



# THE PERSPECTIVE

WITH MIKE SHERBINO

ISSUE 05, JANUARY - 2025

*I will*  
**BUILD**  
*my church*

JOURNEY THROUGH ACTS

MONTHLY GUIDE FOR BIBLE READING AND PRAYER

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## WRITER'S MESSAGE

# A MESSAGE FROM MIKE

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*Mike is married to Terrie, and they have five daughters. They have pastored and planted churches across Canada for 44 years and lived in 4 provinces. Currently they lead Northend Church in St. Catharines which they planted in November of 2018.*

The Perspective devotional is designed to help you become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) we see Jesus' meeting with people and extending the invitation to "follow him." (Matthew 4:19). Through this daily reading plan – I am inviting you to follow Jesus – by meeting with him through reading the scripture and through prayer. My personal agenda is to help you become "Strong in your Faith" so you can live in the victory that God intended you to experience.

My hope is that through these daily readings that you will get in the habit of spending time reading the Bible and then praying about your every situation. As you read the scriptures you will find that the Holy Spirit will remind you of what you read and as you commit your way each day to the Lord – you will learn to follow him.

The daily readings and commentary will generally coincide with what I teach on television each day. This way you will have the opportunity to not just read, but also to listen/watch the teaching for each day on either your TV, tablet or from our website ([www.theperspective.tv](http://www.theperspective.tv)).

Along with the daily bible teaching that I provide, you have the opportunity to hear amazing stories of real people - like you, as they share about how they walk with God through the ups and downs of life.

We make these devotionals free of charge to you, but as you know, everything comes at a price. If you can donate towards the costs of this ministry, I would be grateful. All that we do is dependent on the Lord to provide resources to help people know him and then become followers of Jesus. Thanks for being generous with either your one time or monthly gift.

**Dr. Mike Sherbino**



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

"I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18) is a statement that fills me with hope and confidence heading into the uncertainty of another New Year. Jesus' words to his disciples some 2,000 years ago have been tested and found true. Despite persecution, human failing and dark moments, the church of Jesus Christ is still a beacon of light to all who are looking for hope and the meaning of life. Roman emperors vowed to destroy the church, but they were overthrown, and the church blossomed.

Voltaire the French infidel declared that in 25 years there would not be a copy of the scriptures left. Guess what? He died and the Bible society purchased his house and put up a printing press (I smile every time I think of that). The cultural revolution in China seemed to be the demise of the church but God had other plans, and his church continued to grow and thrive in the harshest of places. Why is the church so key? Because Jesus is building it. I love the local church and despite its human faults it continues to grow because Jesus is Lord, and He is building His church.

Join me this month as we look at the early days of the church and the supernatural encounters people had in the explosive growth of the church. Through this month – you will see that this supernatural encounter is as much for today as it was for then. Fasten your seatbelts as we dive into the book of Acts because Jesus is still building His church and not even the gates of hell will overcome it.



MONTHLY GUIDE FOR BIBLE READING AND PRAYER

# January

JANUARY 1, 2025

# THE PROMISE AND THE POWER

## TO BEGIN

The book of Acts gives us an overview of the growth of the church – from inception, through divisive issues, leadership reviews, extraordinary displays of power, incredible evangelistic efforts and above all – obedience to the final commands of Jesus before he returned to Heaven.

## TODAY'S READING: TODAY'S READING: ACTS 1:4-11

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Jesus told his disciples to wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit before they were to move out on their mission for life. Without the Holy Spirit they would be like a ship without sails or a car without an engine. It was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would equip them for life and witness. The same power that was given to the disciples is also given to us. The moment you put your trust in Jesus to be your leader and Lord his Holy Spirit takes up residence within you. Part of that purpose is to be his witness to all the world. Have you ever considered the reality that you have been equipped and called to a greater purpose in life? We are called to go into all the world. A great preacher – Oswald J. Smith once said; "if you can't go into all the world – then send a substitute." It is somewhat staggering to realize that the Lord of all creation has called us to this global enterprise of reaching the world with the love of Christ. A few weeks ago, I was in Winnipeg and a friend told me that their son had just gotten married and with some friends packed up everything and moved as a group to another city to start a new church – imagine. Others have moved into low rental apartments to bring the presence of Jesus to hurting people. Then there are those who while not called to something as radical have chosen to build relationships right where they live – all the while earning the right to be God's good news people right where they're planted.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-33;  
11:1-16

## TAKE AWAY:

Remember that it is the Holy Spirit that equips you and fills you with power to represent Christ – he is with you, and this is your mission – should you choose to accept it.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, in stepping out the door today may I remember my calling to be your witness and your promise to empower me for that task.

JANUARY 2, 2025

# PRAYER AND DECISION MAKING

## TO BEGIN

The book of Acts reveals stories of how the church prayed and made decisions. When we read the accounts – remember that this is the developing story of a young church learning as it grew to hear and discern the will of God. What remains a constant for us is that they prayed, listened and discerned the will of God together.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 1:13-14, 21-26

13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James's son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." 23 So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen 25 to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." 26 Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so, he was added to the eleven apostles.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Right from the beginning the early church had to decide who would be the leader. Reading between the lines it appears they had two good candidates – but how would they know which one to choose? The answer was simple ...they were praying continually and when it came time for the selection – they just asked the Lord to show them by casting lots. Casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and 7 times in the New Testament. Very little is known about this rite but likely it could be compared to flipping a coin. What we do know is that even in this human practice the presence of God was front and centre. Heading into a New Year you likely have numerous decisions to make. Have you considered a specific period of fasting and prayer for direction? Do you need victory over an area of your life that has become your Achilles heel? What we do know is that the Holy Spirit saw their sincerity in seeking him and made his will plain to them. While I have never flipped a coin there have been challenging decisions that I have had to make. Either way seemed good, so I told the Lord that I was uncertain in which way to go – I was asking him to close the door if I was venturing down the wrong path. He has done that for me, he will do it for you, and he did it for the early church.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34;  
12:1-31

## TAKE AWAY:

Someone once said, "you can make a decision, but that decision will turn around and make you." Have you pondered if you need to rethink the way you go about decision making?

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Determine today to bring to the Lord both the small and great decisions before you – then in prayer listen for the voice of His Spirit telling you which way to go.

JANUARY 3, 2025

# THE PROMISED FULFILLED

## TO BEGIN

How important is it in a relationship for both parties to keep their word? Obviously, this is a 'no brainer' for we know that reliability and dependability are the cement of good relationships. The beginning of Acts both shows and describes how the Lord Jesus fulfilled his word to the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit shortly after he had gone back to heaven. Today's lesson describes what took place.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 2:1-6

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Pentecost was the second of the annual harvest festivals and attracted Jews from all over the world to Jerusalem for the celebration. "Those who heard the apostle's message in their native languages at Pentecost would have come from various regions with the two great competing empires of the day – the Roman Empire and the Parthian empire with Jerusalem near the middle" (ESV Study Bible- pg.2083). The unique way the Spirit was manifested has raised many eyebrows because once again we often want to explain the 'God of the supernatural' in natural ways. The truth is – we can't, and we mustn't! Remember how Jesus described to Nicodemus in John 3 that the Spirit is like a wind that blows wherever it wants and now here in the upper room there is a violent wind that is blowing and rearranging everything including their thinking of how God works. Something that 'appeared' like tongues of fire on their shoulders was another symbol in the Old Testament for the presence and purity of God. The ability to speak in languages unknown to them was the Holy Spirit equipping them to do the work of going into all the world. In Acts 1:8 they were told to be witnesses to all the world and now through the coming of the Holy Spirit they were being equipped for that task.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13,  
14:1-40

## TAKE AWAY:

We learn from the early church that the Lord always equips us for the tasks that he calls us to. God's ways defy man's ways, and he purifies us so that he can use us for his glory.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord – may I be open to moving in the power of your Holy Spirit believing that as you enabled the early Church you will also enable and equip me to be your presence wherever I go.



JANUARY 4, 2025

# THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

## TO BEGIN

Likely you have heard the expression – ‘The Power of the Gospel’ but what really does it mean? In Acts 2, Peter who had denied his Lord is given the opportunity to how people were able to hear the gospel in different languages and then witness the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in bring about repentance and a turning back to God. This ‘Power of the Gospel’ will be our focus of study for today.

## TODAY’S READING: ACTS 2: 36-41

36 “Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

## TODAY’S PERSPECTIVE

I’ve heard the quip that Peter preached a message which takes about 3 minutes to read and 3,000 were converted whereas most preachers could preach for 3,000 minutes and be happy if 3 were saved. What was unique and very simple was the message Peter gave; He recounted the promises of the Old Testament prophets with the reminder that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:21).

What we see happening in his preaching is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit fell upon the people. This is the Power of the Gospel. Something happens when we hear the gospel message when it is preached with Holy Spirit conviction and power. Almost like a magnetic pull, the Spirit calls people back to himself as described in verse 39. One thing that stands out to me is the rawness of Peter, his lack of education or training. Yet God qualifies those he calls! Peter has a huge sense of urgency and passion as he presents the need to follow Christ. He did his part, and the Holy Spirit did the rest. Notice that not all responded to the message but for those who did they repented of their ways and were baptized signifying that they too were now followers of the King of Kings.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-49

## TAKE AWAY:

The Power of the Gospel is released both through the message and the messenger. Peter the messenger was now a changed man. He had become an instrument that God could use to declare the message of The Power of the Gospel. And there were results to prove it.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Fill me with your passion to follow you and boldly share with others the Hope we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

JANUARY 5, 2025

# THE GLUE OF FRIENDSHIPS

## TO BEGIN

I've grown a little weary of the post covid conversations. Subjects about people overwhelmed with loneliness, living in silos and then numbers of people dropping out of connection groups whether socially or in their churches. Today's reading discusses the power of community and how God has created us for each other. We need each other with or without a mask on!

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 2:42-47

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

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

When you are not in community – you leave yourself open to negative thoughts, depressing thoughts and often your thought process is misguided because you have been living in a silo. The strength and secret of the early Church was that while they had large gatherings they met together in each other's homes. They celebrated communion, ate good together and shared in each other's joys and miseries. This week I was interviewing a very successful businessman and his wife who happen to have 6 children including one daughter with developmental disabilities. They shared that the night before our interview they had to deal with a significant crisis and who did they turn to ...their small group. The Lord intended us to pray together, support each other and do life together. To say you don't need to be in a group of some kind is to believe that you are self – sufficient or perhaps too busy with your own agenda. But just wait – till a crisis hits and who then will you turn to? Being in community is at times like sandpaper with various personalities likely one or two of which you don't like! But that is the fun part of it – God uses even those frustrating individuals to shape you and you to shape them. No man is an island, God created us to be in community – so re arrange your schedule and choose to get connected!

• **THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.**  
• **1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-58;**  
• **16:1-24**

### TAKE AWAY:

It is easy to have a list of reasons why you can't connect or make a small group part of your agenda. Think about what you could be experiencing if you chose to be connected with a small fellowship of people.

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord – you spent most of your time invested in 12 guys. Help us fight the urge to be self-centered and value individuals the same way You do us.

JANUARY 6, 2025

# FROM HELP TO HOPE AND HEALING

## TO BEGIN

There is a story based out of today's readings about the early church Father – St. Augustine. It was reported when he was visiting the pope – he showed him all the money within the walls of the Vatican. The pope commented to Augustine and said, "The church can no longer say silver and gold have we none." Augustine looked at the pope and commented; "Neither can it say – in the name of Jesus rise up and walk."

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 3:1-10

1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. 6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

There are many times in life when the Lord brings us on a collision course with someone in need that is beyond our capacity to address. Such was the case with Peter and John in meeting the fellow who was unable to walk. It is fair to assume that Peter and John had been to the temple before to pray, and we are told that the lame man was there every day. So why now – and why on this day did his healing come about? My best suggestion comes out of my own experiences where I avoid people that I know I can't help. The reason for that is I see the solution through my own ability to make a difference and not through the eyes of the one I represent – Jesus. Whenever a need was presented to Jesus, he addressed it, and the disciples witnessed him doing it. Now through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, faith rises in Peter who looks at the lame man, speaks a word of hope and then a word of healing in the name of Jesus - with the command to walk. When it comes to healings and miracles the more time, we spend in the presence of Jesus the greater ability to speak a word of hope or healing to an individual. Let's make an agreement with the Lord – that when someone gets healed, he is the one to get the credit. If he chooses not to heal someone then we can leave that part with him knowing that we have done our part.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24;  
2:1-17

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord – may I never doubt your ability to do the supernatural in and through my human limitations. Increase my faith today!

## TAKE AWAY:

When you read a passage like this one – how does it make you feel? Skeptical, hopeful, questioning or anxious to pray for more sick people?

# POLITICALLY INCORRECT

## TO BEGIN

Many of our readers are of Canadian stock and like it or not – Canucks are often noted as people seldom voice their opinion. At the risk of not offending people, we are often guilty of watering down the truth or giving approval to things simply by our silence. This is certainly not the case with today's study, nor would it appear to be the way God calls us live. Let's observe the candor of Peter and John in the following passage.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 3:15-21

15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. 17 "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

I doubt if Peter would have lasted more than 2 minutes in a barber's chair because he talked about 'religious' matters. He was extremely opinionated and blunt as he spoke to on lookers following the remarkable healing of the lame man. The healing was done in the name of Jesus, and he reminds them of that and more by saying – "you killed the author of life – but God raised him from the dead." Ouch! Then he says it is in Jesus' name and faith which comes through him that completely healed the man. He is quick and clear to give the honour to the Lord for this miracle. Nothing about some 'higher power', 'good karma' or the one I can't stand – 'sending good vibes only'. Nope – the answer and the source of the miracle is none other than Jesus. Peter continues to tell the crowd to repent and turn to God, so their sins can be wiped out in order to experience the times of refreshing from the Lord. The call to repentance doesn't sit well today with most – yet it is the only gateway to experience new life and refreshing from the Holy Spirit.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18;  
4:1-18; 5:1-11

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord God, I thank you today that you are waiting to welcome me home, back to that place of indescribable hope. Here I am – knocking at the door waiting in anticipation of seeing your face as you welcome me back to you.

## TAKE AWAY:

As you enter the busyness of today reflect on the phrase "so that your sins may be wiped out." My mind thinks of grade school when we still had chalk boards, and our teacher would wipe the board clear. That's what God has done with the record of my sins and yours!

JANUARY 8, 2025

# THE CORNERSTONE

## TO BEGIN

In the past when a building of significance was being erected the key to construction was the laying of a cornerstone. The cornerstone is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. All the other stones in the building will be laid in reference to the cornerstone and it will determine the position of the entire structure. Today we unpack the meaning of Jesus Christ being the cornerstone of our faith, the one who gives purpose and direction for life.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 4:5-13

5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Knowing what you believe is essential to live a life on purpose. Peter and John along with the early disciples had forever been impacted by their encounter with Jesus Christ. Just as Christ had stood trial for his claim to be the son of God now Peter and John are on trial for declaring that Jesus Christ was the source of the lame man's healing and that he was the Messiah. Knowing that Christ was the cornerstone of their faith gave them confidence and boldness to articulate before the religious leaders the basic tenants of our faith. First – the healing was in the name of Jesus Christ. Second – Jesus was put to death by Jews and Gentiles alike who rejected him yet was raised from the dead by God himself. Third - Jesus is the cornerstone that they had rejected. Fourth - the only way to be saved from our sins and have eternal life is by faith in Christ alone. When you embrace truth that is so clearly laid out it gives you confidence and courage amidst the storms of each day. Are you resting in the confidence that Jesus is your cornerstone or are you still pondering from a distance? How interesting that the religious leaders after listening to Peter and John took note of their courage, clarity and conviction that they attributed to being with Jesus.

## TAKE AWAY:

Considering today's reading give some time to reflect on what truths are foundational in your life. Do the truths that Peter declared ring true for you?

**THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 CORINTHIANS 5:12-21;  
6:1-18; 7:1-16**

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Oh Lord – I am grateful to know that in a world of so much uncertainty you provide me with the strength and stability like a cornerstone gives to magnificent structure.

JANUARY 9, 2025

# THE PRAYER MEETING

## TO BEGIN

Growing up I often heard it described as the most important meeting of the week – but I wondered why so few ever attended? What I'm referring to – was the weekly prayer meeting of our local church. For all the talk about its importance, it seemed like something was missing! That certainly was not the case in Acts chapter 4 where the Spirit of the Lord came in supernatural power during the church's prayer meeting.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 4:23-31

23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one." 27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will have decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 "Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

I'm intrigued how the early church prayed and what they asked God for. Unlike the prayer meetings I attended, I don't remember many people praying for boldness like the early church did. My goodness – if it was me – I think I would be saying Lord Jesus – protect me from the persecution. As I write this devotional the nation of Syria has had a 50-year dictatorship overthrown. Coming into church I was asked by a sincere lady what I thought would happen to Syrian Christians? My assumption is that it will flourish much like the early church did. In the midst of persecution, they sought the Lord not for protection but that the power of the Lord would be released as they ministered the good news about Jesus Christ. Don't get me wrong – I'm not looking for persecution, but I have often wondered what might happen if we, as the people who love God, sought him in prayer like the church of Acts 4?

THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 6 MONTHS.  
2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-24;  
9:1-15

## PONDER AND PRAY:

A great evangelist and preacher by the name of Billy Graham once said that 'the three most important things in a believer's life is to pray, pray and pray.'

## TAKE AWAY:

The easiest way to read this passage is to believe it was for then and not now. But to do that – is to doubt what God is wanting to do in answer to your prayers.

JANUARY 10, 2025

# SHARING IS CARING

## TO BEGIN

When it comes to possessions do you view them as yours or as 'stuff' that has been entrusted to you? Many live with a hoarding mentality and struggle to share the things they feel have been earned through the toil of their hands. It seems that the lessons of sharing from back in the sandbox days have long since escaped our adult memories. Today we look at how the early church shared their possessions, and we will unpack what it means for us.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 4:32-37

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Two months ago, I was invited to listen in on a zoom call with several business entrepreneurs whose goal was to give away as much money as possible from the profit margins of their company. It is easy to judge and say, "well they still live on more money than I make!" That might be true but the question I asked myself was – what amount of money would I give away if I was in their place? Today's passage highlights a similar scenario. The early church was making a huge impact on the community by the way they were living. The phrase 'one heart and mind' describes the way they saw each other and each other's material goods. "God's grace was so powerfully at work in their midst, there were no needy persons among them." There is a beauty described here that makes you want to be a part of a church like this. People selling houses or land to support their Christian brothers and sisters. It was and still is a sacred trust with how we steward all that God has given us. In most places here in North America this behavior is not the norm – but it truly raises the bar for radical generosity. What could that look like for you?

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18,  
11:1-33

### TAKE AWAY:

Radical generosity could mean passing on a vacation to help a student with tuition or paying a medical bill for someone. Could it mean giving away that extra vehicle you really don't need to help someone who can't afford one.

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Do you own your money or does money own you?

JANUARY 11, 2025

# THE LIE

## TO BEGIN

Have you ever told a lie? What about a 'white lie' – like a slight exaggeration. Have you ever looked someone in the eye and told a flat out lie? That's what I call industrial strength lying. You've got to have steady nerves or 'eyeballs' to do that. Have you ever lied and felt a little sick to your stomach because you knew deep down what you said just wasn't true? Guess what – today we unpack a story of an amazing couple in the early church that brought about their own demise because of their lying.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 5:1-11

1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." 9 Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

No matter how you excuse yourself – God hates liars. The ninth commandment says that we are not to bear false witnesses. While the negative is obvious the positive is that we are invited to be truth tellers. Ananias and his wife Sapphira had the opportunity to tell the truth – but they pretended to be something that they weren't. What was that? Generous. They wanted to look like they gave much more than the others while packing away a little for themselves. How interesting that the only people they hurt were themselves. What was God saying in taking their lives? Was the lesson just for the early church or what about us today? The answer is obvious. It is for us today as well. God is wanting you and I to be people of integrity who 'tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth.'

### TAKE AWAY:

What may the Holy Spirit be convicting me of to change so that I become a 'truth teller?'

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-21;  
13:1-14

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord my prayer for today is that the words coming from my mouth will be truthful and pleasing to you.



JANUARY 12, 2025

# HEALINGS AND PERSECUTIONS

## TO BEGIN

Often, I have wondered about God's divine plan when it comes to healing and persecution? Why are some healed, and others are not? Then my mind struggles with the depravity of man when I read of believers who are persecuted for sharing the good news of Jesus to broken people. Have you ever wondered why believers, for simply helping individuals, are punished for what they do? Today we take a closer look at this reality.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 5:12-20

12 The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. 15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed. 17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Just as it was in the times of the early church, so today people have daunting issues which open our hearts to the supernatural. Our passage today describes the desperate plight of people who were longing for a supernatural touch from God via his apostles. We can read this account and say - well that is not going to happen today! My challenge is why limit what God wants to do in and through you? Why not pray for the sick and let God do the rest. While we might not always see the response that we want, I have never had anybody not appreciate being prayed for. The Lord's divine presence can be ushered into the room as you pray for people so that they can know the peace of his presence. When it comes to persecution and the work of God verse 17 gives us insight. It was for jealousy that the apostles were arrested and jailed. Satan will go to all lengths to hinder the gospel message, and you can expect people out conviction of sin or anger towards Christian values to push back against the message of the cross. The beauty of this passage comes to light through the way the Lord supernaturally intervened with healing power and divine deliverance.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
GALATIANS 1:1-24; 2:1-21

## TAKE AWAY:

The Lord calls us to be his lights and voice in the world that we live in. What might that look like for you? Who has he allowed to cross your path in need of prayer?

## PONDER AND PRAY:

What are you learning from the life of the early Church? The need to pray, speak truth boldly, and respond with compassion are three things that jump out to me.

# SPIRIT EMPOWERED MINISTRY TEAMS

## TO BEGIN

Have you ever thought, "well God can't use me because I'm not skilled, polished nor have I been properly trained." It's easy to come up with excuses but much more fun to simply say 'yes' to God. Believe that he will use the gifts he has equipped you with to do the impossible. The reading today describes just that. The church was in action, navigated an administrative headache, empowered leadership and handled the daily distribution of food for those in need.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 6:1-7

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 6 highlights a sensitive issue between two groups of believers – the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebraic Jews. The Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) widows were not receiving the food distribution, but the Hebraic Jews were. We don't know if there was prejudice by the Hebraic Jews, but the matter needed to be resolved. The apostles knew what they were called to do and so to avoid distractions they come up with a plan. Find seven wise spirit-filled men and entrust the ministry to them. (As simple as that and it was done.) I'm wondering if, as you read this account, are you the type of person who thinks you're the only one who can do it properly? Maybe that's true – but eventually you'll wear out if you don't share responsibilities. There is an important lesson to be learned from the apostles here in delegating and sharing the ministry load. The task of giving attention to prayer and ministry of the word was not to be neglected even for the feeding of people. Both were important and when distributed like this the church continued to grow.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
GALATIANS 3:1-29; 4:1-31

## TAKE AWAY:

It is easy to think that certain kinds of ministry are more important than another. The key is realizing that we are called to be faithful and obedient to what God has called us to do. We all need each other, and the Lord never intended for us to do his work alone.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Like the seven who took over the food distribution may I be faithful to do all you've called me to do in the power of your Holy Spirit.

JANUARY 14, 2025

# THE FIRST MARTYR (PART 1)

## TO BEGIN

"No one wants to suffer, but in a fallen world it is unavoidable. Whether physical pain or mental anguish, suffering is part of the human condition for everyone. However, if we understand the inevitability, purpose and fruit of suffering for Christ – and the resources He gives us to face it – we will be better able to endure when it comes. Forewarned is forearmed." (cslewisinstitute.org)

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 6:8-10,13-15

8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. 10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. 14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." 15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

The Anglican theologian, John Stott pointed out that "persecution is simply the clash between two irreconcilable value-systems." We see that today in many places in the world – whether communism vs democracy or Christianity verses another religion. Important to note that the first martyr of the church is Stephen who was not one of the apostles. But he was one of the seven and described as a full of God's grace and power who performed great wonders and signs among the people. We are not told specifically but it was the wisdom given Stephen that the members of the synagogue could not refute and therefore they decided to get rid of him. It is not uncommon for people who are in a place of power to silence the voices of those who oppose them to protect their fragile ego. Whenever truth is presented, there will be a backlash, whenever a call to holiness is declared, there will be opposition, and whenever Jesus is declared to be the only way to God, there will be persecution.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
GALATIANS 5:1-26, 6:1-18

## TAKE AWAY:

What is it from the story of Stephen that captures your thoughts and stirs your soul to action?

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord may I today be filled fresh with your Spirit so that, like Stephen, your grace and power will be displayed in the way I live and represent you.

# THE FIRST MARTYR (PART 2)

## TO BEGIN

Whether on our tablets, TV's or screens we witness horrific acts of violence every day on the various new outlets. Do you wonder like me if we as a nation have become desensitized to persecuted peoples? As we read the account of Stephen's stoning ask the Lord to open your heart to embrace the truths that are tucked away in this remarkable story.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 7:54-60

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

If you've wondered what would happen to you if you were put on trial for your faith - Acts 7 answers many of those questions. First, just as Jesus said, "do not be afraid what you will say for the Spirit will give you the words to speak" (Mark 13:11). This is exactly what happened to Stephen. We read again that he was 'full of the Holy Spirit' and for the first 53 verses of chapter 7 he gives a biblical account of how the Jews rejected the Messiah even as his accusers were doing to the message he was bringing.

In the moment of testing Stephen has an encounter where he sees the glory of God and the son of man standing at the right hand of God. This vision of Jesus infuriates the leaders and to silence their guilty mind they rush to put him to death. Even in his death there are many cues that we need to know. God was still building his church, and it would be soon led by the young man who was collecting the coats of the killers - Saul, the one who would become the apostle Paul. But even in this moment of defiance by Stephen he says something that only could be said under the influence of the Holy Spirit. What was that? "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." It is in his final moments where we see Stephen dying just as he lived - full of grace and full of the Holy Spirit.

THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 6 MONTHS. EPHESIANS 1:1-23; 2:1-22

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, I am asking that by your Spirit I will live in the fullness of your grace and truth - extending forgiveness to others, as you did on the cross and Stephen did to his persecutors.

## TAKE AWAY:

Let me ask the same question as yesterday. What is it from today's reading that captures your soul and resonates in your heart?

# PERSECUTION, PREACHING & POWER

## TO BEGIN

It's easy to be comfortable and miss opportunities that go right by our door. While no one likes suffering or crisis – numerous times those painful moments have caused us to get off the couch, change directions and start a new path forward. When persecution hit the church, the leaders were scattered and guess what – the church grew. Did God know what he was allowing? I think so!

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 8:1,4-8,18-22

1 And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed, or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Today's reading provides us with a perspective on suffering. Verse 8 says that because of the persecution, those who were scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip who we first meet in chapter 6 is now casting out demons and healing many people at a city in Samaria. Note that the ministry of the Spirit is not limited to just the apostles but to all who call on the name of the Lord. His power is available to heal and restore and Philip is a witness to this truth. Philip would not have been in Samaria had it not been for the persecution that was causing them to flee. Despite the hardships being endured the plans of the Lord are being worked out through ordinary believers. Peter and John come to Samaria and lay hands on the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit and amid declaring the gospel there appears a counterfeit. In this instance, it was Simon the Sorcerer, attempting to buy the apostle's Holy Spirit power and hopefully make a few shekels on the side. Peter calls out Simon for what he is and again the unflinching message is to repent of his sinfulness with the observation that he is a man full of bitterness and captive to sin.

## TAKE AWAY:

Do you find yourself in a challenging position at work or with your family because of what you believe? How does the reading today give perspective to you on the narrative the Lord is writing with your life.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
EPHESIANS 3:1-21; 4:1-32

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, may I be faithful in speaking truth, stepping out in dependence on you and believing in the power of your Spirit to set people free.

JANUARY 17, 2025

# GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT

## TO BEGIN

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Today in our reading we learn from Philip's life how the Spirit guided him and moved supernaturally so that a stranger would hear the message and come to saving faith.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 8:26-31,34-38

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way, home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

The wonder of this passage on how the Spirit directed life is often clouded by our questions wondering if it really is normative? Questions like, God spoke then but will he now or can I really know the voice of the Spirit like Philip did? Friend, let me remind you that the Holy Spirit has been given to you to guide you through life. Feed your mind on the word of God and as you do that learn to be still and listen for the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Start with little steps and then keep exercising your faith in the confidence that God who loves you will guide you and keep you. Romans 8:14 tells us that "those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." After reading that scripture does it not help you to understand why Philip's experience in leading an Ethiopian to Christ should be seen as the norm as opposed to the exception. Friends - "when you expect to be led by the Spirit, you find yourself listening for the Spirit through what he whispers to you within your heart and from the pages of scripture.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
EPHESIANS 5:1-33; 6:1-24

## TAKE AWAY:

Today, choose to pause and invite the Holy Spirit to lead you in your daily activities so that your conversations will be life giving to all - even the people you meet riding in their chariots!

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Father, keep me from doubting you're speaking to me and that you want to lead me by your Spirit.

JANUARY 18, 2025

# 180 DEGREES

## TO BEGIN

Ever felt that a situation was hopeless, that someone could never change? The conversion story of Saul (later known as Paul) is proof that no situation or individual is ever beyond the touch of God upon their life.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 9:1-9

1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Saul's conversion and encounter with the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus serves to remind us that the Spirit can change even the hardest heart. One moment he is taking Christian's captive to Jerusalem and the next moment he is face down on the ground before the Lord. When Paul is on the ground, we learn something about persecution. The Lord speaks to Saul and asks, "why do you persecute me?" Did you catch the implications? When you or I are persecuted for our faith, it is Jesus who they are persecuting - not us. Again, in verse 5 Jesus says - "I am the one you are persecuting". The ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believer will remind you that when men speak evil about you or do evil things to you - it is ultimately against the Lord. Stephen knew this when he was being put to death for his faith and that is why he could say, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." As representatives of Jesus - we will sometimes bear the cruel barbs of verbal or physical rejection but in the same breath we can also walk in the freedom that comes from being witnesses to the saving power of the cross of Jesus Christ.

### TAKE AWAY:

Take a moment to think back to what your life was like before you encountered the presence of Jesus in your life. Give thanks to the Lord for how he has brought you from darkness into his light.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
PHILIPPIANS 1:1-30;  
2:1-30

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Fill me today Lord with your eternal hope - so even loved ones who seem impervious to you will come and bow the knee, declaring you to be their Lord and king.

JANUARY 19, 2025

# DRAMA IN DAMASCUS

## TO BEGIN

When you have an encounter with the living God you are forever changed. Repeatedly in scripture this is the story from creation to the prophets, to the choosing of the twelve apostles and now to the man, Saul. Saul, who had been causing havoc among the early believers is now one of those followers of the Way.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 9:9-16, 18-21

9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.<sup>10</sup> In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. <sup>11</sup> The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. <sup>12</sup> In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." <sup>13</sup> "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

<sup>18</sup> Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, <sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

### Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. <sup>20</sup> At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. <sup>21</sup> All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Today's passage has especially helped me bring back into focus the importance of listening for the voice of God. Imagine the talk in the Christian community. Saul has been converted – he was confronted by Jesus himself going to Damascus. Ananias has a vision and is given clear directives on how to direct this new follower of the Way. With Saul, as with us – God wants to reveal his will and ways to us. The temptation is always - to rush into the day and not first be still. Even Jesus modeled the importance of beginning the day with first being in the presence of his Father in heaven. (Mark 1:35-39) The story of Saul's conversion had lots of drama and likely Ananias's heart was in his mouth when he is directed to go directly to Saul who could have imprisoned him. Ananias was listening for the voice of direction from the Lord, and he was not disappointed. With Saul – reread his story and see how the Lord spoke directly to him giving him directives for the new road he was on. So, what about you today? Friend - the Lord will bring guidance and direction as you spend time listening for his voice and reading his word.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
PHILIPPIANS 3:1-21;  
4:1-23

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, throughout scripture you direct all who listen for your voice and desire to follow your command. May I be ready and willing to hear and obey your prompting today.

### TAKE AWAY:

As you read today's devotional what truth is the Holy Spirit reminding you of today?



# EXPECT TO EXPERIENCE THE SUPERNATURAL

## TO BEGIN

Have you ever felt lost in a crowd? It is one thing to be surrounded by acquaintances yet still feel lonely or ignored. People who have physical illnesses often find themselves suffering in silence. No one wants to hear their plight, and most people don't know what to do about it either. Part of our lesson today touches on one such man.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 9: 32-34; 36,39-41

32 As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. 34 "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up.

36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.

39 Peter went with them, and when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. 40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. 41 He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Probably like me- you have never given much thought to Aeneas. Reading his story today I was blown away with the details packed into a few short verses. Bed-ridden for eight years and paralyzed – what could that have been like? Likely forgotten by most – or politely ignored by friends the Spirit now witnesses to Peter to “find” him. Again, we see the Holy Spirit directing a willing instrument to go and search for someone who is forgotten. Then we go on to Joppa – where hope is lost because a special lady in the community has died. But the story isn't over yet. As Peter prays, he offers a word of faith and speaks life back into the body. Now that's a miracle! Someone once said that the problem with life is that it's so ordinary – but that is not true. When we are directed by the Spirit of God, we can expect to experience the supernatural.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
COLOSSIANS 1:1-23;  
2:1-23

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Oh Lord, my request is that I will live with the expectation of seeing your mighty hand at work in all aspects of my day.

## TAKE AWAY:

Reflect on the two stories today and ask yourself if you are living with an expectation today to see the power of God at work?

JANUARY 21, 2025

# WHEN THE FOOD ISN'T KOSHER

## TO BEGIN

The word straight jacket can conjure various pictures in our minds. It is also a good word to describe legalism which is a man-made route to find peace with God - by keeping a list of rules and regulations. Peter as a devout Jew is about to have his legalistic Kosher world blown to bits through an impactful vision. In the vision of all sorts of food that he would never eat God is opening his eyes to the bigger picture of how he is building his church and with whom.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 10: 9-19

9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." 16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. 17 While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

It was hard to imagine that God in his grace would allow an equal seat at his table for both Jews and Gentiles – but that was what he was doing. The Jews that had converted to Christianity were still bringing the rules of the Old Testament and with it all the ceremonial rules of their past. The message that we are saved by faith alone had not fully taken root. Still today – it is not uncommon for religious people to impose a system on others that become like steps to heaven. In my own church many of the rules had to do with an unspoken dress code. Ladies' dresses had to be a certain length, makeup if any was frowned upon. For me as a guy – long hair was unacceptable. At church I would tuck my hair behind my ears and through the week at school I would let it hang over my ears. And if you wore glasses – the round spectacles that John Lennon wore were a no-no...that was being 'of the world'.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
COLOSSIANS 3:1-25;  
4:1-18

## TAKE AWAY:

Give some thought today to rules and regulations that have been put on you outside of scripture. Legalism steals our joy, creates barriers between friends and calls us to a lifestyle that Christ has set us free from.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord – may I ponder on what it means when I realize that I am saved by your grace through faith in what you did on the cross for me.



## ARE YOU NEEDING PRAYER OR SOMEONE TO SPEAK TO?

Send your prayer requests to [prayer@theperspective.tv](mailto:prayer@theperspective.tv) and Mike will personally get back to you and together pray into and believe for the miracle you are needing.

Or if you are needing to speak to someone, call our **prayer line 1-855-910-6297**. We are available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

## FIND US ON NEW STATIONS STARTING THIS MONTH!



**Vision TV:**

Monday - Friday 6:00am EST

**Joytv:**

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**FAITHTV:**

Monday - Friday 8:30am EST

**Miracle Channel:**

Monday - Friday 12:30 pm EST

JANUARY 22, 2025

# WHAT MAKES SOMEONE CLEAN

## TO BEGIN

Living through Covid encouraged most of us to wash our hands more regularly and thoroughly. But no amount of washing on the outside will change the inside condition of someone's heart. The Jews were famous for ceremonial washings and rites of purifications which all contributed to a legalistic approach towards life and God. Even for an old fisherman like Peter to move past what had been instilled in him through his younger years was a challenge – but that was the journey the Holy Spirit was taking him on.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 10: 15, 30-35

15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."  
30 Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me 31 and said, "Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. 32 Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea. 33 So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."  
34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

The problem with legalism is that it is linked at the hip with pride. It becomes a way whereby we justify our behaviour and validate our choices in life. Peter is struggling to accept at a heart level that access to Christ is equal for the gentile as it is for the Jew. It is easy to say our salvation is by faith it is another thing to not consider myself better because I pray more, give more or do more than someone else. When Peter is speaking with Cornelius, he makes the huge admission when he says; "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."

Maybe this subject seems somewhat disconnected from where you are – yet never doubt the subtleness of how we compare ourselves as better than the other in the eyes of God. This leads to smugness, arrogance and a spirit of aloofness.

### TAKE AWAY:

In John 17 Jesus prayed for believers that they would be one in spirit and in purpose. How could a spirit of legalism quench what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life with other believers?

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10;  
2:1-20; 3:1-13

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord help me to see people in the way you see me. Let me show mercy and grace to others as I would want them to show to me.

JANUARY 23, 2025

# THE GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

## TO BEGIN

The gift of encouragement is like a cold drink on a hot day. Kind words can pick you up and keep you going when tempted to pack it in. Mark Twain once said that he "could go for a whole month on one word of encouragement." Today we'll read how the church continued to grow, fueled by the Holy Spirit and a man named Barnabus who had the gift of encouragement.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 11: 19-26

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

You know the expression... do you see the glass as half full or half empty? When dark times or persecution hits, we can wonder and flounder. Nothing helps more than someone coming along to steady our hand, to remind us that God is in control and to keep pressing on. Like a runner who is steps ahead of the nearest competition... a cheering crowd can cause a huge adrenaline rush to get one over the finish line. In spite of the persecution that caused believers to be uprooted and aliens from their homeland - the gospel was moving forward. Have you thought of this fact, despite persecution the early church was right in the middle of God's will. We read that 'the Lord's hand was with them,' which is an awesome encouragement for when you are in the swamp with the gators. It is very similar to Joseph. Thrown in prison for a crime he never committed - it reads that the Lord was with him. (Genesis 39:21) At times God sends his Spirit to refresh us when the going gets hard and then there are times when he sends someone like Barnabus who up and moves to Antioch - why? To encourage the believers.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-18;  
5:1-28

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Did you know that the name Barnabus means the 'son of encouragement.' Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one person that you can come along side of and encourage.

## TAKE AWAY:

Take a moment and ask yourself why we are drawn to people like Barnabus. What is it in their makeup that calls us to a higher level.

JANUARY 24, 2025

# JAIL BREAK

## TO BEGIN

Years ago, I knew a man by the name of Ernie Hollands. Ernie was somewhat of a notorious bank robber who had busted out of maximum-security prison. He was caught and put behind bars for life. While in prison he had a divine encounter with Jesus in his jail cell that transformed him from the inside out. Miraculously – a short time later he was released from jail. No one was more surprised than Ernie and the prison warden. It was like Ernie stole a page out Acts 12.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 12:5-15

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him... They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen." 12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" 15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

May I encourage you to read the full version of this amazing story so that you can reflect on the various factors at work in Peter's release. The Church was praying earnestly, Herod was trying to demoralize believers, the church continues praying all through the night and boom – God answers miraculously. I don't know your situation today that has imprisoned you. Maybe illness, divorce, some bad news – you fill in the blank. Be encouraged to know that as God's child you are called to be live in freedom and not behind any prison bar. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to break free.

### TAKE AWAY:

Is there a current situation or a negative experience from the past that is holding you down? What principles out of this story do you need to draw upon?

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-12;  
2:1-17; 3:1-18

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Thank you Lord that not even the evil plans of men can hinder you from accomplishing your will in my life.

# POLITICALLY SPEAKING

## TO BEGIN

When you go to the barber shop, you're not supposed to speak about politics and religion. However, you can't read the book of Acts without seeing that the political landscape was often what sharpened the believer's faith. It was a time when emperor worship was common, yet people were dissatisfied and looking for something else. Today we will see the interface between faith and politics and how God still gets the last word.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 12:19-24

19 After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. 20 He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. 21 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. 22 They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of man." 23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Oppressive regimes have been part of the political landscape for generations. Consider what has happened in Syria in recent weeks or the ongoing conflict in the middle East. We find Herod Agrippa enacting a period of persecution on the church and putting James the brother of John to death with the sword. He was a formidable force, and it would be easy to understand someone feeling powerless in his presence. Like other leaders he loved the pomp and splendor which finally went to his head. The Scripture says that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. The people praised him as being a god and he ate that praise up without correcting anyone about the facts. Scripture gives us an insight here as to how God deals with those who are proud. Herod is struck by an angel with a nasty disease which takes his life – all because he did not give praise to God. So - what is the takeaway from this. First – there will be leaders who will cause persecution. Second – in the end God can raise up leaders and take them down faster than they could imagine. Third – the church continues to grow and flourish despite all the political instability around.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 TIMOTHY 1:1-20; 2:1-15;  
3:1-16

## TAKE AWAY:

During the most recent election in the States there was a lot of turmoil and political upheaval. How does the reading of this passage inform your thoughts on leaders who are insular and opposed to Christian values?

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Scripture tells us to pray for those in authority over us so that we will live peaceful lives. Be committed to praying for those in positions of political leadership.

JANUARY 26, 2025

# CONFIRMING THE WILL OF GOD

## TO BEGIN

It was one thing for the church to spread out because of persecution but now we see an intentional ministry of going to specific cities and countries. What will be also neat to observe is how they confirmed the will of God in all of this for Barnabus and Saul.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 13:1-5

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers... 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. On Cyprus 4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Knowing and doing the will of God is a key part in being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We read that in the church there were prophets and teachers whose primary gifting would be instructing and teaching the people to discern the will of God. Notice that key to hearing the voice of God is corporate worship and fasting. So much for individualism! The early church gathered and in worship and fasting prepared themselves to hear a directive from the Lord. That directive came as a clear message through an impression of the Holy Spirit that they were to set apart Barnabus and Saul for the Lord's work. Note what takes place next. There is a commissioning where they placed their hands on them and then off, they go. What is important not to miss is that verse 4 says that they were sent off by the Holy Spirit. All through this process of determining God's will, there was fasting, prayer, worship a willingness to be sent and then a second witness by the Holy Spirit to go on this venture.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16; 5:1-25

### TAKE AWAY:

As you seek the Lord's will for key decisions what part does fasting, prayer and worship play in your life?

### PONDER AND PRAY:

Making a big decision – have you brought it before the leadership of the church to pray with you and for you. This certainly seems to be God's way so that you avoid wrong decisions.



# OPERATING IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## TO BEGIN

Don't imagine for a moment that you or I can do the work of God in human strength. We need the power of the Holy Spirit, the discernment of the Holy Spirit and the boldness of the Holy Spirit. Those endowments only come by spending time in his presence. Today's lesson from the first missionary journey highlights all of the above.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 13:6-10, 44-48

6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?"

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us." 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

It is easy to read Acts and think – 'that was for then but not for now.' That kind of thinking is dangerous because it belittles what the Holy Spirit can do today in your life and mine. Chapter 13 becomes a model for Spirit-filled ministry where the gift of discernment is exercised by Paul who calls out the sorcerer for what he is. One could say that this is truly a power encounter between good and evil. The second aspect of Paul and Barnabas's ministry is how they expounded the Old Testament to show that Christ truly was the Messiah and that the message of salvation is not just for the Jews but also for the gentiles. Now we arrive at a pivotal point where the gospel has gone from Jerusalem to Judea then Samaria and now it is going to the ends of the earth. Not everyone will respond to the message that is preached but we read that all who were appointed for eternal life believed. Paul and Barnabas's responsibility was to preach the gospel, and the Spirit would do the rest in calling men and woman to faith in Christ.

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
1 TIMOTHY 6:1-21

## TAKE AWAY:

Determine today that by God's grace you will go into this day armed with the power of the Holy Spirit and a passion to see men and women encounter the living Christ through you.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, grant that today I might be your light in the darkness, a discerning voice in the chaos and reflector of your power.

JANUARY 28, 2025

# SPEAKING TRUTH AND STAYING HUMBLE

## TO BEGIN

Acts reminds us of the importance of knowing what you believe. In our own lives it is important that we rehearse the gospel so we can explain the truth of knowing Christ and give a defense of the hope that is within us. Today we see how Paul and Barnabas navigated this reality.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 14: 1-10

1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided, some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. 5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel. 8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

The reality of being a witness for Jesus is that conflict is certain to arise. This happens in Iconium where through inuendo or similar means Jews who refused to believe stir things up and poisoned others against the gospel. When things like this happen, Satan wants us to pack it in – but the apostles see it as a new door of opportunity to defend and explain the truth. With persecution mounting they move on to the next city to preach the gospel as well. This time it is a different power encounter. A lame man is healed, and the text tells us that Paul knew he had faith to be healed. What does that mean? Simply put – when our gaze is solely on Jesus we will discover that he is more than enough. Where there is faith – the power of the Lord is released. Few see so little happen in their lives because they do not move out in faith. Remember that Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "without faith it is impossible to please him."

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18; 2:1-26

## TAKE AWAY:

Ask yourself if the Lord is speaking to you about acting in faith? What would that look like today when you encounter people with problems, illnesses or huge obstacles they might be dealing with?

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord the world is desperate for answers – may I today be your child who acts in simple faith speaking words of truth, encouragement and healing.

JANUARY 29, 2025

# BEING ACCOUNTABLE

## TO BEGIN

Accountability is a word that we all nod our heads in agreement with but often it never happens. The news outlets are ripe with stories of corruption, power struggles, immoral choices by leaders we trusted all because they were not accountable. Chapter 14 ends with a commentary on how the apostles put in accountability measures for the churches and for themselves.

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 14: 21-28

21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

With every success the Lord allows us to have there is great temptation to give way to pride and self-adulation. We may not say out loud what all we accomplished – but inwardly have we fallen prey to the temptation of how wonderful we are? With everything we do posted on social media have we become a generation of self-promoting hedonists begging our imaginary fans to look at us? (Frankly – I don't care what you made for supper last night and please don't post a picture of your grilled chicken) Note how Paul and Barnabus speak to the churches, encouraging them to stay strong in the faith and again through prayer and fasting appoint elders who are accountable to watch over them. That kind of accountability is a two-way street keeping us rooted in faith with our feet firmly on the ground. But for that to happen there has to be a willingness to submit to one another allowing spiritual minded people to speak into our lives. Paul and Barnabus return back to Antioch and the first thing they do is give an account of all that God had done and the new doors of opportunity. But there was a reporting and submitting to authority that is modelled by the leaders and becomes an example to all of us of what is healthy spirituality.

**THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
2 TIMOTHY 3:1-17; 4:1-22**

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, remind me that I am not impervious to temptation. May I be wise in building friendships that will sustain my life with you.

## TAKE AWAY:

Have you considered the importance of being accountable to either an individual or a group. Have you given permission for anyone to speak into your life?

# HANDLING CONFLICT

## TO BEGIN

It seems that just when things are starting to run smoothly a fly in the ointment appears which is called – ‘conflict’. How do you deal with it yourself? Do you avoid it, confront it, argue about it or just hope that it just goes away? Chapter 15 is all about how the church dealt with conflict and there are lessons here for all of us.

## TODAY’S READING: ACTS 15:1-11

1 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. 3 The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. 5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.” 6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

## TODAY’S PERSPECTIVE

Conflict arose in the early church over what must happen in order to be saved. The Jewish religion was one of rituals and regulations. Now that many were following Christ, they still wanted to bring some of their rituals to the table which was creating division between Jewish and Gentile converts. How do you solve this? In chapter 15, we see a thumbnail outline for resolving conflict. Hopefully it will help you in the conflicts you have to deal with basis.

- 1.) Identify what the conflict is. (Verses 1-2 addresses this)
- 2.) Plan a time to specifically address the matter – not in the heat of the moment. (Vs.2-3)
- 3.) Give appropriate background information. (vs.6-21)
- 4.) Decide what is right. (vs. 20-21)
- 5.) Come to a determination of what the new path looking forward will be like. (vs.28-29)

Often, we shy away from candid conversations. Without dialogue small frustrations will lead to conflict which leads to anger and that leads to division.

## TAKE AWAY:

How are you at dealing with conflict? What principles do you need to be using this week?

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
TITUS 1:1-16; 2:1-15; 3:1-15

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Lord, give me the inner strength to address conflicting matters in a way that honours you and brings clarity to all. May I be humble in admitting my errors and kind in addressing the issues at hand.

JANUARY 31, 2025

# DO WE HAVE TO ALWAYS AGREE?

## TO BEGIN

The beauty and challenge of life is often highlighted in how we navigate relationships. Strong personalities often get their way in a matter. Sometimes the one who seems compliant finally has enough and unexpectedly blows up. What should happen in situations like this and how do we move forward when people do not see things 'my way'?

## TODAY'S READING: ACTS 15:36-41

36 Sometime later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

## TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas highlights a painful reality for many people. Two men that served together and endured hardship together suddenly come to what is referred to as a 'sharp disagreement'. It appears that this might have come from their personalities and how they approached life. Paul appears to be more 'black and white' while Barnabas (the son of encouragement) wants to give a second chance to John Mark who had deserted them. Why they could not reconcile on this matter we don't know – but they now separate and go in different ways. What do we learn from this. First – we can have a difference of opinions. How we speak of individuals or think of them will either help us or hinder us as we seek to move forward in life. Second-chemistry is important on any team. If you cannot appreciate or support the people you work with – it is likely time for a change. Paul and Barnabas separated each with a new running mate and cool heads prevailed! Over the years I have been amazed to see how God uses different personalities to advance his kingdom in spite of their differences. Imagine that!

THROUGH THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN 6  
MONTHS.  
PHILEMON 1:1-25

## TAKE AWAY:

How are you when it comes to expressing your opinion? Have you been able to handle disagreements in a way that doesn't destroy other people.

## PONDER AND PRAY:

Ask the Lord to reveal to you if he is pleased with the way you work with people? What is asking you to change in your approach?

# THANKS FOR SUPPORTING US



## THE PERSPECTIVE IS:

A ministry that is focused on helping people begin a relationship with God so that they can enjoy the joy of the Lord and experience His forgiveness and love. Your donations help make this a reality and help us to continue to spread the good news of the Lord.



## SUPPORT THE PERSPECTIVE

You can do a one time donation or sign up to make it a monthly recurring payment. Thanks to your support, we can continue to provide free content to those who don't know Jesus yet.

**Visit:** [www.theperspective.tv/donate](http://www.theperspective.tv/donate)  
Or you can mail a cheque payable to Mike Sherbino Ministries



## DO YOU NEED PRAYER?

While we're so grateful for your support we also want to support you in what you are going through in life. We know life can be difficult and we shouldn't do it alone. Call **1-855-910-6297 24/7** and someone will be waiting to talk to you. Or email| [prayer@theperspective.tv](mailto:prayer@theperspective.tv)



## RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTER

*Join our mailing list to receive our Friday newsletter! You'll hear ministry updates, letters from friends and find out who will be on the show the upcoming week.*

**[www.theperspective.tv/contact](http://www.theperspective.tv/contact)**

## Mail Us:

455 Geneva Street,  
St. Catharines, ON L2N 2H2

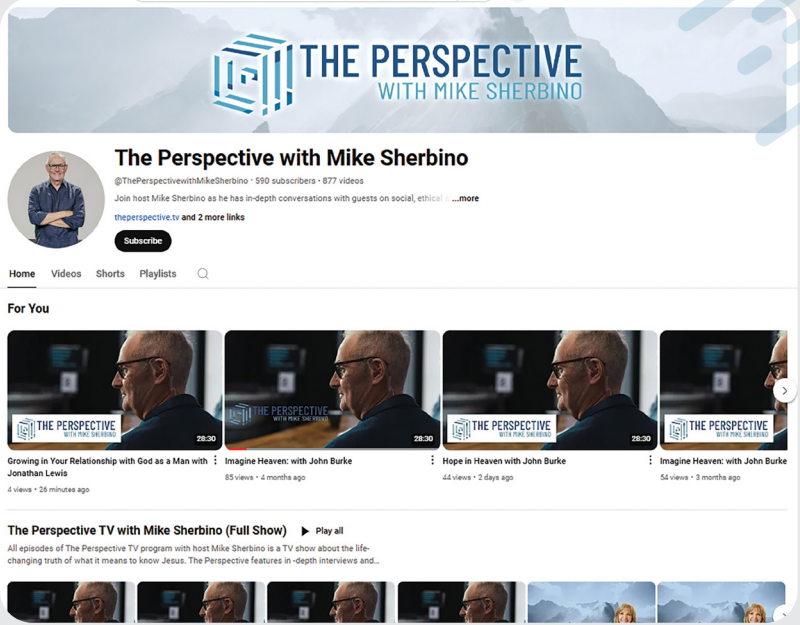
**[www.theperspective.tv](http://www.theperspective.tv)**

**Instagram** - @theperspective.tv

**Facebook** - The Perspective with Mike Sherbino

**Youtube** - The Perspective with Mike Sherbino

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US



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## WATCH THE PERSPECTIVE!

- Vision TV:**  
Monday - Friday 6:00am EST
- Joytv:**  
Monday - Friday 11:00 am EST
- FAITHTV:**  
Monday - Friday 8:30am EST
- Miracle Channel:**  
Monday - Friday 12:30 pm EST

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## LISTEN TO THE PERSPECTIVE!

**Saturdays at 6:00 - 7:00 pm** EST on  
**WDCX radio 99.5fm** in the Buffalo  
 and Niagara Area or go to  
**www.wdcxradio.com** to listen live.



## Join Mike at Northend Church!

Join us **Sundays** in person at **9:30 or 11 am** EST or online live at **11 am** EST.  
[www.northendchurch.ca](http://www.northendchurch.ca)  
 455 Geneva Street, St. Catharines, ON L2N 2H2

## Want Mike to speak at your event?

Wherever he goes, his aim is to bring the hope of knowing Christ and his transformational power.

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CONTACT: [ADMIN@THEPERSPECTIVE.TV](mailto:ADMIN@THEPERSPECTIVE.TV)



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