

# Bread and Butter for the Christian Life

An RUF Bible Study  
Participants' Notes

# Our Bread and Butter in RUF

Getting together and studying the Bible can be very rewarding and very frustrating. It can be good for figuring out what you believe, knowing others better and shaping how you live. Difficult passages and awkward pauses can make it frustrating, but God is always at work. In this study, we will consider what is at the heart of life before God. As a campus minister, I return to these foundational truths over and over in my training, preaching, small groups, and conversations. It is the best that we have to offer, our Bread and Butter.

Remember there is much more to healthy groups than a good discussion. As described in “Leading Live Groups,” our groups will be healthy as they are Groups of the Gospel, Groups for Belonging, Groups for Mission, and Groups of the Group. Please refer to this handout for ideas to strengthen the fellowship of your group.

As for this particular study, we will follow the basic approach that was described in “Bible Study for Fellowship Groups.” While each week we will discuss a different passage, the relation and progression of the topics should hold it together. Each week you will find an ‘icebreaking’ question to help people feel more comfortable talking. Then italicized questions provided in both the leader’s guide and participants’ notes are meant to guide the discussion. In the leader’s guide many of these questions will be answered at least in part. All material along the left margin is included in both leader’s guide and participants’ notes. Indented material is only found in the leader’s guide. There may also be bolded questions not provided in the participants’ notes. Use the material in whatever way seems best. Usually the more questions that involve others in discovering the meaning of the passage and its applications, the better. The study will be best if it follows the natural course of discussion while covering the most important ideas in the passage.

Finally have fun. Please don’t hesitate to call or email if I can help, and let me know of any improvements to the study that come to mind.

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Not much of this material is original or unique since we are striving to present historic Christianity to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. Therefore, we are building on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Please feel free to use this material in discussions with others and even in other Bible studies. Feel free to adapt and modify for your own purposes.

*For more information about RUF at Auburn University, visit our website: [www.auburn.edu/ruf](http://www.auburn.edu/ruf)*



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# Study One – The Father’s Love – Younger Brothers

## Luke 15:11-32

Good News: The Father loves ‘bad’ sinners and ‘good’ ones too.

*If you could travel to another country and live for a year with unlimited funds, where would you go and what would you do? Have you already done this? What was it like?*

For the next two weeks we are going to consider the parable of the prodigal sons in order to discover the uniqueness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is one of Jesus’ more well-known stories that rewards repeated visits for those convinced and unconvinced of his claims. In the first week, we’ll see how easy it is for us to abandon the Father’s love by *rebellion*. In the second week, we’ll see how easy it is for us to evade it by *religion*. Jesus teaches using a parable, which is a story with a point to it. We’ll be looking at the story and trying to figure out what Jesus was communicating to his original listeners and also to us today.

Read Luke 15:11-32.

### *The Father’s Love*

*What evidence in this passage do you see of the father’s love for his sons?*

Try to make four or five observations from the text and list them below.

*The younger son makes a shocking request. What is it and why do you think he might be asking this?*

*How do you think a typical father would respond to this request?*

For some reason, the younger brother believed that the “good life” was found away from the father and outside his house. Remember, this is a parable, so we’re looking for concepts that are broader and deeper than the story itself. Here is an important concept to keep in mind: Though made to worship and serve God, we regularly live for created things that promise what God alone can suitably give. This is called “idolatry.”

***Idolatry is trusting in or living for anything more than God.***

*With this in mind, what do you think were some of the idols that the younger son was living for? What did he want more than the love of his father? What was he seeking? What did he think would give him life? (these are different ways of asking the same question)*

*What idols tempt **you** to live for them more than God? In what ways do you look for them to give you ‘the good life’ of comfort, power, control or approval outside the Father’s house?*

List some here:

*What happens to the younger son?*

*Have you ever been in a place like this in your own life?*

Make a note of that time here. You don't have to share with the group, but it might be helpful if you are willing and open to do so, even if it's a summary of that time.

*What changes the younger son's direction and outlook at this point?*

When we come to our senses and see our need, we reach first step in what is called "repentance."

*What aspects and characteristics of the younger brother's repentance do you see here?*

***Q. 87. What is repentance unto life?***

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

[from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, a historical document used to teach people about God and the Scriptures.]

The younger son seems to be missing something about the character of his father and that affects his repentance.

*What do you think he doesn't fully understand about the father?*

*How would you use this passage to define "grace"?*

*When is a time in your life – it may be currently – when you have had a difficult time coming by grace to God in repentance?*

*When his son returns, what does the father do?*

Make five or six observations and list them below:

*What words would you use to describe or characterize the father at this point?*

*How do you think the love of his father changed the younger son at this point and from this point forward?*

*How would it have motivated him to live like a son?*

*Name a few things that will be difficult in the near future that this type of understanding and confidence in the Father's love would help you do.*

*In what areas in your life are you like the younger brother?*

*What do you think – like the younger brother – you might need to repent of in your life right now?*

*How would your “repentance speech” go?*

Write one out on the back of this page, using the pattern the younger son gives you, and remembering that he didn’t fully understand grace when he scripted it. Use the back of this paper.

*What do you think God’s response would be to your repentance?*



## Study Two – The Father’s Love – Older Brothers

### Luke 15:11-32

Good News: The Father loves ‘bad’ sinners and ‘good’ ones too.

*With our passage in mind, would you rather eat with the pigs or work for an older brother always looking down on you? OR Are you a younger or older sibling? Did you pick on your siblings or get picked on? Share a story where something like this happened.*

Last week we saw how easy it is to abandon the Father’s love by looking for the ‘good life’ elsewhere. This week we will see how easy it is to avoid the Father’s love without ever leaving home.

Read Luke 15:11-32

*What evidence in this passage do you see of the father’s love for his sons?*  
Try to make four or five observations from the text and list them below.

*How does the older son react to his father’s love for his returning brother? How would you describe his tone? Why do you think he is so angry?*

*Though their behavior is different, how are the brothers' hearts similar?*

Last week we introduced the concept of idolatry: Though made to worship and serve God, we regularly live for created things that promise what God alone can suitably give. *Idolatry is trusting in or living for anything more than God.*

*With this in mind, what do you think were some of the idols that the older son was living for? What did he want more than the love of his father? How might he have trusted them to give him power, comfort, approval or control?*

*Some of us might think at first that the older brother had done a better job of loving his father. But how were the older brother's idols in a sense more dangerous than the younger brother's?*

*Describe how this statement is true, "The older brother was lost not despite his goodness but because of it." What makes this statement hard to believe?*

*What are your 'older brother' tendencies? Can you identify them as religious idols? In what ways do you look for them to give you comfort, power, control or approval apart from the Father's love?*

*Often our anger can expose our idols because something is in the way of what we really want. Remember a time recently when you became angry. How were you being kept from what you really wanted? Can you describe this as idolatry?*

*How would repentance have affected the older brother's relationships with his father and brother? Describe how your relationship with God and those close to you (parents, siblings, friends) would be affected by your repenting of religious idols.*

*Do you feel bad for the older brother? Why or why not?*

*How do we see Jesus clearly in what the older brother in this parable is not? From what you know of the life of Jesus, how is he our faithful older brother? Read Philippians 2:1-11. How does this passage shape your understanding of Jesus as our brother?*

*Why do you think the story is open ended?*

If the older had returned to his father, he might have said something like this, "Father, I realize now how you have always loved me freely and fully. I get angry and bitter because I want to control my life by my obedience. The reason I have been 'doing what is right' has been to get things from you not because you love me. Please forgive me and help me to live as your son."

*Use this response as a model and write a prayer of return to God on the back of this page.*

## Study Three – Scripture – Can I Trust It?

### Matthew 27:45-50

*If you could get a book to teach you to do anything you wanted, what would you learn to do?*

For the last two weeks we have seen how easy it is to look for ‘the good life’ apart from God in our rebellion or religion. Living for God by his grace is difficult even when you know how much better he is than anything else you might serve. We’ll begin now to look at how God makes us those who live for him. In our study we will assume that the Bible faithfully guides us. That is a huge assumption that you may be working through currently. We will consider how Jesus’ trust of the Bible or Scriptures should shape our own trust of it. There are many important, related questions that are beyond the scope of this study. One is whether the documents that make up the Bible are reliable witnesses to Jesus’ life. There are many good resources that address this and other questions. While this study may not resolve all of your questions, its goal is to help you trust the Bible which James says “is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

Read Matthew 27:45-50

*From this passage and what you may know of crucifixion, describe the physical crisis that Jesus is under.*

*According to verse 49, what social crisis is he also experiencing?*

*What does his cry in verse 46 reveal about his spiritual crisis? How does it show he is despairing and believing?*

*Using a study Bible or cross references in your Bible or the internet, find and read the Biblical source of Jesus’ cry in verse 46. What evidence from that text suggests that Jesus had more in mind than what he quoted?*

*How does Jesus' use of Scripture at the end of his life affect your confidence to trust it? (For additional passages demonstrating Jesus' trust in the Bible see Matthew 26:52-54, Luke 18:31, Luke 23:28-30, John 19:28.) When in your life could you have benefited from the influence of Scripture as Jesus did? This may seem beyond your reach at this point. The goal is to see the kinds of situations where we need the Bible to guide us faithfully.*

*Read Matthew 4:1-11. How does Jesus demonstrate the authority of the Scripture?*

*What other sources do you look to as an authority besides the Bible? Where do you find truth?*

*When has the authority of the Bible come into conflict with some other authority in your life? How did the conflict make you feel? How did you resolve it?*

The "infallibility" of the Bible is the conviction that the Scripture rightly interpreted is fully trustworthy and will never fail you. It is based on the conviction that the Bible as it was first given was the product of divine inspiration and therefore authoritative and without error.

*Write a one sentence summary of how the following passages support the above statement:*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*2 Peter 1:21*

*2 Peter 3:15-16*

*What questions about the Bible do you need to address in order to trust it more fully?*

## Study Four – Scripture – An Unexpected Power

### Luke 24:13-35

*When was a time from your life or childhood that you were really disappointed?*

Read Luke 24:13-35

Cleopas and the other disciple are sad when Jesus finds them.

*What was it about Jesus' life and ministry and death that would have made this sadness especially painful?*

*What effect does the passage suggest the report of the resurrection had on them?*

*What would you imagine is going through their minds at this point regarding God's work in their lives and the world?*

*Describe a time in your life when you have felt frustrated, bored, dejected or cynical about God's work in your life of the world.*

*What strikes you about Jesus' remedy for their problem (v27)?  
He could have done several other things to address their need. Name 2-3 of them.*

*Christians have historically believed that the Bible is sufficient to teach us everything necessary for God's glory and our salvation. How does Jesus' practice here support the sufficiency of Scripture?*

*What important detail does Luke include about this impromptu Bible study? Why is it important?*

Jesus is saying **all** of the Bible is about **him**.

*How have you related to the Bible as a rule book? How have your thoughts of the Bible as a collection of inspiring stories? How would thinking of it as Jesus does change those views?*

*Read verses 32-33. What effect did Jesus' study of the Bible have on them? What do you think this might mean?*

*On a scale of 1-10, how would you gauge the 'heart's burning' that the Bible brings to your life? Has it been different at different times of your life? Do you have other sources you turn to for this type of inspiration? What are they?*

*What are ways we can encourage each other to be devoted to the Bible?*

*Give a one-sentence summary statement for each of these verses:*

*Hebrews 4:12-13*

*James 1:21*

*Psalms 19*



## Study Five – Scripture – The Story of All Stories

Genesis 1:1-2, 31, 2:25, 6:5-8, Luke 4:18-19, 9:18-24, Revelation 21:1-5

*What is your favorite story from a book or movie? Why?*

The Bible is primarily a story of God's redemption of the world. For this reason, individual passages shape us properly as we see their relationship to this story.

### God Created Our World

Read Genesis 1:1-2, 31, 2:25

*Describe the overall impression of creation these verses give you. What interests you most in them?*

Sometimes people don't understand or believe that God created everything and it was *good*. He called it good. *How does the presence and delight of God at the beginning ground us in the proper enjoyment of His creation?*

### The World Fell From Its Created Goodness

Read Genesis 6:5-8

*How has the story progressed from Genesis 1-2? What happened next?*

In Genesis 6:5, God assesses humankind.

*What key words does he use? What is the impact of those words for understanding the needs of humanity?*

Genesis 6:6-8 describes the effects of our condition on God and the creation.

*Traditional or conservative views of God often present Him as loving only those who live like they are supposed to. How do these verses challenge this traditional or conservative view?*

*Progressive or liberal views of God often present Him as affirming everyone equally. How do these verses challenge this progressive or liberal view?*

Many times we think of sin to be only rule-breaking. God seems to have a more comprehensive view of sin.

*Using Gen. 6:6-8, write a summary statement that shows how sin is more than just the 'breaking of rules.'*

*How have you seen and/or experienced sin to be more than a breaking a set of rules?*

*How do the creation and fall elements of the Bible's story help explain our lives as beautiful and broken?*

*God Redeems the Fallen World*

Read Luke 4:18-19

In the Bible's story, we see God's grace from the beginning with Adam and Noah growing to meet the challenges of growing wickedness in the world. The story of redemption develops with victories, defeats, restoration and destruction. Throughout there develops the increasing awareness that God must and will do something to rescue the world he has made and still loves. In this passage, we see Jesus quoting a description of his long-awaited ministry.

*How does Jesus describe his ministry?*

*Does this description surprise you in any way? Excite you? Bore you? What is your reaction?*

*What do you think it would mean for you to be following in and connected with this ministry of Jesus?*

Read Luke 9:18-24

When Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, he demonstrates that he believes that Jesus has come to do what he described in Luke 4. Then Jesus keeps talking about his work, and about what his followers must do.

*Why would Jesus' teaching here about the work of redemption be shocking to people?*

*What do you think Jesus meant by this?*

*What effect does this have on your desire to take up his work of redemption in the world?*

### God Restores the Redeemed World

Read Revelation 21:1-5

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God has come, and that we still wait for its fullness when he returns. We see great demonstrations of God's power, and we see manifestations of evil fighting against it. In this passage the apostle John gives us part of his vision of the end of our struggle.

*What evidence from the passage do we see that the struggle has ended? Is the story over? If not, what does John lead us to expect?*

*If the creation and fall help us explain our lives and the world, how do redemption and restoration help us look forward to what God will do? List two examples of brokenness in your life or the world. Imagine and describe what the effects of their reversal or undoing would be.*

## Study Six – Justification – The Only Gate of God’s Acceptance

### Luke 7:36-50

*What three people in history would you like to have over for dinner?*

Read Luke 7:36-50

The two people (besides Jesus) in this story are radically different.

*Make observations about the life and backgrounds of the host and the woman in this passage. Feel free to use a study Bible if you need to.*

*The Host*

*The Woman*

These two people represent the extremes of the social and religious spectrums.

*What do you think of this woman's behavior?*

Jesus next tells a short parable.

*Why does he tell this parable? What do you think he's getting at?*

Gates allow access and protect those inside of them.

*What two things does this woman understand and believe that secure God's acceptance? Why are both necessary? How are they absent in the host's life?*

One pastor states, “The gospel is that you are far more wicked than you could ever imagine and simultaneously in Christ far more loved and accepted than you ever dared dream.”

*How do we see all or parts of this quote this illustrated in the lives of the host and the woman?*

It is difficult to continually grasp both our need due to sin and God’s welcome by grace.

*How have you seen yourself in the life of the host? What keeps you from thinking that your wickedness is all that bad?*

*What are we like when we fail to live with an awareness of our sin? What are we like when we fail to live with confidence in God’s grace? Share examples from your own life as you are able.*

*How would you like for your life to resemble this woman’s? How would you like for the confidence of the gospel to show itself in your life?*

## Study Seven – Justification – The Great Exchange

### Romans 3:19-28, 5:19

*What is your favorite courtroom movie?*

Read Romans 3:19-28

*What observations can you make about what Paul thinks of sin from this passage? Try to list 5-7 below.*

*What do you think Paul is getting at when he writes, “that every mouth may be stopped” (v19)?*

*What are some ways that people resist the charge that they are sinful? How do you resist the charge that you are sinful?*

Paul uses an important ‘family’ of biblical words in this passage to describe God’s solution to our sin problem. He uses ‘righteousness’ in verse 22. He uses ‘justified’ or ‘to declare righteous’ in verse 24. In the Bible ‘righteousness’ can refer to God’s character by which He always does what is right. It can refer to right behavior or living. It can refer to a right standing, particularly before a judge. As you might expect, to justify or declare righteous and establish right standing generally follows right living. In this passage, Paul is focusing on how we who do not live right might still receive right standing before God.



Paul is making the case that right standing comes through faith.

*According to v27-28, how does this eliminate boasting? Why is it important to know that there is no merit in our faith?*

*How do these verses shed light on what Paul says in Galatians 6:14 that we boast in the cross?*

*What keeps you from boasting in Christ?*

*According to v24-25, what important words or phrases does Paul use to show how right standing can be ours if we have sinned and fall short of God's glory?*

*Paul says that Jesus fully absorbed or propitiated God's wrath for our sin. What's the practical difference between fully absorbing God's wrath and merely deflecting it?*

Right standing is ours first because God has dealt with our sin, but God does more than clear away the charges against us. Paul continues to describe our justification over the next two chapters of Romans. In chapter 5 Paul elaborates on the ‘gift’ he mentioned in chapter 3.

*How does Paul build on our understanding of the gift of righteousness in Romans 5:19?*

***Q. 33. What is justification?***

A. Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

[from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, a historical document used to teach people about God and the Scriptures.]

*Which verses studied so far support this definition of justification? Which parts of the definition are unclear?*

*What is the practical difference for daily confidence between only sins forgiven, a ‘clean slate’ or ‘another chance’ and receiving Jesus’ righteousness?*

*If all your sins have been atoned for and you have a right standing that has nothing to do with your own obedience, evaluate this statement:*

In Christ, it is a cosmic impossibility for God to ever look on you with anything other than love.

*Do you agree or disagree with that statement? What difference might believing this truth make in your life? How could this give you joy? How would you use this truth to address some insecurity in your life?*

## Study Eight – Sanctification – Promise or Penalty?

Romans 3:19-28, 5:19

*Would it be easier for you to bite into a piece of fruit that you assumed would be revolting but found delicious or bite into a piece of fruit that you assumed would be delicious but found revolting?*

Read John 15:1-17

As those declared righteous through justification, we now pursue righteous or holy living as his disciples. In this passage Jesus uses many images to help us understand and commit to this process of sanctification.

*When you think of the word “holy” what words come to mind?*

*From John 15, how do the images of fruit and vine encourage righteous or holy living?*

*Why do so many people think that holiness is the price you pay for being a Christian? What synonyms for holiness could help enlarge people’s understanding of it?*

*List five ways in which you would like to see your life become more fruitful?*

*Have you seen these before as growth in holiness? If not why not?*

*How does the image of the Father as the vinedresser encourage holiness? How does this image help us endure times of great difficulty? Have you seen God at work to make you fruitful through difficult times in your life?*

*What does Jesus say we must do to grow in holiness? Try to list 4-5 things from the passage that this would include.*

*When have you or are you currently put off by the idea of holiness or exhausted by the demands of holiness? How could this passage help you in pursuing sanctification?*

*What in this passage keeps us from thinking that we abide in Jesus in order to get him to love us? Find five verses in the passage that make this point.*

*Is sanctification for the Christian or the non-Christian?*

## Study Nine – Sanctification – Struggling with Sin and Righteousness Romans 6:1-14

*When can you remember that you disobeyed your parents?*

When the Bible describes growth in Christ or sanctification, it shows us dealing with the present reality of sin. Paul shows us in this passage that walking in the new life that God gives must include a fight with sin.

Read Romans 6:1-14

Paul's opening questions reveal that some think that sin is not that big a deal.

*Why do some think sin is not that big a deal?*

*What metaphor does Paul use to show that sin is more than breaking an abstract list of commands (v6-7, 12, 14)? What impact does this language have on your understanding of sin?*

Paul goes on to say in v16 that slavery to sin leads to death.

*How have you seen sin cause life to unravel?*

Consider how an addict's life unravels financially, socially, vocationally, personally, and physically.  
*How can this progression be seen in other examples of slavery to sin?*

Apparently there were people in the church in Rome who struggled or needed to struggle with sin that would kill them.

*Does this surprise you that such people were a part of the church? Why or why not?*

*What sinful patterns in your own life do you need to be free from? How are they causing or could they cause your life to unravel?* It is important to think about and note your answers to these questions even if you decide not to share them with the group.

*According to verses 1-5, how sure can we be that we will be free from the sin that is destroying us? Why? Why is this important?*

*What is the effect of being united to Christ in his death according to verses 6-7?*

In verses 4-5, 8-10 Paul says that we are also united to Christ in his resurrection.

*In what ways do we already share in his resurrection? In what ways do we not yet share in it fully?*

*According to verse 11, what should we do with the truths we have discussed so far? What do you think this means?*

*Describe what it is like to feel like you are under the power of sin. How does this feeling affect the way you follow Christ? Why does this feeling make the commands of verse 11 important?*

*What does Paul say we must do according to verses 12-13? How does this build on the commands of v11? How do you usually think about the relationship between what you believe, how you feel, and what you do?*

***Q. 35. What is sanctification?***

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

[from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, a historical document used to teach people about God and the Scriptures.]

*How is this definition of sanctification supported by our two studies on sanctification?*

*What steps of faith should you take to present yourself to God as an instrument for righteousness?*



## Study Ten – Glorification – Resurrection Hope

Romans 8:18-30, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

*Whose life that you know would be the hardest to live?*

Read Romans 8:18-30

*What “groans” in this passage and what does that tell us about life in this world?*

*What verses help correct the view that faith in God takes all your problems away?*

*Have you felt like the gospel and the church give you the freedom to groan? Why or why not? What makes you groan?*

*Read v18. What role should present suffering play in helping us understand the future glory? What phrases does Paul use to describe this glory?*

Paul describes the resurrection in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 15.

*In verses 42-44, which contrast between current bodies and resurrected bodies appeals to you the most? Why? How does anticipation of the resurrection affect our understanding of heaven?*

In Romans 8:24-25, Paul indicates that resurrection is part of the core of the gospel.

*Compared to other core truths of the gospel, how would you gauge the importance of the resurrection for your day-to-day life?*

*What two things should the promise of resurrection foster in us according to v24-25?*

*What has to be true of your hope for it to produce patience? Give an example of how a sure hope has helped you wait patiently. What do you need resurrection hope to help you patiently endure currently?*

*How does the resurrection help you 'weep with those who weep' but keep you from despair? Whose life might resurrection hope send you to serve? What practical things could you do for this person?*

At the end of this passage, Paul indicates that glorification is the completion of all of God's work in you.

*How must resurrection include final freedom from sin? How does this help you in your current fight against it?*

# Study 11 – Glorification – New Heavens and New Earth

## Revelation 21:1-8, 22-27, 22:1-5

*Why do we yawn at the idea of a soul on a heavenly cloud playing a harp forever and ever and ever?*

Read Revelation 21:1-8, 22-27, 22:1-5

*List 6-7 verses that show that the whole creation and not only individuals will be redeemed.*

*What do these different images tell us about the renewal of all things?*

*City*

*Bride*

*Wiping of tears*

*Kings bringing glory*

*The garden in the city*

*No more night*

*The reigning people of God*

*How should our experience of these and other images and symbols increase our longing for the new heaven and earth? What experiences have made you eager for the renewal of all things?*

*In 21:22-23, how does John show us that the Father, Son and Spirit's glory will be preeminent in the new heaven and earth? Why is this important to remember?*

*What is meant by the appearance of Jesus in the city as the Lamb? What impression does this make on you?*

*How does this passage remind us of the reality of God's judgment and His preference to show grace? How should we respond to 21:8, 27? Who do you know who might respond well to this vision of what God is doing in the world?*

*On the back of this page, write a prayer of praise to God that includes some of the images of our passage.*

## Study 12 – Mission – The Church and Kingdom

Acts 1:6-8, 2:41-47, 6:1-7, 7:54-60, 19:8, 17-20, 23-27,

*What is the best experience of 'mission' that you or others have had (e.g. sports team, road trip, church related, survival story, etc.)?*

This final study is to show how the truths of the gospel propel us into God's mission in the world to work for his kingdom through his church. To discuss this we will consider several passages in Acts where God works through his people.

Read Acts 1:6-8

Jesus is with his disciples after his resurrection.

*What do they want Jesus to do?*

*How does Jesus both affirm and reshape their expectations?*

*What are the implications for us as God's people? How do Jesus' expectations for his people compare to your experience of his people?*

Read Acts 2:41-47

In this passage, Luke takes a break from the action of the story to describe the practice of God's people.

*List ten things that characterized their life together.*

*Which of these have you enjoyed most? Which of these do you need more of?*

*To which of these would you like to contribute in the coming months? In the coming years?*

*What evidence in this passage do we see of a visible community or church forming?*

*What would the early practice of God's people say to those who think that the local visible church is unnecessary? How would you gauge the practical importance of the local church in your life? What factors have affected its importance in your life?*

Read Acts 6:1-7

*What new development for the church takes place in this passage? What two primary ministries of the church does it reveal?*

*According to verse 3, how is authority in the church neither 'top-down' nor 'bottom-up'? What abuses of authority in the church have bothered you the most? Practically what has resistance to or submission to authority in the church looked like for you? What would help you respond more faithfully to authority in the church?*

Read Acts 7: 54-60

*Make 5-6 observations about what was needed from Stephen for God's mission to go forward. How does the mode of expansion in God's kingdom contrast with the mode of expansion for the kingdoms of this world?*

Read 19:8, 17-20, 23-27

*In what ways is the kingdom of God expanding outside the walls of the church?*

The Bible makes a distinction between the church and the kingdom. The church is the impetus for the kingdom but the dominion of the king over every area of life is to be embraced. While the Bible or word of the king does not directly address every question or need that arises in any culture, it's values and vision for the world equips us to engage them.

*Have you understood work for God's kingdom outside the church to be as glorifying to Him as work within it? In what way would you like to participate in the work of the kingdom propelled by but outside of the church? What needs of our culture might you help address through your occupation (business, education, law, civil service, medicine, engineering, etc.) your community involvement, your relationships with friends and family?*



## Final Study – Recap

If you've made it this far, great job. Look back over what you have thought about, prayed and written.

What has stood out to you the most from this study?

What do you feel God has been saying you to you through the Scriptures?

What insights of others have been particularly helpful for you?

What do you think God is calling you to think differently about?

What do you think God is calling you to do differently in your life?