

Week 17 Psalm 32, John 12-16, Psalm 33

Psalm 32 — The apostle Paul teaches us something about this Psalm in Romans 4:4-8. Notably, David does not declare his own righteousness, but confesses his iniquity. As humility comes before honor, so confession precedes cleansing (1 John 1:9). **David lists consequences of hidden sin, what are they?**

John 12— Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrives at Bethany and during dinner is anointed by Mary with expensive perfume. Although Judas Iscariot reprimanded Mary for wasting this pint of nard which was valued at one year's wages, Jesus made it clear that it was a sacrifice that honored Him for the day of His burial (vv. 1-11). Jesus enters Jerusalem on a young donkey, and the people come out to meet Him with palm branches, shouting "Hosanna to the King of Israel." The Pharisees are dismayed that the world has gone after Him (vv. 12-19). Jesus proclaims that now is the time for the Son of Man to be glorified through His coming death that will produce a great harvest of souls. For the third time during His ministry, the Father attests with an audible voice from heaven, giving honor to His Son (vv. 20-36). Jesus again makes it clear that each one must choose between believing in Him and coming into the light of eternal life or rejecting Him and be judged by His words on the last day (vv. 37-50). In verses 24 to 26, ***what is Christ calling His disciples to do, and what are the results and rewards for obeying Him?***

John 13— Now we come to the last night before the death of Jesus, where He is in the upper room with His disciples showing them a vivid example of what servanthood is all about. This dramatic act of washing the feet of His disciples powerfully teaches them that they are not to jockey for positions of authority and prominence, but rather serve others with acts of humility (vv. 1-20). Jesus had a troubled spirit when he announced to the rest of the disciples that one of them would betray Him. After Jesus gave the piece of bread to Judas, Satan entered Judas, and he went out into the night to betray Him (vv. 20-30). Now that Judas was gone the atmosphere is cleared, and Jesus now prepares His disciples for His crucifixion and their new life after His resurrection and ascension. The first and most important principle to teach them is the New Commandment to love each other in the same way Christ had modeled love to them (vv. 31-38). **Why did Jesus wash the feet of the disciples (vv. 1-17)?**

John 14— After the disturbing news about Peter's betrayal and His own forthcoming departure, Jesus comforts His disciples by painting a beautiful picture of a future with them in His Father's house, because of their trust in Him as the way, the truth, and the life (vv. 1-6). Jesus assures the disciples of His unity with the Father and that the works they have seen Him do through the power of the Father, are the very works He will do in them, but in greater way (vv. 7-14). Now that Jesus reveals His return to the Father, He announces to them that they will have a new Counselor, the Holy Spirit, who will dwell in them forever and teach them all things. Jesus emphasizes that the real evidence of love for Him is that we will obey the commands He has given us. The end result of obedience is an intimate relationship with Him and the Father (vv. 15-31). 1. Jesus said, "If you ask me anything in my name, ***I will do it (v. 14).***" ***Is this promise a blank check or are there conditions? Explain.*** 2. Jesus said, "***If you love me, you will keep (obey) my commandments.***" ***Explain what this verse means and why is obedience so important? Extra Question: Does John 14:6 mean that Jesus is the exclusive way to heaven? What about other religions?***

John 15— Jesus now uses the symbol of the vine and the branches to represent our intimate relationship to Christ and the importance of the branches being connected to the vine in order to produce fruit. The key words in the first seventeen verses are abiding (remaining), love, fruit, and obey my commands (vv. 1-17). Since the same animosity that was directed toward Jesus will also be aimed at His followers, we need to prepare ourselves for this same persecution. Jesus says that Holy Spirit and His disciples will testify to the truth of who He is and what He has done (vv. 18-27). *What are the results in our lives for abiding/remaining in Christ? See verses 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16.*

John 16— Jesus continues forewarning His disciples of the inevitable persecution that will come to them when He is gone (vv. 1-4). Jesus returns to His teaching about the coming Counselor (Holy Spirit) whom He will send to take His place; (1) to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, (2) to guide His followers into all truth and, (3) to glorify Jesus and reveal Christ's person, purpose, and work (vv. 5-16). Our Lord assures His disciples that they will be in great sorrow because of what He will suffer, but that their sorrow will turn into joy and gladness. After Christ ascends into heaven to be with His Father, they will be able to ask the Father anything in His name and therefore, will be assured of receiving their petitions. Since Jesus has overcome the world, His disciples will find in Him complete peace and joy even though they might be in the middle of painful trials (vv. 17-33). *What questions do we need to ask in order to find out if a teaching is coming from the Holy Spirit or not? See John 14:26, 16:8, 16:14, II Timothy 3:15-17 and II Peter 1:20-21, and I John 4:2.*

Psalm 33— This is a Psalm celebrating God's power and goodness. We are to praise the Lord for the wonders of creation and the multitude of blessings we have received from Him. **What does this Psalm say about the plans and purposes of God?**

Week 18 Psalm 34, John 17- 21 Psalm 35

Psalm 34 — Where did David get the wisdom pouring from this Psalm? It is found by those who revere God, who pursue peace and goodness (vv. 11-14). “Come and listen,” David beckons, and I will teach you. Holy fear (reverence not terror) which leads to wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), God’s protection (v 7), and favor (v 9). **What does God do for those who revere/fear him?**

John 17— In this chapter we are able to overhear the intimate prayer of the Son to His Father just before He goes through great suffering and the cross. He prays first for Himself (vv. 1-4), then for His disciples (vv. 6-19), and finally for those who would believe because of their testimony (vv. 20-26). Jesus reports to the Father that the work He had been given is finished, and now He asks that He and the Father would be glorified (to manifest bright splendor and greatness) through the work of the cross (vv. 1-4). Jesus prays that the Father will keep His disciples unified in mission, protected from the schemes of the evil one, and sanctified and purified through the truth of the Word of God (vv. 4-20). Jesus then prays for all believers throughout the ages, that their love and unity in the truth will be a clear testimony to the whole world (vv. 21-26). **1. Jesus prayed that believers would manifest the unity and love that the Father and the Son have. How is this unity of Spirit accomplished in a church and among Christians? 2. What does God not intend when speaking of the unity of Christians and the Church?**

John 18— As we come to the events of the arrest and trial of Jesus, we see Him, not as a surprised victim, but as a Savior who is fully cognoscente of His divine mission. Judas leads a battalion of soldiers to the Garden of Gethsemane to find Jesus and arrest Him. As He was arrested, Jesus protects His disciples to make sure they are not arrested with Him. Peter then acts on his own to defend Jesus but is rebuked by Him (vv. 1-11). Jesus was taken first to the house of Annas, the high priest, for a preliminary hearing and was questioned about His teaching. Peter denies Jesus three times in the courtyard before the rooster crows (vv. 12-27). The Jewish leaders bring Jesus to Pilate’s headquarters, since only he had the authority to execute Him. When Pilate interrogates Jesus, he finds out that His kingdom was not of this world, but that He was sent to testify to the truth. Pilate declares His innocence but gives the Jewish leaders a choice of releasing Barabbas or Jesus (vv. 28-40). **What two lessons did Peter learn in this chapter that we must also learn? Extra question: What was so ironic about the action of the Jewish leaders in verse 28?**

John 19— Jesus suffers physical and emotional torture beyond imagination by being flogged and then tormented by the Roman soldiers. Upon hearing that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate made every effort to release Him, but the Jewish leaders applied great pressure and would not relent until Pilate finally gave Jesus up to be crucified (vv. 1-16). The Roman soldiers took Jesus away to Golgotha to be crucified with two others. Pilate put a sign on the cross with saying, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”, which the Chief Priests disputed. The scripture is fulfilled when the soldiers cast lots for His clothes. Being the oldest son, Jesus asks John to take care of His mother (vv. 17-27). After an agonizing six hours on the cross, Jesus cries out, “It is finished”, and then releases His spirit to His Father. To prove He was already dead, the soldiers pierced Jesus side with a spear thus fulfilling scripture. After receiving permission from Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared His body with spices and placed Him in a new tomb that was nearby (vv. 28-42). **1. What did Jesus mean by His words to Pilate in verse**

11? In what way can we apply this verse today? See also Romans 13:1, 2. After reading this chapter and meditating on Christ's sacrificial death, express in a few words your gratitude to Him for what He suffered on your behalf.

John 20— On the first day of the week, while still dark and finding the stone rolled away from the tomb, Mary Magdalene ran to tell the news to Peter and John. Running to the tomb and finding it empty with the linen wrappings lying there like an empty cocoon, John saw the evidence and believed, even though he did not understand the scriptures regarding the resurrection (vv. 1-10). In a very emotional scene, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and she clings on to Him, never wanting to lose Him again (vv. 11-18). That same day in the evening, Jesus appears to His disciples and commissions them to be His witnesses in the same way the Father had sent Him (vv. 19-23). Eight days later, Jesus appears to His disciples and to Thomas, who was not with them at His first appearance. Seeing Jesus, Thomas believes that Jesus was resurrected from the dead but is chided because of his unbelief. In verse 31, John finishes this chapter by giving the very purpose for writing this book, to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing to receive eternal life through His name (vv. 24-31). ***Why is the resurrection the key to the Christian faith? Extra question: Thomas was scolded by Jesus for doubting that He had risen from the dead. Is it wrong for a Christian to have doubts? Why or why not?***

John 21— The scene changes now from Jerusalem to Galilee, and seven of the disciples go fishing in the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). At daybreak, after fishing all night and catching nothing, Jesus appears on the shore and tells them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. When they obey Him their net is suddenly full of fish. Jesus and the disciples then had a breakfast on the shore together (vv.1-14). Jesus now asks Peter three times if he loves Him. Peter responds “yes” and is newly commissioned to feed and shepherd His sheep. After Jesus tells Peter the type of death he would suffer, Peter wants to know about how John would die. Jesus reproves Peter by telling him it is really none of his business. Peter’s business was to follow Christ (vv. 15-25). ***Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Extra question: What important lesson did Jesus teach Peter in verses 21-22, and why is this important to us also?***

Psalm 35 — what a terrible ordeal to be pursued by enemies whose goal was David’s utter destruction! David does not take matters into his own hand by attacking those who oppose him. Instead, he puts matters into God’s hands, where a more sure deliverance awaits. **In what ways does God promise to aid those who call out to Him?**

Week 19 Psalm 36, Acts 1- 5, Psalm 37

Psalm 36 — This Psalm is an oracle of David contrasting the wicked and the pure in heart. Notably, the wicked man devises sinful plans, while the godly set their affections on God (vv. 4 and 7). **How does the Lord preserve the righteous?**

Acts— Luke wrote the book of Acts to Theophilus as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke and gives the history of the birth of the church from approximately 30 A.D. to Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome at about 62 A.D. when the book was written. The book begins with Christ’s commission to His Apostles and His ascension to Heaven from the Mount of Olives. Acts 1:8 is the key verse of the book highlighting the importance of the Holy Spirit in the witness of believers to the world as well as in the direction and growth of the Church. Verse 8 gives the timeline of the book from Jerusalem and all Judea (chapters 1-7), to Samaria (Chapter 8), and to the ends of the earth (chapters 9-28). The main characters in the book of Acts are Peter (chapters 1-12) and Paul (chapters 9-28). Luke was a Gentile doctor who accompanied Paul on many of his journeys, wrote this historical narrative in polished Greek, and thoroughly researched every detail to provide a meticulous accuracy of people, places, and events. The real title of the book should be the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1— Although Matthew and Mark gave the Great Commission at the end of their books, Luke gave the Great Commission at the beginning of the book of Acts instead of the end of his gospel. The Apostles ask the burning question that any Jewish Christian would have asked after His resurrection. “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel (v. 6 ESV)?” Christ didn’t deny that there was a future kingdom for Israel, but made it clear that the business at hand was to be His witnesses and take the gospel to the whole world through the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit. After the ascension of Christ to heaven, the apostles returned from the Mount of Olives to the upper room in Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. During the next ten days the 120 persons spent much time in united prayer to prepare their hearts to receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that they would be equipped for the task of world evangelism. One item of business to be done was to choose someone to take the place of Judas as a part of the Twelve Apostles. Matthias was chosen. *While here on earth, we are called to be His witnesses in our Jerusalem. Give names of specific people at your work, in your neighborhood, ministry, and family who you are (or should be) praying for, and whom God has put on your heart to share the gospel. Extra Question: As Jesus ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives, two men in white clothing (angels) said that this same Jesus would come again in the same way they saw Him go to heaven. When will Christ return from heaven back to the Mount of Olives? See Zechariah 14:3-9.*

Acts 2— The day of Pentecost (also called Feast of weeks) was held in Jerusalem 50 days after the Passover where thousands of Jews came from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate this festival of thanksgiving to God for the harvested crops. On this day the greatest harvest was that of new Christians who became a part of the Church, the Body of Christ. As the Holy Spirit empowered the 120 believers, they began to speak in the languages of people who had gathered in Jerusalem from around the world. When the people were wondering what was happening, Peter stood up and clearly declared a message explaining that this day fulfilled Joel’s prophecy where God would pour out His Spirit on all humanity. Peter then clearly presented the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the need of repenting, believing, and being

baptized. The original 120 now multiplies to 3000 in one day. A new community is born in which the apostles taught God's Word, the people shared their lives and possessions, and many were being added daily to the Church. ***What evidence of the Holy Spirit's work can be observed in this chapter? What evidence of the Holy Spirit's work is seen in your life?***

Acts 3— In this chapter the Apostle Peter again takes the lead in preaching another gospel filled message energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter demonstrates the power and authority of Jesus by healing a man who was lame from birth. The healing occurred when he and John were going to the temple complex to pray at 3:00 pm. As a large crowd gathered, Peter used this miraculous sign to declare a message to the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah spoken of by Moses and all the prophets. He pointed out that although they had killed the source of life, God had raised Him from the dead of which they were witnesses. If they would repent of their evil ways and turn in faith to Jesus as their Savior and Messiah, their sins would be wiped out. Then, at the appointed time, Jesus would return from Heaven to bring in seasons of refreshing, the restoration of all things, and establish His Kingdom. ***What do verses 13 to 26 say about Jesus?***

Acts 4— The church in Jerusalem now has grown to 5000 disciples, and there is great amazement among all of the people after the healing of the lame man. The priestly family and the Sadducees are very distraught that the Apostles are preaching the resurrection of Christ and accusing them of His murder. Peter and John are taken into custody and brought before the Sanhedrin the next day to give an accounting. Peter and John say that the power and name by which they have done this sign is "Jesus Christ" and that He is the only way of salvation. Knowing they cannot deny the miracle, the Jewish leaders ordered them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus and released them. After their release, Peter and John returned to the church body and reported what had taken place. They did not ask the Lord for protection but for boldness to speak the message, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The whole church was unified in one heart and mind and generously shared their possessions so that there was not a needy person among them. Joseph, known as Barnabas, was singled out as one who showed great generosity. Verse 12 says that Jesus is the only way of salvation and the only way to God. ***How would you answer someone who says that all religions lead to God but just express different ways to get at Him? Extra question: Did the early church practice communism (vv. 32-37). Why or why not?***

Acts 5— External pressures on the church spur on its growth, but in verses 1 to 11 we come to the first internal test that was caused by the deceit and hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira who verified that the money they gave to the church for the sale of their property was the full price of the land when it was not true. Their immediate deaths brought great fear to the whole church and those outside did not dare join them (vv. 1-13). As believers were added to the church many signs and wonders were done by Peter who healed the sick and those tormented by evil spirits. Filled with jealousy, the high priest and the Sadducees arrested the apostles and put them in jail. The angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail for the apostles during the night, and they went to the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Completely baffled as to what happened to these men, the leaders found the apostles in the temple preaching and brought them in to confront them. Peter unflinchingly declares that they will obey God and not men, that God has exalted Jesus to His right hand as ruler and Savior, and will grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to those who believe in Him. Through the intervention of Gamaliel, the Sanhedrin decided to flog

the apostles and let them go. The apostles left the presence of the Sanhedrin rejoicing they had been counted worthy of suffering and continued proclaiming the gospel (vv. 14-42). ***Why was the punishment on Ananias and Sapphira so swift and seemingly too harsh?***

Psalm 37 — Great and precious promises abound in this psalm, but there are terrible consequences for those who forsake God. Compare “I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging bread” (v. 25) and “But all sinners will be destroyed” (v. 38). **List some of the ways that God protects those who love him.**

Week 20 Psalm 38, Acts 6-10, Psalm 39

Psalm 38— David describes severe discipline from God as an overwhelming burden too heavy to bear. He cries out for relief (see verses 1, 15, 21-22) to his Lord and Savior. **How does David demonstrate a pattern for renewed fellowship with God?**

Acts 6— As the church grew in number a problem arose in that the Greek-speaking widows were not receiving the daily food distribution that the Hebrew-speaking widows were receiving. Since the Apostles were occupied in the food distribution, they decided to call seven Greek-speaking men to take over for them so that they could then fully dedicate themselves to the preaching of the Word and prayer. The church was flourishing and growing, and even a large group of priests became believers (vv. 1-7). One of those called to serve the church was Stephen who was full of grace and power and did great wonders and signs. The leaders of a synagogue composed of former Jewish slaves disputed with Stephen but were unable to stand up against his wisdom. They lied about Stephen and dragged him off to the Sanhedrin where they set up false witnesses. Stephen's face was like the face of an angel (vv. 8-15). ***Explain the problem the church had in verses 1 to 7, and what they did to solve the problem. What are principles from this passage that can be applied to our churches today?***

Acts 7— Stephen begins by reciting the history of Israel from the calling and covenant of Abraham (vv. 1-8), to the deliverance of Jacob's entire family by Joseph (vv. 9-16), to the life, calling, and leadership of Moses (vv. 17-37), and to the rebellion of Israel from their days in the wilderness to their deportation to Babylon (vv. 38-43). Stephen spoke of the importance of the temple but said that it is of greater importance that our glorious God should not be limited to the temple as the present Jews had done to Him (vv. 44-50). Stephen boldly confronted the Sanhedrin saying "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit (v. 51 NLT)?" Upon hearing his words that they had killed the Messiah, they became enraged, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death (vv. 51-60). ***How was Stephen an example to us in the way he responded to the people that stoned him to death? How should we respond to others that may persecute us or say evil things against us falsely?***

Acts 8— Chapter 8 is the good news/bad news chapter. The good news is that the gospel was finally taken to Judea and Samaria in accordance with Christ's command in 1:8. The bad news is that it took the persecution by Saul and others to scatter the church so that they would obey His command to be His witnesses outside of Jerusalem. Philip (not the apostle) goes down to Samaria, proclaims the gospel of Christ, performs signs and miracles, and a multitude believes. One of the converts is Simon who had practiced sorcery. Upon hearing that Samaria had welcomed the gospel message, Peter and John came and prayed that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit. Simon was severely rebuked when he offered money to be able to replicate what Peter and John had done (vv. 1-25). An angel of the Lord sent Philip down to the road toward Gaza so that he could proclaim the message of the gospel to an important official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. Upon joining him in the chariot, Philip explained the good news about Jesus beginning with Isaiah 53. When he believed the gospel, he asked Philip what would hinder him from being baptized. After he baptized the Ethiopian, Philip was taken away by the Spirit of the Lord and taken to Azotus where he continued to evangelize, and the Ethiopian eunuch returned to his country rejoicing. Jesus gave the command in Acts 1:8 (Matthew 28:19-

20, Mark 16:15) to go into all of the world and preach the gospel, but it wasn't until the persecution came that they began to scatter and preach the gospel. ***Is there anyone in your life right now that the Holy Spirit has been prompting you to share the gospel with? Who is that person? Ask the Lord for strength to share the gospel with that person. Be accountable to another Next Level woman about this.***

Acts 9— This chapter is a turning point in the life of the church when our Lord Jesus Christ personally selects the one that He desires to be his vessel to take the gospel to the Gentiles and thus, appears to Saul of Tarsus on the Road to Damascus. Instead of dragging off the believers to jail in Jerusalem, Saul receives his sight, is baptized, and then goes into the temple and proclaims Jesus as Messiah and Savior. Both in Damascus and Jerusalem he barely escapes death because of his preaching and is finally sent off to Tarsus by the Apostles (vv. 1-31). As the Apostle Peter travels from place to place, he comes to Lydda where God uses him to heal Aeneas who was paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. This miracle causes the people of this area to turn to the Lord. When a lady full of good works by the name of Tabitha (or Dorcas) dies in Joppa, the disciples hear that Peter is near and send for him. Upon entering her room Peter kneels down, prays, and says “Tabitha, get up.” Throughout Joppa many of those who heard of her resurrection believed in the Lord (vv. 32-43). Before Saul’s conversion he was the number one enemy of the church and the one that the church thought that it would be impossible for him to become a Christ follower. The angel said to Mary, “For nothing will be impossible with God (Luke 1:37 ESV).” ***Write down the name of a person among your family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers that you would love to see saved but that it seems highly unlikely or nearly impossible for that person to become Christian. Share their name with the group and covenant to pray for that person regularly and see what God will do.***

Acts 10— This chapter gives a second turning point in the church when the Lord extends full salvation and acceptance to the Gentiles who believe in Jesus. God simultaneously prepares Cornelius, a God-fearing centurion, and Peter for a meeting in Caesarea where Peter will powerfully proclaim the message of the gospel to him, his family, and close friends. An angel appeared in a vision to Cornelius to send for Peter in Joppa. The next day near the time the messengers that Cornelius had sent arrived at Simon’s house by the sea, Peter had a vision three times of a great canvas sheet coming down from heaven with all kinds of unclean animals on it. He was commanded to kill and eat but protested that he had never eaten anything unclean. A voice said, “What God has made clean, you must not call unclean (v. 15 HCSB).” When the messengers arrived to ask Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, the Lord told him to go with them and have no doubts. When Peter and other brothers arrived at the house of Cornelius, he preached and explained the gospel of Christ to all that were in the house. Upon hearing that “everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins,” the Holy Spirit came in power, they spoke in other languages, and they declared the greatness of God. After they had received the Holy Spirit, Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus. ***What was the difference in the way the Gentile believers (vv. 43-48), the believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38), and the believers in Samaria (8:12-17) received the Holy Spirit and baptism? What might account for the differences?***

Psalm 39 — In this psalm we see a fervent prayer full of vivid descriptions of humanity’s plight. David wrestles with the themes of wickedness, posterity, and discipline. **Name three things that David request from God**