

## About the Author

The Rev. Richard Patterson, Jr. is an ordained Presbyterian minister living near Albany, NY. He currently serves as Scripture Union's Bible Guide Editor. Rev. Patterson is the author of several books including *Confident Parenting in Challenging Times* (1999, Tekna Books) and has been on the staff of Scripture Union for more than 30 years.

The "Overview" sections of The Essential 100™ Sermon Outlines are excerpted from the book entitled *The Essential Bible Guide* by Whitney T. Kuniholm, President of Scripture Union/USA.

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The outlines are intentionally brief. Why? Because the most important component is what you add, that is, your own insights, stories and applications. That's what will make your sermon come alive for your people.

Each of *The Essential 100 Sermon Outlines* uses the following structure:

**Title** The sermon title is taken from the reading in *The Essential Bible Guide*. However, you should feel free to establish your own title if you wish.

**Text** This is a passage from The Essential 100™.

**Key Thought** This is a statement for you, the pastor. It summarizes the main idea on which the outline is built.

**Overview** This is an excerpt from *The Essential Bible Guide* by Whitney T. Kuniholm, the book your people may use to read through The Essential 100™. The excerpt gives you a quick summary of the passage and the key themes you may want to build on in your sermon.

**Sermon Outline** This is a brief set of key points you can use to create your sermon. Again, the most important part of the outline is what you will add. Feel free to customize the outlines by cutting and pasting them into your sermon document. You can do this by using the “text” tool in Adobe® Acrobat® Reader.

**Challenge** This is a statement intended for your congregation. It attempts to summarize a key application point in a memorable way.



# **Old Testament**

**SERMON OUTLINES**

## Meet the Author

# Genesis 1-2

**Key Thought** Creation is the beginning of God's self-revelation.

**Overview** Right from the start, the Bible introduces us to its main character: "In the beginning... God." The rest of this unique and wonderful book is all about him. In this passage, we not only meet God, we also learn how he made the universe. Notice that in each of the seven days of creation, God took the initiative. He had a plan and a design for his world. Our passage also gives special attention to a key part of the story—the creation of humankind. And both men and women reflect God's image.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Bible is God's Word
    - a. Inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16)
    - b. Cannot be annulled (John 10:35)
  2. The Creation is God's First Word
    - a. "And God said..." (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20)
  3. Two Perspectives on Creation
    - a. The big picture (Genesis 1:1-2:3)
    - b. The human interest story (Genesis 2:4-25)

**Challenge** If you want to know God, read his Book.

## Eyes Wide Open

# Genesis 3

**Key Thought** Sin has a profound effect on our relationships with God and others.

**Overview** Popular culture sometimes portrays sex as “the original sin.” But that’s not what the Bible says. Rather, the original sin was to question (3:1), challenge (3:4) and then disobey (3:6) God’s definition of right and wrong (Genesis 2:16-17). Both Adam and Eve made that tragic mistake and it had immediate consequences. But the Good News is that God had a plan to solve the sin problem—a plan that would culminate in Jesus Christ.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Original Sin
    - a. Questioning God (3:1)
    - b. Challenging God (3:4)
    - c. Disobeying God (3:6)
  2. The Consequences of Sin
    - a. In our relationship with God (3:10)
    - b. In our relationships with others (4:1-8; 37:1-36)
  3. The Solution to Sin
    - a. God’s plan of salvation (John 3:16)
    - b. Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2; 4:10)

**Challenge** It’s never too late to say no to sin and yes to Jesus Christ.

## Wipe Out!

# Genesis 6:5-7:24

**Key Thought** Faith involves hearing and obeying God.

**Overview** Sin brought horrible consequences which eventually forced God to act, as we see in the account of Noah (6:9—7:24). God was pleased with Noah because he was willing to listen to and obey (6:22; 7:5) when it made no sense and there were no visible results. Even as God unleashed the flood as judgment on sin (7:17-24), he promised a new beginning (6:18). In spite of the dark clouds, we get a hint that God has a plan for the salvation of the world.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Sin Saddens God
    - a. And he must punish it (6:5-7)
    - b. The example of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:20-21; 19:13)
  2. Obedience Pleases God
    - a. Even when we don't understand (6:9, 22; 7:5)
    - b. Even when it's difficult (6:9-15)
  3. You Can Have a New Beginning with God
    - a. After the flood (6:18)
    - b. In Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)

**Challenge** With faith in Jesus, you can have a new beginning.

## Never Again

# Genesis 8:1-9:17

**Key Thought** God's love overcomes our sin.

**Overview** Noah and his family were free from the smelly ark, but were they free from the stench of sin? Unfortunately the answer is no, as Noah seems to understand (8:20). God knows the reality of sin, but that's what makes his promise to Noah all the more poignant (9:8-17). "Even though" God knows human beings are hopeless sinners (8:21), "never again" will he consider completely destroying them (8:21; 9:11, 15). At this point, a rainbow would be the symbol of his love. Later he would say it in Person.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Bad News: Sin is Real
    - a. Noah recognized it and sacrificed (8:20)
    - b. God recognized it (8:21)
  2. The Good News: God's Love Overcomes Sin
    - a. The rainbow; a covenant with Noah (9:8-17)
  3. The Greatest News: The New Covenant in Jesus Christ
    - a. Jesus' sacrifice: our new covenant (Matthew 26:26-28)
    - b. Jesus is mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13)

**Challenge** God promised it. Jesus accomplished it.

## Can We Talk?

# Genesis 11:1-9

**Key Thought** The greatest of all vices is... pride.

**Overview** Ever since the Fall, humans had increasingly chosen to go their own way instead of God's. The Tower of Babel became a defiant expression of pride, "We're in charge here." But it wasn't true and that's why God confused and scattered the people of Babel (11:7-9). And pride is not just a problem for "them." It infects us all. In the end, the tower didn't come crashing down. It was left standing as a monument to the futility of trying to live without God.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Pride Leads Us Away From God
    - a. Pride infects us in many insidious ways (Obadiah 3)
    - b. God opposes the proud (James 4:6)
  2. Pride Leads Us Toward Futility and Despair
    - a. The builders: confused and scattered (11:9)
    - b. The tower: unfinished symbol of futility (11:8)
  3. Humility Leads Us Back to Fellowship with God
    - a. Remember the example of Noah (Genesis 8:20-22)
    - b. God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)

**Challenge** Turn your back on pride and turn in humility to God.



## Why Me?

# Genesis 12

**Key Thought** God will bless and use those who trust and obey him.

**Overview** During his seventy-five years Abram had cultivated the habit of listening for God's voice and obeying it. Also, Abram frequently took time to remember what God had done and to deepen his relationship with him (12:7, 8). So when God said "Leave" (12:1), Abram left even when the destination was unknown. Because Abram spent time seeking God, he was ready for God's call. That's a good example for us to follow, too.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God's Plan
    - a. To bless Abram (12:2-3)
    - b. To bless the world (12:3)
  2. Abram's Response
    - a. Obedience: leaving for an unknown land (12:1)
    - b. Trust: wavering faith while in Egypt (12:13)
  3. God's Blessing
    - a. Abram accounted righteous (Romans 4:16-22)
    - b. Our blessing in Abram's descendant, Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16)

**Challenge** Trust and obey, for there's no other way!

## He Feels Your Pain

# Genesis 15

### Key Thought

God is faithful to his promises, even when they seem impossible!

### Overview

God's amazing promise to build a nation had become the source of emotional pain for Abram and Sarai—"We don't even have one child yet!" (15:3). It seemed impossible! God knew Abram needed encouragement so he gave him a peek at the master plan (15:12-18). That master plan culminated in the birth of the Savior—a descendant of Abram.

### Sermon Outline

1. An "Impossible" Pain
  - a. Childlessness (15:2-3)
  - b. An impossible task (15:18-21)
2. An "Impossible" Promise
  - a. A son in his old age (15:4)
  - b. Countless offspring (15:5)
3. An "Impossible" Plan
  - a. God's "impossible" plan for Abram (15: 18-21)
  - b. God's "impossible" plan for us in Jesus (Luke 1:37)

### Challenge

Nothing is impossible with God!

**Strange But True****Genesis 21:1-22:19**

**Key Thought** Abraham's "sacrifice" foreshadows God's sacrifice of Jesus.

**Overview** God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22:2) and Abraham wastes no time obeying. As the tension mounts in front of the altar, Abraham unwittingly prophesies God's plan of salvation when he says "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." (Gen. 22:8). God did provide the lamb for Abraham. He also provided the Lamb, his only son Jesus Christ as the once and for all sacrifice for our sins.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God's Salvation Foreshadowed
    - a. Abraham's sacrifice of his beloved son (22:1-12)
  2. God's Salvation Provided
    - a. The ram for Abraham (22:13)
    - b. Jesus Christ, a sacrifice for our sin (Hebrews 9:26, 28)
  3. God's Invitation to Us
    - a. Receive his salvation in Jesus (John 1:12)
    - b. Let Jesus be the sacrifice for your sins (Hebrews 10:1-10)

**Challenge** Will you accept God's invitation and receive his salvation?

**Analyze This!**

## Genesis 27-28

**Key Thought** We often encounter God in the broken places of our lives.

**Overview** A permissive father, a controlling mother, an errant older son and a deceptive younger son. It sounds like reality TV. But Isaac's family is one of the most important in the Bible because God used it to build the nation of Israel. Of course, no family is perfect. God uses broken people from broken families to accomplish his perfect purposes. He has no other choice. And he can use our brokenness to draw us closer to himself, also.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Brokenness Revealed
    - a. Sibling rivalry (27:30-38, 41)
    - b. Rebecca's scheme (27:1-17)
    - c. Jacob's deceit (27:18-29)
  2. God's Grace Encountered
    - a. Jacob meets God in a dream (28:10-14)
    - b. God's promise to Jacob (28:15)
  3. God Can Heal Your Brokenness
    - a. Let him use it for your good (Romans 8:28)
    - b. Let him use it to develop your character (Romans 5:1-5, James 1:2-4)

**Challenge** Bring the broken parts of your life to God for healing.

## True Reconciliation

# Genesis 32-33

**Key Thought** True reconciliation requires true change.

**Overview** Jacob's guilt causes him to try to reconcile with his brother. But true reconciliation involves a change of heart and then a change of actions. Sometimes the only thing that can change our hearts is a genuine experience of God. That's what happened to Jacob (32:22-32). If there are difficult relationships and situations in your life, maybe you need to stop asking God to change the circumstances and pray that God would help you understand and accept how he's trying to use those circumstances to change you.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Reconciliation: True or False?
    - a. False reconciliation: Jacob (32:13-21)
    - b. True reconciliation: Esau (33:1-9)
  2. True Reconciliation Demands True Change
    - a. Change of heart (33:4)
    - b. Change of action (33:10-11)
  3. With Whom Do You Need True Reconciliation?
    - a. Ask God to change you as you begin

**Challenge** Ask God to change you first. Then ask him to change the situation.

## Family Feud

# Genesis 37

### Key Thought

Tensions can destroy families unless “nipped in the bud.”

### Overview

As with most sibling rivalry, it's rarely the fault of only one person. When things go wrong we tend to remember “the big blow up” but it usually takes time for tensions to get to the boiling point. Favoritism, arrogance, jealousy and hate plagued Joseph's family. If we let our angry feelings go unresolved they'll destroy us. Jesus' example (Matthew 5:43-48; 18:15-17) is to deal with the little offenses before they fester into full blown hate.

### Sermon Outline

#### 1. The Roots of Family Problems

- a. Favoritism (37:3)
- b. Arrogance (37:2-9)
- c. Jealousy (37:4, 11)
- d. Hate (37:4, 5, 8)

#### 2. The Solution to Family Problems

- a. Deal with issue as Jesus did (Matthew 5:43-48)
- b. Deal with anger and bitterness quickly (Ephesians 4:26)

#### 3. The Application to Your Family Problems

- a. What are the tensions in your family?
- b. How and when will you deal with them?

### Challenge

The best time to begin working on family problems is now.

No Fair!

## Genesis 39-41

**Key Thought** When life isn't fair we can trust that God is in control.

**Overview** When we first met Joseph, he was an egotistical teenager who deliberately irritated his family. Then he was sold into slavery, falsely accused and thrown into prison. Along the way, Joseph matured. His life seemed unfair but he was prepared for it. Why? He put God at the center and he trusted God's plan. Tough times offer us some of the best opportunities to grow in our faith. But to seize these opportunities we must trust that God has a plan.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Life's Not Fair!
    - a. Potiphar's wife (39:1-20)
    - b. The forgetful cupbearer (40:23)
  2. How Can I Cope?
    - a. Put God at the center of your life (39:9; 40:8)
    - b. Trust in God's plan and control (39:2, 21)
  3. Why Should I Try?
    - a. "Unfair" situations are "spiritual opportunities" to mature in faith (James 1:2; Romans 5:3-5)

**Challenge** Thank God for tough times. He'll use them to help you grow!



## The Deeper Reality

# Genesis 42

### Key Thought

Trying to look good while you feel terrible is futile.

### Overview

On the surface Joseph appeared successful, powerful and in control. But inside he was a wounded soul, longing for the love and acceptance of his family (42:22-24; 43:30). The brothers seemed like honest, responsible men but inside they were full of guilt (42:21). Trying to look good while we feel miserable will never solve our problems. Only God through his Holy Spirit can do that. That's why the church is a place where people who aren't afraid to admit they're broken can be healed and set free.

### Sermon Outline

1. Appearances Can Be Deceiving!
  - a. Joseph, a wounded soul (42:22-6; 43:30)
  - b. His brothers, guilty and afraid (42:21)
  - c. Jacob, fearful and fatalistic (42:36-38)
  - d. Appearances in church can be deceiving, too!
2. Are Appearances Important in the Church?
  - a. No one (or family) is perfect (Romans 3:23)
  - b. No one (or family) is problem-free (John 7:1-9)
3. The Church: A Place for Hurting People to Heal
  - a. That's God's intention for us (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

### Challenge

Hurting people need a church that's more like a good hospital than a beauty parlor.



## Mind Games

# Genesis 43-44

**Key Thought** Anger may be justified, but uncontrolled it can lead to sin.

**Overview** Joseph dealt with his anger by buying some time to process. Some hurts are so deep they take time and gradual pressure from God to get them out in the open. But the main reason Joseph didn't blow his brothers away is that he loved them. That's why lashing out is the worst thing you can do when you're angry. Joseph wisely finds a private place to weep (43:30). Honest grieving is an essential step in healing.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Anger Isn't Necessarily Wrong
    - a. Joseph's was justified (37:12-28)
    - b. Jesus got angry (John 2:14-17)
  2. Uncontrolled Anger Can Lead to Sin
    - a. If Joseph had taken revenge (45:4-8)
    - b. "Be angry but do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26; James 1:19)
  3. Anger Can Be Controlled
    - a. Take time (as Joseph did); don't lash out
    - b. Grieve (43:40)
    - c. Focus on love (45:15)

**Challenge** Get control of your anger so it doesn't get control of you.

## A Curious Whisper

# Genesis 45:1-46:7

**Key Thought** Forgiveness is crucial to healing past wounds.

**Overview** In this passage, Joseph reveals the curious whisper that has been driving him all these years, “Is my father still living?” (45:3). We may think a broken relationship is “no big deal” but it can have a big affect if we don’t let God work in us to resolve it. Joseph finally reconciled with his cruel brothers by grieving, praying and forgiving them (45:14-15). True forgiveness is the final step in healing the wounds in our past.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Effect of Past Wounds
    - a. They haunt us (“Is my father still living?” 45:3)
    - b. They hurt us (if our anger leads to sin, Ephesians 4:26; James 1:19)
  2. The Healing of Past Wounds
    - a. Begins with forgiveness (Joseph forgave them, 45:4-5)
    - b. Empowers us to love (Joseph loved them, 45:4-15)
    - c. Enables us to see God’s working (45:8)
  3. The Challenge of Past Wounds
    - a. Will you forgive and let God heal them?

**Challenge** Forgiving others frees us to love and be loved once again.

## What Are You Doing?

# Exodus 1-2

### Key Thought

God's work must be done in God's way.

### Overview

The baby Moses would grow up to lead the Hebrew people out of oppression and slavery. After his "lucky break" by the river, Moses became part of the Egyptian elite (2:11). But inside he was an angry young man who finally took matters into his own hands in a futile attempt to save his people (2:12). In God's work, the end doesn't justify the means.

### Sermon Outline

1. What Are You Doing, Lord?
  - a. Baby Moses escapes death (2:1-4)
  - b. His "lucky break": found by Pharaoh's daughter (2:5-10)
2. What Are You Doing, Moses?
  - a. Moses' "big mistake" (2:11-14)
3. What Are You Doing, Lord?
  - a. Moses' flight into the desert (2:15)
  - b. Moses settles and marries (2:16-21)
4. What Are You Doing, Lord ...in Me?
  - a. Easy to be "out of sync" with God's plan and timing
  - b. Keep "in sync" with God's plan through prayer

### Challenge

Prayer helps us stay "in sync" with God's timing and God's plan.

**Encounter With God****Exodus 3:1-4:17**

**Key Thought** God promises to give us all we need to serve him.

**Overview** God called Moses to deliver his people from slavery in Egypt. Moses questioned if he wanted that enormous job. God doesn't mind honest doubts and questions, unless they're a smokescreen for rejecting him. (4:13-14). When Moses protested his inadequacy, God didn't argue or object, he simply promised to be with Moses. That would be all Moses needed. When God calls us to a difficult task, he promises us no less.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Moses' Encounter with God
    - a. The burning bush (3:1-10)
  2. Moses' Objections to God
    - a. "I'm not adequate" (3:11; 4:10)
    - b. "What if..." (3:13; 4:1)
  3. God's Promises to Moses
    - a. His presence (3:12)
    - b. His power (4:1-9)
  4. God's Promise to Us
    - a. Our adequacy comes from God (2 Corinthians 3:5)
    - b. "Now, go!" (4:12)

**Challenge** When God calls you, trust his promises and go for it!

## A Plague of Doubt

# Exodus 6:28-11:10

**Key Thought** God's power displays his glory and removes our doubt.

**Overview** Why did God bother with the ten plagues? First, he wanted to proclaim his name, to let people know that he was the Lord and was worthy of their worship (9:16; 10:2). But second, God is always at work in the lives of individuals, preparing them for the work he has called them to. The ten plagues were not just for Pharaoh. They were also a way to help Moses overcome his doubts; he, too, needed a reminder that God alone was the Lord.

- Sermon Outline**
1. No Doubt About God's Power
    - a. The ten plagues (7:14—11:10)
  2. No Doubt About God's Purpose
    - a. That Pharaoh and all Egypt might know he is Lord (10:2)
    - b. To encourage Moses to carry out his task (14:13)
  3. No Doubt About God's Call to Us
    - a. See his power displayed around us (Psalm 8; 19:1-6)
    - b. Carry out our task to declare his glory (1 Peter 2:9)

**Challenge** There's no doubt that God wants to strengthen your faith.

**Spare Me!**

## **Exodus 12:1-42**

**Key Thought** The Passover points forward to our salvation in Jesus Christ.

**Overview** God's first purpose for the Passover was judgment (12:12). The Egyptians cruelly forced the Jews to be their slaves and were deeply involved in idolatry. God had to stop that with a very severe punishment (12:29-30). God's second purpose for the Passover was to create a reminder (12:14) for his people of how he set them free. The lamb and the blood were symbols of a greater salvation to come: Jesus, "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Passover Lamb
    - a. An instrument of God's holiness (12:12)
    - b. A celebration of God's salvation (12:14)
  2. Jesus, Our Passover Lamb
    - a. Satisfied God's judgment (required by his holiness) (Hebrews 9:26-28)
    - b. Achieved our salvation from sin and death (Hebrews 10:1-10)
  3. Christ's Sacrifice for You!
    - a. Worthy of remembering and celebrating
      - i. That's what we do at the table of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

**Challenge** Offer yourself as a "living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."

**The Defining Moment****Exodus 13:17-14:31**

**Key Thought** Defining moments can either build or break our faith.

**Overview** This passage reveals a defining moment for Moses. The most powerful army in the world was bearing down on him and his people were on the verge of a mutiny (14:11-12). He had to feel like he'd made a big mistake. But instead of rationalizing or running, Moses boldly proclaimed his trust in God (14:13-14). What God had been teaching Moses through the plagues—that he was powerful, had a plan and that he wants us to trust and obey—Moses now puts into action.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Defining Moments for the Israelites
    - a. The Israelites doubt (14:11-12)
    - b. “Nostalgia” for Egypt
  2. Defining Moments for Moses
    - a. Moses’ faith (14:13-14)
    - b. God’s power working through him (14:21-28)
  3. Defining Moments for You
    - a. When you are called to take action for God

**Challenge** Trusting God in our defining moments enables us to act boldly for him.



**Top Ten List**

## **Exodus 19:1-20:21**

**Key Thought** The Ten Commandments show us what's important to God.

**Overview** God wasn't trying to start a religion with the Ten Commandments; he was trying to build a relationship with his people (19:4-6). The Ten Commandments show us what God really cares about in three main areas. The first four center on our relationship with God (20:2-11). The next group addresses our relationship with others (20:12-14, 16) and the third group deals with our relationship to things (20:15, 17).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Road map to Our Relationships
    - a. With God (20:2-11)
    - b. With others (20:12-14, 16)
    - c. With things (20:15, 17)
  2. Road map to God's Heart
    - a. The Ten Commandments are vital to God
    - b. They must be to us, also (John 14:15)

**Challenge** Let all your relationships reflect God's priorities.



**Up Close & Personal**

## Exodus 32-34

**Key Thought** God has a “no compromise” attitude toward sin.

**Overview** God really hates sin (32:9-10). Moses did, too (32:19-20) and he’s willing to do whatever it takes to save his people (32:11-14, 31-32). In so doing, he foreshadows what Jesus would do many years later. God and Moses had developed a very personal relationship (33:11). That’s what God wants with all people. He created us in his own image and wants us to love and follow him with our whole heart. The question is do you want a relationship with him?

- Sermon Outline**
1. Requirement of a Relationship with God
    - a. A hatred of sin (32:19-20)
    - b. A willingness to obey him (Micah 6:8, John 14:15)
  2. Evidence of a Relationship with God
    - a. God is with us (the pillar of cloud, 33:9-11)
    - b. God is in us (Moses’ radiant face, 34:29)
  3. Do you desire a Relationship with God?
    - a. Will you do what it takes to have that relationship?

**Challenge** God paid a high price for a relationship with you. What will you do for him?

**Learn It & Live It**

# Joshua 1

**Key Thought** Joshua is an example of effective Christian living.

**Overview** God had been preparing Joshua for the challenge of following Moses. Joshua had witnessed Moses leading the Israelites (Exodus 32:17), and had seen from Moses how to develop a real, personal relationship with God (Ex. 32:17; 33:11). God promised to give Joshua land, success and a leadership platform like he gave Moses (1:3-6). Best of all, God promised to be with Joshua (1:5). In return, God asked only one thing: obedience (1:7). That's key to an effective Christian life.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Joshua's Keys to Effective Christian Living
    - a. Find a mentor (Joshua had Moses, Deuteronomy 31:1-8)
    - b. Trust God's promise to be with you (1:5)
    - c. Know God's word and obey it! (1:7)
  2. How Can You Live Effectively Like Joshua?
    - a. What challenges are you facing?
    - b. What opportunities has God given you?
    - c. How can you follow Joshua's example?

**Challenge** Obeying God's Word is the key to effective Christian living.

**Effective Christian  
Leadership**

## Joshua 3-4

**Key Thought** Our lives can be symbols that point others to God.

**Overview** These verses present some interesting symbols. For example, the stones from the river would be symbols that would “speak” to children and future generations of God’s powerful deliverance on behalf of his people. What are the symbols in your Christian life? Is there a symbol you could use to remind you of the lesson God taught you? What “reminders” are you leaving for future generations?

- Sermon Outline**
1. Symbols That Speak of God
    - a. To this generation (a reminder of God’s work, 4:19-24)
    - b. To future generations (a symbol for the children, 4:6)
    - c. To you today (Christian symbols, Christian lives)
  2. Your life As a Symbol That Speaks of God
    - a. What kind of “living stone” are you? (1 Peter 2:1-9)
    - b. What reminders are you leaving for future generations?

**Challenge** Let your life speak for God—loud and clear.

## I Did It My Way?

# Joshua 5:13-6:27

### Key Thought

The only way to do God's work is God's way!

### Overview

Everyone knows the story about how the walls of Jericho came a-tumbling down. No doubt the Israelites had to endure some "trash talk" from the guards on the wall as they marched around the city. But God's ways are not our ways and once again we are reminded of the need to listen to and obey God. Learning that lesson is key to growth and effectiveness in the Christian life.

### Sermon Outline

1. Joshua's Improbable Marching Orders
  - a. The commander of the army of the Lord (5:13-15)
  - b. Go take Jericho (6:1-5)
- 2 Joshua's Impossible Task
  - a. A heavily guarded city "shut up tight" (6:1)
  - b. Likely ridicule from guards on the wall
3. Joshua's Impossible Victory
  - a. As a result of God's power (6:2-5)
  - b. Joshua trusted and obeyed (6:6-21)
4. Your Improbable, Impossible Task
  - a. Follow Joshua's formula for victory!

### Challenge

Improbable? Impossible? Great! You're ready to see God work.

**Endangered Species**

## **Judges 2:6-3:6**

**Key Thought**

Christians experience ups and downs in their walk with God.

**Overview**

When Joshua and the leaders around him died (2:7), a depressing cycle in Israel's history began (2:10-19). They turned away from God, worshiped idols and experienced disaster. Then, in desperation they cried to God and he raised up leaders ("Judges") and saved them. But the cycle happens again and again. The good news is that, with God's help, we can stop the cycles and grow stronger in our relationship with him as a result (James 1:2-4).

**Sermon Outline**

1. Cycles in Israel's Faith
  - a. Faithfulness (2:6-7)
  - b. Falling away (2:10-13)
2. Cycles in our Lives
  - a. What causes them?
  - b. How can we avoid them?
3. Stopping the Cycles!
  - a. Growing through difficulties (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:1-5)
  - b. Growing through regular time with God (Psalm 119:11, 105)

**Challenge**

No matter how much you've fallen away, God wants to meet with you today.

## Girl Power

# Judges 4-5

**Key Thought** God can use anyone who listens to him and relies on his power.

**Overview** Deborah is the only female Judge in the Bible. And the hero of this story is Jael, a young woman who had the smarts and the guts to eliminate the military commander Sisera. Deborah simply says and does what God has told her (4:6-7, 14), and it has a powerful effect. A second theme in this passage is that courage isn't limited by gender. God used Jael's bold act to defeat the powerful Canaanites (4:17-21). In the end, it's the ability to listen to God and the willingness to rely on his power that makes the difference.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Girl Power
    - a. Deborah said and did what God told her (4:6, 7, 14)
    - b. Jael acted with boldness and courage (4:17-21)
  2. God's Power
    - a. God isn't limited in who he uses if they are obedient and rely on his power (5:1-9)
    - b. Recall the example of Moses delivering the people from Egypt
  3. Your Power
    - a. Follow the example of Deborah and Jael (listen and obey)

**Challenge** Let God's power be your power.

## How Can I Be Sure?

# Judges 6-7

**Key Thought**

Seek God's guidance and rely on his power. That's the key to success.

**Overview**

Does Gideon's request for "signs" reveal a lack of faith (6:17-40)? Probably not. If we genuinely seek God in faith, we can ask him to make his will clear and eventually he will. Real power and conviction comes when we prayerfully wait for confirmation from God. Gideon's success was the result of two other things: he was empowered by the Spirit (6:34) and he was forced to rely on God's power (7:2). That's still a formula for success today.

**Sermon Outline**

1. How Could Gideon Be Sure?
  - a. Confirmation from God (6:17-40)
  - b. Empowered by the Spirit (6:34)
  - c. Relying on God's power (7:2)
2. How Can You Be Sure?
  - a. Trust God to provide the confirmation (James 1:5; Luke 11:9)
  - b. Trust God to provide the power (Acts 1:1-9)
  - c. Listen and obey (James 1:22-25)
3. What Do You Need to Be Sure About Today?
  - a. Your relationship with God
  - b. Your direction in life

**Challenge**

When God gives you a task, you can be sure he'll help you do it.



**Ladies' Man**

## Judges 13-16

**Key Thought** Self control is essential to having healthy relationships.

**Overview** Samson had a fatal flaw: he had no self-control. This trait expressed itself in two ways: lust and anger. His thoughtless pursuit of women produced a string of broken relationships and violence. But the real tragedy of Samson's life is that deep down he knew he had been running from God (16:17). The greatest victory in Samson's life was that in his brokenness, he finally turned back to God (16:28).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Samson's "Fatal Flaws"
    - a. Uncontrolled lust and broken relationships (14:1-2; 16:1-4)
    - b. Uncontrolled violence (15:1-17)
  2. Samson's Final Victory
    - a. He turns back to God (16:28)
    - b. He defeats the enemy (16:29-30)
  3. What Are Your "Fatal Flaws"?
    - a. In your relationships to the opposite sex?
    - b. In your relationship to God?
  4. Your Key to Victory
    - a. Grow closer to God to gain self control (Galatians 5:22)
    - b. Do you need to "turn back" to God?

**Challenge** Self control starts by putting God in control.



## Love Story

# Ruth 1-4

**Key Thought** A godly character is a priceless resource.

**Overview** When both her husband and father-in-law die, Ruth's world comes apart. Her "tough times" revealed Ruth's true character. She was loyal (1:14) and optimistic (1:13). She was a hard worker (2:7) and submissive; she gracefully worked within the customs of her day (3:5-6). She had and faith (1:16) and integrity (3:7-14). Ruth cultivated a noble character and then trusted God to bless her as he saw fit. And he certainly did.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Ruth's Noble Character is Revealed in Tough Times
    - a. Loyal (1:14).
    - b. Optimistic (1:13)
    - c. Hard working (2:7)
    - d. Submissive (3:5-6)
    - e. Faith and integrity (1:16; 3:7-14)
  2. Ruth's Noble Character is Blessed by God
    - a. Her food is provided (2:14-18; 3:15)
    - b. Boaz loves and marries her (4:11-12)
  3. What Do "Tough Times" Reveal About Your Character?
    - a. Is it noble like Ruth's?
    - b. Tough times grow character (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5)

**Challenge** A noble character is the foundation for a happy and productive life.

## The Real World

# 1 Samuel 1-3

**Key Thought** The “real people” in the Bible can teach us valuable lessons.

**Overview** What can we learn from these Bible stories of real people? The Stressed-Out Wife. Hannah couldn’t have children (1:8, 15). She poured her heart out to God (1:10-17). That’s real prayer. The Overly-Tolerant Father. Eli failed to discipline his sons and it showed (2:12-25). Setting limits is an important parental duty. The Faithful Child. Samuel was willing to listen to God (3:10) and it changed his life forever.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Struggles of “Real World” Families
    - a. Hannah: prayer in the face of deep distress (1:9-16)
    - b. Eli: A father’s failure (2:12-25)
    - c. Samuel: A faithful child (2:26; 3:10)
  2. The Lessons from “Real World” Families
    - a. Real prayer is honest and trusting (Psalm 130, 131)
    - b. Faithful parents set appropriate limits for their children (Proverbs 23:13, Hebrews 12:4-11)
    - c. Children need their parents to be good spiritual models (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
  3. The Challenge of “Real World” Families
    - a. What can they teach you and yours?

**Challenge** The most important task of Christian parents is to show their children how to follow God wholeheartedly.

## Hail To The Chief

# 1 Samuel 8-10

**Key Thought** When we're close to God, our prayers reflect God's desires for us.

**Overview** Underneath Israel's "reasonable" desire for a King was a rebellious motivation; they wanted to be like everyone else (8:20). After all God had done for Israel, they still wanted to go their own way (8:6-9)! Even so, Saul seemed like a good choice; he was tall, impressive, humble and religious. Sometimes God gives us what we ask for even though it's not his best plan for us. But if we keep close to God, we'll usually know the right things to ask for.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Be Careful What You Ask For
    - a. Israel's rebellious (8:6-9), conformist (8:20) prayer
    - b. Our prayers can reflect similar motivations
  2. You May Get It!
    - a. It's not his "best" for them, but God says OK (8:4-22)
    - b. Saul disobeys and loses God's favor (1 Samuel 13:13-14)
  3. For Best Results, Pray "In Tune" with God
    - a. Daily Bible reading
    - b. Regular prayer

**Challenge** Thank God he always gives us what we need, but not always what we want.

## Only A Boy Named David

# 1 Samuel 16:1-18:16

**Key Thought** No challenge is too big to overcome when God is with us.

**Overview** The story of David and Goliath has become part of our popular culture. But what really was the key to David's success? Ultimately, David won because he understood Goliath was picking a fight with God (17:45). The Bible also makes clear David had learned to depend on God in other stressful situations (17:34-37), so when the pressure was on with Goliath, he was ready.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Defeating Life's "Giants": God's Part
    - a. He chose David (16:12)
    - b. He filled David with his Spirit (16:13)
    - c. He stayed with David all the way (18:11)
  2. Defeating Life's "Giants": David's Part
    - a. He understood the situation (17:45)
    - b. He was prepared to depend on God (17:34-37)
    - c. His heart was committed to God (16:7)
  3. Defeating Life's "Giants": Your Part
    - a. Follow David's example!
    - b. Trust God's presence and power (Exodus 3:11-4:12)

**Challenge** Having a heart for God is the greatest strength of all.

## First Impulse

# 1 Samuel 23:7-24:22

**Key Thought** When treated unfairly, our first impulse should turn us to God.

**Overview** Saul had an impulse for doing things his own way instead of God's (1 Samuel 13:1-15; 15:10). David's impulse, in contrast, was to trust God in every situation. When he had every right to kill Saul in self-defense, David preferred to let God do things his way (24:12). Have you been unfairly treated or wronged by someone? It rarely helps to "give them a taste of their own medicine." Far better to pray, "Lord, this is not fair and I'm angry about it, but I'm determined to make choices that please you."

- Sermon Outline**
1. First Impulses Are Sometimes Sinful!
    - a. Saul was determined to kill David (23:7-9, 15)
    - b. Saul pursues David to capture him (23:19-28)
  2. First Impulses Can Be Righteous!
    - a. David trusted God (24:1-14)
    - b. He left the "judging" of Saul to God (24:12)
  3. What is Your First Impulse?
    - a. Lash out at unfair treatment?
    - b. Trust the situation to God?

**Challenge** Feeling angry? Don't lash out. Look up and do what pleases God.

## Attaboy, David!

# 2 Samuel 5-7

**Key Thought** David shows us how to have a close relationship with God.

**Overview** Let's examine the traits David built into his life during his struggle to the top. First, David sought God's direction (5:19, 23). He also celebrated God's work (6:14, 21). If your times of worship are becoming dry or routine, get in touch with what God is doing around you. And David focused on God's priorities (7:18-29) and understood God's "big picture" (7:23). It all helped him become a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

- Sermon Outline**
1. David: A Man After God's Own Heart
    - a. David sought God's direction (5:19, 23)
    - b. David celebrated God's work (6:14, 21)
    - c. David focused on God's priorities (7:18-29)
  2. You: Becoming a Person After God's Own Heart
    - a. God is pleased with those who seek his direction for their lives (Proverbs 3:5-8)
    - b. God is pleased with those who worship and celebrate him and his works (2 Samuel 6:16—7:17)
    - c. God is pleased with those who seek to know and focus on his priorities (1 Kings 3:5-15)

**Challenge** Make it your heart's desire to know God better.



## How Could You?

# 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25

**Key Thought** We all sin. But if we truly repent, God will forgive us.

**Overview** How could David, the man “after God’s own heart” commit adultery, arrange a murder and then cover it up? The biggest mistake we can make is to think sin won’t get to us. That’s why it’s so important to be part of a Christian community that can hold us accountable. When David was confronted with his sin (12:1-10) he immediately and genuinely repented (12:13 and Psalm 51). It can be incredibly difficult to admit our sin. But when we do, God removes the burden forever.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Power of Sin
    - a. We’re all vulnerable to temptation (1 Cor 10:12)
    - b. Even Jesus was tempted (but without sinning, Luke 4:1-13)
  2. The Consequences of Sin
    - a. Contempt for the Lord (12:14)
    - b. Death of the baby (12:19)
  3. The Proper Reaction to Sin
    - a. Repentance (12:13; Psalm 51)
    - b. Worship (12:20)
  4. Protection from Sin
    - a. Accountability to other Christians
    - b. Regular time with God

**Challenge** Sin may infect you but God will protect you.

## Wise Guy

# 1 Kings 2-3

### Key Thought

True wisdom is found in God alone.

### Overview

Solomon is best remembered for his uncommon wisdom (3:16-28). It's significant that although he showed impressive discipline in choosing it over other possibilities (3:9), Solomon's wisdom was still a gift from God (3:12). He instinctively knew that acknowledging God was the key to genuine understanding (Proverbs 1:7). God and his ways are still the foundation upon which true knowledge and wisdom are built.

### Sermon Outline

1. The Key to True Wisdom
  - a. Asking God for it (3:5-9)
  - b. God gives wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5)
2. The Source of True Wisdom
  - a. It's a gift from God, along with riches and honor (3:10-14)
  - b. Found in God (Proverbs 2:6; 9:10)
3. The Way to True Wisdom
  - a. Seek the Lord (Proverbs 2:6)
  - b. Seek his kingdom (Matthew 6:33)

### Challenge

The smartest thing to do is always to seek God's wisdom.



## The Heart of Worship

# 1 Kings 8:1-9:9

**Key Thought** True worship involves meeting God.

**Overview** This was a spectacular building (1 Kings 6:1-38; 7:13-51) and the king was going all out to celebrate (8:5, 62-63). But the most important thing was that God showed up; he allowed his glory to fill the temple (8:11). It's natural to think of worship in terms of the components of the service. But what makes worship come alive is not how well the service goes; it's how prepared and eager we are to meet the living God.

**Sermon Outline**

1. True Worship Requires:
  - a. Careful preparation (8:1-9)
2. True Worship Includes:
  - a. Prayer (8:22-53)
  - b. Praise (8:56)
  - c. Exhortation/preaching (8:57-61)
  - d. Offering (9:25)
3. True Worship's Aim:
  - a. Meeting with God (8:10; 9:2)

**Challenge** The heart of worship is not what we do. It's Who we meet.

**Prophetic  
Smackdown****1 Kings 16:29-19:18**

**Key Thought** We may get “down” sometimes, but we don’t have to stay there.

**Overview** This passage introduces us to “two Elijahs.” The first was the bold prophet who won a dramatic victory for God (18:16-40). The other was a depressed quitter who ran from God (19:1-9). Serving God is hard work. No matter how strong we are, it’s important to take time for rest and renewal (19:7-9). Ultimately, the thing that will sustain us most through the challenges of the Christian life is the day-to-day communion with God that comes from reading his Word, praying and worshipping with other Christians.

- Sermon Outline**
1. All Christians Get “Down” Sometimes
    - a. Even the “best” like Elijah (19:1-9)
    - b. Even the “best” like Paul (Acts 18:5-11)
  2. God Will Help Us “Up”
    - a. Through regular meeting with him in Bible reading and prayer
    - b. Through regular worship and fellowship (Elijah felt alone, 19:10)
    - c. Through regular rest and refreshment (observe the Sabbath, Exodus 20:8-11)
  3. Learn to Listen for God
    - a. God’s “gentle whisper” encourages Elijah (19:12-18)
    - b. When has he whispered encouragement to you?

**Challenge** Up or down, never stop listening for God.

## A Severe Mercy?

# 2 Kings 25

### Key Thought

When the bottom drops out, we can trust God to catch us.

### Overview

The Babylonians killed Israel's leaders, smashed the glorious temple, burned Jerusalem and took most of the people into captivity (25:21b). How do you react when the bottom drops out? Sometimes it helps to look back to what God has done in the past. If there's anything good about disaster it's that we are forced to cling tightly to God, simply because we have no other options.

### Sermon Outline

1. When the Bottom Drops Out
  - a. The disastrous judgment on Jerusalem (25:1-21)
2. God is There to Catch You (Psalm 74)
  - a. Affirm faith in God (Psalm 74:12)
  - b. Remember God's work in the past (Psalm 74:13)
  - c. Call on God in the present (Psalm 74:22)
3. God Can Bring Good from It
  - a. He can work all things for your good (Romans 8:28)
  - b. His strength is made evident in your weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)

### Challenge

When you feel the lowest you may be the closest to God.

**No Fear!**

## **Psalm 23**

**Key Thought** Jesus, the Good Shepherd, cares for us each day.

**Overview** In this psalm, David compares the Lord to a shepherd. A shepherd both comforts (23:2-3) and protects (23:4) the sheep. And in a second image, David envisions himself at a banquet table, surrounded by his enemies (23:5)! He seems to be saying that even if the worst happens (23:4) we can trust God to take care of us (Romans 8:28).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Lord is My Shepherd
    - a. A shepherd leads (23:2)
    - b. A shepherd guides (23:3)
    - c. A shepherd comforts (23:4)
    - d. A shepherd protects (23:5)
  2. Jesus is Our Good Shepherd
    - a. He leads and guides (John 10:11-18; 14:6; Luke 5:27)
    - b. He comforts and protects (John 11:17-25; 6:16-24)
  3. How is Jesus Your “Good Shepherd” Today?
    - a. How does he lead, guide, comfort and protect you?
    - b. What do you need his care and leading for today?

**Challenge** You have nothing to fear when you’re close to the Good Shepherd.

**“Mea Culpa”**

# Psalm 51

**Key Thought** True confession means admitting our sin and changing our ways.

**Overview** The context of David’s confession in this famous Psalm is his sin against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11:2—12:25). In David’s prayer, we can find three steps to genuine confession. “Have mercy on me...” (51:1). David honestly described his actions as “transgressions...iniquity...sin.” “Cleanse me...” (51:7). David realized that sin is offensive to God. “Create in me a pure heart...” (51:10). He asked God to straighten out his inner motives so he’d avoid future sin.

**Sermon Outline** STEPS TO TRUE CONFESSION

1. Admit Your Disobedience
  - a. David’s Sin with Bathsheba (Psalm 51:1; 2 Samuel 11:2—12:25)
  - b. We all sin; all are guilty (Romans 3:23)
2. Recognize Your Offense
  - a. All sin is sin against God first of all (51:4)
  - b. Recognizing our sin is the first step in confession
3. Ask for Forgiveness
  - a. There is no relief without God’s forgiveness (51:7)
4. Ask for God’s Help to Rebuild Your Life
  - a. He’ll do it if we ask (51:10)

**Challenge** A clean heart, a fresh start, relief from guilt—all yours for the asking.

## Praise the Lord

# Psalm 103

**Key Thought** God is worthy of our praise.

**Overview** Let's discover some things in this Psalm that will deepen our relationship with God today. The Benefits of God: There are some incredible benefits to knowing God (103:2-5). The main one is forgiveness of our sins! The Character of God: The main traits David cites are compassion (103:8, 13) and a willingness to forgive (103:9-12). The Response to God: The Psalm begins and ends with praise. In light of who God is, and all he's done, what else can you do?

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Benefits of God
    - a. Forgiveness (103:3)
    - b. Healing (103:3)
    - c. Satisfies and renews (103:5)
  2. The Character of God
    - a. Compassion (103:8, 13)
    - b. Willingness to forgive (103:9-12)
  3. The Response to God
    - a. The sincere praise of our soul (103:1, 22)

**Challenge** The more you know about God, the more you want to praise him.

Like Father,  
Like Son

## Proverbs 1-4

**Key Thought** God's wisdom is the true basis for "the good life."

**Overview** The Book of Proverbs contains the writings of Israel's King Solomon, to whom God gave a unique gift of wisdom (1 Kings 2:1-3:28). Solomon understood that true wisdom begins with "the fear of the Lord" (1:7; 2:5) and is the foundation for godly living. God's wisdom also protects us against evil and its consequences (1:10-19) and provides us with happiness and health (3:13-26). But it's important to note that Solomon is talking about wisdom that is a heart commitment to learn and follow God's ways (4:23).

**Sermon Outline**

1. Where is True Wisdom Found?
  - a. It begins with "the fear of the Lord" (1:7; 2:5)
  - b. It comes from God and his word. (James 1:5; 3:13-17)
2. Why Should I Want It?
  - a. True wisdom protects us against evil (1:10-19)
  - b. True wisdom provides us with many blessings (3:13-26)
3. How Can I Get It?
  - a. Commit to knowing God's word (4:20-21)
  - b. Commit to obeying God's word (4:24-27)

**Challenge** You don't have to be smart to be wise. You just need to follow God's Word.



## A Treasure Chest of Wisdom

# Proverbs 16-18

**Key Thought** The Proverbs contain wisdom for living today.

**Overview** In the Book of Proverbs, what seem like individual verses actually fit together into at least three bigger themes. Wisdom and folly. Using our words for positive ends is one of the most significant wise things we can do (17:27-28; 18:14). Humility and pride. A humble, content life is far more satisfying than grabbing for all the gusto we can get (16:18). God's will and human action. God expects us to use our talents and abilities, but to trust the final results to him (16:1-4).

**Sermon Outline** TREASURES OF WISDOM FROM THE PROVERBS

1. The Treasure of Wisdom
  - a. God's Wisdom is more valuable than anything else (16:16)
  - b. Speaking without the benefit of God's wisdom is folly (17:27-28)
  - c. God give wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5)
2. The Treasure of Humility
  - a. Pride is the source of downfall and pain (16:18)
  - b. God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)
3. The Treasure of Trust
  - a. We use our talents and depend on God for the results (16:1-4)
  - b. Trusting in God not our own action is the only wise way.

**Challenge** The wise person treasures God's Word.

## The Suffering Servant

# Isaiah 51-53

**Key Thought** The Good News is that God sent us a Savior.

**Overview** Israel's idolatry and sin brought a terrible punishment (2 Kings 25:1–30). But God gave Isaiah a message of hope. God will save his people (Isaiah 51:1–52:12). Isaiah pointed to what God had done for them in the past (51:1-2) and emphasized God's willingness and power to save. That's good news! (52:7) God will send a Savior (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), a suffering servant, broken for our transgressions (53:5). That's exactly what Jesus did.

**Sermon Outline** GOOD NEWS FOR YOU

1. God, Our Help in Ages Past
  - a. God's blessings in the past recalled (51:1-2)
  - b. What past blessings can you recall?
2. God, Willing and Able to Save
  - a. News of God's salvation made known (52:7-10)
  - b. How has God shown you his saving power
3. God, Sending a Savior
  - a. The "Suffering Savior" foretold (53:5-10)
4. God's Good News Today: Jesus
  - a. Announced with joy by the angels (Luke 2:10-11)
  - b. For us to share joyfully today (Matthew 28:19-20)

**Challenge** Don't just keep the faith... pass it on.

## Who Me?

# Jeremiah 1:1-3:5

**Key Thought** Sin is a big problem, but God has a bigger solution.

**Overview** Jeremiah had the difficult task of telling his people that God was about to unleash a terrible punishment (1:14-16) for their idolatry (1:16; 2:11-19). And what a graphic image he uses—a bride who becomes a prostitute (2:1–3:5). But God’s love is so great that he’s willing to forgive and “remarry” his wayward people (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jeremiah’s Call from God
    - a. Personal knowledge and plan (1:5)
    - b. God knows you and has a plan for you, too
  2. Jeremiah’s Bad News from God
    - a. Idolatry (1:16; 2:11-19)
    - b. Broken relationship (2:1—3:5)
    - c. Punishment (1:14-16)
  3. Jeremiah’s Good News from God
    - a. A New Covenant prophesied (31:31-32)
    - b. A restored relationship with God (31:33-34)
  4. God’s Good News for You: Jesus
    - a. We are made children of God (Galatians 4:4)
    - b. We are redeemed and given God’s spirit (Galatians 4:5-6)

**Challenge** Sin not only breaks the rules, it breaks your relationship with God.

**Dare To Be  
A Daniel****Daniel 6**

**Key Thought** God uses those who serve him faithfully.

**Overview** Standing up for God brings opposition, in Daniel's case from jealous bureaucrats (6:4-9). When we face similar attacks in the workplace, they often have spiritual opposition behind them. Daniel seems to understand this since his first reaction was to pray (6:10). Daniel was willing to sacrifice his entire career because he trusted God no matter what (6:23).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Full Time Commitment
    - a. Daniel served God full time in a secular, "Marketplace Ministry" (6:1-3)
    - b. You needn't be a full time Christian worker to make an impact for God, just a full time Christian
  2. Full Time Faithfulness
    - a. Daniel was faithful during opposition (6:4-9, 10, 23)
    - b. Be a full time Christian when opposition hits (Ephesians 6:10; Acts 18:1-9)
  3. Full Time Impact
    - a. Daniel's faithfulness had an impact for God (6:25-27)
    - b. Your faithfulness will, too

**Challenge** Being a Christian is a full time position.

Burp!

## Jonah 1-4

**Key Thought** God is gracious, compassionate and eager to forgive our sin.

**Overview** The delightful book of Jonah reads like a four act play! Act One: Running from God. Jonah's trip to Tarshish is as ridiculous as when we try to hide our sin. Act Two: Prayer for Salvation. Coming face to face with the consequences of our sin can be overwhelming (2:3-6). Act Three: Revival in Nineveh. The Ninevites turned from their wicked ways and believed God. Act Four: Disappointment with God. Jonah's temper tantrum gives God another chance to show his patience and love (4:2).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jonah: Running from God
    - a. Jonah flees in the boat to Tarshish (1:3-4)
    - b. You can't run and hide your sin from God (Numbers 32:23)
  2. Jonah: Turning to God
    - a. Jonah admits his sin and turns to the Lord (2:1-9)
    - b. Recognize that sin may have frightening consequences (Isaiah 59:2)
  3. Jonah: Obeying God
    - a. Jonah starts to obey (3:3)
    - b. When we obey, God is the God of "second chances"—for Jonah and for Nineveh (3:1, 10)
    - c. God is gracious and compassionate to sinners (4:2)
  4. Jonah: Angry with God
    - a. Once again, God shows his patience, grace and love (4:1-11)
    - b. How has he shown patience, grace and love to you?

**Challenge** If you need a second chance, God is waiting to give you one.

## Great Is Thy Faithfulness

# Malachi 1-4

**Key Thought** Unfaithfulness to God comes in many forms.

**Overview** Following the exile, the Israelites had become insincere in their worship (1:7-14). In addition, men were not remaining committed to their wives (2:10-16). Malachi reminds them to guard both their actions and their spirits (2:15). Finally, Malachi calls their lack of tithing “robbing” (3:6-18). Malachi ends with two passages on “the Day of the Lord” (2:17—3:5; 4:1-6). Sin brings judgment. But Good News is coming!

- Sermon Outline**
1. “You Can’t Fool God”
    - a. With insincere worship (1:7-14)
    - b. Just “going through the motions” (1:10)
  2. “You Can’t Defy God”
    - a. With marital unfaithfulness (2:13-16)
    - b. So guard your spirit (2:15)
    - c. Guard against temptations of the Internet
  3. “You Can’t Rob God”
    - a. By neglecting to tithe (3:6-18)
    - b. Only 12% of born again Christians tithe; 23% give nothing
  4. “You Can’t Escape God”
    - a. Judgment on sin is coming (4:1-6)
    - b. But soon the “Good News”!

**Challenge** Unfaithfulness to God doesn’t pay... it costs!



# **New Testament**

**SERMON OUTLINES**



## In The Beginning ... Again

# John 1:1–18

### Key Thought

Jesus is God in the flesh sent for our salvation.

### Overview

In Jesus' day, people didn't understand who he really was (1:5, 10). That's still true today. Many accept him as a good man, a great moral teacher or even a unique model of team-building and leadership. But unless you also accept him as God (1:14), it's the same thing as rejecting him (1:11). All God wants us to do is "receive" and "believe" Jesus (1:12). That's how we discover the incredible blessings God wants to give us (1:16-17).

### Sermon Outline

1. Who do People Say Jesus Is?
  - a. Great moral teacher
  - b. Great prophet
  - c. Other answers?
2. Who Does John Say He is?
  - a. The Eternal "Word" (1:1)
  - b. God in the Flesh (1:14)
3. What Does Jesus Offer?
  - a. A relationship with God (1:12)
  - b. Freedom from the law (1:17)
4. Who Do You Say Jesus Is?
  - a. Agree with Peter's answer (Matthew 16:13-16)

### Challenge

Receive and believe Jesus!

**Greetings!**

## **Luke 1**

**Key Thought** God uses persons of real faith, no matter what their stage of life.

**Overview** You may feel too old, like Elizabeth (1:18), or too insignificant, like Mary (1:48), to make a difference. But God can do incredible things (1:37) through people who are faithful and dependent on him (1:6, 13, 50). Having faith doesn't mean you will understand exactly what God is doing in your life. Faith is simply believing that God has the power to do anything (1:37) and then committing yourself to his way, no matter what happens (1:38).

- Sermon Outline**
1. You're Never Too Old to Serve God
    - a. Elizabeth (1:18)
  2. You're Never Too Insignificant to Serve God
    - a. Mary (1:48)
  3. God Uses All People of Faith to Serve Him
    - a. Who believe in his power (1:37)
    - b. Who commit to his way (1:38)
    - c. Who depend on him (1:6, 13, 50)
  4. How can God Use You to Serve Him?
    - a. If you're willing, he is able!

**Challenge** Build your faith and be ready to let God use you.

**Christmas Special****Luke 2:1–40**

**Key Thought** Meeting Jesus is a life-changing experience.

**Overview** God intentionally chose to work his greatest miracle through “invisible people” like two overwhelmed parents and some terrified shepherds. What did the shepherds know about prophecy or God’s plan of salvation? All they knew is that their lives had been changed by an incredible time of worship (2:13-14) and by meeting Jesus (2:15-16). Those experiences transformed them into effective evangelists who had a powerful impact for God (2:17).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Shepherds Were Transformed!
    - a. By heavenly worship (2:13-14)
    - b. By meeting Jesus (2:15-16)
    - c. Into effective evangelists (2:17)
  2. Have You Been Transformed?
    - a. Have you met the Savior? (Luke 19:1-10)
    - b. Do you worship him regularly? (Acts 2:42)
    - c. Do you share the “good news”? (Acts 2:37-41)

**Challenge** Look for Jesus in worship, in life, in everything, and he will transform you.

## The World's Greatest Prophet

# Luke 3:1–20

**Key Thought** Anyone can have a spiritual impact.

**Overview** John the Baptist's assignment was to prepare the way for the Messiah (3:4). Notice the main elements of his message—a call to repentance and a challenge to produce fruit, all in preparation for the coming of the Christ (3:7-14). In the end, John devoted his life to the higher purpose of humbly pointing people to Jesus (3:15-17; John 3:27-36). You may not be a prophet or a preacher, but you can still have a big impact for God by letting your words and actions point others toward Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Your Spiritual Impact Can Begin in Your Family
    - a. John is Jesus' Cousin
  2. It Can Influence the Witness of Those Around You
    - a. Jesus' message reflects John's (3:7-14; Luke 11:37-54)
  3. It Can Point Others to Jesus
    - a. John testifies to Jesus (3:22-36)
  4. It Can Be Greater Than You Think
    - a. With faith, we'll do great things for God (Matthew 17:20)

**Challenge** God wants to use you for his purposes right where you are.

**Lead Us Not  
Into Temptation****Matthew 3:13–4:17**

**Key Thought** Jesus shows us how to resist temptation.

**Overview** Satan had prepared a trap for Jesus in the desert (4:1). Notice what Jesus did to avoid Satan's temptations. Each time, Jesus went back to the Word of God, the Bible (4:4). The Bible can protect us, as it did for Jesus, but it can also mislead us if we misuse it, as Satan attempted to do (4:5-6). That's why it's much easier to stay on track when you are accountable to a faithful community of fellow Christians.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus' Temptations: They're Ours, Too!
    - a. Prove yourself! (4:3, 6)
    - b. "Enhance" yourself (4:9)
  2. Jesus' Defenses: They're Ours, Too!
    - a. Knowing and using scripture (4:4, 10)
    - b. Knowing scripture in context (4:6-7)
  3. Don't Face Temptation Alone
    - a. Rely on the help of God and fellow believers

**Challenge** The best defense is a good offense. Beat temptation with God's Word.

## Radical Happiness

# Matthew 5:1–6:4

**Key Thought** Jesus challenges us to be his agents in the world.

**Overview** The nine statements Jesus made at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-12) are a counter-cultural definition of true happiness. He then tackled another touchy subject: influencing others (5:13-16). Jesus challenged his followers to be like salt—flavoring and preserving the world with the gospel—and light—demonstrating the gospel with godly actions. Once you’ve discovered “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6), you can’t keep it hidden (5:14-15).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Preserving Your World
    - a. You are the salt of the earth (5:13)
    - b. Preservative and flavoring functions of salt
  2. Enlightening Your World
    - a. You are the light of the world (5:14)
    - b. Reflecting Jesus’ light (John 1:7-9)
    - c. Sharing the light of truth (5:15)
  3. Influencing Your World
    - a. Your good works change the world and bring praise to God (5:16)

**Challenge** Are you ready to be “salt” and “light” in the world around you?

## The Audience of One

### Matthew 6:5–7:29

**Key Thought** Jesus warns us about many spiritual “pitfalls.”

**Overview** Whether he’s talking about prayer, fasting, giving or any other subject, Jesus says we are to do all things with our Heavenly Father in mind. As Os Guinness put it, we are to play to “the audience of One.” When that becomes the focus of our lives, worrying about things like money, possessions, clothes or food all take their proper place (6:33). Jesus concluded his Sermon with more straight talk: forgive or else (6:14-15), don’t judge others (7:1-6), and watch out for false prophets (7:15-20).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Spiritual Pitfall #1: “Praying to the Gallery,”
    - a. Don’t pray for show, pray to God (6:5-8)
  2. Pitfall #2: Trying to Serve Two Masters
    - a. You can’t serve both God and money (6:19-24)
  3. Pitfall #3: Worrying Instead of Seeking
    - a. Worrying about ourselves instead of seeking God (6:25-34)
  4. Pitfall #4: Unfair Judging
    - a. Judging others with pride instead of grace (7:1-5)
  5. Pitfall #5: Being Deceived by False Prophets
    - a. Not everyone who claims to know God does (7:15-20)
  6. Pitfall #6: Building a Weak Foundation
    - a. Hearing but not obeying God’s word (7:24-7)

**Challenge** To avoid the pitfalls in life, keep your eyes on Jesus.



**D-Day for Sin**

# Matthew 13

**Key Thought** Following Jesus changes everything about our lives—forever.

**Overview** By comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to yeast, hidden treasure, a mustard seed or a net, Jesus painted a picture of a seemingly insignificant thing that would have an overwhelming impact. That's how it is when we decide to follow Jesus—a seemingly small step changes everything about our lives, both now and for eternity. Jesus challenged his hearers to “understand with their hearts” (13:15), to allow his word to affect their attitudes, motivations and actions.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Small Things... Big Influence
    - a. Mustard seeds and yeast (13:31-33)
    - b. Hidden treasure, a pearl (13:44-46)
    - c. A net (13:47-50)
  2. Small Step... Big Impact
    - a. Deciding to follow Jesus ( see the example of Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10)
    - b. Our lives shaped now (motivations, attitudes, actions, 13:15)
    - c. Our lives shaped for eternity (in the eternal kingdom)

**Challenge** Making a difference for God starts with one small step of faith.

## The Uncommon Deed

### Luke 10:25–37

**Key Thought** Christians should reach out to those in need.

**Overview** In this well-known parable we notice at least two principles. First, Jesus is saying that the Christian faith is not about being an expert or being perfect all the time. It's about being willing to receive God's love and forgiveness and then expressing them to those around us. The second principle is that true neighbors are those who show mercy (the idea of feeling empathy and compassion) as well as taking action on behalf of the helpless.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Who Can Be a “Good Neighbor”?
    - a. Anyone. You don't have to be “perfect” or an “expert” (10:31-33)
  2. What Does a “Good Neighbor” Do?
    - a. Shows caring and compassion to those in need (10:33-35)
    - b. Shows God's mercy and love (10:36-37)
  3. Where Can I be a “Good Neighbor”?
    - a. Look for opportunities to be a “good neighbor” in your own neighborhood

**Challenge** God is calling you to be a good neighbor in his world.

## Sinners Welcome

# Luke 15

**Key Thought** God cares about lost people and so should we.

**Overview** The point of the stories about the lost sheep and lost coin (15:3-10) is that Jesus came was to reclaim lost and broken people. Then, in his third story (15:11-32), Jesus shows us that God is far more interested in repentance than punishment. He loves sinners and is waiting for them to return to him. The mission of the church of Jesus Christ is not to isolate the “good people,” it’s to welcome and save the “bad people,” which includes you, me and everyone else (15:21-24).

- Sermon Outline**
1. God’s Passion: Lost People
    - a. God cares deeply that lost people return to him (15:4, 8, 20)
    - b. We are to share God’s passion (Matthew 28:19-20)
  2. God’s Joy: Finding the Lost
    - a. God rejoices when lost people return to him (15:7, 10, 24)
  3. God’s Eagerness: Forgiving the Repentant
    - a. God is waiting to forgive lost people who return to him (15:20-22)
    - b. He is gracious and compassionate toward them (Nehemiah 9:17)
  4. God’s Command: Reach Out to the Lost
    - a. Do you share God’s heart for lost people?

**Challenge** “Lost and found” is the most important mission of the church.

## All You Can Eat

# Luke 9:1–36

### Key Thought

Jesus wants us to share the Good News with others.

### Overview

To fully understand Jesus' miraculous feeding of 5,000 men (not to mention many more women and children), we must consider its context. Jesus sends the disciples out to heal people and share the Good News (9:6). Soon after, he chose to feed the large crowd. "They all ate and were satisfied..." (9:17). Jesus had given his followers an unforgettable symbol of what he had been teaching them: the God's Kingdom multiplies as it is given away. This miracle also demonstrated that Jesus really was the Son of God.

### Sermon Outline

1. Jesus Challenges His Disciples
  - a. To "feed" others by sharing the Good News of his kingdom (9:2) so that it multiplies
  - b. To do good works in his name (9:2, 13)
  - c. To demonstrate that he is the Son of God
2. Jesus Challenges You
  - a. How are or can you share the Good News?
  - b. What good works can you do in his name?
  - c. How does your life proclaim Jesus?

### Challenge

The best way to expand God's Kingdom is to give it away.

## Imaginative Faith

# Matthew 14:22–36

**Key Thought** The way to handle life's problems is to stay focused on Jesus.

**Overview** Some people think that becoming a Christian exempts them from life's problems. Unfortunately, that's not true. But no matter how bad things get, God never abandons us. Some point to Peter's lack of faith on the lake (14:30-31), but I would never have imagined that I could walk on water; I'd have stayed in the boat. Sometimes faith requires the willingness to believe God can do things that seem impossible (Matthew 19:26). God will provide everything we need, when we need it, if we stay focused on him.

- Sermon Outline**
1. How to Deal with the Problems of Life
    - a. Recognize that Jesus is with you (14:27; Matthew 28:20)
    - b. Trust his power to help ("Take courage," 14:27)
    - c. Step out in faith to deal with the situation (14:29)
    - d. Remember to worship and give thanks (14:33)
  2. Problems are an Opportunity to Move Closer to Jesus
    - a. How do you react?
    - b. Will you "take courage" and step out of the boat?

**Challenge** Problems are your opportunity to get out the boat and follow Jesus.

## I See What You Mean

# John 9

**Key Thought** Jesus welcomes honest seekers and tough questions.

**Overview** After hearing about the miraculous healing of a blind man (9:6-7), the disciples tried to over-analyze the blind man's predicament (9:1-2). But in the midst of all the arguing, the blind man had the clearest insight of all. He started with a basic understanding of the facts (9:11, 25) and formed an opinion about Jesus (9:17) but finally made a decision to believe (9:38), in spite of the consequences (9:34). That's a good description of how to become a Christian.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Get the Facts About Jesus (9:11, 25)
    - a. Ask the tough questions; Jesus welcomes them (9:35-37)
  2. Make Up Your Mind About Jesus
    - a. Discover who he is (Matthew 16:16)
    - b. Discover all that he is (Colossians 1:15-20)
  3. Count the Cost of Following Jesus
    - a. There may be serious opposition (9:34)
    - b. It's important to "count the cost" (Luke 14:25-33)
  4. Believe and Commit to Jesus
    - a. This is the vital, final step (9:38)

**Challenge** You've got questions? He's got answers.



## In The Name of Jesus

### Mark 5:1–20

**Key Thought** Jesus heals us and sends us out to tell others what he has done.

**Overview** Jesus wants to bring the most radical kind of healing into our lives; he wants to break our co-dependence on sin and free us from the power of evil. Jesus also wants to empower us to share the Good News. Notice that he didn't spend time teaching the formerly demon-possessed man. All he told him was, "Go... tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (5:19).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus' Power Working in the Demon-Possessed Man
    - a. Jesus freed the man from the power of evil over him (5:1-13)
    - b. Jesus empowered the man to "go... and tell" (5:19)
  2. Jesus' Power Working in Us
    - a. Freeing us from the power of sin and death (Romans 8:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:17)
    - b. Empowering us to "go" (Matthew 28:20)
  3. Is Jesus' Power Working in You?
    - a. Who can you "go... and tell"?

**Challenge** A changed life is the most powerful statement of the gospel.



## Dead Man Walking

# John 11

**Key Thought** Jesus demonstrated that he has power over death.

**Overview** By raising Lazarus, Jesus created an unforgettable symbol of the new, eternal life he would offer to those who believed in him (11:25-26). How sad that people can go to church all their lives and still not understand who Jesus is and all he offers. Martha didn't understand everything either; but she honestly stated what she did understand (11:24) and then trusted herself and her future to Jesus (11:27). That's all he asks us to do.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Trusting Jesus in the Face of Death
    - a. Tell Jesus honestly what you feel and believe (11:24)
    - b. Trust your future to Jesus (11:27)
    - c. Jesus offers eternal life to all who believe (11:25)
    - d. Take (and give) comfort in Jesus' resurrection  
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
  2. How Does Your Faith Affect Your View of Death?
    - a. Have you received eternal life from Jesus? (Acts 16:30-31)
    - b. Are you encouraged by his promises? (John 14:1-3)

**Challenge** Don't be afraid. Jesus overcame death so you can too.

## A Meal To Remember

# Luke 22:1–46

**Key Thought** Communion is more than just another meal!

**Overview** Jesus was soon to fulfill the mission given to him by his Father—to die on the Cross for the sins of the world. That’s what he wanted to symbolize for his followers with this meal. The bread helps us remember his body (22:19), the fact that he was about to take the punishment for sin. The cup helps us remember his blood (22:20), the fact that he was about to make the final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. He called it a “new covenant,” between God and humankind that would last forever.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Last Supper: What it Meant for Jesus
    - a. Symbolizing the fulfillment of his mission (22:16)
  2. The Last Supper: What it Meant For Us
    - a. Remembering:
      - i. The bread: his body broken for us (22:19)
      - ii. The cup: his blood shed for us (22:20)
  3. The Last Supper: What it Meant For God
    - a. The new covenant in Christ’s blood (22:20)

**Challenge** Remembering what Jesus did then helps us follow him now.

## The Big Decision

# John 18

**Key Thought** Deciding about Jesus is life's biggest decision.

**Overview** Pilate certainly didn't care about fairness; he just wanted to avoid hassle (18:29-35). It doesn't seem like he cared too much about truth either (18:38). But before he knew it, Pilate was faced with the most important decision of all time—what to do with Jesus? Sooner or later, everyone must make that decision. Is Jesus a source of anger and frustration; a hassle to be avoided; or is he “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6)? It's important to carefully think it over; it's the biggest decision you'll ever make.

- Sermon Outline**
1. What CAN You Do with Jesus?
    - a. Avoid the “hassle” of dealing with him? (18:29-35)
    - b. Search for the truth about him? (18:38)
    - c. Accept him as the source of all truth and listen to him? (18:37)
  2. What WILL You Do with Jesus?
    - a. Everyone has to decide; no one escapes (Romans 14:10; Hebrews 9:27)
    - b. What will you decide?

**Challenge** It is impossible not to make a decision about Jesus—one way or the other.

**Paid In Full!**

## **John 19**

**Key Thought** Jesus' death on the Cross completed his God-given mission.

**Overview** Just before he died, Jesus shouted, "It is finished" (19:30). In the Greek, the literal meaning of the word Jesus used was, "Paid in full." It was the same word that was stamped on a paid invoice. Instead of a dying gasp, Jesus' last word was a triumphant shout, "I've paid the price, the full price for all time for the sins of the world. Death no longer has the final say. The kingdom of darkness is defeated. I've completed my mission. It is finished!"

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Cross: An Ending
    - a. Jesus' mission completed: "It is finished" (19:30)
    - b. The debt of sin is "paid in full" (Romans 8:3)
    - c. The power of sin is broken (Romans 6:1-7)
  2. The Cross: A New Beginning
    - a. Death overcome (Romans 8:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:55-56)
    - b. Evil defeated (Colossians 2:13-15)
    - c. New life for all (John 1:12; 3:16)
  3. The Cross: Its Meaning for You?

**Challenge** Because of the Cross, your debt of sin can be paid in full.

## The Linchpin

# John 20–21

**Key Thought** The resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of the Christian faith.

**Overview** Although John was confused (20:9), he had his “conversion experience” when he made a decision to believe in Jesus based on the evidence (20:8). Thomas was walking the fine line between intellectual honesty and prideful, self-centered rejection, “Unless I see... I will not believe” (20:25). Fortunately, he didn’t stay that way (20:28). And Peter didn’t know if he was still a follower of Jesus at all (Luke 22:54-62). But on the beach, Jesus restored him and gave him a new mission in life (21:15-19).

- Sermon Outline**
1. John: Convinced by the Risen Lord
    - a. Confused (20:9) but convinced by the evidence (20:8)
    - b. Have you been convinced and believed?
  2. Thomas: Challenged by the Risen Lord
    - a. Skeptical but finally believing (20:25-28)
    - b. What’s holding you back from believing?
  3. Peter: Commissioned by the Risen Lord
    - a. Fallen but restored to serve (21:15-19)
    - b. Will you let Jesus restore you and send you out?

**Challenge** It’s your turn to come to grips with the Risen Lord.

**So Long... For Now!**

## **Acts 1:1–11**

**Key Thought** Jesus' presence and power are still with us.

**Overview** After his resurrection, Jesus communicated two important realities about his kingdom to his disciples. The first was about empowerment. The disciples wouldn't be able to fulfill their mission (Matthew 28:18-20) on their own. They needed his presence and power. That's why he promised the Holy Spirit. The second was about witnessing. The reason for the power was to communicate a message (1:8).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Mission
    - a. Be my witnesses (1:8)
  2. The Means
    - a. Jesus sends the power of his Spirit (1:4, 8)
    - b. Be willing to prayerfully wait for the Spirit's leading (1:4)
  3. The Results
    - a. Powerful witnessing to the "ends of the earth" (1:8)
    - b. Thousands of believers added to the church (Acts 2:41)
  4. The Call
    - a. Are you carrying out your mission using Jesus' means?
    - b. What are the results?

**Challenge** Pray patiently. Wait prayerfully. Then go.

## A Surprise Gift

# Acts 2

**Key Thought** The Holy Spirit enables us to be effective witnesses for Jesus.

**Overview** Peter was the first example of how the Holy Spirit can completely change a person. He went from being an impulsive deserter to a persuasive leader. The Holy Spirit gave Peter insight into God's Word, a keen understanding of God's plan, uncommon courage and power, plus a supernatural effectiveness in ministry (2:40-41). Those are the traits of a Spirit-empowered person.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Traits of a Spirit-Empowered Witness
    - a. Insight into God's word (2:16-17)
    - b. Understanding God's plan (2:22-35)
    - c. Boldness and courage (2:14, 15, 40)
    - d. Effectiveness in ministry (2:37, 41)
  2. How Does Your Witness Measure Up?
    - a. How can you become more "Spirit-empowered"?
    - b. How do you seek insight into God's word and plan?
    - c. How do you achieve boldness and courage?
    - d. How effective is your ministry?

**Challenge** The Spirit-empowered life is the path to effectiveness for God.



## A Completely Different Team

# Acts 3–4

**Key Thought** Unity in the Church is a powerful witness to Jesus.

**Overview** Some think that the most unique thing about the early church was their approach to money and possessions (4:32-37). It was impressive and challenges our attachment to possessions today. But it seems that their willingness to practice “radical sharing” was the result of an even more impressive trait: unity (4:32). Imagine what the church could do today if they were “one in heart and mind.”

- Sermon Outline**
1. Christian Unity: Its Basis
    - a. “One in heart and mind” (4:32)
    - b. What does that mean?
  2. Christian Unity: Its Product
    - a. Radical love and sharing (4:32)
    - b. Is it possible today? If so, how?
  3. Christian Unity: Its Reason
    - a. To empower our witness (4:33)
    - b. How could greater unity empower our witness today?
  4. Christian Unity: Its Result
    - a. Attracts others to the faith (Acts 2:47)
    - b. How can we achieve that kind of unity?

**Challenge** A fractured church results in a fruitless witness.

## Seeds In The Wind

### Acts 6:8–8:8

**Key Thought** Sometimes “religion” keeps us from hearing what God is saying.

**Overview** God had given Stephen a message for the religious leaders. Tragically, they weren’t the least bit interested. For one thing they were too angry. Also, they loved their religion more than they loved God (6:13-14). There’s nothing wrong with appreciating your church and its traditions. But watch out if they become too important to you.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Reasons We May Be “Deaf ” to God
    - a. We’re too angry (6:8-10)
      - i. Is your anger hiding a struggle with God?
      - ii. Is God saying something you don’t want to hear?
    - b. We love our “religion” more than God (6:13-14)
      - i. Is your church and its traditions interfering with your relationship with God?
      - ii. Our “religion” is to be a means, not an end in itself
  2. How to Open Our Ears to God
    - a. Confess any anger with God
    - b. Ask God to help you focus first on him (Matthew 6:33)

**Challenge** Jesus didn’t come to start a religion; he came to start a relationship — with you.

## Unsung Hero

# Acts 8:26–40

**Key Thought** Phillip shows us how to effectively share our faith.

**Overview** Notice how Phillip witnessed for Jesus. He started with questions (8:30), not answers. It's important to understand a person's struggle before we offer a solution. Next, he explained what the Bible said about Jesus (8:35). Most significantly, he was willing to take action even when he didn't know "why." Philip had no idea what he'd find in the desert (8:26). He only knew God wanted him to go there and be ready.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Keys to Effective Faith-Sharing
    - a. Start where the person is (their questions, struggles, 8:30).
    - b. Don't go with an "agenda," start with theirs'
    - c. Take time to explain what the Bible teaches (8:35)
    - d. Encourage honest seekers to join a group Bible study
    - e. Be willing to act as the Spirit leads you (8:26, 40)
    - f. Be open to God providing you opportunities to witness (8:40)
    - g. Be willing to go! (8:27)
  2. "Go... and Make Disciples"
    - a. That's Jesus' command to all his people (Matthew 28:19-20)
    - b. What opportunities has Jesus given you?

**Challenge** Effective witnessing is God-led and people-centered.

## The Rainbow Coalition

# Acts 10:1–11:18

### Key Thought

The Church must welcome all who believe.

### Overview

The over-riding result of this meeting between Peter and Cornelius was to clarify a fundamental truth about God's Good News: salvation through Jesus Christ is for everyone, not just a select group of insiders. The Kingdom of Heaven is the ultimate "rainbow coalition." It's open to all who believe in Jesus Christ (10:43) and who therefore are able to receive the Holy Spirit (10:47).

### Sermon Outline

1. The Church Doors: Open to All
  - a. Peter's radical conclusion (10:27-8)
  - b. Open to all who believe (10:43)
  - c. And therefore, receive (10:47)
2. The Church Doors: Barred to Some?
  - a. Financial/class "bars"
  - b. Racial "bars"
  - c. Other "bars"
3. The Church Doors: Open Wider
  - a. What "bars" are there in your church?
  - b. Ways your church can remove those "bars"

### Challenge

Our challenge today is to keep the church as inclusive as God intended it to be.

## The Only Question That Matters

# Acts 9:1–31

### Key Thought

Jesus wants people to “see the light” about him.

### Overview

How could a person make such a turnaround as Saul? The main reasons are that God chose Saul (9:15) and that Saul had an encounter with Jesus (9:3-6). Once you really understand who Jesus is (9:5) it changes your life forever. Another reason for Saul’s turnaround was help from other believers. Ananias had the courage to accept him (9:17) and Barnabas helped him grow in his faith (9:27). Perhaps the final reason was Saul’s response to Jesus. “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (9:6 NKJV).

### Sermon Outline

1. Saul’s Turnaround: He Met the Living Lord
  - a. He met Jesus on the road (9:5)
  - b. Saul was willing to respond (9:6)
  - c. He was no longer an enemy of believers (9:13)
2. Saul’s Turnaround: He Was Chosen for a Great Task
  - a. To be a light to the Gentiles (9:15)
3. Saul’s Turnaround: He Was Helped by Others
  - a. Ananias had the courage to accept him (9:17)
  - b. Barnabas had the wisdom to help him grow (9:27)
4. How Can You Help Someone Make a “Turnaround” to Jesus?

### Challenge

Jesus is the ultimate “turnaround specialist.” If he can do it for Saul he can do it for you.

## The “P” Word

# Acts 13–14

### Key Thought

Paul and Barnabas show us how to be effective witnesses.

### Overview

Today, people don’t like “proselytizing.” But notice the diplomacy Paul used throughout his message (13:16-43). He presented the gospel in a way that was respectful of his mixed audience (13:26) and he emphasized the positive (13:32, 38-39). That gets results (13:42-44). And there were two other factors that made Paul such an effective witness: courage (14:19-20) and accountability. Paul was sent out by the church and he reported back to them (13:1-3; 14:26-28).

### Sermon Outline

#### 1. Effective Witnessing Requires:

- a. Being respectful of the audience (13:26)
- b. Emphasizing the positive (13:32, 38-9)
- c. Courage in the face of opposition (14:3, 22)
- d. Accountability to the church (13:1-3; 14:26-28)

#### 2. Do You have What it Takes?

- a. What is your “audience”? Are you respectful?
- b. Are you supported in prayer by your church?
- c. Are you prepared and willing?

### Challenge

The purpose of evangelism is to build Christ’s church, not your reputation.



## Who Is The Church For?

# Acts 15

**Key Thought** Disagreements in the church needn't always cause division.

**Overview** In this passage we see how the early church handled a divisive issue. When the disagreement became public (15:2) the opponents didn't gossip or fight. Instead, they came together (15:2-4), listened to all sides (15:5-12), remained sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit (15:8) and accepted the decision of the leaders (15:19). Sadly, after avoiding a split in the emerging church, Paul and Barnabas couldn't agree on a personnel issue so they parted company (15:37-39; Acts 13:13).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Avoid "Fighting"
    - a. Come together to discuss and pray (15:2-4)
    - b. End fighting and sharp debate quickly (15:3)
  2. Listen Respectfully to All Sides
    - a. Give all sides a respectful hearing (15:5-12)
  3. Watch and Listen for the Work of the Holy Spirit
    - a. You may recognize the leading of the Spirit (15:8)
  4. Accept the Decision of Leadership
    - a. Listen to and respect the leaders' decision (15:13-21)
  5. Avoid Unnecessary Divisions
    - a. If disagreement remains, perhaps seek the church's blessing (15:39, 40) to leave

**Challenge** Fighting for the faith doesn't mean fighting the faithful.



## Knowing God's Will

# Acts 16–20

**Key Thought** God will show us his will if we sincerely seek it.

**Overview** How can we know God's will? The starting point is waiting on the Lord (13:2-3); pray, fast, seek advice and wait for the Holy Spirit to guide us. That doesn't mean we need to be paralyzed. Notice that Paul tried to go to Asia and then to Bythinia. Both times God stopped him (16:6, 9-10). Finally, God opened the door to Macedonia (16:9-10). When we have taken time to earnestly seek God's will, we can step out in faith even if the way is still unclear.

- Sermon Outline**
1. To Know God's Will
    - a. Pray for guidance and wait for it (13:2-3)
    - b. Don't decide and then ask for God's blessing
    - c. Go in the direction God seems to be leading (16:6, 7)
  2. To Do God's Will
    - a. Don't be afraid if you're not 100% sure
    - b. God uses our "detours" to get us there (16:6, 7)
    - c. Step out in faith and go where God is leading you. (Joshua 1:1-6)

**Challenge** God can use your detours to get you where he wants you to go.

**Ahoy Mates!**

## **Acts 25–28**

**Key Thought** God has a purpose for us and he'll help us carry it out.

**Overview** God wanted Paul to preach the Gospel in Rome and he gets him there courtesy of the Roman authorities. In the midst of seeming chaos, two things kept Paul going. The first was his single-minded focus on his mission (Acts 9:15). Even when confronting King Agrippa, Paul never blinked (26:20, 28-29). The second was the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Several times, God miraculously changed the course of events (27:33-34, 44; 28:1-10). In the end, Paul accomplished exactly what God wanted.

**Sermon Outline**

1. Have a Purpose in Life!
  - a. God had a Purpose for Paul (Acts 9:15)
  - b. You can trust that God has a purpose for your life, too
2. Have a Focus in Life!
  - a. Don't let anything distract you from your purpose
    - i. Not opposition (26:20, 28-29)
    - ii. Not what others think of you (26:24-25)
3. Have a Power in Life!
  - a. Trust the power of God to help you (27:33-34, 44; 28:1-10)

**Challenge** Once you find your God-given purpose in life, don't let anything deter you from pursuing it.

**Amen, Brother!**

## **Romans 8**

**Key Thought** A Spirit-controlled life is the greatest life of all.

**Overview** Jesus Christ overcame sin and death and then gave us a new Spirit (8:1-4). And Paul reminds us that either we are controlled by our sinful nature, or by the Holy Spirit (8:5-17). Being controlled by the Spirit doesn't mean life will always be easy or successful, but God will use everything, even bad things, for your ultimate good if you belong to him. You can be sure God loves you and is in charge of your life. That's what makes you more than a conqueror (8:37).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus Frees Us
    - a. From the law of sin and death (8:1-4)
    - b. To choose to live controlled the Spirit (8:9)
  2. The Spirit Controls Us
    - a. We have an obligation to live under that control (8:9, 12)
    - b. To live by the what the Spirit desires (8:5)
    - c. The Spirit testifies that we are God's children (8:16; 1 John 3:1)
  3. God Blesses Us
    - a. Working all things together for our good (8:28) so that we are "more than conquerors" (8:37)

**Challenge** With the Spirit as your guide, you are "more than a conqueror."

## Two Lists

# Galatians 5:16–6:10

**Key Thought** With God’s help, we can develop a godly character.

**Overview** In contrast to the sinful nature (5:19-21), Paul offers a list of the “fruit of the Spirit” (5:22-23); traits we should cultivate in our lives. But removing the “weeds” and cultivating the “fruit” in our lives is tough work, so Paul suggests two sources of help. The first is fellow believers (6:1-5); Christian friends who can help restore the broken parts of our lives (6:1-5). The second is the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us to “live by the Spirit” (5:16), to be “led by the Spirit” (5:18) and to “keep in step with the Spirit” (5:25).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Growing Godly Character: Preparing the Soil
    - a. Recognize and “pull” the “weeds” (5:19-21)
    - b. Cultivate the “fruit” (5:22-23)
  2. Growing a Godly Character: Sowing the Seeds
    - a. Be led by the Spirit (5:18, 25)
    - b. Be accountable to other Christians (6:1-5)
  3. How Will You Begin “Growing” Today?
    - a. What “weeds” do you need to pull?
    - b. What “seeds” do you need to sow?

**Challenge** You can cultivate a godly character by growing the fruit of the Spirit.

## The Fight of Your Life

# Ephesians 6:10–20

**Key Thought** We have the defenses we need to resist Satan's schemes.

**Overview** The devil is real; he opposes God and he is scheming against God's children (6:11-12). That's why we need protection. The way we get it is to use God's armor, things like truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, God's Word and prayer (6:14-18). They are the weapons God has given us to survive in the spiritual battle. This passage reminds us that the best defense against evil is a good offense. Put on the full armor of God!

- Sermon Outline**
1. We're Engaged in Battle
    - a. It's a spiritual battle against Satan and his forces (6:11-12)
    - b. Beware of Satan's schemes: drugs, the occult, greed, pride, etc.
  2. We've Got "the Gear"
    - a. God's power (6:10)
    - b. God's "full armor" (6:14-18)
  3. "The Best Defense is a Good Offense"
    - a. Expect temptation (1 Peter 5:8)
    - b. Use God's defenses to win!

**Challenge** You are in a spiritual battle. Get ready to fight. Prepare to win.

**Give Peace A Chance**

## **Philippians 4:4–9**

**Key Thought** We can have peace even in the midst of life's problems.

**Overview** We can experience peace in the midst of the problems of life. How does Paul say to do that? It requires three conscious decisions. The first is the decision to rejoice whether you feel like it or not (4:4). The focus of our rejoicing is the Lord, not our circumstances. The second decision is to pray (4:6). The third is to focus on positive things (4:8). When we're overwhelmed with the negative, it helps to remember God's goodness. Rejoice, pray, focus on the positive.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Peace Comes Through Rejoicing
    - a. Rejoice in the Lord, not in circumstances (4:4)
    - b. You can rejoice whether you feel like it or not
  2. Peace Comes Through Praying
    - a. Give your worries to God (4:6)
    - b. God cares! (1 Peter 5:7)
  3. Peace Comes Through Focusing on the Positive
    - a. Recall God's goodness (4:8)
    - b. Focus your mind on what is good and uplifting (4:8)
  4. Peace Comes Through Trusting God's presence
    - a. The God of peace will be with you (4:9)
    - b. God is never far, no matter the situation (Matthew 14:22-33)

**Challenge** Are you willing to exchange your anxiety for God's peace?



## Drifting Away

**Colossians 1:1–23**

**Key Thought** Jesus Christ is God's supreme self-expression.

**Overview** How can we help Christians who are drifting away from their faith? That's the challenge the Apostle Paul addressed in this letter to the Colossians. Paul corrected their misunderstandings by going back to the heart of the Gospel: Jesus Christ. He chose every phrase of his carefully worded statement (1:15-20) to communicate important truth about Jesus. Then Paul gave them the Good News in concentrated form (1:21-23). Anyone who may have drifted from the faith should get re-focused on Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus: The Image of the Invisible God
    - a. He's the Image ("Icon") (1:15) To know what God is like, look at Jesus
    - b. Nothing in God is lacking in Jesus (1:19)
  2. Jesus: The Creator
    - a. He's the one who created it all (Genesis 1; John 1:3)
  3. Jesus: The Sustainer
    - a. He holds all things together (1:17)
    - b. In Jesus, all "things", all knowledge makes sense
  4. Jesus: The Head of the Church
    - a. That he might have supremacy in all things (1:18)
  5. Jesus: The Reconciler
    - a. He's reconciled us to God (1:20)
    - b. And to each other (Ephesians 2:13-14)

**Challenge** Praise Jesus for who he is and for all that he's done for you.



## The Habits of Highly Effective Leaders

# 1 Timothy 3

### Key Thought

Christian leaders are expected to meet high standards.

### Overview

Paul faced the challenge of finding a new generation of leaders for the new churches he had planted. The question was, how? He started with a set of high standards (3:2-13). Whether you're a leader in your church or not, these are good goals to work on. The lists balance personal traits, family issues and a good outside reputation.

### Sermon Outline

1. Church Leaders Must Have High Family Standards
  - a. Faithful in marriage (3:2)
  - b. A good parent (3:4)
2. Church Leaders Must Have High Personal Standards
  - a. Self controlled, temperate and not greedy (3:2, 3)
  - b. Hospitable and gentle (3:2-3)
  - c. A good reputation inside and outside the church (3:7)
  - d. Humble (3:6)
3. Church Leaders Meeting These Standards Are Needed Now!
  - a. Are you qualified?
  - b. If not, how could you become so?

### Challenge

The church needs you to begin developing your leadership qualities right away!

## Show Me The Money

# 1 Timothy 6:3–21

**Key Thought** Loving money causes big problems.

**Overview** In his letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul explains three important “financial principles” for Christians. Loving money leads to evil (6:10). Having money isn’t evil; loving it is. That quickly “detours” us from loving and serving God. Greed leads to strife (6:3-5). Even today, money is at the bottom of many church squabbles. Godliness leads to contentment (6:6). The secret of happiness is not to pursue money; it’s to pursue God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Loving Money LEADS to Evil
    - a. Having money isn’t evil but loving it is (6:10, Matthew 6:24)
    - b. You can’t serve God and money, too. (Matthew 6:24)
  2. Greed LEADS to Strife and Quarrels of All Kinds
    - a. In our families and our churches (6:3-5, Genesis 25:29-33; James 2:1-7)
  3. Godliness LEADS to Contentment
    - a. Godliness with contentment is great gain (6:9)
    - b. Seek God’s kingdom first (Matthew 6:33)

**Challenge** Manage your money; don’t let it manage you.

## You've Got A Friend

# 2 Timothy 2

**Key Thought** Hard work and staying focused are vital to effective faith-sharing.

**Overview** Paul uses four images to help Timothy understand his ministry (2:3-7, 15). The thing that a soldier, an athlete, a farmer and a workman all have in common is hard work and a focus on the task. If they get lazy or distracted, they'll fail to accomplish their objective. Paul mentions some potential distractions including the "evil desires of youth" (2:22) and arguing (2:14-26). That was Paul's message to Timothy and to you.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The "Images" of an Effective Witness
    - a. A soldier, athlete, farmer (2:3-6)
    - b. Workman (2:15)
  2. The Commitment of an Effective Witness
    - a. Willing to work hard (see the four images above)
  3. The Focus Of an Effective Witness
    - a. On living and sharing the gospel
    - b. Avoid distractions
      - i. Of the "evil desires of youth" (2:22)
      - ii. Of unnecessary arguing (2:14-26)

**Challenge** Keep your focus. Live and share the Gospel.

## Finishing Well

# 2 Timothy 3:10–4:8

**Key Thought** These are Paul's "last words" to his son-in-the-faith.

**Overview** What were the last things Paul wanted to stress before he died? First, he said suffering is inevitable for "everyone who wants to live a godly life" (3:12). But God can use it to help us grow (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7). Second, Paul stressed that Scripture expresses the words of God ("God-breathed") and has at least three purposes: to explain God's plan of salvation, to train us for godly living and to motivate us for good works (3:15-16). Finally, Paul challenged Timothy to continue preaching the word (4:1-2).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Suffering is Inevitable (3:12)
    - a. It comes to all who live a godly life (3:12)
    - b. God can use suffering for good (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 2:4-8)
  2. Scripture is Indispensable (3:16)
    - a. To explain salvation (3:15)
    - b. To train us in godly living (3:16)
    - c. To motivate us to good works (3:17)
  3. Sharing the Good News is Incredible
    - a. Persist in faithfully sharing the Good News (4:1-2)
    - b. A crown of righteousness awaits you (4:8)

**Challenge** What would you like your last words to be?

## I Want To Be Ready

# 1 Thessalonians 3:10–4:8

**Key Thought** We should be ready for Christ's return—whenever it happens.

**Overview** Paul didn't hesitate to talk about what Christ's return would be like (4:16-17). But he was hesitant to talk about when it would happen (5:1-3). The main thing we need to know is that it will be a surprise, like a "thief in the night." Instead of trying to determine exactly when it will happen, we should focus on being alert and self-controlled (4:6) so that no matter when it does happen, we'll be ready. The hope of Christ's return should be one of the most encouraging realities of the Christian life (4:18).

**Sermon Outline**

1. Christ is Coming: Be Surprised!
  - a. Speculation is common but futile (5:2)
  - b. We can't know exactly when it will be (Matthew 24:36)
2. Christ is Coming: Be Ready!
  - a. How does one be "awake" and get "sober?" (5:6)
  - b. How does one stay "alert" and "ready?" (Matthew 24:42, 44)
3. Christ is Coming: Be Encouraged
  - a. He'll return for us! (5:11)
  - b. We'll be with him forever (4:18)

**Challenge** The most important thing to know about the second coming is that you need to be ready.

## The Active Ingredient

# 1 Corinthians 13

**Key Thought** God's love is the greatest thing in life.

**Overview** Paul had just finished an extended discussion of spiritual gifts but he called love "the most excellent way" (12:31b). At the heart of this chapter (13:4-7), Paul answered the question, "What is love?" This passage reminds us that the things in life that have the greatest value are faith, hope and love. But love is the greatest. And yet, as wonderful as this passage is, it's still only the second best expression of love ever. The best was Jesus Christ's death on the Cross for the sins of the world.

**Sermon Outline**

1. True Love is Christ-Like Love
  - a. The nature of true, Christ-like love (13:4-8)
  - b. How does your love match up at home, at work, in church, etc?
2. True Love is the "Active Ingredient" in the Christian life
  - a. Spiritual gifts or actions are of little value without love (13:1-3)
  - b. God is love and calls us to love (1 John 4:7-21)
3. True Love is Demonstrated by Jesus
  - a. God's love is shown by the gift of his son to die for sinners (Romans 5:8) (1 John 4:9-10)

**Challenge** God's love is the active ingredient in the Christian life.



## Supernatural Hero

# 2 Corinthians 4:1–6:2

### Key Thought

Jesus gives us a fresh start in life.

### Overview

When we hear and receive the Gospel, everything in our life changes. Paul described what it means to be a “new creation” in Christ (5:17). The first thing he emphasized is this ministry (4:1), which he later described as a “ministry of reconciliation” (5:18). The Good News is that through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be reunited with God. No wonder Paul refers to the Gospel as this treasure (4:7). Amazingly, as a new person, you also have a new mission, to be Christ’s ambassador (5:20).

### Sermon Outline

1. You Are a “New Creation”
  - a. We have a new start (sins forgiven) (5:17)
  - b. We’re reconciled to God (5:18)
2. You Have a New “Treasure”
  - a. The gospel (4:7)
  - b. As the gospel spreads, it brings glory to God (4:15)
3. You Have a New Ministry
  - a. The ministry of reconciliation (5:18)
  - b. So that all might have eternal life (John 3:16)
4. You Have a New Office
  - a. We are Christ’s ambassadors (5:20)
  - b. We’re sent into the world with his message (Matthew 28:19-20)

### Challenge

Your old life? Forget it! Jesus makes everything new.



## Sure, I'm Sure

# 1 Peter 1:1–2:12

### Key Thought

God has given us a sure foundation in Christ.

### Overview

The Apostle Peter was very sure about what he believed. He was sure of the “new birth” (1:3); being free of our sin. He was sure of our “living hope” (1:3). Because Jesus is alive, we have real hope, not just fairy tales to help us get to sleep at night. Because of that, we should be “strangers” to the evil ways of this world (2:11) and live self-controlled, loving and holy lives (1:13-16, 22). In the meantime, we gain strength and support knowing we are “a people belonging to God” (2:9-10) with the Living Christ as our leader.

### Sermon Outline

1. Sure Thing #1: Our New Birth
  - a. We’ve been “born again” (1:3, 23)
  - b. As a result we’re called to be holy (1:13-16) and love each other (1:22)
2. Sure Thing #2: Our Living Hope
  - a. Jesus assures us of our eternal inheritance (1:3)
  - b. There’s a place for us with Jesus (John 14:2)
3. Sure Thing #3: Our Status as God’s Own People
  - a. We’re a chosen people (God’s Own) (2:9-10)
  - b. And called to be strangers to the world and its evils (2:11)

### Challenge

Build your life on a sure thing and it will last forever.

**Just Do It!**

## **James 1-2**

### **Key Thought**

James offers practical advice for Christian living.

### **Overview**

First Century Christians were being persecuted, so James' practical advice was to see persecution not as a reason to complain but an opportunity to grow (1:2-4). He also had some practical things to say about words: be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (1:19, 26; also see 3:1-12). Perhaps his most famous quote is, "Faith without deeds is dead" (2:26). If your faith is real, it must show in your actions. Now that's practical advice!

### **Sermon Outline**

1. Grow from Trials!
  - a. They're opportunities for spiritual growth (1:2-4)
  - b. They produce character (Romans 5:1-5)
2. Watch Your Tongue!
  - a. Unguarded speech can lead to anger, immoral talk and sin (1:19, see also 3:1-12)
  - b. So we must control our tongue! (1:26)
3. Show Me Your Faith!
  - a. Salvation is not earned (Eph. 2:8-9), but
  - b. A person's faith is made visible in obedience to the Word (2:14-26)

### **Challenge**

f your faith is real, people will notice.

**Authentic Christianity**

# 1 John 3:11–4:21

**Key Thought** John gives us four “tests” of a true Christian.

**Overview** The Apostle John offers us four essential tests of a true Christian. The first is to believe in Jesus Christ (3:23). Believing means agreeing that Jesus is the risen Son of God, and then following his commands. The second is to receive the Holy Spirit (4:13). He’s here and available to all Jesus’ followers (Acts 2:14-21). The third test of a true Christian is to love others (3:11, 23; 4:21 also 3:15; 4:7-8). The fourth test is obedience (3:6-9). Those who love God obey him.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Tests of a True Christian
    - a. Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (3:23)
      - i. Belief includes obedience to Christ’s commands (3:23; 5:3)
    - b. The Holy Spirit is active in your life (4:13)
    - c. Love for others (3:11-12, 4:11, 16-21)
      - i. Love for others is a sign of God’s life within us (4:7, 16b, 21)
      - ii. Jesus insisted on it (3:11, 23b)
    - d. Obedience to Jesus (3:6-9; John 14:15)
  2. How Do You Measure Up?
    - a. Use the test for assurance (4:13-18)
    - b. Use it as a motivation to grow (John 14:15)

**Challenge** Following Jesus is the way to pass the final test.

**A Voice And A Vision**

# Revelation 1

**Key Thought** You can have a closer relationship with God.

**Overview** Notice the clues John gave us about his walk with God from his prologue to this book. He was committed to whole-hearted worship (1:10). In addition, he was obedient to the word of God (1:2, 9), focused on Jesus (1:2-8), eagerly embraced the Holy Spirit (1:10) and was enduring suffering (1:9). That's a prescription for a closer walk with God.

- Sermon Outline**
1. John's Secrets to a Closer Relationship with God
    - a. He was devoted to worship (1:10)
    - b. He was obedient to the Word (1:2, 9)
    - c. He was focused on Jesus (1:2-8)
    - d. He embraced the Holy Spirit (1:10)
    - e. He endured suffering (1:9, see also James 1:2-4)
  2. How Can You Have That Closer Relationship?
    - a. How might you worship differently?
    - b. How might you be ore focused on Jesus and obedient?
    - c. How might you embrace the Holy Spirit?
    - d. How might you grow from suffering?

**Challenge** Write yourself a prescription for a closer relationship with God... and fill it today!

**Good News,  
Bad News**

# Revelation 2–3

**Key Thought**

Jesus has challenging news for his church!

**Overview**

Jesus really cares about the church, and he knows what's going on (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). The main theme of his messages to the seven churches is to contrast congregations who were faithful in teaching and practice with those who weren't. Two churches received only praise (Smyrna and Philadelphia) because they were poor and weak (2:9; 3:8). In contrast, the church in Sardis thought they were alive when in fact they were dead (3:1). His message to a "successful, dead church": obey and repent (3:3).

**Sermon Outline**

1. Good News for Churches
  - a. It's okay to be poor and weak ("small") (2:9-10)
    - i. "Poor and weak" churches must rely on Jesus (3:8-12)
    - ii. Wealth can be dangerous to church health (3:15-19)
  - b. God's discipline is an act of love (3:19)
2. Bad News for Churches
  - a. Good deeds aren't "good enough." Keep focused on Jesus (2:2-5)
  - b. You can't tolerate sinful behavior and false teaching (2:14-16, 20-23)
    - i. Your faith and witness is undermined by them
  - c. You can think you're alive but really be dead (3:1-3)

**Challenge**

What message would Jesus have for the church today?

## My Heavens!

# Revelation 4–7

**Key Thought** Heaven is a glorious place where we'll worship Jesus forever.

**Overview** Heaven is not a place in the clouds where people go to strum harps and watch their relatives below. What will it be like? First, the Lamb of God will be at the center (5:6; 7:17). Second, as we see throughout the book of Revelation, worship will be the main activity. And the worshipping community will include people from “every nation, tribe, people and language” (7:9).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Common Views of Heaven
    - a. Gold streets, pearly gates, Saint Peter
    - b. Looking down on family
    - c. Relaxing, playing harp
  2. The Bible's View of Heaven
    - a. Jesus will be at the center (5:6-14; 7:9-10)
    - b. Filled with people from “every tribe and nation” (7:9)
    - c. Main activity is worship (4:6-11; 7:9-12)
    - d. No pain or suffering (7:19)
  3. Your View of Heaven
    - a. What do expect to find?
    - b. What are you looking forward to?

**Challenge** Worshipping Jesus is “a little bit of heaven on earth.”



## Waiting On The Overlook

# Revelation 19–20

**Key Thought** “The end” will be good new for some, bad news for others.

**Overview** The main point of this passage is that in the end, evil will be defeated (19:11–20:10). The devil lost the decisive battle at the Cross. Another reality of the end is judgment (20:11–15). That’s what the “book of life” symbolized. Only those who believe in Jesus will be saved (Romans 3:23; 5:8; 10:9). For those who are in Christ, the end of the world will be a time of joy and celebration (19:1–10). In his vision, John saw a magnificent wedding with Jesus (the Lamb) as the groom and the church as his bride (19:7).

- Sermon Outline**
1. A Happy Ending
    - a. At the end, evil will be defeated once and for all (19:11; 20:10)
    - b. For Jesus’ followers, there is joy and celebration (19:1–10)
      - i. the wedding feast of the Lamb (19:7)
  2. A Sad Ending
    - a. Satan and his followers will be judged (20:11–15)
    - b. But Jesus’ followers will be saved (Acts 10:43; Romans 10:9)
  3. Your Ending?
    - a. Which kind will it be? (Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 25:31–46)

**Challenge** Now is the time to make sure your life has a happy ending.



## Those Pearly Gates

# Revelation 21–22

**Key Thought** God's great plan is that we will live forever with him in heaven.

**Overview** These chapters are filled with popular images of that wonderful moment when we enter heaven—pearly gates, streets of gold, river of life, etc. But the reality is better still. First, everything will be new (21:5). When Jesus returns, he will create a new heaven and a new earth (21:1). A new Jerusalem will appear (21:2). But the second and most important reality of Heaven is that it is where God will dwell with his people forever (21:3). That was his plan from the beginning, and why he sent his Son to earth (John 1:14).

- Sermon Outline**
1. What's So Special About Heaven?
    - a. Everything will be new (21:5)
      - i. New Heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem (21:1,2)
    - b. All trace of sin will be absent (21:27)
    - c. God will dwell there with his people forever (21:3; 22:3)
    - d. It's the culmination of his plan in Jesus. (John 1:14; 3:16)
  2. I Want to Be Ready!
    - a. Receive Jesus (John 1:12)
    - b. Live in grateful obedience (John 14:15)

**Challenge** Are you prepared to live with God in heaven forever?