



Homecoming

WEEK 2

STUDY GUIDE



CENTRAL
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

Read: Deut. 31:9-12

Scripture Verse: *“Gather the people together. Gather the men, women and children. Also bring together the outsiders who are living in your towns. Then they can listen and learn to have respect for the LORD your God. And they’ll be careful to obey all of the words of this law.”* – Deuteronomy 31:12

Today’s Thought:

We are created to worship our God and to bring him glory. Worship takes place in many ways. We worship God through singing. We show adoration to God through serving him and others. We worship through our tithes and offerings. Our responsibility is to honor God not just on the weekend but daily. It needs to become our spiritual habit.

In Deuteronomy 31, we discover that Moses is the author of the Law and doctrine contained in the first five books of the Old Testament. These first five books are referred to as the Torah. They were written and given to the priests for public reading and to instruct God’s people. The elders who assisted the priests made sure the Law was kept, read, and observed by all.

Moses had called and commissioned Joshua to be the next leader of the Hebrew people as they were heading into the promised land. By laying hands on Joshua, Moses granted him the spiritual power he would need for the excellent task ahead. With Joshua now in the lead and the Law placed in the hands of the priests, Moses gave the command to gather the people and read it publicly every seven years during the week of God’s Feast of Tabernacles.

God’s major feasts were celebrated each year, with only men required to make the journey to the central sanctuary, although families often came along. However, on each seventh year during the Feast of Tabernacles, men, women, and children were required to attend this special ceremony. It was an essential experience for a couple of reasons: first, it was rare for an individual or family to possess a copy of the Scriptures; second, it was a step of faith for the people to leave their homes behind and trust that God would take care of them. It was something of a reenactment of the Exodus from Egypt. During these times of gathering as a people, it became an ideal time to receive the Word of God in a spirit of faith where they could learn to fear the Lord and carefully follow all His Law. Gathering to listen and learn God’s Word became an act

of true worship, and everyone benefitted. With this gathering and the public reading of scripture, Israel regularly renewed its commitment to God. When we gather each weekend we too, participate in worship by listening and responding to God's Word.

- For what do you need courage and strength in your life? Where will you find it?
- Who has been a mentor for you and what have you learned?
- How have you set about time for reading and listening to God's Word?
- How does or did your family incorporate the call to worship into your lives together?

Further Reading: Nehemiah 8:1-6

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

Read: Psalm 32:1-11

Scripture Verse: *“Be glad because of what the LORD has done for you. Be joyful, you who do what is right! Sing, all of you whose hearts are honest!”* – Psalm 32:11

Today’s Thought:

The Psalmist writes of the testimony of forgiveness and a call to experience God’s love. Twice in the first two verses, the forgiven person is pronounced as happy. There is a good reason for the happiness described. The joy comes at hearing his sins are forgiven and removed; there is no longer any trace of sin. The call to share in God’s love leads us to heartfelt worship.

We are all aware of what happens when sin goes unconfessed. There can be severe consequences. Unconfessed sin can be like leaving a wound untreated allowing infection to set in and destroy the surrounding tissue. And sin we hide and refuse to confess will do the same to devour our body and soul. The ultimate cause of the Psalmist’s suffering was spiritual, coming from the hand of God. He describes the draining of his strength to the withering of a tree in the summer heat. Feeling sapped and weak, the Psalmist decides to face his sin head-on and confesses.

Somewhere along our spiritual journeys, we have all felt this way when trying to hide our sin from God. What brings our spiritual happiness and healing is the prompting of the Holy Spirit to confess and uncover our hidden corruption. Our joy is restored at the moment we acknowledge our sin because God’s forgiveness always comes at the first sign of repentance. With God’s forgiveness comes the blessing of protection and guidance due to His unfailing love. The love that forgives you and I now surrounds those who place their trust in Him. We no longer deal with a troubled heart; we are filled with a new song with all guilt removed! The Apostle John expressed it this way, *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”*

- What is the source of blessedness or happiness in this Psalm?
- Why do you think David waited so long to confess his sin?
- What picture would you use to describe forfeiting God’s blessing by covering up your sin?

- What happened when he confessed? What happens when we confess?
- What does David learn about God? What do you learn?
- What should our response be to God's free gift of grace?

Further Reading: 1 John 3:1-10

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

Read: Acts 1:1-14

Scripture Verse: *"They all came together regularly to pray."*
- Acts 1:14

Today's Thought:

"Make me an Intercessor,
One who can really pray,
One of the Lord's Remembrancers
By night as well as day.

Make me an Intercessor,
In Spirit—touch with Thee,
And give the heavenly vision
Praying through to victory.

Make me an Intercessor,
Teach me how to prevail,
To stand my ground and still pray on,
Though pow'rs of hell assail.

Make me an Intercessor,
Sharing Thy death and life,
In prayer claiming for others,
Victory in the strife.

Make me an Intercessor,
Willing for deeper death,
Emptied, broken, then made anew,
And filled with Living Breath.

Make me an Intercessor,
Reveal this mighty thing,
The wondrous possibility
Of paying back my King.

Make me an Intercessor,
Hidden—unknown—set apart,
Thought little of by those around,
But satisfying thine heart." —Selected

As the Book of Acts opens, we read the eyewitness account of Jesus' final instructions to the men he has poured his life into for the past three years. He instructs them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the

promised gift from the Father. This was the gift Jesus had spoken of many times during his ministry with the disciples.

Immediately after watching Jesus ascend into heaven, the disciples made their way back to Jerusalem as instructed. The guys that had faithfully followed Jesus throughout the land arrived in the city and made their way back upstairs to the upper room where they were staying. It is believed that this is the same room they met with Jesus the night of his arrest and where He appeared to them after His resurrection. It was a room that held beautiful memories for them all.

I think it is essential for us to mention the fact that the disciples stayed together. It would have been so easy for them to head off in every direction, but they didn't. In obedience to Jesus' instruction, they remained unified. Together they must now wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They had no idea the timing of coming events. How would they know when the Holy Spirit arrived? I am sure they were all curious about what would happen and when.

Together, unified in Christ, the disciples and all in the upper room encouraged one another and prayed. They all joined together in constant prayer as they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit. They had many unanswered questions, and the One they would typically turn to for answers was back in heaven. Rather than worry about things outside of their control, they spoke to the One who knew the future. Because the disciples remained open to God and His plans, they were prepared for what was about to happen! They demonstrated their desire to seek and know God's plan not only through prayer but by reflecting on the Scriptures. May we follow the disciples' example in knowing God's plans for us by seeking Him in prayer and through searching His Word daily.

- How would you describe Jesus' ascension to heaven?
- What might be some of the questions going through the minds of the disciples?
- What were Jesus' last instructions to his disciples?
- Why do you think the disciples stayed together in the upper room?
- What did the disciples and others do in preparation for the gift that was to come?

Further Reading: Luke 18:1-5

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Scripture Verse: *“When he had given thanks, he broke it. He said, “This is my body. It is given for you. Every time you eat it, do it in memory of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup. He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do it in memory of me.”*

– 1 Cor. 11:24-25

Today’s Thought:

Paul was writing to the church in Corinth to address some disorder at the Lord’s Supper table. The tension resulted from some corrupting the body of Christ through selfish and unchristian behavior while gathered for this meal. The short version was people were arriving early and eating all the food before others could get to the table or even arrived. The lack of respect for the dinner was causing disunity within the church body. Paul wanted these attitudes and actions exposed and brought out in the open. Unfortunately, many churches have split up over non-essential issues, and Paul reminds us that unity, not division, is the bottom line. It was plain that the Corinthians didn’t have God’s approval by the way they were behaving at the Lord’s Table.

It’s at the Lord’s Table where we are supposed to participate together as God’s people in obedience to our Savior’s command to remember him and his death for us. Our participation in this sacrament is an act of proclamation. And this proclamation is to be expressed with a sense of solemnity and worship. Every time we meet together around the Lord’s Table, the gospel message is symbolized and proclaimed. When we share in the Lord’s Supper, we keep the Lord Jesus Christ’s death central in our thinking and give public notice of an inward transformation because of his saving work on the cross. Each week with introspection, when we participate in the Lord’s Supper together, we become fully aware of our dependence on His death for the forgiveness of our sins and that we all stand equally before God’s grace. Our participation together unites us in this act of worship.

- How would you describe the scene if you were observing the Lord’s Supper in Corinth?
- How were they disrespecting the Lord’s Table?

- What was Paul's goal in bringing this issue out in the open?
- What was to be the true meaning and intention of gathering together at the Lord's Table?
- What do we proclaim when we participate in the Lord's Supper?
- How is participating in the sacrament an act of worship?

Further Reading: I Corinthians 10:15-17

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2021

Read: Romans 12:1-8

Scripture Verse: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”*
– Rom. 12:1

Today’s Thought:

Paul opens the twelfth chapter of his letter to the Roman church, speaking on the subject of sacrifice. When we think of the term sacrifice from a biblical perspective, we immediately return to the ancient tradition of animal sacrifice in the temple. The animal sacrifice became the payment for the sins of the people. It was essentially offering the life of one to pay for the life of another. Although at the time, the animal sacrifices were enough to cover the people’s sins each year, they had some drawbacks. Even though the blood of the animal sacrifice served its purpose, it only covered the people’s sins; it could not wash them away. The sacrifices had to be repeated each year at the temple. Not only did this have to happen each year, but it was also costly, secondhand, and dead.

Paul’s challenge to the Roman church was to make themselves living sacrifices pleasing to the Lord. This challenge came on the back of the mercy they had experienced and received from God. For them to live in such a way would be holy and pleasing to the Lord. He had already written to them about this in Romans 6:13, “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” Paul wanted them to see their need to make the sacrifice direct, personal, and living. He understood that animal sacrifice came with an economic and financial cost, but when we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, we now have some skin in the game, our own.

When we are willing to commit ourselves fully as living sacrifices to God, it pleases Him. And not only does our sacrifice please the Lord, but it displays true worship on our part. As we participate in this act of worship, another blessing takes place. Through presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, a radical change takes place in each of us. This change happens as we believe in the promise of God to change us. It’s not easy, but at the same time, it isn’t complicated. The power of commitment to

change Paul addresses in verse two with this instruction, "do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

The challenge to the Romans is the same one addressed to those of us in the church today. We must make ourselves living sacrifices which is our act of worship to God in response to His mercy. Remember, the world will constantly seek to exert its pressure on you at every turn to get you to adopt its way of thinking. Do not conform or let this world squeeze you into its mold but be transformed by renewing your mind as a living sacrifice to our God.

- What are the insufficiencies of animal sacrifice?
- How does the cross of Christ eliminate the need of animals?
- What does it mean to "make our bodies living sacrifices?" How does it become an act of worship?
- What is the result of the renewing of our minds?

Further Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-10

NOTES



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