



followers of
THE WAY

a discipleship pathway

“However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers *as a follower of the Way* ...” Acts 24:14

ABIDE IN CHRIST – Part Five

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Day 1

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Introduction

Throughout the Abide, you've been introduced to different parts of the tool, SMORP. Today the final part, prayer, will be highlighted.

Scriptures – Refers to reading and memorizing the Bible

Message – Refers to anything the Lord may be saying to you

Obedience – Refers to obeying what God instructs you to do

Repentance – Refers to sin the Holy Spirit requires you to confess and repent of

Prayer – Refers to your prayers to God

It's wise to be a follower of the Way who wants to grow in prayer! In doing so, you're imitating the early disciples, who offered one of the most significant prayers of all: "Lord, teach us to pray" (**Luke 11:1**). In the following twelve verses Luke passes on four messages about prayer, originally delivered by Jesus. The first message is often called, "the Lord's Prayer." Really, it's a pattern for how his disciples should pray.

Hallowed Be Your Name

This model prayer starts off with the phrase, "Father, hallowed be your name." What does this mean? The word "Father" refers to an intimacy that you can have with God in prayer. This is amazing! However, it's also a reminder that you're not at the same level as God – he is, "hallowed" – which means to be recognized as set apart, unique, and above all. There is none like him!

Further, this phrase – "hallowed be your name" - goes beyond personally recognizing God's greatness. A disciple is ALSO to pray that God's uniqueness will be recognized by others, even through their own service to the church and the world. This is what Jesus was getting at when he said, **Matthew 5:16 (NIV)** ... *let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

Really, the "heart" of this prayer includes many things! It means:

First: you're asking God to keep YOU from dishonoring the name by which you are called

Consider Paul's words, **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)** *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* This means that you're to pray in a way that is concerned with God being honored; NOT simply for your selfish desires to be satisfied.

That's why James says, **James 4:3 (NIV)** *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

Second: you're asking that God be praised among the NATIONS

Abraham provides an example of a prayer where God's honor is seen as the most important thing, **Genesis 18:24-25 (NIV)** *What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do*

such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Third: you're expressing your gratitude to God, magnifying who he is

This desire for God to be lifted up (some say, "to be glorified") is the key thought of the entire prayer that Jesus teaches. While praise focuses on who God is, thanksgiving focuses on what God has done. Of course, at some point in practice, the two always end up coming together, for God reveals who he is precisely by what he does!

You can see this in many verses, including, **Psalm 106:1-2 (ESV)** *Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all his praise?*

A person cannot read the Psalms without being deeply impressed that praising the Lord is EXPECTED. In fact, the word "praise" is used 137 times and the word "praises" another 27 times.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. Why is calling the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples "the Lord's Prayer" a bit misleading?
3. What 3 things does the phrase "hallowed be your name" include?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. How much time are you currently giving to prayer in your daily devotions?
2. However long that you've walked with Jesus, think about this question – has your prayer life grown or declined over the years? What impacts how much you pray?
3. Spend a few minutes in prayer and ask Jesus – "Jesus, teach me how to pray." Listen in prayer for his response to this desire/request.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 25:1-30.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 2

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Why You Should Praise God

Reason 1: he is a great God who is worthy of your praise

The Psalms are a reminder of God's greatness, and the need to praise him in response. Consider these incredible words, **Psalm 96:2-4 (NIV)** *Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.*

For another example, Psalm 103 lists many reasons why the Lord is worthy of great praise! As you read through this, either highlight all the reasons to praise him, or write them down.

Psalm 103:1-5, 8-13 (NIV) *Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's ... The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

Reason 2: praise is an appropriate sacrifice to give to God

Some argue that disciples of Jesus should not speak of, “sacrificing for God.” Of course, Samuel did say, **1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)** *Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

So in one sense, you don’t need to sacrifice – that is, sacrifice rams goats or ANYTHING for your sins. The blood of Jesus took care of all your sins! Praise him! However, you DO have the responsibility for two types of sacrifice. First, to obey him. Second, to praise him. And have you ever noticed that the word “response” is a part of the word “responsibility?” Put another way, there is this responsibility, or response, of sacrifice for followers of the Way, as a reaction to the GREATEST sacrifice.

Consider, **Psalm 50:14 (ESV)** *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High.* And again, **Psalm 50:23 (ESV)** *The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!*

Of course, this expectation is also in the New Testament as well, **Hebrews 13:15 (NIV)** *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.* It uses the word “sacrifice!” Here’s a good guideline – don’t hesitate to use words that the Bible does.

In Romans 1, Paul notes that sin includes a lack of thanksgiving, **Romans 1:21 (NIV)** *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.* The verb translated “glorified” means to give God the praise due to him. Men and women, experiencing God’s provision in every area of life, should have recognized that he is the source of all good things (see **James 1:17**). This IS the obligation of ALL people. And it’s an appropriate and expected sacrifice for those who are followers of the Way.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today’s reading.
2. What 2 reasons for praising God are given today?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Would you say that your life is full of thanksgiving and praise? If you feel that you fall short in this, spend some time in confession, saying sorry to your Father for a lack of gratitude.

2. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4.
3. Memorize Matthew 5:16.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 25:31-46.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 3

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Why You Should Praise God

Reason 3: through praise you experience God's presence

The Bible teaches that God is present everywhere, always. However, you don't always *experience* him, do you? This is an imperfect illustration, but consider marriage. A spouse isn't always right beside their husband or wife, but at any moment they MAY be able to call them, or bring them to mind. In other words, through a bit of effort, someone who is married can usually experience their husband or wife.

Of course, God is far greater, more available and is perfect (e.g. he has no insecurity, isn't moody, etc.)! But it also takes some effort on your part to experience him. Well, praising him and thanking him are, "doorways into his presence." Or as it says in the Psalms, **Psalm 27:8 (ESV)** ... *my heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."*

And in another verse, it declares, **Psalm 100:4 (NIV)** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.* When you bring your offering of praise to the 'gates' of his presence, he doesn't just tell you to drop off your sacrifice and take off! Instead, the gates OPEN up and you can come right into his presence.

This experience is similar to the life that can be found in Jesus, which previous lessons highlighted.

Reason 4: you experience the joy of the Lord and peace through praise

The apostle Paul clearly emphasized the connection between thanksgiving, and experiencing peace. He said, **Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Not only is peace experienced as you take time to be thankful, but the psalmist states that there is also fullness of joy! **Psalm 16:11 (NIV)** *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.* Wow!

And not just peace and joy, but also hope! Which is why Paul said, **Romans 15:13 (NIV)** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Once you're genuinely thankful in God's presence, anxiety, worry, and stress will go! Why? Because God has NO anxiety, NO worry, and NO stress! NONE! The King of kings and Lord of lords is completely in control and no one can overturn his will or threaten his plans! And so, you're urged to pray with thanksgiving in all circumstances, **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)** *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What 2 reasons for praising God are given today?
3. Why will being in God's presence help you experience peace, joy, and hope?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Write down something that you are anxious about right now. Spend some time in thanksgiving – e.g. "Father, I praise you for having a plan for this thing that I'm anxious about . . ." Also praise him for who he is – e.g. "God, I am thankful that you are Gracious, Merciful, Gentle, Sovereign, All Powerful, Loving, Perfectly Wise." Stay in this position of praise – it takes practice, especially if you're used to focusing on your challenges.
2. Now bring the anxiety to God. Practice stating it, rather than dwelling on it. Finish this prayer time by thanking God for caring for you!
3. Review Matthew 5:16.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 26:1-25.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 4

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Why You Should Praise God

Reason 5: praise increases your strength and faith, helping you to pray expectantly

When you turn to wholehearted praise and thanksgiving, you enter the presence of the Lord – you really experience him. Further, as was noted in Day 3, you'll discover joy, peace, and hope.

And here's a bonus - these emotions in turn will give you strength. As Nehemiah described it, **Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)** *Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* Of course, all followers of the Way will need this strength as they seek to be faithful to Jesus!

The apostle Paul also refers to the result of such strength, as he speaks of boldness. He says, **2 Corinthians 3:12 (NIV)** *Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.* Praise God that when you're filled with hope, you acquire the faith needed to pray faith-filled prayers!

Reason 6: praise is a spiritual weapon against evil

The Bible has a lot to say about praise defeating and driving back the very REAL powers of darkness! For example, 2 Chronicles 20 tells the story of Jehoshaphat, who was facing the invading forces of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites.

In prayer, Jehoshaphat says to the Lord that they are helpless against such a great army, and that all eyes are on him (the Lord). God responds, telling them to not be afraid, as he would fight the battle for them! So, instead of sending out soldiers with swords and spears against his enemy, look at what Jehoshaphat does, **2 Chronicles 20:21 (NIV)** *After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever."*

And what does God do? The next verse notes, **2 Chronicles 20:22 (NIV)** *As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.*

What happened here? The physical enemy was defeated because unseen, spiritual enemies were scattered by the power of praise!

The same thing – praise to God resulting in victory - happens when King Saul is plagued by an evil spirit. In 1 Samuel, you can read the whole story! When David would worship and praise the Lord with his harp, the evil spirit would leave. Or in the words of the Bible, **1 Samuel 16:23 (NIV)** *Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him. Wow!*

Praise isn't merely a nice way to begin a church gathering, or a personal time of devotions. It's not a warm-up or filler until a sermon or Bible reading. Of course, if praise is just something you do mechanically, it IS meaningless.

Biblical praise however, drives back the powers of darkness, releases the angels of God to do battle on one's behalf and brings God's awesome presence into each situation. Listen to how one psalmist describes praise, **Psalm 149:5-6 (NIV)** *Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands . . .* And another one, **Psalm 8:2 (NIV)** *From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.*

Worship IS spiritual warfare!

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What 2 reasons for praising God are given today?
3. Why can being in God's presence increase your faith for prayer?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. You're seeing in this lesson that your praise of God is so important! Take a look at your life and schedule – how can you better include this in your devotions and even family life?

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 26:26-46.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 5

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

How You Should Praise God

First: with your whole heart

It takes time to learn how to praise God! Since God is unlimited, this is a lifelong journey. But it's important to know that the starting point is to praise him with your whole heart. Or as the psalmist declares, **Psalm 9:1 (NIV)** *I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders.* May your praises be no different!

True praise and thanksgiving are definitely motivated by whole-heartedness – that is what God seeks! How appropriate for the one who is your very life.

Second: you may speak, shout or sing your praises

For sure, you can speak your praises to God. He loves this! However, the Psalms reveal other features of praise, such as singing, **Psalm 147:1 (NIV)** *Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!*

The Bible also refers to shouting in praise. People understand this in a sports setting! But when it comes to an almighty God, many shrink back at the idea of shouting out to him. This is sad! Yet, see what God's Word says, **Psalm 33:3 (NIV)** *Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.*

This can result in loud or enthusiastic singing as well! **Psalm 47:1 (ESV)** *... shout to God with loud songs of joy!* And even clapping, **Psalm 47:1 (ESV)** *Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!*

Third: with corresponding postures

There's another element to entering God's presence and that's your posture; how you use your body. Consider this instruction in the Bible, **Psalm 95:6 (NIV)** *Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

To physically bow and kneel are ways of acknowledging greatness! It's also appropriate to raise your hands in praise to the Lord, **Psalm 134:2 (NIV)** *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.*

And what about dancing? You're to rejoice in the Lord with abandonment – like little children. Sometimes pride stands in the way, doesn't it? When David's wife, Michal, saw her husband (the king) "leaping and dancing before the Lord," she despised him in her heart (**2 Samuel 6:16**). And later the two got into a very heated argument over this (**2 Samuel 6:20-23**), and it appears that God judged her for it.

When your praise comes out of a good and loving heart, postures and movements of your body will flow almost automatically. At other times, the INTENTIONAL use of a specific posture can lead the heart to a place of adoration.

Fourth: by adoring or praising him for his attributes.

You may select an attribute of God, such as his mercy, and center your attention on it. Or as you're reading and meditating on the Bible, you'll come across an attribute of God. Either way, you can simply begin to praise God in prayer for that characteristic.

For example, as you begin to read Psalm 3, you read that God is a deliverer. Then, you ponder how he delivered people and people groups in the Bible, and throughout time. Next, you can move on to consider how God has delivered you in your own personal life. As you do, you praise him for that!

Today, there's a lot of excellent praise and worship music available online, which you can use in your quiet time. Try it! It can transform your devotional time with the Lord. You'll never be the same!

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What 4 suggestions are given today for how you can praise God?
3. How can postures help you praise God?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you something that you can praise God for, with your whole heart. Once you receive something, write a prayer of praise to God. Let it flow from deep in your heart!
2. Text, phone, or email a friend. Ask them to share what they have been praising God for lately.
3. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4, Matthew 5:16.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 26:47-75.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 6

Final Steps

1. Write down a list of 8-10 things that God has done for you and/or your family. Then try praising God in a different posture than you would normally use.
2. Choose an attribute of God. Spend some time praising God for: 1) how he has always been this attribute 2) how he displayed this attribute in the Bible 3) how he has displayed this attribute in the lives of others 4) for how he has displayed this attribute in your life. If you get stuck, remember to ask Jesus to help you pray! He will!

Abide 14 – Prayer Changes Everything!

Day 1

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Introduction

There's a very brief part of Jesus' model prayer found in Luke 11 that many give little thought to, **Luke 11:3 (NIV)** *Give us each day our daily bread.* Is Jesus really saying that "daily bread" is the only need you have to pray for?

Remember, this is a simple tool that Jesus gave his disciples, and to all who would follow him. It's a guide for prayer. Of course, it wasn't meant to be a complete list of everything that you can or should pray for!

After all, the apostle Paul referred to consistent prayer, saying, **Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)** ... *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.* And it's something he practiced! Even Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer – which proves that there is MUCH to pray for.

The Need for Intercessory Prayer

Prayer is important, but if God is sovereign, then why is it necessary to ask for things in prayer? The answer is connected to God's original plan when he created man and woman. Throughout the Bible, you can observe that God delegated authority and responsibility, for the care of all creation, to people. It all started with Adam and Eve, **Genesis 1:26 (NIV)** *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

This is exactly what one psalmist echoed, **Psalms 115:16 (NIV)** *The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given (assigned) to mankind.* The Hebrew word, "nathan," translated here as "given," means to assign. Put another way, God didn't give away ownership of the earth, BUT he did assign responsibility of ruling it to humanity. This is staggering and a key reason why you need prayer!

Jesus also told his followers to pray - your kingdom come, your will be done (**Matthew 6:10**). Surely, he wouldn't want you to waste your time asking for something that was going to happen anyways? Jesus anticipated that his followers would pray.

Consider the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 17 and 18. According to James 5, Elijah prayed that it wouldn't rain for three years. After the three-year drought, God said to Elijah ... **1 Kings 18:1 (NIV)** *"Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."* According to verse 1, whose idea and will was it to send rain? God's! YET it required Elijah's perseverance in prayer to release God's will here on earth!

Now consider something else James reveals, **James 5:17-18 (NIV)** *Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.* Elijah was just like you! Did he ever sin? Was he ever discouraged? Did he ever want to quit? The Bible says, "yes," to all of these! But he prayed, and God moved. And the same can happen for you!

There are many stories in the Bible that highlight the incredible power of asking! When Abraham prayed on behalf of his nephew Lot, God spared Lot from the destruction that came on Sodom and Gomorrah. When Moses interceded, God changed his mind about killing Israel in the wilderness. When Daniel cried out to God in prayer, God set in motion the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian captivity. When the church prayed, Peter was set free from prison!

Some things God WILL NOT move, unless you pray! Your prayers do make a difference – a huge difference! It changes everything! God wants you to pray for his will to be done in every area of your life; in your family, in your friends' and acquaintances' lives, in your city, in your country, and beyond.

He is calling you, a follower of the Way, to learn and grow in this truth - prayers of faith are not praying once but persevering in prayer!

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. Why is intercessory prayer (asking) necessary? What does it accomplish?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Can you think of a time in your life when you persevered in asking God for something that built his kingdom in some way? Write down what happened.
2. Call, text or, email a few friends. Ask them if they have something to share in response to Question 1.
3. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4, Matthew 5:16.
4. Memorize Matthew 6:9-13.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 27:1-26.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 2

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

God DESIRES to Answer Your Prayers

A key reason why some don't make requests in prayer is because they're not convinced that God wants to answer. In response, Jesus told a powerful parable!

Luke 11:5-7 (NIV) *Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'*

Jesus is asking, “Can you imagine going to a neighbor, asking for help to entertain a friend and getting such a response – don’t bother me?” The Middle Eastern responsibility for a guest is legendary; they are not just a guest of one home, but the entire community! Refusal in such a case is unthinkable.

Jesus continues the parable, “And can you imagine that the neighbor offers such silly excuses about sleeping children and a locked door?!” The scenario is so unimaginable that it’s humorous to the listeners! Then Jesus brought home the lesson of the parable saying, **Luke 11:8 (NASB)** *I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

The significance of the passage hangs on the meaning of the Greek word “anaideia,” translated persistence, which can have two meanings: shamelessness (a negative quality) or persistence (a positive quality). With only one exception from ancient Greek and the Greek version of the Old Testament, this word is translated as a negative (shame), never meaning persistence. It wouldn’t even make sense culturally as a guest in the Middle East wouldn’t have to ask but once!

Therefore, the guest is received because of the shamelessness of the SLEEPER! The sleeper knows the host must gather up the essentials for the banquet from the various neighbors. IF the sleeper refused the request of anything so humble as a loaf of bread the host would continue his rounds cursing the stinginess of the sleeper, who would not get up even to fulfill this small request. The story would be all over the village by morning. The sleeper would be met with cries of “shame” everywhere he went. Because he wants to avoid being shamed, the sleeper WILL rise and grant whatever the borrower wants.

This parable uses the lesser to greater argument. IF it is true that the sleeper will get up and get the bread, just to save face, THEN how much more will God, who loves you, grant your requests.

God Offers to KEEP on Answering

In Luke 11 above, you see the words, “ask, seek, and knock.” There are so many things you can ASK for! For example, you can ask for food, resources to serve others, inner healing, growth in character, and more!

There are also many things you can SEEK for. What has been lost? You can pray for something you’ve misplaced, or for a reminder of something you’ve forgotten. What about a restoration of strength, for work? How about a family member, or friend, or co-worker who is not a follower of the Way – you can pray for them to be found – the Bible teaches that they are lost.

And you can KNOCK! This can include knocking on a door to gain entry to a closed opportunity.

Finally, it’s important to note that all three verbs – ask, seek, and knock - are in the present tense and active voice, meaning that a better translation of what Jesus said is: “keep on asking;” “keep on seeking;” and “keep on knocking.” Yes, this means that you need to persevere, but it also points to this beautiful truth – if you ask in prayer God is SO good that you’ll keep on receiving, finding, and experiencing open doors! Amen!

Track Your Answers

A wise habit to get into is to find a place, perhaps in your journal, to track your answers to prayer. This is powerful for two reasons. First, it can spark gratitude in your heart, always a good thing! Second, it can

inspire you to pray more. This is VITAL, as James says, **James 4:2 (NIV)** *You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What is the point or points of the parable that was referred to today?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Do you desire to pray? If not, don't be consumed by guilt. But DO plan to change this:
 - a. Make it your #1 prayer request
 - b. Ask your spouse or friend to begin praying for you to have a desire to pray
 - c. Track your answers to prayer every day
 - d. Make sure you BEGIN with thanksgiving of specific answers from the day, previous day, week, previous week, and so on! That will jump start your prayer time!
 - e. Make sure you include listening to God. It's amazing to hear him!
2. Review Matthew 6:9-13

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 27:27-44.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 3

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

God Desires to Give You GOOD Gifts

As Jesus continues to teach on prayer, he asks a profound question and gives an amazing promise, **Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)** *Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, HOW MUCH MORE will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*

Do you understand the power of what Jesus is saying? He's affirming that if an earthly father will only give appropriate gifts to his child, how much more will the heavenly Father give appropriate gifts to you, HIS child! Also, if an earthly father will give good gifts to his child, how much more will the heavenly Father give good gifts to you, HIS child?

Luke even mentions the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the early church couldn't think of a better gift than the Holy Spirit! He's the best gift! God is THAT generous.

God Promises to Answer Your Prayers – ALWAYS!

Paul tells believers, in one of his letters, **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV)** ... *pray continually*. Why such a command? Because God ALWAYS answers prayers! ALWAYS! This is a consistent truth emphasized throughout the Bible. Wow!

Consider, **Matthew 21:22 (NIV)** *If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer*. Or another passage, **1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)** *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him*. Then in Jesus' famous teaching in John 15, he promises, **John 15:7 (NIV)** *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you*.

This is incredible! Paul even says this about God's generosity in answering prayers, **Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)** *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine ...* Have you ever received something in prayer that you may have thought about but didn't pray for? Of course, you have! Praise God!

And not only will he often give you MORE than you ask, but he will frequently give you BETTER than you ask. For example, three times Paul asked the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh (see **2 Corinthians 12:7**); but the Lord said he had something better in mind! What was it? To protect him from becoming prideful in how God was speaking to him and using him!

Someone once said: "The Lord cares more about the line of your eternity, than the dot of your present." Think about it: Paul is almost 2000 years into eternity already! Do you think he remembers that thorn in the flesh now? And if he does, isn't it just a faint memory?

You will not always get exactly what you pray for, but due to the goodness of God what you receive will be MORE AND BETTER. As has been noted, this is something Paul learned, saying, **2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)** *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all*.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What should motivate you to pray? What reasons are given in today's reading?
3. Will God only give you what you ask for? Explain your answer.

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Throughout this lesson the power of prayer is noted. Of course, specific prayers are natural for someone in a relationship with a good Father. They also glorify God, in that you're more likely to praise him when you see specific answers. Therefore, think of something specific that you can pray for. Record this somewhere to help you to remember to pray about it every day.
2. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:9-13.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 27:45-66.

2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 4

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Boundary Markers for Answered Prayer

From what Jesus said about prayer above – e.g. “ask and you will receive” - it might appear that prayer is a “blank check” from God. Unfortunately, some have treated God’s promises this way, and confused and hurt many people! Of course, it’s wrong to believe that a person can be selfish and convince God to respond to all of their requests. Instead, there are three conditions, or boundary markers, for what guarantees an answer to prayer.

Boundary Marker 1: it must not dishonor God

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus’ disciples are told to pray, “Father, hallowed be your name.” Surely then, God will not respond to requests that would diminish his glory.

Boundary Marker 2: it must not threaten his higher kingdom purposes

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus instructed his disciples to pray, “your kingdom come.” God is building his kingdom on earth, and this is an awesome thing! Therefore, he won’t answer prayers that conflict with this goal.

Boundary Marker 3: it must not hurt you, ultimately

Yes, you’ll experience suffering on this earth, but in the Lord’s Prayer Jesus taught you to pray, “And lead us not into temptation” (these are things that will overwhelm or hurt you).

Remember what it said in Luke 11:13, that a good father would not give his child a snake or scorpion? Wouldn’t that be harmful? Well, neither will God let you be exposed to something that would harm you beyond what may be useful for your spiritual growth.

An Objection

Some may object though, to such boundary markers. After all, didn’t Jesus say, “anything,” specifically, **John 14:14 (NIV)** *You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.* He did! But please notice the phrase, “in my name.” Why did he include this? What does it mean?

First: it means praying in a way that is consistent with Jesus’ character

In the ancient world, the “name” of a person represented every part of them, including their character. In fact, to have a good name was to have a good reputation, or in the words of Proverbs, **Proverbs 22:1 (NIV)** *A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*

And Jesus has a good name! The psalmist says, **Psalm 52:9 (NIV)** *I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good.* Obviously then, if there are warnings in the Bible to stay away from behaviors that bring harm to his name, then your prayers must line up accordingly.

Second: it means praying according to Jesus' will

John explains this very well, **1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)** *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.*

Third: it means praying and acting with Jesus's authority

When you pray consistent with Jesus' character and in line with his will for you, then you'll have his authorization and the power to carry it out! This can be observed in some of Peter's ministry, as recorded in the book of Acts, **Acts 3:6 (NIV)** *Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And the lame man walked!*

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What are 3 boundary markers for answers to prayer?
3. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? (there are 3 things shared in this lesson) Can you get anything you pray for then? Explain.

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Can you think of anything from your past that you prayed for, that contradicts one of the boundary markers shared in today's reading?
2. Consider something that you have been praying for recently. Does it fit in with the boundary markers that were shared today? Is this request consistent with praying in Jesus' Name? Ask the Holy Spirit if you need to adjust how you pray for this request.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 28:1-10.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 5

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

So Then, Why Don't Disciples Pray More?

Here is a powerful and challenging quote, "the greatest tragedy is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer." You've seen what Jesus promised about prayer. It's incredible! However, why do so many struggle to pray? What are some reasons for unoffered prayer?

First: pride

One obvious form of pride is a religious pride that *theoretically* acknowledges Jesus and the Bible, but *practically* lives independently. Such people seldom, if ever, pray. They may attend church, but they don't really 'think' they need God! It may sound harsh, but they're self-deceived.

A second form of pride is uncovered when people become angry at God because he delays in answering, or because he answers differently than they ask, or because something tragic happened to them. In their hearts they 'fold their arms' in defiance, or react with self-pity. They stop talking to God. They think that they know better than God!

Such pride is so different from Job's response after hearing that EVERYTHING he owned had been taken or destroyed, and that ALL seven of his children were killed. **Job 1:20-22 (NIV)** *At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.*

May that challenge any pride that you might have.

Second: laziness or distractions

This usually comes from having too many comforts. Many don't have any real physical or 'this-world' needs, so they become distracted by the things of this world – these are worldly 'Christians.' Or a person can become undisciplined, and not rise to greet the risen Jesus in the mornings.

Third: unbelief

Some simply do not believe God when he says that when one prays, they will receive. And so, they don't ask. But James says, **James 4:2 (NIV)** *"You do not have because you do not ask God."*

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What are 3 reasons given for why some do not pray very much?
3. What are 2 forms of pride that can stop a person from praying?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Examine your life using the 3 reasons why people don't pray more. Be honest with yourself. Do any of these exist in your life?
2. Many cultures are very busy! Can you imagine standing before Jesus one day and realizing that you missed building his kingdom through prayer because of distractions? **Jonah 2:8 (NIV)** says, *"those who cling to worthless idols, forfeit the grace that could be theirs."* Ask the Holy Spirit if any of these things are idols in your life – sports, television and/or movies, video games, social media, reading simply to escape, a specific hobby. A hungry heart will confess and turn from any idols.

Bible Reading

1. Please read Matthew 28:11-20.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 6

Final Steps

1. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:9-13.

Abide 15 – Jesus is to be Lord of Your Life

Day 1

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Introduction

The word “Lord” is often seen as outdated and other names for Jesus seem to be more popular. However, “Jesus as Lord,” is a key truth in the New Testament. It’s not presented as optional, and if it’s ignored, the result is fragile Christians and ineffective churches. As Romans says, **Romans 10:9 (NIV)** ... *if you confess with your mouth that, “Jesus is Lord” ...*

When Jesus is ACTUALLY Lord of your life, it should impact everything, including how important decisions are made. Even if you’ve been a follower of Jesus for many years, can you say that he is Lord of every part of your life? Followers of the Way can always grow in this area.

Thankfully, affirming Jesus as your Lord is a GREAT blessing, as he comes to bring freedom! As Paul notes, **2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV)** *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* The Lord he’s talking about is Jesus!

Jesus: Great Shepherd of the Sheep for Today

Jesus is qualified to be your Lord, today, because he is a great Shepherd! Consider what Peter says, **1 Peter 2:25 (ESV)** *For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* What a powerful metaphor! A Shepherd of your soul!

Several chapters later, Peter calls Jesus the Chief Shepherd of the sheep - which is the church (see **1 Peter 5:2,4**) This is wonderful news! As a Chief Shepherd, Jesus fully knows and understands his sheep – including YOU. Jesus explained it this way, **John 10:27 (NIV)** *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* Praise Jesus!

Since Jesus is God and was involved in the creation of each of his sheep, he knows what purpose you were created for. He also knows your future and all the Father’s plans for you! Isn’t this a relief? And the Chief Shepherd also knows THE future – what is coming for the entire world.

This is why, “Jesus as Lord,” is not an expired, out-of-date idea. He knows EXACTLY how to shepherd and direct you and this makes him the only Lord that you’ll need.

Finally, Jesus knows how to find lost sheep! What an incredible Shepherd! Here’s a story from Pastor Ray Duerksen, illustrating this wonderful truth:

“Our son Stefan was listening to a song given to him by his brother, “Come, Just As You Are.” You see, Stefan had thought that because of his past choices he wasn’t worthy of salvation. Therefore, he had been consciously trying to become worthy of salvation. But the Spirit, knowing this, directed circumstances so that Stefan would hear the words of the song, “Come just as you are.” And with that the Spirit opened his understanding and he was wonderfully saved!”

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. Why is Jesus qualified to be your Lord? What metaphor is used today?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Spend some time in prayer asking this question – “Lord, show me what it means for you to be my Shepherd and for me to your sheep?” Write down what he shows you.
2. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:9-13.

Bible Reading

1. For Abide 15, your Bible reading will include some of your memory verses AND their surrounding verses. Today, please read John 15:1-17.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 2

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

The Church Really Matters!

Did you know that when Jesus died, he died for all – every single person who would live – but he ALSO gave himself to create a church? It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Jesus' plans are ONLY for individuals!

Instead, Jesus brilliantly balances the extraordinary value of each person, while also seeking to create and shape a beautiful community! Paul says that, **Ephesians 5:25 (NIV)** ... *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.* Earlier in that same letter, in describing God's plans, he refers to the church this way, **Ephesians 2:21 (NIV)** *In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.*

Jesus Is the “Owner” of the Church Today

The significance of the church to Jesus is highlighted many times in the New Testament. He LOVES the church! However, many churches and believers sadly act as if THEY are the owners of the church and managers of their own lives! The prophet Jeremiah, on the other hand, completely understood what everything belonged to, **Jeremiah 10:23 (NIV)** *LORD, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.*

Jesus is to be the owner of all churches, as he bought the church with his OWN blood (see **Acts 20:28**). Think about that for a moment. This is a very important truth! Then consider the pride of a person or group who acts as if they should be running things without the Lord?

Jesus said that HE would build his church, **Matthew 16:18 (NIV)** *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* The way to build Jesus' church is NOT to ask the members what they want. The way to build Jesus' church is NOT for the leaders to come up with their best plans.

The way to build Jesus' church is to carry out what the true owner of the church wants. A radical shift in thinking is needed for this to happen. Local churches do NOT belong to you, nor to any boards or elders, nor to the pastors, nor to any denominations.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. Typically, who do people view as the owner of local churches? Practically, how do churches or individual believers actually make decisions? Who should the true owner be?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Examine your current and past involvement with the church. Have there been moments when you acted like you were in charge or that your opinion mattered most? If yes, spend some time confessing this and acknowledging Jesus as the owner.
2. Spend some time praying for YOUR local church (followers of the Way pray for churches. It's really important!). Pray that: 1) Jesus would be acknowledged as the owner 2) the leadership of the church would be humble enough to let Jesus lead 3) that the leadership of the church would be supported in their efforts to let Jesus lead.
3. Spend some time praying for the churches of your country. Pray that: 1) Jesus would be acknowledged as the owner in all the churches in your country 2) the leadership of the churches would be humble enough to let Jesus lead 3) that the leadership of the churches would be supported in their efforts to let Jesus lead.

Bible Reading

1. For Abide 15, your Bible reading will include some of your memory verses AND their surrounding verses. Today, please read Romans 12:1-8.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 3

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Jesus Is Lord Of All TODAY

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a deeply troubling dream about a large statue (**Daniel 2**). Together with his friends, Daniel went to prayer to discover its meaning. Daniel grasped who the Lord of all is, including of dreams! When God revealed what the dream meant, Daniel praised the Lord, saying, **Daniel 2:21 (ESV)** *He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding*

When Daniel arrived at the king's court, he told Nebuchadnezzar that God was the provider of his kingdom, power, might, and glory (**Dan 2:37**). Nebuchadnezzar would be nothing without God allowing him to rule! Put another way, the dream that God gave Nebuchadnezzar was a reminder of who is Lord. Then Daniel went on to discuss the king's dream of a grand statue, made of various metals, noting that these metals represented various kingdoms which would rise, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian empire.

Daniel ended his interpretation by telling the king that God had not only determined what the next kingdoms would be, but ALSO that a final one would be raised up, that God himself would rule. In fact, this kingdom would one day destroy all other earthly kingdoms and last forever! This is the kingdom that Jesus spoke of when he said, **Mark 1:15 (NASB)** *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*

Just before Jesus went back to heaven, he announced, **Matthew 28:18 (NIV)** "... all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Paul also said that the Father had placed everything under Jesus, **Ephesians 1:22-23 (NIV)** *And God placed all things under his feet ...*

That isn't something that *will* happen; it has ALREADY happened! As Paul describes the current role of Jesus, he says, **Philippians 2:9 (ESV)** *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name ...* And now, seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus REALLY rules in the affairs of people. Consider these words, found in the last book of the Bible, **Revelation 1:5 (NIV)** . . . *and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

Of course, at this time, there are stubborn pockets of resistance to Jesus' rule. But the final outcome is not in doubt; it has already been determined. In God's timing, all rebels will be defeated, and Jesus' rule will be fully established on earth.

Yes, rebellion continues, but the kingdom, like yeast, continues to spread, as the Lord TODAY guides all earthly matters to their conclusion. And so, followers of the Way are expected to keep praying, "your kingdom come," and engage in the battle for that final victory.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What biblical example is used at the beginning of today's reading to illustrate that Jesus is Lord of all, even today? Can you think of other verses or biblical examples that support this truth?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Write down a list of different areas in your life – i.e. specific relationships, finances. Thank Jesus that he is Lord over all of this! Also ask him to speak to you – "Jesus, is there something that I am not making you Lord over?" If he reveals something, write out a confession.
2. Pick 3 countries to pray for, other than for your home country. Start with praise – praise Jesus that he is Lord over each of these countries *and* will continue to be their Lord. Then ask God – "is there anything specific that I can pray for these countries?" Respond by spending time in prayer.

Bible Reading

1. For Abide 15, your Bible reading will include some of your memory verses AND their surrounding verses. Today, please read John 10:22-42.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 4

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Jesus ACTIVELY Rules His Churches Today

It's clear that Jesus ruled and directed his apostles before his crucifixion: he sent them to heal the sick; to preach the Gospel; fetch a colt for him; feed the thousands; prepare a room for him; and so on.

It's also obvious that Jesus led his apostles after his crucifixion, and before his ascension: he instructed Mary to tell the disciples that he had risen; directed the disciples to throw their nets on the other side of the boat; commissioned them to make disciples of all nations; and so on!

But here's a big question - "did Jesus directly rule and govern after his ascension?" The evidence overwhelmingly declares that he did AND does! This reality requires that you, and all followers of the Way, should respond to his active leadership by intentionally seeking him.

What are some biblical examples of Jesus' active leadership?

First: how the gospel got to the Gentiles (those who aren't Jewish)

Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was a God-fearing man who gave generously to those in need, and he prayed regularly. One day, God gave him a vision in which an angel told him to send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Peter, who was staying at the place of a man named Simon.

As the servants approached Joppa the next day at noon, Peter went up on the roof to pray, and fell into a trance. Peter saw a vision of a large sheet being let down to earth, containing all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles and birds. Then Peter heard a voice telling him to kill and eat from these animals, which Peter saw as ceremonially unclean.

At first Peter resisted, but the voice persisted three times. Now, that's directive! While Peter was pondering the meaning of all this, Cornelius's men arrived inquiring if there was a Peter staying there – there WAS!!! And while they were asking, the Spirit of Christ says to Peter, "Three men are looking for you. Get up and go with them, for I have sent them." Without Jesus clearly directing Peter, there is NO WAY that he would have gone with those Gentiles and entered their house – it was forbidden for a Jew to enter a Gentile's house!!

But Peter OBEYED the Lord who was ACTIVELY leading! As a result, the gospel ended up going to the Gentiles!

Second: how the Gospel got to Europe

The book of Acts highlights the early days of the church, and how the gospel began to spread. It's a thrilling book! Now notice the direction that Paul received from the Holy Spirit, similar to how Peter

was specifically led, **Acts 16:6-7 (NIV)** *Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them.*

Not once, but twice on the same journey, the Spirit changed their plans. And the following three verses then go on to say that they went down to Troas, where Paul had a vision (from the Lord) about a man from Macedonia begging them to come over. They concluded, it says, that the Lord had called them to preach there instead. This is how the gospel got to Europe!

In Acts alone, the Holy Spirit is said to: choose church leaders, warn church leaders, resolve church problems, give prophetic words through people, judge people, and direct church leaders. This is because ONLY the Lord has all the information necessary to guide his kingdom and his church! No wonder that as the church listened and obeyed the Lord, amazing things happened.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What evidence is there that Jesus is still leading the church after he ascended?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Ask the Lord to give you examples of where he has led the church that you're currently a part of. If no examples come to your mind, simply pray for him to lead your church.
2. Send an email, text, or call 3 friends. Ask them to share how Jesus has used the church to help them walk with him.

Bible Reading

1. For Abide 15, your Bible reading will include some of your memory verses AND their surrounding verses. Today, please read Colossians 3.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 5

Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Jesus Is EVALUATING His Churches From Heaven

Jesus is Lord! Are you willing to let him lead in every area of your life TODAY? As the leader, Jesus has every right to evaluate churches, and each follower in each church! He is still leading, as the book of Revelation highlights. In Revelation 2 and 3, you can observe five parts of Jesus' evaluation.

First: Jesus commended their correct behavior

For example, see what he said to the church at Ephesus, **Revelation 2:2 (NIV)** *I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.*

Second: Jesus challenged them to persevere

To the church at Smyrna he urged, **Revelation 2:10 (NIV)** *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Third: Jesus rebuked them for bad heart attitudes and behavior

He rebuked the church at Pergamum like this, **Revelation 2:14 (NIV)** *Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.*

Fourth: Jesus warned the churches of discipline and judgment

See how Jesus warned the church in Thyatira, **Revelation 2:21-23 (NIV)** *I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.*

Fifth: Jesus called the churches to repent

There's an example of this in his command to the church in Sardis, **Revelation 3:3 (NIV)** *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.*

Remember that Jesus was doing all of this in THEIR “present time.” And he warned the church in Ephesus that if they did not respond, he would remove their lampstand. This means that even if they kept meeting, he wouldn't be there with them! Jesus can do this because he is STILL evaluating and ruling his local churches.

Is He Lord?

Jesus asked many challenging questions! Here's one example, **Luke 6:46 (NIV)** *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"* Of course, you can't know what Jesus, by his Spirit, is saying unless you hear his voice. This again emphasizes the need to abide!

Or as Revelation says multiple times, **Revelation 2:7 (NIV)** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* This pattern of listening to the Spirit and then carrying out God's will was even modeled by Jesus. He said, **John 5:30 (NIV)** *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.* Wow!

And so this is what he expects you to do – to listen to and follow him by his Spirit, both through your Bible and otherwise.

For Your Journal

Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. In your own journal, write down something that stood out to you from today's reading.
2. What 5 parts were there to Jesus' evaluation of the churches?

Life Application (James 1:22)

1. You're part of the church! Ask God to evaluate your life – as a member of the church. Does he have an encouragement, challenge, rebuke, warning, or promise for you? (or all of these!) Write down what you receive.

2. Share what you received in Question 1 with someone who is close to you.
3. Review John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39:4, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:9-13.

Bible Reading

1. For Abide 15, your Bible reading will include some of your memory verses AND their surrounding verses. Today, please read Psalm 39.
2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
3. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 6

Final Steps

1. You've finished all fifteen lessons! Congratulations! This investment of time will bear much fruit in your life.
2. Spend some time writing out a prayer to God, thanking him for the journey you have been on. Also thank him for others who are on this journey with you!
3. Are you committing to continued growth? What is your next step? *Followers of the Way: A Discipleship Pathway* has something called *Grow Character* lessons, if you're interested.
4. Spend some time asking God – are there others that I can walk this journey with, encouraging them to also go through Abide? Perhaps re-do it with them! It might be one person or an entire group. Be bold in inviting others to experience the life found in Jesus!