

## November Answers

- 1) [November 1] The Pharisees and Sadducees had the **privilege** of talking face-to-face with the incarnate Son of God, yet they had no desire to **learn** from Him! Instead, they asked difficult questions, hoping to catch Him in something he said. Jesus' response shows us how to handle such situations. First, He wasn't afraid to **expose** their true motive ("Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?"). Second, He confronted them with their lack of **insight** into God's Word and power ("You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God"). Third, He demonstrated how to draw proper **inferences** from the clear statements of Scripture ("He is not the God of the dead, but of the living"). Fourth, He showed how to reason correctly about the **implications** of God's power ("For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven"). Fifth, He reminded them that the Law is all about **love**, and if they didn't think of love when they thought about the Law, then they didn't understand it ("On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets"). Finally, He asked a pointed question of His own, for often the best way to handle a skeptic is to **confront** them with the inconsistencies in their worldview ('How is it that David, in the Spirit, calls his son, the Messiah, **Lord?**'). Jesus not only answered all their questions flawlessly, but ended by asking them the most important question of all: "What do you think about the Christ?" Even as He rebuked them for their unbiblical thinking and ungodly attitude, He was **reaching** out to them with the truth!
- 2) [November 2] Concerning the scribes (the **teachers** of the Law) and the Pharisees, Jesus said, 'They talk the talk, and what they say is true, for they teach and preach the **Scriptures**. You should, therefore, observe and **do** what they say (cf. Matt 5:19). But don't imitate their lives, for they do not walk the walk.' Amazing! Jesus calls us to recognize and obey the truth, even if it comes from a **hypocrite**! Jesus then gave an example of what it means to "judge with **righteous** judgment," for He had said, "Judge not," and yet He publicly denounced the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites and fools. This teaches us that there's a big difference between the harsh, fault-finding criticism of others and the careful, discerning **inspection** of the fruit of their lives. The former will be measured back to us, while the latter will guard us from **false** prophets. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for several things: (1) they multiplied the number of ways that people could **offend** God, but they never showed the people how to truly please Him, (2) they eagerly sought the praise and approval of **men**, but they refused to humble themselves before God, (3) they made intricate rules about how to phrase an **oath**, but they ignored God's desire for truth and integrity, (4) they scrupulously observed the minute **details** of the Law, but they neglected the weightier matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness, (5) they took great care to clean the **outside** of their cups and utensils, but they refused to come to God for cleansing from greed and self-indulgence, and (6) they denied any complicity in the **killing** of the prophets by their ancestors, but their determination to destroy Jesus showed that they too had **murder** in their hearts. In fact, their decision to crucify Him meant that their hands would soon be stained with the blood of all the prophets that came before, for those men had been the **messengers** of the supreme Prophet of God!
- 3) [November 3] Jesus' Olivet Discourse is a sweeping overview of the future, from the destruction of **Jerusalem** in AD 70 to His return at the end of the **Tribulation**. This discourse teaches us that: (1) we should never put our trust in the grandeur and beauty of **man-made** structures, for they are destined to **pass** away (2 Pet 3:7); (2) we should not be terrified when we hear of wars and famines, for they are part of this **present** age (Luke 21:9); (3) we should expect **persecution** for the sake of the gospel, for the world will hate **us** as it hated Jesus (Mark 13:9); (4) we should use persecution as an opportunity to share the **gospel**, for the Holy Spirit will be there to support and **guide** us (Mark 13:11); (5) we should be on guard against false teachers and prophets, for **many** will come in Jesus'

name and try to lead believers **astray** (Luke 21:8); (6) we should not believe those who claim to know the exact time of Jesus' return, for "concerning that day and hour **no one** knows" (Matt 24:36); (7) we should avoid getting caught up in the **cares** and concerns of life, for Jesus has warned us to "stay awake" (Matt 24:38–39).

- 4) [November 4] Jesus' revelation of the future was given to motivate us to live holy, godly lives in the **present**. His first command—Stay **awake!**—teaches us that the cares of this life have a way of **weighing** down our hearts (Luke 21:34). If we're not careful, we can become **entangled** in fleshly pursuits, and that day will come on us suddenly like a trap. We need to be sober and **vigilant**, praying for strength to follow God's commands. His second command—Be **faithful!**—reminds us of the importance of being a faithful **steward** of the gifts, talents and skills that God has given us. We need to live each day as though Jesus' coming was **imminent**. His last command—Prepare for **judgment!**—impresses on us the necessity of living a **righteous** life. It's not enough to claim a right relationship with God. We must be active in the work of the Kingdom, **servicing** and ministering to those who are in need. If we ignore the hungry, the sick, and the imprisoned, we will discover to our shame that we ignored our **Lord** and **Savior**, Jesus Christ.
- 5) [November 5] The last Passover meal. The wording suggests that the upper room had been prepared in the **Roman** style with the food on a triclinium (a U-shaped table). Guests reclined around the table according to social custom, where the position signified either greater or lesser **honor**.<sup>1</sup> The disciples had prepared the meal themselves, and there was no **servant** to wash their feet. No one volunteered, and so they took their places at the table with dry and dusty feet. They evidently weren't happy with the seating order, for a dispute soon began over who was the **greatest**. Jesus told them, "Let the greatest among you become as the **youngest**, and the leader as one who **serves**." Then He put His words into action by pouring water into a basin and washing the disciples' feet. Are we looking for ways to serve others, or are we looking for the place of greatest honor? At the table, Jesus was in the place of the **host**. **John** was on His right, with his back to Jesus, while **Peter** was on the far side in last place. And where was Judas? Where was the man who had treachery and betrayal in his heart? The wording suggests that he was on Jesus' left in the place of **highest** honor! (cf. John 13:26). Did he take that place for himself? It seems unlikely given Jesus' rebuke. No, **Jesus** put Judas there Himself. Down to the very last moment, Jesus was reaching out to Judas, not wanting him to commit that final, terrible act of sin.
- 6) [November 6] Jesus' farewell discourse and prayer. The disciples were struggling to reconcile Jesus' talk of betrayal, death and departure with their **expectation** that He would soon restore the kingdom. Jesus, knowing their confusion, told them, "Let not your hearts be **troubled**. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Jesus wanted the disciples to **trust** Him in spite of their doubt and uncertainty, and we should do the same. Jesus then affirmed some of the most vital truths of the gospel. First, He declared Himself to be: "The **way**, and the **truth**, and the **life**. No one comes to the Father except through me." This means that there are not many paths to God—there is only **one** way, Jesus Christ. Next, He claimed **equality** with God: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." This means that Jesus is God-of-very-God, as well as man-of-very-man. He is the **God-man**, the exegete of the Father, the One who reveals and expounds God to the world. Last, Jesus explained that it was better for Him to **leave** so that the Holy Spirit could come and take over the role of "helper" to the disciples (John 14:16; 16:7). Jesus went on to tell the disciples that their spiritual **union** with Him could be compared to branches in a vine. As long as they would **abide** in Him, they would be able to bear fruit, for apart from Him they could do nothing. How can we do this? By

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<sup>1</sup> James C. Martin, John A. Beck, and David G. Hansen, *A Visual Guide to Bible Events* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), p. 198.

**keeping** His commandments, for Jesus said, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love” (John 15:10). **Obedience** is the key to a fruitful life in Christ.

- 7) [November 7] Jesus’ actions in the garden teach us several crucial lessons:<sup>2</sup> (1) Jesus saw the companionship and support of his friends as a legitimate **need**. In this, He modeled the importance of **reaching** out to others in times of trouble, rather than withdrawing and trying to go it alone; (2) Jesus didn’t pretend to be **tough** or try to hide His emotions. People in leadership often think they can’t be real for fear of looking **weak**. (3) Jesus chose to **pray** when He was at His lowest point. Jesus reminds us that finding spiritual **strength** through prayer is the way to handle trials; (4) An angel appeared to Jesus the first time He prayed, but it came to strengthen His resolve, not **release** him from the fight. So many times we want to get **out** when God’s will is for us to go **through!** (5) Jesus didn’t let His **emotions** lead His will. He freely admitted that He didn’t want to go through the terrible torture of the cross, but He brought those feelings **captive** to the sovereignty of God’s will; (6) Jesus didn’t pray only **once**. He poured out His heart to God **three** times before He was ready to pick Himself up and say, “Rise, let us be going.” This teaches us that there will be times when we need to wrestle **repeatedly** to bring our mind, will and emotions in subjection to God’s will. We must not give up before we have **determined** to follow God no matter what.
- 8) [November 8] The difference between how Jesus and Peter acted in the garden (and after) is due to how these two men **prepared** for their hour of temptation. Peter had given little **thought** to the difficult time that was coming, while Jesus had been thinking and preparing for **weeks**. Peter had argued with the other disciples about who was the **greatest**, while Jesus had taken a bowl and **washed** their feet. Peter had loudly proclaimed that he would never **forsake** Jesus, while Jesus had gently **warned** Peter of his coming trial. Peter had openly promised to lay down his **life** for Jesus, while Jesus had purposed to suffer and **die** for Peter. Peter **bragged** while Jesus counseled. Peter **slept** while Jesus prayed. Peter **maimed** while Jesus healed. And when Jesus was arrested, Peter **fled** while Jesus stayed. What happened to Peter teaches us: (1) The danger of **pride**. Peter thought himself above temptation (Matt 26:33), and he didn’t take Jesus’ warnings seriously. (2) The danger of **self-reliance**. Peter kept saying that *he* would do this and *he* would do that. (3) The danger of the **flesh**. Peter was tired after a long day, and his body wanted to sleep when his spirit wanted to pray. (4) The danger of going **halfway**. Peter was one of only two disciples who followed Jesus, but he stayed out in the **courtyard** rather than standing by Jesus’ side. Those who go halfway will find to their dismay that they haven’t gone at all!
- 9) [November 9] There were three issues that contributed to Pilate’s downfall: (1) He insisted on doing things his **own** way. This teaches us how important it is to follow God’s leadership in **all** our decisions, for our past mistakes can **undermine** our ability to do right when it really counts; (2) He was **cynical** and **sarcastic**. This teaches us to cultivate a **love** for the truth, for if we **scorn** God’s Word, the day will come when we can no longer tell the truth from a lie; (3) He put political **ambition** above personal **integrity**. This teaches us the danger of ambition, for if we care more about **success** than integrity, we will end up sacrificing what is most precious—the Son of God.
- 10) [November 10] Jesus’ sayings on the cross leave us an **example** to follow. First, Jesus told the women who mourned him, “Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” This means we should be more concerned about what will happen to **others** than about what will happen to us. Second, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This means we should **forgive** our enemies rather than seeking retribution and revenge. Third, Jesus told Mary and John, “Woman, behold, your son! Behold, your mother!” This means we should **protect**

<sup>2</sup> Matt, “Looking at Gethsemane Anew: The Fall and Rise of Jesus.” Web blog post. *Theology in Tension*, 22 Nov 2015. Web. 14 Mar 2016.

and **provide** for those who depend on us for their needs. Fourth, Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” This means we should take every opportunity to share the **gospel** with those who are lost. Fifth, Jesus cried out to God, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1). This means we should bring our sorrow and suffering to God in **prayer** and then trust Him to **supply** all our needs in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19). Sixth, Jesus said, “I thirst” (Ps 22:15). This means we should be faithful to fulfill **all** that God has commanded, for Jesus refused to die until he had fulfilled every **prophecy** concerning his ministry (Ps 69:21). Seventh, Jesus said “It is finished.” This means we should **endure** to the end by faith, so that when our death is near, we can say with confidence that we have done God’s will. Last, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” This means we should put all things in God’s mighty hands, even the time and nature of our **death**, so that when our spirits leave our bodies, we will be **welcomed** into God’s glorious presence!

- 11) [November 11] The significance of Jesus’ resurrection can be seen in the following ways: (1) It validates and **confirms** everything Jesus said about Himself. Jesus claimed to be **one** with the Father (John 10:30), the **Son** of God (John 5:17–18), the **source** of eternal life (John 17:3), the only **way** to God (John 14:6), the **Messiah** of Israel (John 4:25–26), and the Son of **Man** (Mark 14:62). Jesus’ resurrection means that all these things are true. (2) It proves that Jesus’ sacrifice for sin is **acceptable** to God. The Spirit said, “When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb 10:12). By **raising** Jesus from the dead, the Father showed that He accepted the once-for-all sacrifice of His Son as the atonement for the sins of the world. (3) It proves that Jesus has power over **death**. Paul said, “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has **dominion** over him” (Rom 6:9). Jesus’ resurrection means our own **victory** over death as well, for God has “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). (4) It means that Jesus lives forever as the **mediator** of the New Covenant through His blood. The author of Hebrews said, “He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make **intercession** for them” (Heb 7:25). Praise God for a great High Priest who **lives** forever!
- 12) [November 12] On the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained to Cleopas and his friend, “the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27 NASB). In Genesis, He’s the **Seed** of the woman who will crush the serpent’s head. In Exodus, He’s the Passover **Lamb** which was sacrificed to appease the wrath of God. In Leviticus, He’s the great High **Priest** who offers a sacrifice for sin. In Numbers, He’s the bronze **serpent** that was lifted up in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy, He’s the **Prophet** like Moses who would come. In Ruth, He’s the Kinsman **Redeemer**. In Samuel, He’s the **Davidic** Son. In Psalms, He’s the Priest after the order of **Melchizedek**. In Isaiah, He’s the Prince of **Peace** and the Faithful **Servant**. In Daniel, He’s the Son of **Man** who receives an eternal kingdom. In Joel, He’s the **Savior** of all who call on His name and the sender of the Holy Spirit. In Amos, He’s the **builder** of David’s house and the Savior of the **Gentiles**. In Micah, He’s the Ruler born in **Bethlehem**. In Habakkuk, He’s the One who lives by **faith**. In Zechariah, He’s the One whom they **pierced** and the Fountain opened for cleansing from sin.
- 13) [November 13] Jesus asked Peter, “Simon, do you love me more than **these**?” He asked the question **three** times, and His words to Peter teach us three things: (1) We will always find **forgiveness** when we truly repent, for Peter’s three denials were answered by his three affirmations of love; (2) We can have no greater love in our heart than our love for **God**, for Peter was called to love Christ more than anything else; (3) If we really love Jesus, we will **care** for His sheep and labor faithfully in His service, for Peter’s love had to show itself in obedience to Christ’s command. How fitting that after this morning encounter on the shores of Galilee, Jesus appeared to His disciples on a nearby mountain and commissioned them to proclaim the gospel to the world. They were to make **disciples**

of all nations, **baptizing** them and **teaching** them to **observe** all that He had commanded. This is to be our mission and our passion. As Christians, we are first and foremost disciples of Jesus, and we're called to show others how to be His followers. We do this because all **authority** has been given to Him. This means that He is our Lord and Master—He **alone** is worthy of all our worship, devotion, and service.

- 14) [November 14] Pentecost was significant in several ways: (1) It was the fulfillment of God's **promise** to pour out the Spirit on "all flesh" in the last days; (2) It was a **sign** which God said would precede the coming judgment and wrath of the "day of the Lord"; (3) It **authenticated** the message and ministry of the apostles and gave them **power** to preach the gospel in Jesus' name; (4) It inaugurated the **church**, which is the union of all believers in Christ through the Spirit; (5) It was the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that the Spirit would **teach** the apostles "all things" and help them remember all that He said (leading to the writing of the NT); (6) It was the first display of the spiritual **gifts** which are given to believers through the Spirit for the edification and **building** up of the church. Peter's sermon at the temple was an stirring example of how the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to be mighty in word and deed (Acts 3:25–26). Peter rightly pointed out that the "**seed** of Abraham" (Gen 22:18) was the resurrected Servant, Jesus (cf. Isa 42:1–4), and he told the Jews that the blessing which was promised to Abraham was the blessing of "**turning** every one of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:26). Jesus is the promised "seed" that will "bless" the nations of the earth by **saving** them from their sins.
- 15) [November 15] The story of Ananias and Sapphira teaches us several important lessons: (1) **Unity** is the natural result of genuine faith. If there's not unity in our family or our church, there's either a lack of **faith** or a lack of **love** (or both). (2) **Generosity** flows from a heart of love and gratitude. If we're grateful for all God has done for us and we truly love others, then we will use what we have to bless and **serve** our neighbor. (3) **Sin** is a deadly serious matter. When we sin, we're rebelling against the **Spirit**, and although God is kind and forgiving, His patience is meant to lead us to repentance, not embolden us to sin. (4) **Fear** is a vital part of worship. So often we mistakenly think that if we **confront** sin, people will turn away from God. But if done in the proper way (1 Tim 5:19–20), the opposite is true, for people are **drawn** to something that is real. As our fear of God increases, so does our sense of **love**, because we understand more fully the riches of His grace to us in Jesus Christ.
- 16) [November 16] Acts records that a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem. This teaches us that there's no such thing as a **resistance**-free ministry. Saul led the persecution, and his zeal was such that he dragged men and women off to prison, tried to make them to **blaspheme**, beat them, and voted to put them to **death**. This had the effect of scattering the disciples throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, and as they went, they **preached** the gospel. This teaches us that God can turn persecution into an opportunity to reach the lost. Philip ended up going to the **Samaritans**, the very ones that James and John wanted to burn up with heavenly fire (Luke 9:54). His work there reminds us that the gospel knows no social or religious boundaries, for it spans the divide between different cultures. God even had Philip minister to an Ethiopian eunuch, and the man's salvation shows that those who seek God with their **whole** heart will find Him (Jer 29:13). Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples, pursued them even to Damascus, but Jesus met him on the road and stopped him: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting **me**?" This teaches us that when the world persecutes us, they are really persecuting **Jesus**, for we're part of His body. It also shows us that we should **pray** for those who mistreat us, for God may have a plan for their lives in which they are converted and labor to spread the gospel.

- 17) [November 17] Cornelius' conversion teaches us several lessons: (1) We must be truly **born** again, for goodness and religiosity alone will not save us. Paul was one of the most devout, religious men of his day, but he was not saved until he believed in Jesus. (2) We must **draw** near to God, for when we do, He will draw near to us. Cornelius sought God with all his heart, and God rewarded his sincerity by sending him the special revelation he needed to have faith in Christ (Heb 11:6). (3) We must preach **Jesus**, for there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12). The NT is clear that faith in Christ is **necessary** for salvation, and we must be diligent to make the person and work of Jesus the cornerstone of our witness. (4) We must never allow **social** customs or **ethnic** differences to keep us from reaching out to those in need. Peter regarded the Gentiles as unclean, and it is unlikely that he would have gone to see Cornelius apart from the vision. We need to examine our hearts for any signs of prejudice or pride. (5) We must not put our trust in anything other than Christ to be saved, for if any **work** (e.g., circumcision) is necessary for salvation, then Jesus' sacrifice is not **sufficient** (Gal 2:17). We are justified by **faith** alone in Christ alone, and this vital truth would be the battleground of the next great crisis for the church.
- 18) [November 18] James, the half-**brother** of Jesus, wrote a letter to the believing Jews scattered across the Roman Empire. Some of the key takeaways are: (1) Trials **refine** and **perfect** our faith. This is why James told his readers to "count it all **joy**" when they encountered various trials. We are called to rejoice, not in the evil which so often causes trials, but in the certainty that God is using our trials to **conform** us to the image of Christ (Rom 8:28–29). (2) The faith that saves **obeys**. James asked his readers, "What good is it if someone says he has faith but does not have **works**? Can that faith save him?" This means that it's not enough for us to claim that we have faith in God. We must demonstrate our faith by how we **live**. When we obey God, we are "justified by works" in the sense that our works show that our faith is **genuine**. (3) The power of the **tongue**. The good news is that God's grace is able to do what no man can do—it can **tame** our tongue. If we yield to the desires of the Spirit, God will help our speech to be "**gracious**, seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6). (4) Friendship with the world is **enmity** with God. The world is always trying to squeeze us into its **mold**. To avoid this, we must humble ourselves before God and submit to His will. Only then will we find the **grace** we need to resist the devil. (5) The importance of **endurance**. We are called to strengthen our heart in the Word and endure to the end by faith. If we remain steadfast like Job, then we will enjoy the final blessing of God's compassion and **mercy**.
- 19) [November 19] The first recorded effort to subvert the "truth of the gospel" took place during Paul's visit to Jerusalem to bring **famine** relief to the brothers living in Judea. Paul wrote that "false brothers" were secretly brought in to "spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into **slavery**" (Gal 2:4). Paul stood his ground, and **Titus** was not forced to be circumcised. This teaches us how important it is to **resist** those who preach a gospel which is not consistent with Scripture. After this confrontation, the apostles encouraged Paul to "go to the **Gentiles**," and when he and Barnabas returned to Syrian Antioch, the Spirit set them apart to be **missionaries**. They preached the gospel in Cyprus and southern Turkey, and Paul's message is a model for evangelism today. Jesus' **resurrection** is the core tenet of the gospel. We need to be challenging the world to find forgiveness in Christ. Paul's first missionary journey was the beginning of a long and fruitful ministry to the Gentiles, and it serves as an **example** of how to build the church. Paul preached the gospel to Jew and Gentile alike, endured persecution, took time to **disciple** his new converts, established a **church** in each city, appointed **elders** who would care for the flock, and exhorted the Galatians to continue "in the faith" (cf. Acts 14:22; Gal 3:3).
- 20) [November 20] The first theological **crisis** in the early church. The Jews began teaching the brothers: "Unless you are **circumcised** according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be **saved**" (Acts 15:1). Paul's response: 'We Jews know that a person is justified by faith in Christ, not by **works** of the law.'

If we are not justified by faith in Christ—if we also need to be circumcised to be saved—then Christ’s work has left us in a **sinful** state, and He is the **minister** of sin! May it never be!’ (cf. Gal 2:16–17). The church agreed to send Paul, Barnabas and some of the others to Jerusalem to ask “the apostles and elders about this question.” However, before Paul and Barnabas left, word reached Paul from the new churches in Galatia. To his dismay, he discovered that the Galatians were **deserting** Christ and “turning to a different gospel” (Gal 1:6)—a gospel of Christ-plus-circumcision. Paul had several goals in mind as he wrote Galatians. First, he wanted to show that the “other gospel” of Christ-plus-circumcision was **heresy** (Gal 1–2). He did this by declaring that the gospel he preached came directly from **Christ**. Paul’s point was this: ‘If my gospel is from Christ—if it’s the true gospel—then any other gospel is false and thus heretical.’ Second, he wanted to persuade the Galatians to **return** to the true gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone (Gal 3–4). He did this by reminding them of their original conversion **experience** and showing them that the **Scriptures** confirmed salvation by faith in Christ alone.

- 21) [November 21] Having argued from the Scriptures that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone (Gal 3–4), Paul now wanted to ensure that the Galatians’ liberty did not become a **license** for their flesh (Gal 5). He wanted them to understand that freedom from the law was not the freedom to do whatever they wanted; rather, it was the freedom to **serve** one another “through love” (Gal 5:13b). Paul then explained how the Galatians could live a life of love for one another: “But I say, **walk** by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). Following the leadership of the Spirit eliminates any need to be “under the law.” What the law **cannot** do, the Spirit can, and where the law is **limited**, the Spirit is not. The Galatians were “Law-less” but not “**lawless**,” for as they followed the Spirit’s leading, He would empower them to **love** each other and **fulfill** the law’s requirements (cf. Matt 22:35–40; James 2:8). Paul continued by urging the Galatians to obey the Holy Spirit, for He would enable them to bear spiritual **fruit**. This teaches us that walking in the Spirit is not passive but **active**. We should not ‘coast along’ waiting for the Spirit to produce love and joy in our lives. Rather, we should live a Spirit-directed, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-pleasing life. Paul concluded by encouraging the Galatians to **persevere** in the faith (Gal 6). He did this by giving them practical examples of how to **edify** the body and reminding them of the **reward** that comes from enduring to the end.
- 22) [November 22] The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. Peter stood up and reminded everyone of the conversion of **Cornelius** and his household. He said, “God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by **faith**” (Acts 15:8–9). If the council demanded more of the Gentiles than faith in Christ for salvation, they would be “putting God to the test,” that is, **questioning** His judgment in this matter. Furthermore, they would be “placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples” in the sense that they would be requiring them to seek salvation through **law-keeping** (Acts 15:10). At this point the assembly fell silent, and they listened as Paul and Barnabas told them what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James did a very important thing. He **validated** their words by quoting God’s Word. This teaches us that Scripture is the final **arbiter** of truth. Our personal experiences must be corroborated and **confirmed** by the Bible. James then recommended that they ask the Gentiles “to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20). This was not an attempt to force the Gentiles to keep the law, but an appeal for sensitivity to **Jewish** concerns, as well as a reminder to avoid all associations with **idolatry**.
- 23) [November 23] Paul’s second missionary journey. God’s method of leading Paul and Silas was fascinating: “They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been **forbidden** by the

Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not **allow** them” (Acts 16:6–7). Then they saw a vision of a man of Macedonia, yet when they got to Philippi, they met a group of **women!** This teaches us several important things about God’s leadership. First, when Paul started his journey, he had no idea he would end up in Corinth. He got there by a series of choices and events in which God guided him one **step** at a time. This teaches us that God leads us step-by-step, and even if we know the ultimate destination (as the Israelites did when they left Egypt), God often leads us by the path **less** traveled (cf. Num 9:15–23). Second, Paul didn’t panic when God kept him from preaching in Asia. He simply **yielded** to the guidance of the Spirit and made plans to go into Bithynia. This teaches us that there’s nothing wrong with taking the **initiative** and going in a direction we believe is prudent. If it isn’t God’s will, He is more than capable of shutting the door. We should take comfort in this, for it allows us to **relax** into God’s guidance and not be fearful that we’re making a mistake. Third, when the Holy Spirit kept Paul from going into Bithynia, he didn’t throw up his hands in despair. Instead, he passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. This teaches us to expect course **corrections** as we follow God’s leadership. There may be times when we try to go in several different directions and God shuts the door on all of them. That may mean that we need to **wait** for God’s timing, or it may mean that God wants us to meet a Lydia in Philippi! Whatever the case, we can rest in knowing that God will help us reach the right destination. Fourth, Paul no doubt expected to meet the man from his vision, but when he met the women by the river, he didn’t allow this to keep him from sharing Jesus. This teaches us to take **advantage** of every opportunity and manage our **expectations** about ministry, because we may end up doing something very different than what we thought!

- 24) [November 24] Paul’s first letter to the church in Thessalonica. The letter reads like a textbook on how to grow in **grace**. First, Paul praised them for **imitating** his behavior and the behavior of the churches in Judea which had suffered for the sake of the gospel (1 Thess 1:6–7, 14). This teaches us how important it is to find godly role **models** and imitate their example of righteousness and holiness. Second, Paul reminded them that as disciples of Jesus, they were destined for affliction and **persecution** (1 Thess 3:3). This teaches us that we can expect to **suffer** for the cause of Christ. Third, Paul commanded them to abstain from sexual **immorality**. This teaches us to avoid fostering **desires** in our relationships which should only be satisfied within the bounds of marriage. Fourth, Paul reminded those who had lost loved ones that we do not grieve as others who have no **hope**. Rather, we have confidence that Jesus will **raise** them to everlasting life, and we who are alive to hear the Lord’s command will be caught up (**raptured**) with them in the air. This teaches us that God has not destined us for the outpouring of His **wrath** on the wicked during the Tribulation, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:9). Finally, Paul exhorted them to **continue** in all the ways of love and grace which they had received from him. This teaches us that loving others sometimes means **confronting** them.
- 25) [November 25] Paul’s second letter to the church in Thessalonica. Paul first dealt with the timing of the Day of the Lord (the seven-year **Tribulation** period). He told them that Day must be preceded by a final **apostasy** and the coming of the “man of **lawlessness**” (2 Thess 2:3). Paul next addressed the **spiritual** condition of the Thessalonian believers. He assured them that they were “brothers beloved by the Lord,” chosen as “the **firstfruits** to be saved,” and he encouraged them to “stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us” (2 Thess 2:13–15). This meant they should **admonish** those who had become idle and **imitate** Paul’s example of hard work. Those who did not obey should not be fed by the others; instead, they should be **avoided** (2 Thess 3:6–10). This teaches us two lessons: (1) we need to carefully **examine** any claim concerning the timing of the Tribulation and make sure it’s in harmony with Scripture, and (2) we need to be focused on **working** hard and providing for our families, not on doomsday scenarios and fears about the end of the world.



- 26) [November 26] Paul's **second** letter to the church at Corinth (called 1 Corinthians). Paul wrote this letter to deal with various **problems** in the church and answer some **questions** the Corinthians had asked him in a recent letter (1 Cor 7:1). It had been almost two years since Paul left Corinth, and in his absence, the church had been visited by **Apollos** and perhaps Cephas (**Peter**). The Corinthians were greatly influenced by these two men, and some began to identify themselves as belonging to Peter or Apollos (others remained loyal to Paul or Christ). Paul responded, not by disavowing Apollos or his ministry, but by calling the Corinthians back to the **simplicity** of the gospel. He began by reminding them that baptism was about **following** Christ, not about swearing allegiance to the one who had baptized them. This teaches us not to fixate on those who led us to Christ, but rather to **follow** Jesus with them as brothers in the faith. Paul then urged the Corinthians to anchor their identity in the **cross** of Christ. This teaches us that the most important part of the gospel is its ability to **transform** our hearts and minds. Passion and rhetoric are useful, but they are not a substitute for the **power** of the Spirit. Paul then gave the Corinthians a correct understanding of Christian service. He and Apollos and Peter were **servants**, fellow-workers together for the sake of the gospel. We must be careful not to think of ourselves or others more **highly** than we ought. Paul concluded by calling the Corinthians to **imitate** him, their father in the faith (1 Cor 4:16). He willingly endured the scorn of the world in order to show forth the beauty and glory of **Christ**.
- 27) [November 27] Paul now rebuked the Corinthians for several other sins. First, Paul addressed the case of **incest**. This shocking incident teaches us: (1) The boundaries for sex given in **Leviticus** are still relevant today (cf. Lev 18:8); (2) Jesus' statement, "Judge not," has been wrongly interpreted as a command to **ignore** sin in the lives of Christians; (3) Sin is insidious and **corrupting**. If we don't remove it quickly from our lives and from the church, it will "**leaven** the whole lump" (1 Cor 5:6). (4) Church **discipline** is just as needed and important today as it was in Paul's day, for it shows the seriousness of sin and the consequences of rejecting God's Word (1 Cor 5:2). Next, Paul addressed the issue of civil disputes. Paul rebuked the Corinthians sharply for such behavior, and his comments teach us several important lessons: (1) This present life is preparing us for the future, for our destiny to is **rule** and reign with Christ. If we are to judge **angels**, we should certainly be wise enough to judge disputes between brothers! (1 Cor 6:2, 5); (2) It is better to be defrauded—to be actually **cheated** by a fellow-believer—than to damage the witness of the gospel (1 Cor 6:7). (3) The freedom we have in Christ is not a license to commit **sin**. Next, Paul addressed the issue of sexual immorality. Paul teaches us: (1) Our bodies are **temples** of the Holy Spirit. We should never use them to do anything that is unholy or **immoral**; (2) Our bodies belong to **God**. We should care for them in such a way that they bring **glory** to God; (3) Something can be "lawful" and yet not be **beneficial**. We must evaluate whether a given activity is helping us to be a better disciple of Jesus; (4) Something can be "lawful" and yet exert a **controlling** influence over us. If a given activity starts to dominate our life or interfere with our priorities, we shouldn't do it.
- 28) [November 28] Paul now addressed the issue of "food offered to **idols**." By insisting on their right to eat such food, the Corinthians were encouraging the weak to **violate** their conscience. Paul was rightly upset by this, and he called on those with knowledge to **love** their weaker brothers by **sacrificing** their "right" to eat food offered to idols. This passage teaches us several important lessons: (1) Determining whether or not a given activity is wrong is very important, but we must also consider whether it's **edifying** to others (1 Cor 10:23). Part of loving others is considering how our behavior **affects** them. (2) A fellow believer is said to be "weak" if they would be influenced by our liberty to **violate** their conscience and do something they believe to be wrong (1 Cor 8:10). If we care about others, we will be concerned about their **conscience**. (3) We have an obligation to **limit** our liberty out of love and concern for a weak brother, for if they are encouraged to violate their conscience because of our actions, then we have **sinned** against them and against Christ (1 Cor 8:10–12). (4) Our primary motivation should be the **glory** of God and the **good** of others (1 Cor

10:31–32). Like Paul, we should try to **please** everyone in everything we do, not seeking our own advantage, that they may be **saved** (1 Cor 10:33).

- 29) [November 29] Paul now addressed the issue of spiritual **gifts** in the church. Paul explained spiritual gifts in terms of four key concepts: (1) **Unity**: although there are many believers in the church, we are all united into one spiritual body by virtue of being in Christ. (2) **Interdependence**: each believer in the church belongs to the other believers. (3) **Diversity**: believers in the church do not all have the same spiritual gift, for if they did, where would the body of Christ be? (4) **Purpose**: the Spirit gives gifts to each believer so that the body of Christ might be fully equipped for the work of the ministry. Above all, Paul wanted the Corinthians to use their gifts in a spirit of **love**. If we love others: (1) We will be **patient** and kind, not **envying** what they have or boasting about what we have. (2) We won't be condescending or **rude**, and if things don't go our way, we won't be **resentful** or angry. (3) We will never condone wrongdoing, but rather affirm and rejoice in the **truth**. (4) We will bear, believe, hope and endure **all** things, and when we feel like we've gone the extra mile, we will **keep** going. Paul concluded his discussion of spiritual gifts by emphasizing the importance of **edification**—building others up in the faith. He did this by contrasting the gift of **tongues** (various languages) with the gift of **prophecy** (telling forth the truth). Although every gift is useful, the “greater” gifts are those which **edify** the whole body (1 Cor 14:5). When we use our gift, our focus should be on helping others, not pleasing or glorifying ourselves.
- 30) [November 30] Some Corinthians believed that there was no **resurrection** of the body after death, and this belief had led to a *carpe diem* attitude toward life: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we **die**” (1 Cor 15:32). Paul's discussion of the resurrection teaches us several important lessons: (1) Jesus' bodily resurrection is the **foundation** of the Christian faith. (2) **Union** with Jesus is the essence of the Christian life. We have been united with Christ in His death and raised with Him in the power of His resurrection. We have **spiritual** life now, and we will enjoy **physical** life in the world to come. (3) **Imitating** Jesus' example is the calling of the Christian walk. Paul wanted the Corinthians to remember that Jesus left an **example** so that they might follow in His steps (1 Pet 2:21).