it's hanging in the closet; you must put it on. If you want to fight against sin and Satan, you must tighten the truth of God's Word and wrap it around your life. Truth is the first piece of armor that you put on and wear. Otherwise, the devil will persuade you to believe his lies.

He wants you to doubt God's goodness. He wants you to believe happiness and fulfillment are found within yourself. He wants to hide the painful consequences of sin and trick you into believing you're in control and life is all about you.

The beginning of Ephesians is loaded with deep, personal truths about the gospel and what it's like to be a Christian. If you want to stand against Satan and his schemes, these are the spiritual truths that you need to know to guard yourself.

Read Ephesians 1 and reflect on the following questions.

EPHESIANS 1

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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How do the glorious truths of Ephesians 1 prepare you for battle against Satan and the powers of darkness?

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What does it look like to put on and wear the belt of truth? Practically, what does this look like in your daily life?

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What lies does Satan tell you and try to get you to believe? What truth do you need to put on and wrap around your life to give you confidence to stand against the lies of Satan?

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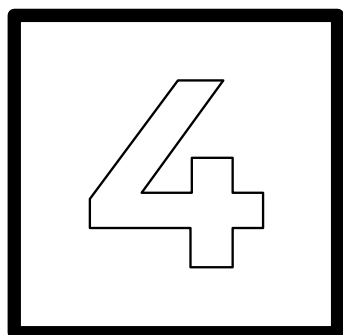
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WEEKLY QUESTIONS



BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Once a soldier was fitted with his belt, he would put on a *breastplate*. This breastplate was a solid metal shield. It was worn over the midsection, covering the neck to the thighs. The purpose of the breastplate was to guard the organs, especially the heart. If a soldier received a direct hit to the upper body, wearing the breastplate could mean the difference between life and death.

Unlike modern warfare, ancient battles were fought hand-to-hand. Having the right armor was necessary for survival. Without a breastplate, a soldier was exposed and vulnerable. One strike from an enemy sword or a single rogue arrow flying through combat was all it took to stop a soldier cold.

But this breastplate isn't made from metal. This is made with the righteousness that comes from God. As armor, the breastplate of righteousness protects you from the lies that Satan shoots. Satan doesn't want you to believe God loves you. He doesn't want you to believe your sin can be forgiven. He wants to crush your hope and stomp out your faith.

What protects our hearts in battle is God's righteousness. It's His righteousness that covers us and keeps us eternally safe. If you want to stand against the devil, if you want to fight against sin, you must put on the righteousness of God, which is offered through Christ.

Though some days it feels like a losing battle, our weakness and humanness are meant to expose us and point to the power of Jesus, which we desperately need. It's only through His strength that we can stand against the evil one.

As Paul continues his letter to the Ephesians, he reveals that righteousness is available only by grace and through faith in Jesus Christ. There's no other way. It's His righteousness that enables us to stand against the powers of darkness.

Read Ephesians 2 and reflect on the following questions.

EPHESIANS 2

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— ¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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Righteousness is not accomplished through good works. We can't earn it for ourselves or achieve it on our own. It's a gift. Why does God require the righteousness of Jesus and not our own efforts? Are we really that bad?

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Like a metal plate that covers you in battle, Ephesians 2 should give you confidence to stand against the evil one. How does this passage, and everything you have in Christ, compare to what you know about Satan and his evil forces?

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When it comes to righteousness, what lies does Satan try to tell you or tempt you to believe? Why is this dangerous?

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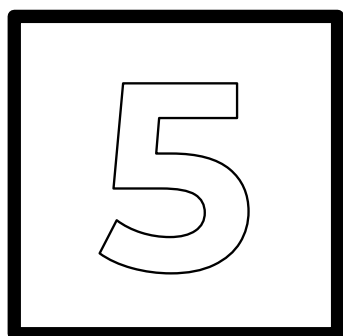
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WEEKLY QUESTIONS



WEEKLY QUESTIONS



GOSPEL SHOES

After highlighting the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, the next piece of armor is the *shoes of peace*. Going back to ancient history, travel was slow and difficult. Shoes weren't a fashion statement. Most people couldn't afford a pair of shoes, so they walked around barefoot.

Those who wore shoes, apart from the wealthy, were soldiers and couriers. These were the people whose lives depended on their ability to travel fast and far. Soldiers wore heavy military-issued shoes that were half-sandal-half-boot.

The upper portion strapped around the soldier's legs. The soles were made with leather and tipped with metal studs. These shoes dug into the ground. They kept a soldier stable when holding his ground or advancing against an enemy.

Soldiers could cover any terrain without worrying about cutting their feet and being out of commission. Sturdy shoes helped them guard their post and stand for hours.

But more than traction or protection, what is the real benefit of shoes? Shoes make you fast. Shoes prepare you for action. Shoes make you ready for whatever life throws your way.

If the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness focus on preparation and protection, shoes of peace are all about our readiness to share and advance the message of the gospel.

Like a soldier, we have a mission that others depend on. Our job is to share our story and point others to the peace that we have in Jesus. Peace with God. Peace in relationships. Peace from whatever happened in the past. Peace from the lies of the enemy. Peace that looks straight into the future.

As Paul gets into the heart of his letter, his mission is clear. We have access to the greatest message ever, and it's our job to share it fast and far. This is why we have gospel shoes.

Read Ephesians 3 and reflect on the following questions.

EPHESIANS 3

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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As Paul wrote these words, he was arrested and handcuffed to a soldier. Waiting for his trial, he knew his life was about to end. Think about a difficult situation or season in your life where God filled you with His peace. What was this like?

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As a Christian, you're called to advance the gospel and carry the message of peace everywhere you go. How have you seen peace that only comes from God to be powerful or desirable to those who don't know God? Why is peace so relatable?

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Peace is the opposite of living in a spiritual war zone. How does God give you peace when it feels like your efforts to share the gospel with others are futile or you have failed?

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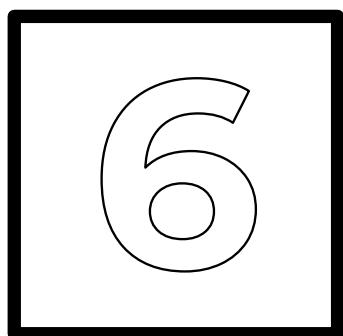
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WEEKLY QUESTIONS



WEEKLY QUESTIONS



THE SHIELD OF FAITH

The first-century Roman army was the most advanced military giant in the ancient world. Their success has often been attributed to the fact that no other army possessed such superior armor. Their sandal-boots studded with metal tips, sturdy breastplates and leather belts gave them a clear advantage in battle. This armor made them fearless.

But beyond their impressive armor, these soldiers also received extensive training in battle formations. This strategy made them virtually impassable to their enemies. One of the most iconic pieces of armor was their *shield*.

There were two types of shields used by soldiers during this time. The one the Apostle Paul describes was not a small, round one—the size of a trash can lid. He envisioned a larger shield, two feet wide and four feet long, like a door. This shield consisted of wooden planks fused together and covered with canvas. It was then wrapped and bound with leather. Finally, iron was forged into the center of the shield as a hub to reinforce the wood from the top to the bottom.

This made the shield capable of withstanding the enemy's sword and spear. These shields were so large that they covered the whole body of a soldier when he crouched down.

Perhaps this is why Paul connects a battle shield to *faith* in a Christian's life. Faith isn't merely something to believe; it's what you hold onto when the enemy attacks you.

If you find yourself at war against Satan, faith is dropping to your knees in prayer and holding up the promises of Scripture to protect you from the assault of the evil one.

If Ephesians 1–3 reveals our identity in Christ, chapters 4–6 give clear instructions for living our faith in a hostile world. A strong faith, like a shield, will protect you from dangers head-on and anything shot your way.

Read Ephesians 4 and reflect on the following questions.

EPHESIANS 4

¹As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says:

"When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people."

⁹(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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Like a shield, faith protects you from head to toe. Have you ever thought what your life would be like without your faith? How would you be different today if you were far from God?

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Shields are more than a defensive strategy. Soldiers would interlock their shields, shoulder to shoulder, to push through the enemy line. How does the faith of others inspire you to move forward when it feels like you're stuck or under attack?

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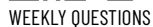
Lies of Satan are called *"flaming arrows"* and the words that come out of your mouth can be used as weapons. How does this chapter challenge your speech and the words you say?

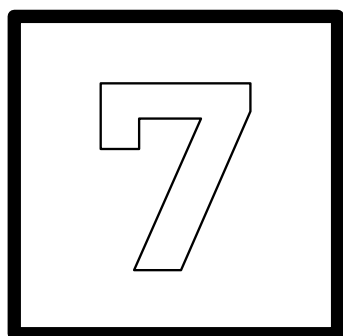
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THE HELMET OF SALVATION

A soldier's helmet was essentially a skullcap made of iron, then covered with bronze. Its function was to protect the soldier's brain from the edge of a broadsword. Remember Braveheart? This was a three to four-foot sword with a massive handle that required two hands and blunt force. One swift swing could completely crush a soldier's skull.

Over time, the soldier's helmet was redesigned to be more comprehensive in coverage. A neck-guard and cheek plates were added for additional protection. When the helmet was strapped in place, very little was exposed.

Comprehensive coverage. Put on. Strapped up. Ready for battle. The helmet is designed to be a snug fit. Choosing not to wear it leaves your mind exposed and vulnerable.

Most people want to be saved. Nobody wants to go to hell. But how can you be sure where you will spend eternity? Hope is more than wishful thinking. Nor is it vague optimism that everything will work out and be okay.

Hope is confidence. Hope is a conviction. Hope is certainty. Hope is strong and settled. Hope doesn't swerve when something comes at you to test you or challenge you.

This is why Paul makes the connection between *salvation* and a helmet. If your breastplate protects your heart, a helmet protects your mind and guards your thoughts. Satan wants you to doubt. He wants you to live in despair. He loves it when you second-guess and waver in your faith. Strap on your helmet so you don't have to duck and dodge every lie. This is your ultimate protection against Satan.

For Paul, the gospel changes everything. This includes your thoughts, actions, words, motives and even your marriage. When you come to Jesus, you step out of the shadows, and everything in your life is exposed to His glorious light.

Read Ephesians 5 and reflect on the following questions.

EPHESIANS 5

¹Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children
²and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷Therefore do not be partners with them.

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴This is why it is said:

"Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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Have you ever questioned if your faith was genuine or real?
How does Satan attack your confidence or make you doubt
the sincerity of your salvation? How can you fight back?

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What lies does Satan throw at you when it comes to your
marriage? If you are not married, what lies does Satan throw
at you when it comes to the people who are closest to you?

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When Paul wrote Ephesians, Roman soldiers were required
to buy their own equipment. Only the wealthy could afford a
helmet, while the poor fought unprotected and were prone
to injury. How does this compare to the helmet of salvation?

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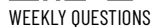
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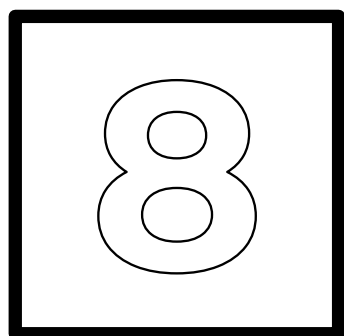
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WEEKLY QUESTIONS





THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Warfare has changed over the past two thousand years. Today, much of war is carried out by laser-guided bombs, cruise missiles and drone strikes. Without diminishing the severity and intensity of today's war, it's easier to light the fuse and stand back at a safe distance.

For the early church, war was face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball. While there were archers, sling throwers and people with javelins who could kill you from 50 yards away, most of the fighting was done with swords at close range. It was fierce. Messy. And most of all, it was a very personal affair.

The option was clear—you or him? One-to-one, face-to-face.

Most of us would prefer spiritual warfare to be more like the modern, clinical kind. We want a quick fix and comfortable outcomes. We want to sit back and watch our struggles disappear in a puff of smoke... but that's not how it works.

The final piece of armor is not a high-tech, long-range instrument of mass destruction, but an old-fashioned, down-and-dirty sword.

This means that if we are going to defeat our temptations and seek to live fruitful, holy lives, then we will need to get close and personal with the Holy Spirit, who works through the sword, which is the Word of God.

Like ancient warfare, the struggle for growing in Christ is fierce and messy. Holiness is an intensely personal battle. Following Jesus isn't for the casual, comfortable Christian. To win the war, you must immerse yourself in God's Word.

From beginning to end, the armor of God relies on the Bible. It starts with the belt of truth to hold everything together, and it's our greatest weapon to swing against the evil one. Like a sharp sword at your side, your life depends on it.

Read Ephesians 6 and reflect on the following questions.

EPHESIANS 6

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

² "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the

evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

²¹ Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. ²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

²³ Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

As you read this passage, what stands out? What do you see?

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The verses immediately before the armor of God (10–17) are marriage, parenting and what it means to be a Christian in the workplace. What battles are you facing in these areas?

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God’s Word is the armor by which His power is shown. Practically, how have you seen the Bible to be razor-sharp and pierce your life in a personal and powerful way?

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What do you want to remember from this study in *Ephesians* as it relates to the armor of God? What was most impactful?

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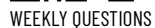
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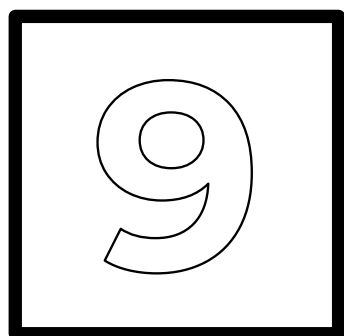
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WEEKLY QUESTIONS





ACTS 4:32–37

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

COMPELLED BY LOVE

BIBLE

What do I see in this passage?
What stands out?

GOD

What does this passage reveal
or tell me about God?

ME

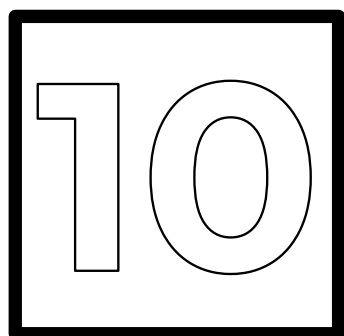
What does this passage
show me about my
heart, attitude or actions?

APPLY

How does this passage
encourage or challenge me
in the area of generosity?

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WEEKLY QUESTIONS



ACTS 2:36–47

³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

COMPELLED BY A NEW IDENTITY

BIBLE

What do I see in this passage?
What stands out?

GOD

What does this passage reveal
or tell me about God?

ME

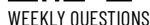
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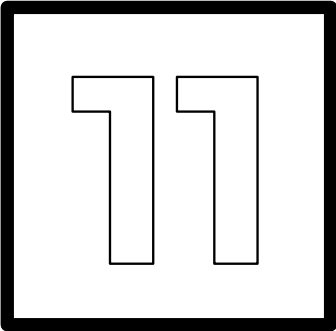
APPLY

How does this passage
encourage or challenge me
in the area of generosity?



WEEKLY QUESTIONS





ACTS 11:19–30

¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. ²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²² News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. ³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

COMPELLED BY MISSION

BIBLE

What do I see in this passage?
What stands out?

GOD

What does this passage reveal
or tell me about God?

ME

What does this passage
show me about my
heart, attitude or actions?

APPLY

How does this passage
encourage or challenge me
in the area of generosity?

[illegible]

WEEKLY QUESTIONS

12

ACTS 20:17–38

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²² "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

²⁵ "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.

²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

³² "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

COMPELLED BY ETERNITY

BIBLE

What do I see in this passage?
What stands out?

GOD

What does this passage reveal
or tell me about God?

ME

What does this passage
show me about my
heart, attitude or actions?

APPLY

How does this passage
encourage or challenge me
in the area of generosity?

[illegible]

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13

GOING DEEPER AS A GROUP

As we wrap up this study, take a few minutes to reflect on the last four months. It's easy to move on and rush to the next thing and miss out on what God is doing around you. As a Life Group, take some time to look back on this fall and then look ahead to what's coming up this next year.

What does your Life Group mean to you? What stands out?

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Looking back, what are a few things that your Life Group does well? What are the unique strengths of your group?

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Looking ahead, how can your Life Group go even deeper? What needs to happen to make this next year even better?

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How can you encourage or thank your Life Group leaders?
Please thank your Life Group leaders for everything they do.

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As an individual, write down one or two things that you want to do to support and contribute to the group next year. What needs do you see? In what ways can you come alongside and encourage your Life Group members?

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We believe there's always room for one more. As Northview continues to grow, we want to multiply leaders and create more Life Groups to serve more people. What does it look like for your group to grow and multiply into more groups?

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