



# Week 1

## News Worth Living For

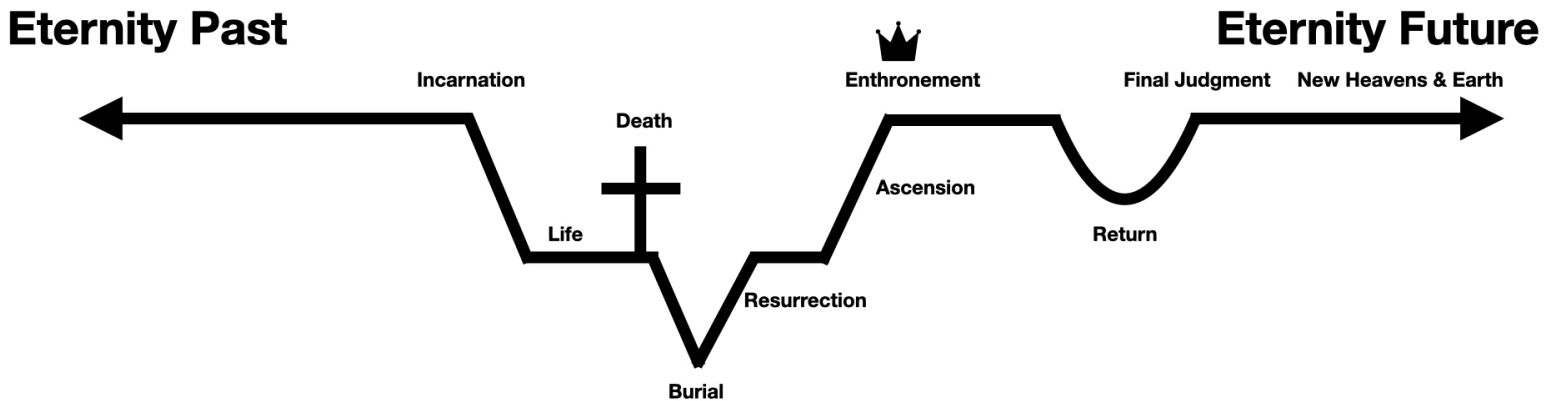
### **What is the Gospel?**

The Gospel is the core message at the heart of Christianity, encapsulating the good news about Jesus Christ and His mission. It declares that through Jesus—God incarnate who lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again from the dead—humanity can be reconciled to God. This reconciliation is offered as a free gift of grace, requiring only faith in Jesus for salvation. The Gospel promises forgiveness of sins, a transformed life here and now through the Holy Spirit, and the hope of eternal life with God. It calls individuals to repentance, faith in Christ, and a life of discipleship, reflecting the love, truth, and holiness of Jesus in the world as they grow in his likeness.

### **What does the Gospel change in the life of a follower of Jesus?**

Many passages in the New Testament explicitly describe the implications of the Gospel in the life of disciples of Jesus. Some passages talk about the work of Christ that he accomplished for us. Other passages emphasize that the Gospel also sets a pattern of life for us to “live into.” These passages demonstrate that the Gospel was not simply a declaration of something Jesus has done for us, but also something God desires to do in us. As the first generation of disciples thought about the work of Jesus in the Gospel, they saw their lives as a continuation of that work. To put it more simply, the first disciples didn’t just focus on being saved FROM something, they saw the Gospel as being saved TO something. After placing our faith in Jesus as the King of kings, a “believer/convert/Christian/follower/disciple” is then enlisted into a life that embodies the values of his kingdom.

# The Gospel of Jesus



## Exploring how the Gospel is news that is worth living for:

The graphic above provides a visual display of the “good news” about the work of Christ in redeeming his people and establishing his kingdom. As you read the passages below, take time to reflect on the way that elements of the Gospel are applied to various aspects of Christian living. Notice the ways that the early Christians applied the Gospel to their lives. Answer the questions after each scripture. Use a print Bible rather than a phone and take your time with each passage. You may choose to break up the scriptures for meditation throughout the week by answering the questions for just a few a day. Or you may decide to do it all in one sitting. The choice is yours.

### Example:

Romans 6:4-5 - "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

Death, burial, and resurrection

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

The context tells us that this is being used to encourage us to battle against sin.

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

The same victory that Jesus had in defeating the power of sin on the cross through his death and resurrection is the same victory we can enjoy as those who are battling sin.

# Day 1

Romans 8:17 - "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

Romans 14:8-9 - "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

Romans 15:1-3 - "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.'"

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

## **Responsive Prayer**

Take a moment to write a prayer in response to what you have read. In your prayer, give thanks for what Christ has done, and then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to embody all that you see Christ doing in the Gospel.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Day 2

1 Corinthians 8:11-12 - "And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

1 Corinthians 15:19-22 - "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

2 Corinthians 1:5 - "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

2 Corinthians 2:14-15 - "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we

are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,"

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

2 Corinthians 4:10-11 - "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

## Responsive Prayer

Take a moment to write a prayer in response to what you have read. In your prayer, give thanks for what Christ has done, and then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to embody all that you see Christ doing in the Gospel.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Day 3

2 Corinthians 4:14 - "knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

2 Corinthians 8:9 - "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

Galatians 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

Ephesians 4:32-5:2 - "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and 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."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

Philippians 2:5-8 - "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

# Responsive Prayer

Take a moment to write a prayer in response to what you have read. In your prayer, give thanks for what Christ has done, and then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to embody all that you see Christ doing in the Gospel.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# Day 4

Philippians 3:10-11 - "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

Colossians 3:13 - "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

2 Timothy 2:11-13 - "The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

**Hebrews**

Hebrews 12:1-2 - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

# Responsive Prayer

Take a moment to write a prayer in response to what you have read. In your prayer, give thanks for what Christ has done, and then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to embody all that you see Christ doing in the Gospel.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Day 5

1 Peter 2:21 - "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

1 Peter 4:1-2 - "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

1 John 3:16 - "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."

- This verse directly links the understanding of love to Jesus' sacrificial death, setting it as a standard for how believers should love one another.

**Name which aspect of the work of Jesus is being used as instruction for Christians and write it below. (Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Enthronement, Return)**

---

**Name which aspect of Christian living is being shaped by the Gospel.**

---

**How does the highlighted aspect of the work of Jesus bring instruction for how to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

---

---

---

# Responsive Prayer

Take a moment to write a prayer in response to what you have read. In your prayer, give thanks for what Christ has done, and then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to embody all that you see Christ doing in the Gospel.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Week 2

# News Worth Dying For

The Gospel stands as the beacon that guides our steps, the truth that shapes our lives, and the treasure that is worth more than life itself. But in a world brimming with distractions and alternate truths, the pressing question remains: Why is the gospel worth giving your life for? This is not a question of mere intellectual curiosity but one of existential significance. It touches the very core of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This resource invites you to meditate on, wrestle with, understand, and ultimately embrace the staggering worth of the gospel. This devotion is not just another study—it's a heart-stirring, faith-deepening exploration designed to help you see that if the Gospel is true, it is worth living and even dying for. This devotion is your invitation to explore the depth of the gospel's value, allowing it to penetrate your heart, challenge your assumptions, and change your life.

### **Why Wrestle With This Issue?**

**Deepened Conviction:** Wrestling with the reality and implications of the gospel solidifies your conviction, making your faith not just inherited but truly owned.

**Increased Faith:** Understanding the depth of what Jesus has done for us fuels our faith, moving us from mere acknowledgment to a place where the gospel becomes the foundation of our lives.

**Enhanced Mission:** Grasping the worth of the gospel compels us to share it with others. It becomes not just a duty but a joy and the very reason for our being.

**Transformative Imitation:** As we grow in understanding the gospel's value, we naturally seek to imitate Jesus more closely, aligning our lives with His teachings and character.

# Day 1

## The Gospel: The Importance According To Jesus

*"And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.""*

*Mark 8:34-38*

In this passage, Jesus makes clear his valuation of the Gospel. From Christ's perspective, the Gospel is so precious that it is worth even losing your life over. This teaching is a central part of being a disciple of Jesus. Every person must grow in their understanding of what the Gospel is and how we are to live in response to it. There is a way to live that finds life even if you lose it. There is also a way to live that loses your life even though you sought to save it.

In Mark 8, the Gospel is presented not merely as a set of doctrinal beliefs but as a transformative way of living that demands a radical reorientation of one's life. Jesus calls His followers to a life characterized by self-denial, bearing one's cross, and following Him. This indicates that discipleship involves personal, obedient actions, in response to Jesus and in response to the message about Jesus.

This call underscores the profound truth that the Gospel is indeed worth dying for. This is a conviction that permeates the narrative and the lives of early Christians. This idea is abundantly present in most of the New Testament books. Without controversy, the early church took these words of Jesus literally and acted upon them. The first generations of disciples often considered it an honor to suffer for name of Jesus and the sake of the Gospel.

Jesus said to lose one's life for his sake and the sake of the Gospel is paradoxically to save it. However, Jesus also warns of the severe cost of rejecting this call. He also taught that to gain the world but forfeit one's soul represents the ultimate tragedy. Furthermore, Jesus highlights the eternal consequences of being ashamed of Him and His words; such shame will be reciprocated at the final judgment. Through these teachings in Mark 8, Jesus lays bare the stakes involved in following Him. To follow Jesus will be a path marked by sacrifice and challenge, yet it is loaded with eternal significance and reward.

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. What three requirements does Jesus say must be met if anyone wants to come after him?

---

---

---

2. What reaction do these requirements of Jesus provoke in your heart and why?

---

---

---

3. In what ways are you tempted to prioritize or value other things more than Jesus and the message about him?

---

---

---

4. In what ways do you see God growing your reverence for Jesus and the message about him more?

---

---

---

**Responsive Prayer:**

Write a prayer responding to how you answered the questions above.



# Day 2

## The Gospel: A Prize Worth Suffering For

*“...and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.” Acts 5:40-42*

Throughout the book of Acts, the apostles encounter persecution for the name and the cause of Christ. Because they are heralds of the Gospel, they are at odds with the Jewish culture and eventually the Roman empire. To proclaim Jesus as the eternal king of an eternal kingdom that will outlast all others puts you in a precarious position with the state. Earlier in the book of Acts we read that they are arrested and brought before the very same council that had Jesus crucified. When questioned about a miracle that God had done through them in the temple, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said, *“Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:8–12.*

After being released, they gathered with their friends and immediately began praying for boldness to speak the Gospel even more. Only one chapter later, they are arrested again. (Acts 5:17-21) After being placed in prison, they are miraculously released by an angel who opens the prison doors for them and sets them free. So what did they do? They went right back to the temple and began preaching the Gospel to anyone and everyone. They are then arrested now for the third time. This time they are threatened, physically beaten, and told not to speak in the name of Jesus. What did they do? *“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”* As soon as they were released, they went right back out and began preaching the Gospel again.

The apostles didn't like suffering more than anyone else. They are not hoping for legal troubles and a beating. However, they had been given a value proposition that made them give more weight to the Gospel than their comfort. For the apostles, knowing Christ and sharing the message about his authority to redeem the world from sin, death, and the devil was the greatest gift from God. They were willing to suffer because knowing Christ, proclaiming the Gospel, and being united with him was their greatest treasure.

Consider the words of some Christians who did give their lives for the sake of the Gospel:

William Tyndale, who was tied to a stake, strangled, and burned for translating the Bible into the common language said: "Christ is with us until the world's end. Let his little flock be bold therefore."

The murdered missionary Jim Elliot famously said: "He is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor who was executed by the Nazis for his defiance against Hitler said: "*When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.*"

Western Christians have lived without much suffering and persecution, we have been inclined to reinterpret or spiritualize Christ's call to give our lives for the sake of the Gospel. While there are many ways to "spiritualize" the truth that the Gospel is worth dying for, Christians throughout history have taken it literally and lost their lives for the sake of it.

**Questions for Reflection:**

The apostles viewed the Gospel and their relationship with Christ as treasures worth suffering for, even to the extent of physical harm and legal troubles. How does this comparison influence your willingness to face discomfort or opposition for the sake of sharing Christ's message?

---

---

---

William Tyndale, Jim Elliot, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are mentioned as individuals who literally interpreted and lived out Christ's call to sacrifice, even unto death. What do you find challenging and what do you find inspiring in their examples? Why?

---

---

---

What steps can you take to move from merely intellectual or spiritual acknowledgment of Christ's call to a more concrete, lived-out expression of faith, even if it means facing opposition or misunderstanding in your own context?

---

---

---

**Responsive Prayer:**

Write a prayer responding to how you answered the questions above.

# Day 3

## The Gospel: Valued in the Example of Paul

Scattered throughout the writings of Paul in the New Testament, are references to the persecution he would suffer throughout his life for the sake of the Gospel. Take a moment to consider how Paul thought about his suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

Paul told the Ephesian elders that he was headed to Jerusalem and he knew that suffering would result.

*“22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:22–24)*

Paul told the Corinthians that his life and the lives of the apostles feel like being sent to the gladiatorial arena.

*“9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. 11 To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, 12 and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.” (1 Cor 4:9–13)*

Paul listed some of his sufferings in his second epistle to the church at Corinth.

*“Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?” (2 Cor 11:23–29)*

Paul spoke about the reason for his suffering to the church at Colossae.

*“24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known...” (Col 1:24–25)*

In reference to the scars on his body from being whipped and beaten so many times Paul told the Galatians:

*“17b... for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” (Gal 6:17)*

Paul told the Philippian church that his suffering was being used for the whole church.

*"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. [...] For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have." (Philippians 1:12-14, 29-30)*

In the last written words of Paul, he took the opportunity to speak these truths to his friend and co-laborer in the gospel, Timothy.

*"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." (2 Timothy 1:8-12)*

*"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."(2 Timothy 2:8-10)*

*"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)*

Paul saw his life as a worshipful offering unto God. He compares the spilling of his blood in death to the libation offering in the temple where wine would be spilled on the altar to God. Suffering for the sake of the Gospel is a normal part of the Christian life. Our obedience cannot be determined by how painful it will be to obey. Paul knew this truth and lived accordingly.

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. Considering the immense value Paul and the early Christians placed on the Gospel, to the extent of enduring suffering and persecution, reflect on your personal experience with the Gospel. How does the Gospel shape your priorities, choices, and the sacrifices you are willing to make?

---

---

---

2. How does the example of Paul's life and the early Christians, what do you think the cost of discipleship entails for you in the 21st century?

---

---

---

3. Paul's life demonstrates a radical transformation from persecutor to apostle, committed to spreading the Gospel despite numerous hardships. This transformation was not just about a change in beliefs but was evident in every aspect of his life and actions. Considering your current lifestyle, profession, and relationships, in what ways is the transformative power of the Gospel evident?

---

---

---

**Responsive Prayer:**

Write a prayer responding to how you answered the questions above.

# Day 4

## The Gospel: Requires Death Before Physical Death

Read each section and respond to the questions below.

*“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Philippians 2:1-13*

What attitudes in us need to die to fulfill Paul’s call to be like-minded with Christ?

---

What attitudes must we bring to life to fulfill Paul’s call to be like-minded?

---

What encouragement does Paul offer from this passage to help us make these choices?

---

---

What do you hear God saying and what action will you take to do something about it?

---

---

*“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:1-4*

What kind of death does Paul tell the Roman Christians to embrace, based upon the death of Jesus?

---

---

---

What attitudes and actions must be taken to embrace the kind of death that is described in these scriptures?

---

---

---

What are the implications of living a resurrection life now, in this present world, before the fullness of God's kingdom is realized at the return of Christ?

---

---

---

*“<sup>30</sup> Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup> What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’” 1 Cor 15:30–32.*

In the context of the entire chapter, Paul argues that the resurrection of Jesus changes everything and is essential as motivation to live for more than this life. As Paul describes his life of self-denial in light of the resurrection of Jesus, how frequently does he encounter this experience?

---

---

---

Would Paul's argument about facing danger and death make sense without the resurrection? Why or why not?

---

---

---

How does the hope of the resurrection motivate believers to endure hardship, self-denial, and danger?

---

---

---

**Responsive Prayer:**

Write a prayer responding to how you answered the questions above.

# Day 5

## The Gospel: The Life We Find When We Lose Our Lives

*“4...though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

*12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.*

*17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.” Phil 3:4–17.*

Paul speaks of his impressive credentials and past life as "loss" compared to knowing Christ. What are some achievements or aspects of your identity that you might need to reconsider in light of your relationship with Jesus?

---

---

---

Paul lists what he gains in exchange for counting all things as a loss for the sake of Christ. What has he discovered to be of more worth than the things he has lost?

---

---

---

---

---

---



Paul said he gained a righteousness that is not his own. It didn't come through following the Old Testament laws, rather it is a righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus. What are the differences between finding righteousness through our own efforts and that which "depends on faith"? What makes it better to have righteousness by faith?

---

---

---

Paul desires to become like Jesus in His death and to share in His sufferings. How can suffering and challenges deepen your fellowship with Christ and transform you into His likeness?

---

---

---

Paul talks about forgetting the past and pressing on towards the future. What past achievements or failures might you need to let go of to fully embrace what God has for you now and in the future?

---

---

---

In what ways does Philippians 2:12-16 bring encouragement to you?

---

---

---

In what ways does Philippians 2:12-16 bring conviction to you?

---

---

---

Paul urges those who are mature to think in this way. What marks spiritual maturity according to this passage, and how does this perspective challenge or affirm your current spiritual state?

---

---

---

Paul encourages the Philippians to imitate him and keep their eyes on those who live according to the example set by the apostles. Who are the examples of faith in your life, and how do they inspire you to live out your faith?

---

---

---

What is God saying to you through these passages and what are you going to do about it?

---

---

---

**Responsive Prayer:**

Take a moment to write a prayer in response to what you have read and studied this week. Take note of the ways the Holy Spirit has engaged your heart and mind to stir you to action.

**Encouragement To Consider:**

We all struggle and have the same or similar struggles! No one has “arrived” on this side of eternity. So please reach out to a mature Christian friend, mentor, or Heritage’s pastoral staff to walk out these tensions with you. If you are struggling to find Christ’s victory in your life, you may need the encouragement God offers through the body of Christ. There truly is freedom, peace, hope, and perfect love found in Christ. You are not alone in your journey and you are loved!