A Series Study Guide

Aug 2026



BECOMING THE

GOSPEL

LIVING THE GOOD NEWS IN REAL LIFE

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

SERIES INTRODUCTON

Week 5 –
Corinth: Becoming Resilient
2 Corinthians 4.6-12

Week 6 –
Ephesus: Becoming Peace
Ephesians 2.11-22; Acts 19

Week 7 –
Colossae: Becoming New
Colossians 1.15-20, 3.1-17

Week 8 –
Thessaloniki: Becoming Hope
1 Thessalonians 1.2-10, 5.16-24

Week 9 –
Thessaloniki: Becoming Steady
2 Thessalonians 2.13-17, 3:13

NEXT STEPS



Becoming the Gospel

Most of us know the gap.

We believe Jesus brings peace, but we still carry anxiety. We believe grace is real, but we still feel the pressure to prove ourselves. We believe God makes us family, but relationships can still feel fractured, lonely, or hard. We believe the gospel is hope for the world, but we do not always know what that hope looks like on a Tuesday afternoon.

That gap is not new.

Paul wrote his letters to churches living in that same space. They were real communities (house churches) in real cities, learning to follow Jesus in the middle of pressure, conflict, suffering, temptation, division, spiritual confusion, cultural compromise, and everyday life.

Philippi, Galatia, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, and Thessaloniki were not abstract Bible places. They were neighborhoods, households, workplaces, marketplaces, and

cities where ordinary people were learning what it meant to belong to Jesus.

And Paul does not respond to them by giving religious ideas detached from reality. He keeps bringing them back to Jesus — crucified, risen, present by the Spirit, and forming a new family. Paul's letters are full of theology, but that theology is never meant to stay in the clouds. The gospel Paul proclaims is meant to become visible in a people. It takes shape in humility, freedom, welcome, resilience, peace, holiness, hope, endurance, and love.

That is the heart of this series.

Becoming the Gospel is about the Good News of Jesus taking on flesh in ordinary people, in ordinary places. It is about the life of Jesus becoming the shape of our lives. The gospel is not only a message we believe. It is a reality we receive, embody, and display (we "practice" the way of Jesus). By the Spirit, Jesus forms His people into a living witness that the Good News really is good news.

Over these nine weeks, we will walk through several of Paul's letters and ask one central question: **What would it look like for the gospel to take on flesh in us?**

In Philippians, we will see that the story of Jesus becomes the pattern of our shared life. In Galatians, we will be invited into the freedom of the Spirit that sets us free from proving ourselves and frees us for love. As we move through the series, though, we're really talking about how to live the gospel right here in the Inland Valley.

This study guide is not designed simply to help us learn more information. The goal is not just to understand Paul's letters better, though we hope that happens. The goal is to follow Jesus more faithfully together - right here and now.

Each week, we want to engage Scripture with an obedience-

based posture. That means we are not only asking, "What does this passage mean?" We are also asking, "What is Jesus inviting me to trust? What is the Spirit revealing in me? What needs to change? What step of obedience can I take this week?"

In other words, we are learning to read the Bible as disciples.

A disciple is not someone who only studies Jesus from a distance. A disciple is someone who hears from God and does what He says – someone who listens to Jesus, follows Jesus, and learns to live the life of Jesus in real life. So as you read, pray, discuss, and practice your way through this guide, pay attention to the places where the Spirit is making the gospel personal and practical.

Do not rush past that invitation. That may be the very place where the gospel is becoming visible in you.

This summer, let's not only study the gospel. Let's become good news right here in the cities that fill our valley. The Good News becomes visible when it takes on flesh in us.

Additional Resources

Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission, Michael Gorman

Flesh: Bringing the Incarnation Down to Earth, Hugh Halter

Renovation of the Heart, Dallas Willard

Why the Gospel, Matthew Bates

Paul for Everyone, N.T. Wright

The King Jesus Gospel, Scot McKnight

Becoming the Gospel -Week 5

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4.6-12

SERMON TITLE

Corinth: Becoming Resilient

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quotes:

“God may become more visible through thy frailty.”
- John Henry Jowett

“Joy is relational. It is what we feel when we are with someone who is happy to be with us.”
- Jim Wilder + Michel Hendricks

Week 5: Reflect and Discuss

1. When you hear the word resilience, what comes to mind? How is biblical resilience different from simply becoming tougher?

2. Which image from 2 Cor. 4.6–12 speaks most powerfully to you: light in darkness, treasure in clay jars, being pressed but not crushed, or life emerging through death? Why?

3. Paul describes carrying “the death of Jesus” so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed. What do you think that means in ordinary life?

4. Paul does not hide his weakness; he sees it as a place where the power of Jesus can become visible. What weakness or limitation are you most tempted to hide?

5. How might knowing that the Father looks at you with love and joy change the way you face hardship, failure, or uncertainty?

6. What is one situation in which you need to stop trying harder and begin by receiving the Father’s love?

7. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

8. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: Find Strength in the Father's Presence

"We have this treasure in jars of clay to show us that the all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."
2 Cor. 4.7

Most of us think resilience means becoming stronger: push harder, toughen up, and refuse to let anything get to you. Paul offers a very different picture. We are not steel containers. We are jars of clay—ordinary, vulnerable, and sometimes chipped by life. Our hope is not that we will become unbreakable, but that the life and power of Jesus will be revealed through us.

But how do we find the courage to face what is hard?

Think about a child standing at the edge of a swimming pool, afraid to jump. What gives the child courage is not a lesson about proper technique. It is the face of a loving parent in the water: smiling, attentive, and ready to catch them. The child can face the water because they know who is facing them.

Jim Wilder describes joy as what we experience when we are with someone who is glad to be with us. This kind of joy does not remove difficulty. It gives us strength to remain connected—to God and to one another—while we move through it.

Resilience begins here: not by convincing ourselves that we are strong, but by learning to face life beneath the loving gaze of our Father. We can tell the truth about our weakness because weakness does not cause God to turn away. In Jesus, God has moved toward us. He is present in the darkness, near to the brokenhearted, and at work within our fragile lives.

THE PRACTICE
Set aside two or three quiet minutes each morning this week.

1. Become still.
Take a few slow breaths. Relax your body and become aware that God is present with you.

2. Remember joy.
Recall a moment when someone was genuinely glad to see you. Remember their face, their voice, and the feeling of being welcomed.

3. Turn toward the Father.
Ask slowly: Father, how do you feel about being with me right now?

You don't need to force anything in this moment. Instead, rest in what Jesus has already revealed: the Father has turned his face toward you in love.

4. Bring him your weakness.
Name one place where you feel afraid, overwhelmed, disappointed, or tempted to hide.

Pray: Father, help me face this while remembering that you are with me and glad to be with me.

5. Take the next step.
Ask Jesus: What is one faithful step you are inviting me to take today?

Do not worry about step seven. Take the next step while keeping your attention on the One who is with you.

REFLECT
What expression do you usually imagine on God's face when he looks at you?

Where are you tempted to hide your weakness or pretend that you are stronger than you are?

What becomes possible when you remember that you are not facing this alone?

Complete this sentence: Because I am loved by the Father, today I can courageously _____.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 6

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: Ephesians 2.11-22; Acts 19

SERMON TITLE

Ephesus: Becoming Peace

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“The creation of this united worshiping community is a sign to the principalities and powers of the world that their time is up.”
- N.T. Wright

“The only hermeneutic of the Gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.”
- Lesslie Newbigin

“The church…is a place where anger and contempt can be unlearned.”
- Dallas Willard

Week 6: Reflect and Discuss

1. Acts 19 shows that following Jesus disrupted the spiritual, economic, and social life of Ephesus. Why do you think the gospel created such a strong reaction?

2. Paul says, “He himself is our peace” (Eph. 2.14). How is that different from saying that Jesus simply gives us peace?

3. What kinds of differences most easily become dividing walls in our culture—politics, race, class, generation, theology, personality, or lifestyle?

4. Where might Jesus be inviting you to move toward someone rather than remain distant?

5. Where do you need the Spirit to tear down hostility within you?

6. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

7. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: Cross the Room

“The Messiah has made things up between us so that we’re now together on this... He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance.
- Ephesians 2:14 (MSG)

Most of us do not think of ourselves as hostile people. We may think of hostility as shouting, hatred, or open conflict. But hostility often takes quieter, subtler forms.

We avoid. We assume. We label. We reduce people to a position, a personality, or a group. We keep our distance. Over time, the distance begins to feel normal. Before long, a wall divides “them” and “us.”

Paul says Jesus came to destroy the dividing wall of hostility. He did not simply help two groups tolerate one another. He brought them near. He created one new humanity and made former strangers members of the same household.

Dallas Willard describes the church as a place where anger and contempt can be unlearned. That means peace is more than avoiding conflict. It is allowing Jesus to change the way we see and move toward people—especially those we find difficult or unfamiliar.

This week, ask Jesus to reveal one divide in your life or hostility in your heart. It may be between you and a person, a group, a generation, a neighbor, or someone with whom you strongly disagree. The goal is not to force agreement or repair everything at once. The invitation is simply to let Jesus begin tearing down the hostility that lives within you.

THE PRACTICE
Set aside a few minutes for this reflection, and then ask God how to put it into action.

1. Notice the distance.
Ask: Who have I kept at a distance?

Pay attention to the person you avoid, criticize, dismiss, or reduce to a label. Notice the language you use about them, even if you only say it internally.

2. Name what is happening in you.
Be honest before God. Is there fear? Pride? Hurt? Suspicion? Defensiveness? Contempt?

Pray: Jesus, show me what has allowed this person to become a category instead of a neighbor.

3. See the person again (with new eyes).
Remember that this person has a story, carries wounds, desires to be known, and bears the image of God.

Ask: Jesus, how do you see them?
Do not excuse harm or deny real disagreement. Simply refuse to let disagreement erase their humanity.

4. Cross the room.
Take one concrete step toward them this week. Learn their name. Ask about their story. Sit beside them. Send a message. Invite them for coffee. Offer an apology. Listen without preparing a response.

The goal is not to win the conversation. It is to refuse the distance.

5. Seek their good.
Dallas Willard said, “Love is good will in action.”
Ask: What would it look like to seek this person’s good today? Then act on the answer.

REFLECT
What did I notice when I moved toward someone rather than remaining distant?

Complete this sentence: Because Jesus is our peace, this week I will move toward _____ by _____.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 7

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: Colossians 1.15-20, 3.1–17

SERMON TITLE

Colossae: Becoming New

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“How the disciple lives naturally comes out of who the disciple is.”

- Dallas Willard

“A heart touched and softened by pardon will be a heart apt to pardon.”

- Alexander Maclaren

“Forgiveness is one of the most fragrant flowers of grace.”

- Charles Spurgeon

Week 7: Reflect and Discuss

1. When you hear the phrase “put on the new self,” what do you imagine?

2. Paul begins with identity: “You have taken off your old self” and “have put on the new self.” Why is that different from simply trying to improve yourself?

3. Which quality in verses 12–14 stands out most to you: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, or love? Why?

4. Where have you personally received compassion, patience, or forgiveness from Jesus?

5. How might your closest relationships change if the character of Jesus became more visible in your ordinary responses?

6. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

7. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: Identity Becomes Actions

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”
– Colossians 3.12

Change often feels overwhelming because we imagine becoming a completely different person all at once.

Paul offers another way. He doesn’t begin with pressure, but with identity: you are chosen, holy, and dearly loved. Before he tells us what to put on, he reminds us who we already are in Christ.

The Christian life is not an attempt to earn a new identity through better behavior. It is learning to live from the new identity Jesus has already given us.

That is why Paul uses the image of clothing. Each day, in ordinary moments, we choose what we will wear into our relationships. Will we put on anger, defensiveness, impatience, self-protection, or will we put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love?

Small choices matter. Every act of patience, every gentle response, every decision to forgive becomes a way of practicing the new life of Jesus.

Not earning it.

Not pretending.

Learning to wear what is already yours. Getting more and more comfortable in the clothes God has fitted for you.

THE PRACTICE
Choose one quality from Col. 3:12–14 to practice this week:

Compassion
Kindness
Humility
Gentleness
Patience
Forgiveness
Love

Each morning, complete this sentence:
Because I am chosen, holy, and dearly loved, today I will practice _____ by _____.

Make the action small and specific.

For example:

- Because I am chosen, holy, and dearly loved, today I will practice patience by letting someone finish without interrupting.
- I am chosen, holy, and dearly loved, today I will practice forgiveness by refusing to rehearse the offense.
- I am chosen, holy, and dearly loved, today I will practice kindness by encouraging someone before asking anything from them.
- I am chosen, holy, and dearly loved, today I will practice gentleness by lowering my voice when I feel frustrated.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is to take one concrete step that agrees with who you are becoming in Christ.

At the end of the day, take a quiet moment and ask:
Where did I wear the life of Jesus today?
Where did I return to the old self?
What small choice can I practice again tomorrow?

Then pray:
Jesus, thank you that my identity is secure in you. Keep renewing me into your image. Teach me to put on your life in the ordinary relationships of my day.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 8

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1.2–10; 5.16–24

SERMON TITLE

Thessaloniki: Becoming Hope

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“Ultimately, I don’t hope for some thing at all, but for some One.”
- John Ortberg

“I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.”
- Lesslie Newbigin

“Hope and patience are necessarily correlative virtues.”
- Stanley Hauerwas

Week 8: Reflect and Discuss

1. What is the difference between Christian hope and simple optimism?

2. Where do you see anxiety, cynicism, exhaustion, or despair shaping the people around you?

3. Why do you think hope produces endurance (a la 1 Thes. 1.3)?

4. What most often weakens hope in you: fear, disappointment, delay, exhaustion, comparison, or something else?

5. Where might you be quenching the Spirit through distraction, cynicism, or resistance?

6. How could our church become a clearer sign of hope for anxious or exhausted people?

7. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

8. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: Speak Courage

“So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you’ll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you’re already doing this; just keep on doing it.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5.11 (MSG)

Hope is not just something we hold inside. It is something we can give away.

The believers in Thessaloniki were living under pressure. Their faith was costly and their future was uncertain, but Paul says their faith, love, and hope had become visible. The message of the Lord had “rang out” from them.

Sometimes hope rings out through dramatic courage. More often, it sounds like one person reminding another not to give up.

Biblical encouragement is deeper than vague positivity. It does not pretend that everything is fine or promise that circumstances will turn out the way we want. Christian hope tells the truth about what is hard while also telling the truth about God: Jesus is risen, God is present, and the One who calls us is faithful.

The word encourage means to give courage. When we encourage someone, we help them see grace they may no longer be able to see for themselves. We remind them that they are not alone. We call their attention back to the faithfulness of God.

THE PRACTICE
This week, become hope for someone who is weary.

1. Ask God to bring someone to mind.
Who around you seems tired, anxious, grieving, discouraged, or close to giving up?

It may be a friend, family member, coworker, neighbor, or someone from church.
Pray: Jesus, who needs courage today?

2. Pay attention to grace.
Ask yourself:

- Where have I seen God at work in this person?
- What strength, faithfulness, or growth might they no longer recognize?
- What burden might they be carrying alone?

Do not rush to advice. Begin by seeing them.

3. Speak specific hope.
Send a message, make a call, write a note, or speak with them face-to-face.

Avoid empty phrases such as: “Everything will be fine.” Instead, offer something true and specific:

- “I see the way you have kept showing up.”
- “I have seen God grow patience and courage in you.”
- “I do not know how this will unfold, but I believe God is still with you.”
- “Can I remind you of something God has already done?”
- “I am here, and I will keep praying with you.”

You may also share a brief promise from Scripture, but let it serve the person rather than silence their pain.

4. Put hope into action.
Ask: What would help you keep going this week?
Then offer one concrete form of support:

- pray with them
- share a meal
- help with a task
- sit with them in grief
- follow up later
- take one step beside them

Hope becomes visible when words and presence come together.

Becoming the Gospel -Week 9

Date:

Speaker:

Main Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2.13-17, 3.13

SERMON TITLE

Thessaloniki: Becoming Steady

Main Points | Verses Used	Notes

REFLECTIONS

Reflect on how to apply today's sermon to your life

Quote:

“We are secure not because we are sure of ourselves but because we trust that God is sure of us.”
- Eugene Peterson

“Talking well is also a great deal more common than doing good.”
- Charles Spurgeon

“Mundane duties [are] like God’s heavenly sandpaper.”
- Bradley Nassif

Week 9: Reflect and Discuss

1. What most easily shakes you: uncertainty, conflict, bad news, disappointment, delay, or exhaustion?

2. What do you think Paul means by “stand firm and hold fast” (2 Thes. 2.15)?

3. Why do you think “do not grow weary in doing good” is such an important command for a church waiting for Jesus?

4. Which truth from this passage do you most need to hold fast to right now?

5. Where do you feel most unsettled right now? Where has disappointment slowly turned into cynicism?

6. Paul says, “The Lord is faithful” (2 Thes. 3.3). What would it look like to build your next step on that truth rather than on your current feelings?

7. How is God calling you to respond to this passage? Try writing an “I will” statement (“I will _____”) that captures your response. Then, go and do!

8. Who can you tell about how God has met you in His Word? Pray for an opportunity to share it with them.

Practice: The Next Good Thing

“As for you...
do not grow weary
in doing good.”
- 2 Thessalonians 3.13 (ESV)

Some seasons make faithfulness feel simple. We can see progress. We have energy. The work feels meaningful.

Other seasons are different.

We keep praying, but nothing seems to change. We keep serving, but no one notices. We keep loving, but the relationship remains difficult. We keep doing what is right, but the results are slow or invisible.

That is where weariness begins to whisper: Why keep going? Is any of this making a difference?

Paul writes to a church living under pressure and tells them, “Do not grow weary in doing good” (2 Thes. 3.13). But this is not a command to manufacture endless energy or carry every burden alone. Paul has already reminded them that they are loved by God, called by grace, and strengthened by the Lord.

Christian steadiness does not begin with our ability to hold everything together. It begins with the faithfulness of the God who holds us.

We do not need to “solve” the future today. We don’t need enough strength for every step that might come. We need grace for the next good thing God has placed in front of us.

THE PRACTICE

1. Remember God’s faithfulness.
Begin by naming one specific way God has met you in the past.

Where has he provided, guided, strengthened, forgiven, or carried you?

Pray: Lord, you were faithful then. You are faithful now.
Let memory become the ground beneath your next step.

2. Name where you are weary.
Be honest with God about the place where you feel tempted to quit, withdraw, or become cynical.

Finish this sentence: I am growing weary of
_____.

You do not need to minimize your exhaustion. Bring it into the presence of the God who strengthens tired hearts.

3. Ask for the next good thing.
Do not ask how to fix everything. Ask: Jesus, what is the next good thing you have given me to do?

It may be: make the call, keep the promise, prepare the meal, pray again, send the encouragement, apologize, show up, ask for help, rest so you can return with love, or whatever God puts on your heart.

Make the step small, clear, and possible.

4. Do it in borrowed strength.
Before you act, pray: Jesus, I do not need to do this alone. Strengthen me for the good in front of me.

Then take the step without demanding that it produce immediate results. Faithfulness belongs to us. The outcome belongs to God.

5. Remember at the end of the day.
Ask:
Where did God give me strength today?
What good was I able to continue?
Where do I need to receive grace and begin again tomorrow?

Next Steps
As we wrap up our series, what's your next step in the direction of Jesus?

House Church
Paul did not write his letters to isolated individuals trying to follow Jesus alone. He wrote to churches — communities of disciples, often gathering in homes, learning how to live the gospel together in real life.

That is why House Church matters. It gives us a place to move from hearing the Word to practicing obedience: listening to Jesus, encouraging one another, praying together, and taking concrete steps to live the Good News where we actually live.

As we walk through Paul's letters this summer, consider joining a House Church and discovering the joy of becoming the gospel together.

Find your House Church: www.findcommunity.com/housechurch

Global Week of Prayer || September 6-13
From September 6–13, 2026, churches around the world will join together for the Global Week of 24-7 Prayer, a week of non-stop prayer in every nation on earth.

This year's theme is "At the Name of Jesus," rooted in Philippians 2:9–11: every knee bowing, every tongue confessing, and the whole earth acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord.

As we spend the summer in Paul's letters, this is a beautiful opportunity to respond with prayer. We do not only study the lordship of Jesus; we seek His presence, lift up His name, and carry His love into our towns, cities, and nations. Join us as we pray with the global Church and ask God to make the Good News of Jesus visible in us and through us.

More info: https://findcommunity.com/prayerroom/

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