

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE Fall 2026 | September 8 – October 19

Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,
1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

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Introduction

This leaders' guide is designed for use with the **Fall 2026 Read a Chapter a Day (RACAD) initiative**—a small group Bible study from September 8–October 19 in which participants from around the world are invited to read one chapter of the Bible each day, with the small group meeting in-person or online once each week during the study period.

Reading scripture daily shapes our imagination with the stories of humanity, faithfulness, and God's redemptive plan for the world through Jesus. It connects us to people of the past and to Christians around the world for whom scripture is our common story; cultivates awareness of the Holy Spirit's continuing voice in our lives; and inspires, instructs, shapes, and challenges individuals and communities to mature as followers of Jesus.

The guide can be used during the small group sessions to explore:

- **Key Themes:** What major theological or practical themes emerge?
- **Historical Context:** What was happening in Paul's time?
- **Reflection on Personal Practice:** What have I been learning? How have I experienced God through my daily reading?
- **Spiritual Practice:** Is there a spiritual practice that connects to this week's reading?
- **Application:** How does this apply to daily Christian life?
- **Discussion Questions:** Thought-provoking questions for deeper engagement.
- **Prayer:** A time of opening and closing prayer together.

To learn more about Read a Chapter a Day, and to find additional resources to support your daily scripture reading, please visit: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/read-a-chapter-a-day>

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Other Ways to Engage with Read a Chapter a Day

- **Join the Mailing List**

Sign up for our weekly emails to receive a reminder every Sunday about upcoming scripture texts, a common prayer, and resources for further study by visiting our webstie:

<https://www.UMCdiscipleship.org/articles/read-a-chapter-a-day>



- **Weekly Online Meetings**

Join our weekly Zoom meetings led by leaders' guide authors Rev. Ivan Milosi and Rev. Heureuse Kaj every Sunday between September 13–October 18 from 7:00–8:00 p.m., Central Time:

<https://upperroom-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/yLwzvBVKSySWvID-ONNgNQ>



- **Join the Facebook Group**

Share your reflections and be encouraged by others in our RACAD Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/umcreadachapteraday>



About the Authors

Rev. Heureuse Kaj and **Rev. Ivan Milosi** are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have degrees from Africa University in Zimbabwe and Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. They have served in ministry both internationally and within the Great Plains Annual Conference for more than seven years and are currently based in Lincoln, Nebraska. Rev. Kaj serves as associate of congregational care at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, and Rev. Milosi serves as senior pastor at St. Luke United Methodist Church.

As children of clergy, both grew up in homes where daily scripture reading and evening prayer were central to life—a heritage they now pass along to their young children through bedtime hymns and daily Bible reading. They are passionate about the transforming power of God's Word and look forward to journeying through scripture together with our global community.

WEEK 1: September 8–12, 2026

Reading: Galatians 1–6

Principal Chapter: Galatians 5

Spiritual Practice: Simmer

Core Emphasis: Spiritual Fruit from Life with Christ

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read Galatians 1–6.** Mark repeated words and contrasts: faith/works of the law, flesh/spirit, old creation/new creation. Spend some time journaling or reflecting on these themes. You do not need to teach every idea in Galatians during this small-group session.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Be prepared to explain the issue without making Judaism, Jewish people, or the law sound inferior or rejected by God.
- ☐ **Spiritual Practice: Simmer.** Read Galatians 5:13–15 and Galatians 5:22–25 aloud slowly and clearly.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** If meeting in person, have paper and pens ready for the Scribe/Savor practice. If meeting online, ensure participants have access to a computer or phone and have the link to access the virtual meeting space.
- ☐ **Pray for each person by name.** Ask that God would create honesty, grace, and care for others in the group.

Historical Note on Galatians:

Background: Paul writes with urgency to congregations in Galatia after other teachers have convinced Gentile believers to receive circumcision and take on Jewish practices of the Mosaic law to demonstrate full belonging. Paul explains that his gospel comes from God and insists that Jesus Christ, not ethnic boundary markers, sets people right with God. The promise God made to Abraham now reaches the nations through Christ, and receiving God's Spirit marks the people of God's new creation.

Paul's writing is not permission to indulge ourselves. Freedom in Christ shapes us into loving servants. Life in the Spirit cultivates a community that restores graciously, bears one another's burdens, perseveres in doing good, and boasts only in the cross.

Interpretive Care: Paul's argument is about Gentile inclusion in the first-century Jewish and Jesus-following world. Avoid taking verses in Galatians to demean Judaism or teach that Jewish people need to reject their identity. Stay focused on Paul's claim that Gentiles belong to God through Christ and the Spirit.

Discussions about Galatians may raise sensitive issues related to legalism, shame, spiritual/church performance, freedom, identity, law, and experiences of exclusion in community or church. Listen with care and invite participants to do the same. If necessary, pause and say:

"Thank you for sharing that with the group. Let's take a breath and remember to listen and speak with grace. We're not trying to solve all of life's challenges today, but we can hold one another in these conversations and keep seeking God's wisdom."

Offer to connect privately with anyone who appears particularly distressed or who has more they need to share. Maintain confidentiality as needed except where care or safety requires contacting others.

Opening (8 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome participants warmly by name. Briefly explain the purpose of the gathering, then invite one-sentence responses. Keep responses brief so everyone can speak.

Check-in Question: What word describes how you are arriving today (*curious, expectant, overwhelmed, calm, content, tired, etc.*). What do you need from God in this hour?

Opening Prayer

God of grace and freedom, you called us through Christ and welcomed us into your family. Quiet our hearts as we listen to your Word. Free us from whatever tries to bind us, form us by the fruit of your Spirit, and teach us to love and serve one another. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read Galatians 1–6 this week, what words, images, or ideas stood out to you? While Galatians explores many powerful ideas, today we will focus on three core themes in Paul's message: faith versus works of the law, flesh versus Spirit, and old creation versus new creation.

Faith & Works of the Law: Paul teaches that righteousness comes from faith in Jesus Christ, not by circumcision or following the rituals of the Mosaic law. God's grace through Christ is enough for us; our religious rituals cannot make us right with God or earn God's love.

- Key Passage: Galatians 5:2–6.
- Which verse in this passage most clearly explains how faith in Christ is enough?

Flesh & Spirit: When Paul refers to “flesh,” he does not mean the physical body. To Paul, “flesh” means human nature that relies on and desires self more than God. Life controlled by the Spirit produces loving service and Christlike character, accomplishing in believers what law and religious effort alone never could.

- Key Passage: Galatians 5:13–26.
- Where do you see differences between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5?

Old Creation & New Creation: The “old creation” boasts about what sets people apart from one another. Through Christ crucified, God initiates a “new creation” (Gal 6:15) where race, class, gender, and citizenship no longer define whether someone belongs. God makes everyone who trusts in Christ an equal heir to God's promise.

- Key Passages: Galatians 3:26–29; 6:14–15.
- Where in these verses do you see evidence of God's “new creation”?

To put it together: Galatians calls us from relying on the “works of the law” to faith in Christ, from living according to our selfish flesh to walking by the Spirit, and from the dividing lines of the old creation into the unity of God's people—God's new creation.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? The apostle Paul wrote Galatians. He makes a strong argument for his apostolic authority in this letter, insisting that he did not learn about Jesus from any other human. Rather, his calling and the gospel he teaches come from encountering Christ through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

To Whom? Paul writes to congregations in Galatia, a Roman province in what is now Turkey. Scholars debate whether these churches were located in northern or southern Galatia, which affects the estimated date of the letter.

What Is Happening? After these believers were introduced to Christ, other Christian workers visited these churches. They likely encouraged church members to receive circumcision and follow Jewish traditions of the Mosaic law. The other teachers may have framed these practices as necessary to belong fully or as a “next step” in the faith journey.

Core Issue: Paul argues that these other workers twisted or misrepresented the gospel. Jewish traditions cannot make us, keep us, or improve our standing with God. Our relationship with God depends solely on the grace we receive through faith in Jesus Christ.

Urgency: Galatians is one of Paul’s most urgent letters. It is the only letter he writes that doesn’t begin with words of thanks to the recipients. Instead, he jumps right into arguing that the Galatians have turned to a completely different gospel.

Why Does This Matter? Understanding this background can help us see why Galatians is about more than circumcision. Paul’s argument touches on grace, identity, who belongs to God, and how the Spirit makes believers God’s new creation.

Paul writes urgently to congregations in Galatia. Jewish leaders came to these churches after Paul introduced them to Christ. Those teachers encouraged church members to receive circumcision and follow Mosaic law. Perhaps they taught that circumcision and traditions were required steps of belonging. Perhaps they taught that these were important next steps in growing people’s relationship with God. Paul argues that we cannot earn or add to our acceptance before God. We are right with God because of our faith in Jesus Christ. We belong to God because we have received God’s grace.

- What part of this historical background explains Paul’s urgent tone?
- What questions do you have about this background?

Paul is not arguing that Jewish traditions do not matter or that Jewish people should abandon their ethnic and religious identity. Paul argues that circumcision and the law cannot make us right with God. This study guide reminds us of that. We don’t need to add anything to the sufficiency of Christ.

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to share their experience of reading Galatians each day. Remind participants that Read a Chapter a Day isn’t about just finishing the reading each day or learning information—it becomes a spiritual practice when we pay attention to God speaking and moving through scripture.

Ask one or both of the following questions:

- What was easy or hard about reading one chapter each day this week?
- Where did you experience God speaking, comforting, challenging, or surprising you through your reading of Galatians?

Leader Note: Affirm a variety of experiences. Some days of reading will be crystal clear and encouraging. Other days, we read and feel bored, distracted, or just don’t understand. Both experiences can be part of learning to pay attention to God through faithful scripture reading. Daily scripture reading isn’t about having an ‘Aha’ moment every day. It’s a spiritual practice of making ourselves available to God. Even when we feel bored or don’t understand what we’re reading, we can trust that God is still at work shaping us through our commitment to returning to the Word.

Spiritual Practice: Simmer (7 min)

This week’s spiritual practice is **Simmer**. Simmer encourages us to be still and attentive to the Holy Spirit before and during our time in God’s Word. Instead of rushing to interpret or know how to apply the text, we allow a word, phrase, or image from scripture to “simmer” in our hearts. For this practice, you will focus on Galatians 5, especially Galatians 5:13–26.

This passage calls believers to live out freedom in love. It contrasts the “works of the flesh” and the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Instruction: Invite participants to get comfortable. If you're meeting in person, encourage participants to put both feet on the floor, rest their hands open, or close their eyes if that helps them feel more attentive.

- Remind participants that they're not trying to do anything. They're creating space to listen.

Scripture Reading: Read Galatians 5:13–14 slowly: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become enslaved to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

- Pause for a few seconds. Then read Galatians 5:22–23 slowly: “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.”

Invitation to Silence: Say, “As we invite God to speak to you during this time of silence, notice if any word, phrase, or image stays with you. It may be a word like *freedom*, *love*, *peace*, *patience*, or *gentleness*. Maybe you notice an area of your life where you need the Spirit's help. There's no forcing or accomplishing anything in this time. Open yourself to receive God's words.”

- Keep silence for about one minute.

Response: After silence, say: “Take a deep breath. If you would like to share, what word, phrase, image, or prayer remained with you during the silence?” Invite two or three people to respond.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

Invite the group to consider the main themes from Galatians: grace, faith, freedom, life in the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit, and new creation. Encourage participants to keep their responses focused. Allow multiple people to share.

- **Grace:** In what ways does Galatians confront or assure your understanding of God's grace?
- **Faith and Works of the Law:** Where do you see pressures (inside yourself, church, or our culture) to prove your value or earn your belonging? How does Paul's message of faith in Christ respond to that pressure?
- **Freedom and the Spirit:** Paul writes, “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). How might Christian freedom show up in your life this week?
- **Fruit of the Spirit:** Which quality of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control—do you long to see God develop in you today?

The fruit of the Spirit is not something we produce through sheer willpower. The Spirit produces it in us as we stay connected to Christ and learn to live by love.

If the conversation becomes too theoretical or abstract, ground participants in a specific verse or moment from the week's reading. You may say: “Can you point to that idea in the text? Is there a verse that clarifies what Paul is trying to say?” Explore John Wesley's understanding of grace and why grace is such a foundational component of Methodism.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Invite participants to name one faithful response to the week's reading. Allow about ten seconds of silence before asking for responses. You may ask one or both questions:

- Where has the Spirit invited you to live out part of Galatians' message of grace, love, and freedom this week in your home, work, church, or neighborhood?
- What is one tangible way you can respond to what you've read this week?

Examples may include casting off a spirit of religious self-reliance, offering forgiveness to someone who hurt you, practicing patience in a difficult relationship, serving a neighbor, or praying each day for the fruit of the Spirit to grow abundantly in your life.

Conclude this section by saying: “As we pray, bring before God that one area where you sense God inviting you to trust in grace more deeply, walk by the Spirit, or live in the freedom Christ gives.”

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite participants to name one brief prayer concern. Prayer concerns could come from participants' personal life, the church, or the wider world. Concerns may also arise from the week's reading.

You can say, "As we prepare for prayer, invite one another to share a one-sentence prayer concern. This could be a personal concern or something the church or world needs. It also might be a prayer that has surfaced while reading Galatians this week."

Allow two to three people to share. If you have time, allow each person to give a one-sentence prayer. If you're a large group, it may be appropriate for the leader to take prayer concerns and incorporate them into the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly God, we praise you for the freedom we have in Jesus Christ. Set us free from trying to earn what you freely give us. Teach us to live by your Spirit, bear one another's burdens, and overflow with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Hear the prayers we've spoken and the concerns we hold silently. Strengthen your church, comfort all who suffer, and use us to build your new creation in Christ. Send us out in the power of your Spirit and love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Invite the group to pray The Lord's Prayer together.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Continue daily reading with next week's assigned readings: Ephesians 2–6 and Philippians 1–2. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Plan to join a weekly Read a Chapter a Day small-group gathering.
- Stay engaged with encouragement, resources, and conversations through the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group and weekly email.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or activity led to the most meaningful conversation?
- Where did the group require more time or clarity? Where did it require pastoral care?
- What would make next week's gathering more hospitable and fruitful?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 2: September 13–19, 2026

Reading: Ephesians 2–6; Philippians 1–2

Principal Chapter: Ephesians 2

Spiritual Practice: Speak

Core Emphasis: Grace Received and Grace Shared

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read Ephesians 2–6 and Philippians 1–2.** Circle repeated words and phrases: *grace, peace, reconciliation, unity, new life, humility, service, life “in Christ.”* Highlight God’s gift of grace, reconciliation across dividing walls, and the church’s call to embody grace in its shared life.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Prepare to lead a discussion about Jewish–Gentile reconciliation carefully, ensuring participants do not walk away thinking Gentile Christians replace Jewish people in God’s purposes.
- ☐ **Spiritual Practice: Speak.** Practice reading Ephesians 2:1–10 and 2:11–22 aloud, slowly and clearly. Invite two or three participants to read aloud different sections of the passage, if possible.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** If meeting online, identify reader(s) before beginning the practice. If meeting in person, have a few different Bible translations available.
- ☐ **Pray for each person by name.** Invite the Holy Spirit to help each person in the group receive God’s grace with humility and to share that grace generously with others.

Historical Note on Ephesians:

Background: Ephesians focuses on God’s purpose in Jesus Christ: to bring all things together in Christ and create one reconciled people. Ephesians 2 weaves these two threads together. In verses 1–10, Paul declares salvation is a gift from God. We are saved by grace through faith. In verses 11–22, he explains how Christ breaks down hostility between Jews and Gentiles, reconciles them into one new humanity, and builds them together into a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians chapters 3–6 further develop Paul’s vision. The church is called to grow into unity, live humbly and with love, practice forgiveness, and put on the full armor of God. Grace, then, is not simply private forgiveness or personal assurance. Grace creates community and reconciliation. Those who receive God’s mercy are called to live out that grace in humility, hospitality, forgiveness, peace-making, mutual service, and love.

Interpretive Care: Ephesians 2 addresses reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. Do not describe or refer to this passage as though the church has replaced Israel or as though Jewish identity has been wiped away. Paul celebrates that Gentiles have been brought near to God’s people through God’s grace. This does not mean Jewish people are rejected or their faith has become meaningless. Christ breaks down dividing walls so hostility can end and those once far off are brought near.

This passage could prompt sensitive reactions related to shame, feelings of spiritual unworthiness, family estrangement, divorce, exclusion from community, division in church, racism or nationalism, abuses of power, lack of self-worth, or divisions among social or economic classes. Remind participants that receiving God’s grace and reconciliation may not always look like affection for one another. In situations of harm, abuse, injustice, or dangerous relationships, Christian reconciliation will look like truth-telling, accountability, personal and communal safety, and justice.

If necessary, say, “This passage calls us to peace. Peace does not mean avoiding difficult conversations. Let’s bring our whole truths to this time together, listen to others carefully, and trust God will lead us toward justice and healing.”

Opening (10 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome each participant by name. Briefly remind the group that this is a place to listen generously to others, speak honestly about scripture, and receive God's Word together.

Check-in Question: Where have you seen or experienced grace this week from God, another person, or even yourself? Invite one-sentence responses.

Opening Prayer

God of mercy and grace, you have made us alive with Christ and brought us into your household by grace. Open our hearts to hear your word. Help us receive your grace with gratitude and share your grace through mercy, forgiveness, and peace. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read Ephesians 2–6 and Philippians 1–2 this week, which words, images, or ideas stood out to you? Today we'll focus on grace as a gift, reconciliation, and unity in Christ.

Grace as a Gift: Ephesians 2 opens with what humans cannot do—bring salvation to ourselves. God acts in mercy and love to make us alive with Christ. Salvation is entirely a gift by grace through faith.

- Key passage: Ephesians 2:1–10
- What words or phrases from Ephesians 2:1–10 help you understand grace as a gift?

Reconciliation and Unity in Christ: Christ's work reconciles more than individuals to God. Christ breaks down hostility to create a reconciled people, in which Jews and Gentiles are near to one another.

- Key passages: Ephesians 2:11–22; 4:1–6
- What does Paul mean when he says, "Christ Jesus our peace"?

Ephesians 2 and Philippians 1–2 remind us that grace is received as a gift from God; lived out in reconciliation with others; and expressed through humility, forgiveness, service, and love.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? Ephesians names Paul as the author. He presents himself as an apostle, servant, and prisoner for Christ Jesus, writing to churches that include Gentile believers. Paul and Timothy wrote Philippians to the church in Philippi.

To Whom? Ephesians is addressed to churches in Ephesus. Ephesus was a city in Roman-controlled Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Many believe Ephesians was intended for churches throughout the region. Philippians is addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi. Philippi was a Roman colony in the province of Macedonia. Paul has deep affection and gratitude for this church.

What Is Happening? The church included both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. This created practical and theological questions. How could people with different histories, practices, cultures, and social positioning belong together in one community?

- Ephesians announces God has made peace through Christ! The hostility that separated Jews and Gentiles has been overcome. Through Christ, Gentile believers now belong in God's household.
- Philippians exhorts the church's life together. Believers should live in unity, care for others, and live with humility. Paul encourages them to care about others as well as themselves.

Why Does This Matter? Receive God's grace as a gift. Live in reconciliation with others who are different from us. Embody that grace through humility, hospitality, forgiveness, peace-making, service to others, and love.

Read Ephesians 2:11–22. Paul writes to communities made up of Jewish and Gentile believers. Both groups had different histories, customs, and life experiences. Paul writes that, in Christ, those who were once far away have been brought near. Dividing walls of hostility have been broken down.

Jesus reconciles Jews and Gentiles into one household of faith. Philippians teaches us how to live out that grace-filled life daily. Believers are called to be humble and to care for one another. Receiving God's grace does not depend on what we do. It is a gift through which we receive new life. It teaches us how to live and relate to one another in peace.

- What part of church history helps you understand Ephesians 2:11–22?
- What do you long to see reconciled in the church or world?

Leader Note: *Paul's letter about unity does not mean that people must shed their history, culture, or identity. Instead, through Christ, we are welcomed near to God and called to live in peace with others.*

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to reflect on their experience of reading Ephesians and Philippians each day. Remind the group that Read a Chapter a Day's purpose is not just to finish daily readings or learn new information. It is to cultivate attentiveness to God's presence and voice through scripture.

- What did you find easiest or most challenging about reading one chapter each day this week?
- When did you sense or experience God speaking, comforting, challenging, or surprising you through Ephesians or Philippians this week?

Expect a range of responses. Some participants may love reading Ephesians; others may find it dense. Philippians lends itself to personal application; some might say it's sentimental.

Ephesians 2 can feel expansive and theologically rich. Philippians chapters 1 and 2 invite personal reflection on humility, Christlike joy, and grace. Some passages will feel accessible. Others will require time, patience, and repeated reading.

Spiritual Practice: Speak (7 min)

This week's spiritual practice is **Speak**. Before Bibles were accessible to every household, God's people heard scripture read and proclaimed aloud in worship. Reading scripture aloud helps us slow down, listen intentionally with our whole being, and receive the passage as something spoken to the gathered community.

Instruction: For this practice, read Ephesians 2:1–10. Ask the group to listen attentively. Invite two readers for Ephesians 2:1–3 and Ephesians 2:4–10. (*If meeting online, ask readers to mute themselves and unmute when it is their turn to read.*)

- Say: "As you hear these words, listen for a phrase, sentence, or image that speaks to you. Notice what you hear about *grace, peace, welcome, belonging*, and *reconciliation*. There's no need to explain or interrupt the reading. Simply listen."

Scripture Reading: After reading is finished, allow thirty seconds of silence. Then ask, "What phrase or image did you hear God speak to you?"

Response: Invite two to three participants to respond briefly.

- When we hear scripture read aloud, we hear it not only as individuals reading privately but as members of the household of faith. Today, we heard Ephesians 2 call us near to God; we are drawn together in peace.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **Grace Received:** What does Ephesians 2:8–10 teach us about grace as a gift rather than something we earn?
- **Grace Shared:** How will receiving God's gift of grace change how you treat people who are different from you?

If time allows, briefly connect the texts to John Wesley's explanation of grace.

- *Prevenient Grace* – God comes toward us before we can come toward God.
- *Justifying Grace* – God receives us and pardons us when we believe in Christ.
- *Sanctifying Grace* – God continues to transform us through love and holiness.

Point out that each of these gifts is freely given. Each is also life-transforming.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a few seconds of silence. Ask one or both questions:

- How will you receive God's gift of grace more deeply this week?
- In what situations are you invited to share grace through forgiveness, hospitality, humility, reconciliation, or welcome?

Invite participants to name one concrete practice for the upcoming week. Consider the following:

- Forgive someone who hurt them.
- Make time to listen to someone who is different.
- Invite a neighbor into their home.
- Make a phone call to someone who lives alone.
- Pray for healing and reconciliation.
- Practice humility during a conflict.
- Worry less about earning God's love by proving their self-worth.

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to share brief prayer requests: a personal need, a concern for the church or world, or somewhere they long to see God's grace and peace shine brightly.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God, you have made us alive with Christ and brought us into your household through grace. Give us humble and grateful hearts to receive your gifts. Break down dividing walls of hostility between us, make peace where there is fear and danger, and show us how to receive and share your gift of grace. Fill us with the mind of Christ that we may love one another in humility and joy. Draw us together into your family, a dwelling place for your Spirit. Amen.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Daily readings for next week are Philippians 3–4; Colossians 1–4; and 1 Thessalonians 1. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Gather with other Read a Chapter a Day small groups next Wednesday.
- Continue the conversation through the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group page and weekly emails.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or small-group activity do you want to spend more time on?
- Was there a concept or participant who needed more care, time, or pastoral sensitivity?
- What would make next week's session more welcoming and fruitful?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 3: September 20–26, 2026

Reading: Phil. 3–4; Col. 1–4; 1 Thess. 1

Principal Chapter: Philippians 4

Spiritual Practice: See

Core Emphasis: Joy and Peace in Christ

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read Philippians 3–4, Colossians 1–4, and 1 Thessalonians 1.** Mark repeated words and images such as *joy, peace, prayer, thanksgiving, perseverance, contentment, fullness, hope, faith, love, and the gospel*.
- ☐ **Prioritize the themes of joy and peace in Christ.** Do not try to teach every theological theme in Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians in one hour. Let Philippians 4 guide the session's center of gravity.
- ☐ **Review the historical notes below.** Prepare to speak honestly about Paul's imprisonment without romanticizing suffering. Joy in Philippians is not denial of pain; it is confidence in Christ amid hardship.
- ☐ **Prepare the spiritual practice: See.** Practice guiding the group through Philippians 4:4–9. Notice repeated words, commands, contrasts, images, and connections among rejoicing, gentleness, prayer, gratitude, peace, and thought.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Have paper and pens available for participants who wish to write observations from the passage. If meeting online, display Philippians 4:4–9 on screen.
- ☐ **Pray for each participant by name.** Ask the Holy Spirit to help the group receive Christ's joy and peace amid the particular burdens they carry.

Historical Notes on Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians:

Background: Philippians is a deeply affectionate letter Paul wrote to a congregation that supported him in his ministry. Paul writes from prison, yet the letter repeatedly speaks of joy, confidence, partnership in the gospel, and a life worthy of Christ. Philippians 3 calls believers to find their ultimate identity and confidence in Christ rather than in human accomplishment, religious status, or personal success. Philippians 4 turns toward practical encouragement: rejoice in the Lord, practice gentleness, bring every concern to God in prayer, give thanks, and set the mind on what is true and life-giving.

Colossians proclaims the supremacy of Christ. Christ is before all things, holds all things together, and reconciles all things through the cross. Believers are invited to set their minds on things above and to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love.

First Thessalonians 1 celebrates a community whose faith, love, and hope have become visible to others. Together, these readings remind us that joy and peace are rooted not in ideal circumstances but in Christ's steadfast presence and sufficiency.

Interpretive Care: Paul's invitation to rejoice and not be anxious should never be used to shame people who experience anxiety, grief, depression, trauma, or other forms of suffering. Philippians 4 is not a command to suppress emotion or pretend that hardship is not real. Rather, it invites believers to bring their concerns to God in prayer and to receive God's peace amid circumstances that may remain difficult. Paul's words about joy and peace are written from prison, not from an easy life. He does not tell us to deny pain or feel cheerful at all times. Instead, he invites us to bring our concerns to God and receive the peace of Christ in the midst of life as it is.

Philippians 4 may raise sensitive concerns related to anxiety, grief, depression, trauma, chronic illness, financial stress, contentment, or spiritual pressure to appear joyful. Do not present Paul's instruction, "Do not worry about anything," as a reason to shame people for anxiety or mental-health struggles. Encourage participants to pray, seek appropriate support, and receive help from trusted professionals, pastors, family members, or friends.

If conversation becomes difficult, you may say, "The peace of God is not a demand that we stop feeling pain or anxiety. It is God's promise to meet us in the midst of what we carry. We can bring our whole selves before God and one another with honesty and care."

Opening (10 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome participants by name. Briefly remind the group that the gathering is a place to share honestly, listen attentively, and receive God's Word together.

Check-in Question: Where have you experienced a moment of joy, peace, gratitude, or encouragement this week?

Opening Prayer

God of joy and peace, you are near to us in every season. Quiet our distracted hearts as we listen to your Word. Teach us to rejoice in you, bring our concerns to you in prayer, and receive the peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Transition to Scripture

This week, we read Philippians 3–4, Colossians 1–4, and 1 Thessalonians 1. These passages remind us that Christ is sufficient, Christ is present, and Christ forms in us a life of joy, gratitude, peace, hope, and love.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read Philippians 3–4, Colossians 1–4, and 1 Thessalonians 1 this week, what words, images, or ideas stood out?

These readings offer many rich themes. Today, we'll focus on three that shape Philippians 4 and connect with the rest of the week: joy rooted in Christ, peace through prayer and gratitude, and a Christ-centered way of thinking and living.

Joy Rooted in Christ: Paul repeatedly calls the Philippians to rejoice, even though he writes from prison. Christian joy is not shallow optimism or a refusal to acknowledge hardship. It is a deep confidence in Christ's presence, faithfulness, and worthiness of trust.

- Key passages: Philippians 3:7–11; 4:4–5; 1 Thessalonians 1:2–6.
- What is the difference between Christian joy and simply feeling happy because circumstances are going well?

Peace through Prayer and Gratitude: Paul invites believers to bring every concern to God with prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. The promise is not that every difficulty will disappear immediately, but that the peace of God will guard hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

- Key passage: Philippians 4:6–7.
- What do you notice about the connection between prayer, thanksgiving, and peace in these verses?

Christ-Centered Thinking and Living: Philippians 4 calls believers to focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Colossians likewise calls the church to set its mind on things above and to clothe itself with the character of Christ.

- Key passages: Philippians 4:8–9; Colossians 3:1–17.
- What might it mean to set our minds on what is true and worthy of praise in a world full of distraction, fear, and conflict?

Philippians and Colossians teach us that joy and peace do not depend on perfect circumstances. They are rooted in Christ's presence, strengthened through prayer and gratitude, and expressed through the ways we think, speak, and live.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? The apostle Paul writes Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians, sometimes with co-workers named alongside him. These letters address different congregations, but each reflects Paul's pastoral concern that believers remain faithful to Christ and grow in love.

To Whom? Paul writes Philippians to the church in Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. The community had supported Paul's ministry and shared a close relationship with him. Colossians is addressed to the church in Colossae, in Asia Minor. The letter emphasizes the fullness and supremacy of Christ. First Thessalonians is addressed to the church in Thessalonica, a community that had experienced opposition and needed encouragement to continue in faith, hope, and love.

What Is Happening? Paul writes Philippians while imprisoned. His circumstances are restricted, but he remains joyful because the gospel continues to advance and because Christ is present with him. The Philippian church faces pressures that could threaten its unity and confidence. Paul encourages them to stand firm, to practice humility, and to set their minds on Christ.

- Colossians emphasizes that believers do not need to seek spiritual fullness anywhere apart from Christ. First Thessalonians affirms a church whose faith, love, and hope have become visible to others.

Why Does This Matter? These letters teach that Christian joy and peace are not based on ease, success, or the absence of struggle. They grow from confidence in Christ, prayerful dependence on God, gratitude, mutual encouragement, and a community shaped by faith, love, and hope.

Leader Note: Paul writes Philippians from prison, yet joy appears throughout the letter. This does not mean Paul ignores suffering or pretends that everything is easy. Rather, his joy is rooted in Christ's faithfulness and in the shared life of the church. Philippians 4 invites believers to bring their concerns to God with prayer and thanksgiving, trusting that God's peace will guard them. Colossians and 1 Thessalonians reinforce this message by pointing us to Christ's sufficiency and to a community marked by faith, love, and hope.

- How does it change your reading of Philippians 4 to remember that Paul writes from prison?
- What question or response does this historical context raise?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to reflect on their experience of reading Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians during the week. Remind the group that the purpose of Read a Chapter a Day is not simply to complete readings or collect information, but to become more attentive to God's presence and voice through scripture.

- What has been easiest or most challenging about reading one chapter a day this week?
- Where did you experience God speaking, comforting, challenging, or surprising you through Philippians, Colossians, or 1 Thessalonians?

Affirm a range of experiences. Some participants may find joy and peace immediately comforting, while others may struggle to connect these words to their present circumstances. You might say, "Thank you for sharing honestly. Scripture does not ask us to hide our difficulties. It invites us to bring our lives before God. We can hold joy and grief, peace and uncertainty, gratitude and longing together in the presence of Christ."

Spiritual Practice: See (7 min)

This week's spiritual practice is **See**. See invites us to slow down and carefully observe what is present in the text.

Instruction: Before rushing to interpretation or application, notice repeated words, contrasts, commands, images, and surprising details.

Scripture Reading: For this practice, focus on displaying or reading Philippians 4:4–9. Invite participants to read the passage silently once. Then read it aloud slowly a second time.

- Ask participants to notice, without trying to explain, repeated words or ideas, commands or invitations, contrasts, images, connections between sentences, or a word or phrase that surprises them.

Response: If participants have paper or journals, invite them to write down three observations.

Seeing comes before explaining. When we slow down, we often notice that scripture has already begun to shape our attention. Philippians 4 invites us to see the nearness of the Lord, the practice of prayer, the gift of peace, and the kinds of things that form our minds and hearts.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **Joy in Christ:** Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). How can this invitation be meaningful without minimizing grief, stress, or suffering?
- **Prayer & Peace:** What do you notice about Paul’s instruction to pray “with thanksgiving” when we are anxious?
- **The Nearness of the Lord:** Paul says, “The Lord is near” (Philippians 4:5). How might that truth shape the way we respond to conflict, uncertainty, or fear?
- **Forming the Mind:** What shapes your attention during the week? How might Philippians 4:8–9 guide you in choosing what you dwell on?
- **Contentment:** What does Paul’s testimony of contentment in Philippians 4:10–13 teach us about relying on Christ in changing circumstances?
- **Faith, Love & Hope:** Where do you see faith, love, and hope becoming visible in your congregation or community?

Leader Note: If discussion becomes abstract, return to the text: “Where do you see that in Philippians 4? Which word or phrase helps us hear Paul’s message more clearly?”

If time allows, connect Philippians 4 with John Wesley’s understanding of grace:

- *Prevenient grace:* God is near and at work before we recognize or respond.
- *Justifying grace:* In Christ, we are received by grace through faith.
- *Sanctifying grace:* God continues to shape our desires, thoughts, practices, and relationships in love.

Emphasize that Christian peace is not something we produce alone; it is God’s gift and ongoing work in us.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What is one concern you need to bring to God with prayer and thanksgiving this week?
- What is one true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, or praiseworthy thing you can intentionally set before your mind this week?

Examples may include beginning each day with a brief prayer of gratitude, limiting a source of anxiety or harmful comparison, reaching out to encourage someone, practicing contentment, or memorizing Philippians 4:6–7.

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A source of anxiety, grief, or uncertainty
- A thanksgiving
- A concern for the church or world

You may say, “As we prepare to pray, you may name a concern you are carrying, a place where you long for God’s peace, a thanksgiving, or a need in the church or world.”

Closing Prayer

God of joy and peace, you are near to us in every season. Receive the concerns we have spoken and the burdens we carry silently. Teach us to bring everything to you through prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. Guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Shape our thoughts toward what is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and worthy of praise. Give us joy that is deeper than circumstance, peace that is stronger than fear, and love that becomes visible in the way we serve one another. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Continue the daily reading rhythm with next week’s assigned readings: 1 Thessalonians 2–5 and 2 Thessalonians 1–3. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Join the next weekly Read a Chapter a Day small-group gathering.
- Look for encouragement and conversation through the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group and weekly email.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or activity generated the most meaningful conversation?
- Where did the group need more time, clarity, or pastoral care?
- What change would help next week's session be more hospitable and fruitful?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 4: Sept. 27–Oct. 3, 2026

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2–5; 2 Thessalonians 1–3

Principal Chapter: 1 Thessalonians 4

Spiritual Practice: Study

Core Emphasis: Holy and Quiet Daily Living

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read 1 Thessalonians 2–5 and 2 Thessalonians 1–3.** Note the words, images, and themes that are repeated, such as *faith, love, hope, holiness, encouragement, work, prayer, steadfastness, perseverance, and the coming of Christ*.
- ☐ **Prioritize the themes of holy and peaceful daily life.** Focus in particular on 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12, and use the other passages for the week to strengthen the group's grasp of faithful work, mutual love, encouragement, and hope.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Be prepared to make clear that Paul's teaching on holiness is a positive exhortation to honor God and love others, not a way to shame or control people.
- ☐ **Prepare for the spiritual practice: Study.** Practice leading the group through 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12, and devise several open-ended questions to help participants examine the passage carefully and discuss it together.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Arrange the meeting place or provide the online link. Make pens and paper (or journals) available for anyone who wishes to take down questions from the reading. When meeting online, display 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12 on the screen.
- ☐ **Ask God to assist each member by name.** Pray that your group may develop into a community based on love, honesty, hope, and encouragement.

Historical Note on 1 & 2 Thessalonians:

Background: Paul wrote these letters to first-century Christians facing difficulties and uncertainty. His letters are full of care and encouragement. He thanks God for their faith, love, and hope, and urges them to keep growing in holiness and care for one another.

1 Thessalonians 4 outlines practical ways to follow Jesus. Paul urges believers to live in ways that please God, show greater love toward one another, “strive to live quietly, look after their own business, and work with their hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Living quietly does not mean staying silent about injustice or shirking responsibilities. On the contrary, it means leading a steady, reliable life that benefits the entire community.

2 Thessalonians still speaks about perseverance, faithfulness, and hard work. Paul advises believers not to grow weary of doing what is right and good. Both letters urge the church to live faithfully in ordinary life while awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ.

Interpretive Care: At times, people have misapplied Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4 to control other people's bodies, their relationships, or their public behavior. Instead, it should be made clear that holiness is God's act of love, shaping us through love, honesty, respect, and freedom.

In the same way, people should not be discouraged from speaking out against injustice, asking for help when needed, or taking part in public ministry because of the idea of living quietly. The passage urges Christians to avoid doing harm and, instead, take their place in community life with love and a sense of responsibility.

The subject matter of these passages could involve delicate issues such as sexuality, relationships, jobs, disability, financial difficulties, grief, concerns regarding Christ's return, duties within the family, or feelings of shame about work and productivity.

Do not cite Paul's remarks on work to disgrace anyone unemployed, underemployed, retired, disabled, looking after others, sick, or unable to work. The idea of "working with your hands" was intended for a particular period and must be understood in the context of the Bible's broader teachings concerning care, dignity, and love for all.

In the same way, don't use "live quietly" to stop people from asking for help, reporting harm, seeking justice, or speaking up against oppression. If the conversation becomes difficult, you may say, "Paul's call to faithful daily living is not a measure of anyone's worth. God's grace meets us in many different circumstances. Let us speak with compassion, honor one another's dignity, and seek ways to support one another in love."

Opening (10 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Greet participants by name and quickly remind the group that this meeting is a place to listen carefully, speak honestly, and grow in love for God and neighbor.

Check-in Question: What is a normal aspect of your life, whether at home, work, school, church, or in your neighborhood, where you would like God to grant you more steadiness, peace, or love?

Opening Prayer

Holy and loving God, we are called to grow in faith, love, and hope. As we listen to your Word, teach us to live in ways that please you, love one another more deeply, and serve our neighbors with quiet faithfulness. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Transition to Scripture

This week we read 1 Thessalonians 2-5 and 2 Thessalonians 1-3. The letters urge a young church to stay faithful under pressure, grow in love, work responsibly, and hope in God's future.

Key Themes (10 min)

When you read 1 Thessalonians 2-5 and 2 Thessalonians 1-3, which words, images, or ideas caught your attention?

The letters contain several significant themes. Today, we will focus on three that influence 1 Thessalonians 4—holiness that pleases God, love shown in everyday life, and the hope that supports faithful work.

Holiness that pleases God: Paul encourages believers to live in a manner that pleases God. Holiness does not mean spiritual perfectionism or retreating from the world. Instead, holiness is a life increasingly influenced by God's love; it is characterized by integrity, respect for others, and freedom from habits that harm ourselves or neighbors.

- Key passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.
- What do you observe regarding the kind of life Paul considers to be pleasing to God?

Love shown in everyday life: Paul praises the Thessalonians for their love and encourages them to develop it further. Love is shown in respect, responsibility, hard work, care for neighbors, and living in a way that strengthens rather than weakens the community.

- Key passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.
- What could love for neighbors amount to in the everyday duties of life?

The hope that supports faithful work: The church at Thessalonica is urged to stay firm as they wait for Christ's coming. Christian hope is not simply passive waiting or fleeing from the world. It enables believers to support and encourage one another, work faithfully, and never grow weary in doing good.

- Key passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 5:8–11; 2 Thessalonians 3:13.
- What makes our hope in Christ effective when the work we do seems to be overlooked, hard, or incomplete?

We are called by the books of First and Second Thessalonians to live holy lives based on love, show steady faithfulness in our everyday duties, and hold on to hope so that we do not become weary in doing good.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? Paul wrote the epistle to the Thessalonians with Silvanus and Timothy; similarly, the second epistle to the Thessalonians also opens with the names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Paul's coworkers helped establish and support the church.

To Whom? The letters are directed to the church in Thessalonica, an important port city in Macedonia, and to people who have given up idol worship to serve the living and true God.

What Is Happening? Paul's ministry in Thessalonica ended because of opposition, and the church he established kept suffering pressure after he left. Paul writes to encourage the believers whose faith is being tried. The letters also address issues related to Christian behavior, work, the coming of Christ, and the meaning of living faithfully before God's future appears. Those who had watched others die before Christ's return may have been disturbed by this, while others might have become disruptive or withdrawn from their normal work.

Why Does This Matter? The letters written to the people in Thessalonica are directed to those striving to follow Christ while facing uncertainty, opposition, and the demands of everyday life. Paul does not tell them to leave the world but asks them to become more holy, love one another, encourage the discouraged, pray without ceasing, work faithfully, and remain hopeful in Christ.

Leader Note: *The church at Thessalonica was young and facing pressure. Paul addresses them in a warm, encouraging tone, telling them that true faithful Christian living involves having hope in God's future as well as showing responsibility in the present day. In 1 Thessalonians 4, he urges them to grow in love, live responsibly among their neighbors, and work with their hands. In 2 Thessalonians, he encourages them not to grow weary of doing good, for their hope in Christ is meant to strengthen, not replace, their faithfulness in everyday life.*

- What aspect of this historical background helps you understand Paul's concern for ordinary work and community life?
- In what way does this context enable you to understand the phrase "live quietly" more fully?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Ask participants to consider how it felt to read 1 and 2 Thessalonians this week. Remind them that the aim of Read a Chapter a Day is not to complete an assignment or gather information but to grow in awareness of God's presence and voice as revealed in scripture.

Ask one or both questions:

- What has been the easiest or most difficult aspect of reading one chapter a day this week?
- Where did you feel God speaking, comforting you, challenging you, or surprising you through the books of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians?

Have three or four participants give brief accounts of their experiences. If your group is large, ask for short answers so more people can take part. Some participants will probably find Paul's practical advice on work, holiness, and life in the community immediately relevant. However, others may have questions or concerns about how these teachings apply in today's world.

You might say: “Thank you for being honest. The Bible frequently comes to us in the everyday aspects of life—such as the work we do, the way we speak, the relationships we care for, and the habits we cultivate. Likewise, God can use our questions and insights to shape us in love.”

Spiritual Practice: Study (7 min)

This week’s spiritual practice is **Study**. Study encourages us to ask sincere and faithful questions about scripture. Once we have slowed down and observed the text, we should consider what it means, what it tells us about God, and how it relates to the rest of scripture and to our lives.

Instruction: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9–12 slowly out loud, then ask participants to read it silently a second time.

Scripture: Ask the participants to write down one or two questions that occur to them as a result of the passage; encourage those questions that begin with:

- What does Paul mean when he says...?
- What reasons might Paul have for connecting...?
- What must this have meant to the first listeners?
- What could this mean in today’s context?
- What does all this tell us regarding God, love, and community?

Response: We have heard that passage; next we are going to put it to some questions. Examining the Bible does not mean we are putting it on trial. Instead, we give it our full attention, curiosity, and honest wonder to God’s Word. Note what seems clear, surprising, difficult, or incomplete, and consider what question this passage raises. Take a minute to reflect in silence and to write. Then offer these prompts:

- Why does Paul identify a quiet life and daily work with brotherly and sisterly love?
- What could the phrase “aspire to live quietly” have meant in Thessalonica?
- What could this passage mean for present-day Christians?
- How can we tell the difference between quiet faithfulness and shirking difficult responsibilities or injustices?
- Have one or two participants ask a question rather than answer.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **A life that pleases God:** Paul tells the Thessalonians to “live in a way that pleases God” (1 Thessalonians 4:1). What could such a way of living look like?
- **Love that grows:** Paul tells the Thessalonians they already love one another, and he exhorts them to love one another even more. What, then, does it mean for love to increase in our relationships, in our congregation, or in our community?
- **Living quietly:** What does Paul have in mind when he says “aspire to live quietly” (1 Thessalonians 4:11)? What does this appeal signify, and what does it fail to signify?

Leader Note: *If the conversation becomes abstract, return to the text: “What in 1 Thessalonians 4 do you see? Is there a particular word or phrase that enables us to understand Paul’s message more clearly?”*

If time allows, connect this week’s texts with John Wesley’s understanding of holiness:

- *God’s grace does not merely forgive but also brings about transformation.*
- *Sanctifying grace shapes believers into holy love.*
- *Holiness becomes visible in love for God and love for one’s neighbor.*

Tell the group that being holy doesn’t mean withdrawing from everyday life; instead, it means showing love through how we live, work, speak, and care for others.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What is God asking you to do this week so that you may practice a holy and quiet faithfulness?
- What is one ordinary responsibility, relationship, or task you can treat as an act of love toward God and neighbor?
 - Examples might include carrying out a task with honesty, encouraging another person, showing patience at home or work, asking for assistance before difficulties become great, praying for a neighbor, or not stopping when trying to do good.

When we begin to pray, think of an ordinary place in which you want to become more faithful, loving, or full of hope.

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A responsibility that feels difficult or burdensome
- A person who needs encouragement
- A concern for the church or world

You may say: “As we prepare to pray, you might mention a burden you are carrying, a place where you need strength to live faithfully, someone who needs encouragement, or a worry about the church or the world.”

Closing Prayer

Holy and faithful God, we are asked to develop our love and to live in a manner that pleases you. Give us strength for the ordinary tasks that lie before us. Give us integrity in our choices, gentleness in our speech, courage in our witness, and love within our relationships. Do not let us become weary in carrying out what is good. Encourage those who are discouraged, comfort those who grieve, and let us become a people who reflect the hope of Christ. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Keep up the daily habit of reading with the assignments for next week: 1 Timothy 1–6 and 2 Timothy 1. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Attend the following weekly Read a Chapter a Day small-group meeting.
- Check out the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group and the weekly email for encouragement and conversation.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or activity generated the most meaningful conversation?
- Where did the group need more time, clarity, or pastoral care?
- What change would help next week's session be more hospitable and fruitful?

Notes

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WEEK 5: October 4–10, 2026

Reading: 1 Timothy 1–6; 2 Timothy 1

Principal Chapter: 1 Timothy 4

Spiritual Practice: Scribe

Core Emphasis: Training in Godliness and
Becoming an Example to Believers

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read 1 Timothy 1–6 and 2 Timothy 1.** Mark repeated words and themes: *sound teaching, grace, godliness, faith, conscience, prayer, contentment, money, leadership, endurance, guarding the faith, and the gift of the Spirit.*
- ☐ **Prioritize the themes of training in godliness and being an example.** Focus especially on 1 Timothy 4:6–16, and let the rest of the week's readings illuminate faithful leadership, prayerful community, contentment, and perseverance.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Prepare to speak about “godliness” as a life shaped by devotion to God and love of neighbor, rather than as moral superiority, religious performance, or control over others.
- ☐ **Prepare for the spiritual practice: Scribe.** Practice writing out 1 Timothy 4:7–8 and 4:12 slowly. Have pens and paper, index cards, or journals available. If meeting online, encourage participants to bring a journal or paper.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Display the key passages if possible. Consider offering quiet instrumental background music during the writing portion if it helps the group.
- ☐ **Pray for each participant by name.** Ask the Holy Spirit to form the group in humility, love, faithfulness, courage, and holy living.

Historical Note on 1 & 2 Timothy:

Background: 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy reflect a focus on care, leadership, teaching, and the life of the Christian community. These two books are said to have been written by Paul to Timothy, his younger colleague in Ephesus, offering advice on leading the community with sound teaching, prayer, integrity, generosity, and respect.

In 1 Timothy, Paul tells Timothy to study teaching on faith and how to live a godly life. He compares this to athletic training, since regular practice builds strength and skill. Likewise, disciples grow through habits that shape love, character, and faithfulness. For Paul, godliness is not a means of earning salvation but a response to God's grace and a life guided by the Spirit.

Paul also advises Timothy not to let others look down on him because of his youth. Instead, he should serve as an example by the things he says, the way he acts, and the strength of his love, faith, and purity; the aim should not be perfection but integrity so that his words and actions reflect Christ.

The content relates to the main topic of the letters: 1 Timothy speaks about prayer, leadership, caring for vulnerable people, contentment, generosity, and the dangers of seeking wealth. In 2 Timothy, Timothy is instructed to remember the gift God has given him and to live with power, love, and self-discipline instead of fear.

Interpretive Care: Certain sections of these letters may raise difficult questions about authority, gender, leadership, wealth, age, and the structure of the church. The session should remain focused on training in godliness, setting a faithful example, and living a life guided by love.

Don't employ words like "godliness," "purity," or "example" to shame people, compel them to conform, or imply that anyone has to win God's approval. Grace from God comes first. Spiritual practices are not about proving ourselves; they are about opening ourselves to God's transforming love. The idea of abounding in godliness is not intended to lead to comparison or self-criticism. Instead, it urges us to form habits that will help us receive God's grace and grow in love. The need to serve as an example does not mean one has to be perfect; it just means that our speech, behavior, love, faith, and integrity should reflect Christ more fully.

The subjects involved might raise delicate questions about age, authority, leadership, gender, money, contentment, work, purity, spiritual discipline, shame, or past experiences of religious control.

Do not regard Paul's appeal for us to be an example as a requirement for perfection or as a justification for judging people who struggle, fail, have disabilities, grieve, or suffer from mental health issues. When mentioning "purity," do so with care, emphasizing integrity, respect, and freedom from exploitation rather than fear or shame.

If the conversation becomes difficult, you may say: "The call that God makes for us to grow in godliness is by no means a chance to make one another ashamed. He meets us where we are and shapes us out of love. Let us be honest when we speak, show compassion when we listen, and encourage one another in Christ."

Opening (8 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome participants warmly by name. Briefly explain the purpose of the gathering, then invite one-sentence responses.

Check-in Question: What habit, practice, or relationship has contributed to strengthening your faith over time?

Opening Prayer

Faithful God, we are meant to develop in grace and godliness. As we listen to your Word, nourish us with the truth of the gospel, strengthen us by your Spirit, and shape our character through the things we say, the ways we behave, and the practices of love, faith, and purity. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read 1 Timothy 1–6 and 2 Timothy 1, which words, images, or ideas struck you? The letters address many aspects of church life, but we will focus on three subjects: training in godliness, serving as an example through Christlike character, and protecting the gift of faith with courage and love.

Training in Godliness: Paul compares godliness to physical training. Although physical exercise is beneficial, training in godliness has lasting value since it shapes the entire person and directs our lives toward God. This kind of training is not concerned with self-improvement alone but is a means of participating in God's grace through prayer, scripture, worship, service, generosity, and love.

- Key passages: 1 Timothy 4:6–10; 6:6–8
- What might it mean to have the idea of being trained in godliness during an ordinary week?

Serving as an example for believers: Paul advises Timothy to serve as an example in what he says, how he acts, and how he models love, faith, and purity. Christian witness has nothing to do with one's position, age, rank, or perfection; it means living in a way that our words, actions, relationships, and commitments reflect Christ's character.

- Key passages: 1 Timothy 4:11–16; 2 Timothy 1:6–8.
- Which of the elements of Paul's invitation, namely, his speech, behavior, love, or faith, seem the most encouraging? Which is the most difficult?

Contentment, generosity, and faithful stewardship: First Timothy tells us not to regard wealth as equivalent to godliness or security. Paul values contentment, generosity, and trust in God. Godliness is shown by how we use what we have, how we care for others, and how we avoid judging our worth by status or possessions.

- Key passages: 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19.
- What parts could contentment and generosity play in the training connected with godliness?

First and Second Timothy state that godliness is developed through consistent practices of grace. As individuals grow, their speech, behavior, love, faith, and integrity become a practical testimony to Christ.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? The First and Second Letters to Timothy are attributed to Paul, who wrote them to Timothy, a young colleague he supported in his ministry and leadership.

To Whom? Timothy carried out work for the church in Ephesus, a city now in Turkey, and the letters address the problems of establishing a Christian community in such an intricate urban environment.

What Is Happening? The church needed advice on teaching, prayer, leadership, caring for vulnerable people, wealth, and living faithfully together. Paul instructed Timothy to remain firm in the gospel, reject teachings that lead to speculation or division, and lead with love and integrity.

- Because of his youth, people have doubted Timothy's authority, and his capacity to lead. But Paul encouraged him not to be afraid and to let the character of his life and ministry stand as an example to the believers.
- Paul encourages Timothy to remain faithful in difficult situations, guard the gift God has given him, and trust the Spirit, which bestows power, love, and self-discipline.

Why Does This Matter? The letters remind the church that discipleship is evident in everyday life through actions such as prayer, conversation, service, leadership, generosity, care for others, and remaining faithful during difficult times. Godliness is not private spirituality; it is a way of living that is visible within the community.

Leader Note: *1 Timothy focuses on the practical aspects of Christian life. Timothy is urged to keep growing in his faith, teach with integrity, and serve as an example through his words, actions, love, faith, and purity. It teaches that discipleship requires time and practice and that we do not earn God's love but instead strive for godliness, since God's grace is at work in us, shaping us to reflect Christ in our everyday lives.*

- Which part of this historical background helps you understand Paul's concern about training and setting an example?
- What influence does this context have on the way you understand the words Paul writes to Timothy?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to share their experience of reading Galatians each day during the week. Remind participants that Read a Chapter a Day isn't about just finishing the reading each day or learning information. Read a Chapter a Day becomes a spiritual practice when we pay attention to God speaking and moving through scripture.

Ask one or both questions:

- What has been the easiest or most difficult part about reading one chapter each day this week?
- Can you recall occasions in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy in which you felt God talking to you, encouraging you, criticizing you, or surprising you?

Ask three or four people to make short remarks; if there are many participants, ask for brief comments so a variety of voices can be heard.

Individuals have different experiences; some might feel encouraged by the appeal to train in godliness, while others might feel guilty, exhausted, or recall having undergone previous spiritual pressure. You might say: "Thank you for

having been so open. We do not demonstrate our value to God through spiritual practices. Instead, such practices provide a place for God's grace, which is already at work. Even minor and consistent acts of faithfulness can be situations in which God shapes us out of love."

Spiritual Practice: Scribe (7 min)

This week's spiritual practice is **Scribe**. Scribe urges us to write a word, a phrase, or a passage from scripture by hand to slow down, become aware of each word, and receive the text as if it were a prayer.

Instruction: Provide pens and paper, index cards, or journals. For online meetings, ask participants to use a journal or a blank sheet of paper.

Scripture: Read 1 Timothy 4:8,12 (*suggested translation NRSVUE or NIV*) aloud slowly. Ask the participants to write one or both verses slowly, pausing between phrases and recording the word or phrase that speaks most directly to them.

Response: Say, "When you are writing, take all the time you need. Pay attention to any words that encourage you, challenge you, or surprise you. You could write out the entire verse, highlight one word, or compose a brief prayer as a response. It isn't necessary for what you write to be carefully polished. Just let the words of scripture get into your heart."

- Allow participants two to three minutes to write. Then ask, "What word, phrase, or prayer occurred to you while you were writing?"

Training in godliness comes from consistently giving one's attention and placing one's trust. As we write, we allow God to shape our speech, behavior, love, faith, and integrity.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **Training in godliness:** What practices help you to become more open to God's grace and more firmly rooted in love?
- **The cultivation of one's spirituality with no performative elements:** How are we to carry out spiritual disciplines without them becoming a means of comparing ourselves with one another or of demonstrating our worth?
- **Being an example:** Regarding any of the areas such as speech, behavior, love, faith, or purity, which one do you think that God is telling you to develop more deliberately?
- **Contentment and generosity:** What are we learning from 1 Timothy 6 about the relationship between contentment, money, generosity, and godliness?

Leader Note: If the conversation becomes abstract, return to the text: "What do you notice in 1 Timothy 4? Which word or phrase allows us to understand Paul's message more clearly?" If time allows, connect this week's texts with John Wesley's understanding of sanctifying grace:

- The grace of God doesn't simply forgive but also causes transformation.
- Sanctifying grace molds us into holy love.
- The ways we pray, study the Bible, worship, serve, fast, and take part in the Christian community can serve as means through which God shapes us.
- No amount of practice can win over God; we carry out these actions because God's grace attracts us and retains us.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What simple, sustainable practice could help you train in godliness this week?
- How can you demonstrate love for Christ in what you say and do, how you love others and express your faith, or how you live with integrity?

This might consist of reading a scripture to yourself, adopting a new spiritual practice this week, or choosing to reflect Christ more fully in one area of your life (such as praying before a difficult conversation, showing generosity, encouraging someone, serving in a quiet way, or selecting one word from 1 Timothy 4:12 for use in your daily prayer.)

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A place where they desire growth, courage, or greater faithfulness
- A person who is learning, leading, or serving
- A concern for the church or world

You may say: “As we prepare to pray, you may share a personal concern, a place where you want God’s strength and growth, the name of a person you want to encourage, or a concern for the church or the world.”

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you call us to grow in godliness and be examples of your love. Nourish us with the words of faith and strengthen us by your Spirit. Form our speech, conduct, love, faith, and integrity so that our lives may be a reflection of Jesus Christ. Give us contentment in what we have, generosity toward those in need, courage in the face of fear, and steady faithfulness in all our actions. Amen.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Continue to keep up your daily habit of reading the assigned passages for next week, which are 2 Timothy 2–4; Titus 1–3; and Philemon 1. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Go to the weekly Read a Chapter a Day small-group meeting.
- Go to the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group and read the weekly email to get encouragement and to take part in the conversations.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or activity generated the most meaningful conversation?
- Where did the group need more time, clarity, or pastoral care?
- What change would help next week's session be more hospitable and fruitful?

Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 6: October 11–19, 2026

Reading: 2 Timothy 2–4; Titus 1–3; Philemon 1

Principal Chapter: Philemon 1

Spiritual Practice: Savor

Core Emphasis: Faith Made Effective Through Partnership, Goodness, and Reconciliation

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read 2 Timothy 2–4, Titus 1–3, and Philemon 1.** Mark repeated words and themes: *endurance, faithfulness, scripture, teaching, grace, good works, reconciliation, partnership, forgiveness, dignity, and belonging in Christ.*
- ☐ **Prioritize the core emphasis.** Focus on Philemon 1:4–7, especially verse 6, while allowing the readings from 2 Timothy and Titus to illuminate endurance, sound teaching, grace, and good works.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Prepare to address the letter's setting carefully, especially the realities of slavery in the ancient Roman world and the ethical challenges Paul's appeal raises.
- ☐ **Prepare for the spiritual practice: Savor.** Practice leading participants to choose a word, phrase, or verse from Philemon to carry into the coming week and beyond the end of the Read a Chapter a Day study.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Have paper, index cards, Savor notes, or journals available. If you meet online, invite participants to have paper or a note-taking device ready.
- ☐ **Pray for each participant by name.** Ask the Holy Spirit to help the group recognize the good God is doing among them and to grow in reconciliation, courage, humility, and faithful partnership.

Historical Note on 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon:

Background: Second Timothy is a deeply personal letter of encouragement. Paul urges Timothy to remain steadfast in the gospel, endure hardship, continue in the sacred writings, and complete the ministry entrusted to him. The letter emphasizes perseverance, courage, and confidence in God's faithfulness.

Titus addresses the ordering of Christian communities in Crete. Paul emphasizes sound teaching, the grace of God that forms holy lives, and good works that express faith in practical service. Titus reminds believers that grace does not end with forgiveness; it teaches and equips us to live for the good of others.

Philemon is Paul's shortest letter, addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church that meets in their home. Paul writes concerning Onesimus, who is connected to Philemon through the institution of slavery. Paul appeals to Philemon to receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother" (Philemon 1:16).

The letter invites believers to consider what it means for the gospel to reshape relationships, power, property, status, and belonging. Paul does not explicitly command Philemon to free Onesimus, and the letter should not be used to justify slavery or to minimize its violence. Rather, it confronts the church with the claim that in Christ, people are bound together as beloved siblings whose dignity cannot be reduced to social status.

Interpretive Care: Philemon requires careful interpretation because it concerns slavery. Ancient Roman slavery was a violent and exploitative institution, although its legal and social patterns were not identical to race-based chattel slavery in the modern Atlantic world. The letter has been misused in Christian history to defend slavery and racial oppression.

Do not present Philemon as a simple story of personal forgiveness or private reconciliation. It raises questions about power, ownership, dignity, repair, and how the gospel transforms relationships. Avoid asking participants to identify themselves uncritically with any single character in the letter. Philemon is a short letter with difficult implications. It concerns a relationship shaped by the institution of slavery, and we must not minimize that reality. Paul appeals to Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother in Christ. This does not erase the injustice of slavery, but it challenges the church to consider how the gospel transforms relationships of power and calls us to recognize one another's God-given dignity.

Philemon may raise sensitive concerns related to slavery, racism, class, power, incarceration, exploitation, debt, forced labor, broken relationships, and reconciliation after harm.

Do not minimize the violence of slavery or use this letter to justify coercion, submission to abuse, or reconciliation without accountability. Reconciliation is not always immediate, safe, or possible in every circumstance. It requires truth-telling, attention to power, commitment to justice, and care for those who have been harmed.

If the conversation becomes difficult, you may say, "This letter raises serious questions about dignity, power, and reconciliation. We do not need to resolve every question today. We can listen carefully, honor the gravity of the subject, and ask how Christ calls us to practice justice, mercy, and love in relationships and communities."

Opening (10 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome participants by name. Acknowledge that this is the final gathering of the six-week Read a Chapter a Day study. Invite the group to bring honesty, gratitude, and openness as they reflect on what God has been doing through the daily readings.

Check-in Question: What word or phrase describes your experience of Read a Chapter a Day during these six weeks?

Opening Prayer

God of grace and reconciliation, you call us into partnership with one another and make us one family in Christ. Open our hearts as we listen to your Word. Help us recognize the good you are doing among us, receive one another with dignity and love, and live in ways that make our faith effective in the world. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Transition to Scripture

This week we read 2 Timothy 2–4, Titus 1–3, and Philemon. These writings call us to remain faithful, to live in the grace that forms good works, and to receive one another as partners and beloved siblings in Christ.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read 2 Timothy 2–4, Titus 1–3, and Philemon this week, what words, images, or ideas stood out? These writings contain many important themes. Today, we will focus on three that help us hear Philemon: faith expressed through partnership, grace that bears fruit in good works, and reconciliation that honors human dignity.

Faith Expressed Through Partnership: Paul gives thanks for Philemon's love and faith, praying that sharing his faith will be effective. Faith is not merely private belief. It is lived and shared through relationships, hospitality, service, encouragement, and participation in Christ's work.

- Key passages: Philemon 1:4–7; 17–21; 2 Timothy 2:1–2.
- What might it mean for faith sharing to be effective in the life of a community?

Grace That Bears Fruit in Good Works: Titus teaches that God's grace has appeared, bringing salvation and training believers to reject destructive patterns and live upright, godly lives. Grace creates a people eager to do good and ready to meet urgent needs.

- Key passages: Titus 2:11–14; 3:1–8, 14.
- How do Titus and Philemon help us understand that grace is received freely and becomes visible in the way we live?

Reconciliation That Honors Human Dignity: Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as more than a slave: as a beloved brother. This appeal challenges relationships shaped by power, possession, status, and exclusion. In Christ, belonging is redefined by shared dignity and siblinghood.

- Key passages: Philemon 1:8–16; Galatians 3:28.
- What does it mean to receive another person as a beloved sibling in Christ?

These final readings remind us that faith becomes effective as grace bears fruit in good works, partnerships are strengthened in love, and relationships are transformed by the dignity and belonging we share in Christ.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? Paul identifies himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus; he writes with Timothy. The letter is personal but also public: it is addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church that meets in their home.

To Whom? Philemon is likely a Christian householder whose home serves as a gathering place for a local church. Apphia and Archippus are included, along with the wider congregation, indicating that the appeal has communal significance.

What Is Happening? Paul writes concerning Onesimus, who is connected to Philemon through slavery. Onesimus has come into contact with Paul and has become “useful” to Paul in ministry. Paul sends him back to Philemon with a personal appeal that Philemon receive him not merely according to his social status but as a beloved brother in Christ. The letter does not give enough information to settle every historical question about Onesimus’s situation. Paul’s appeal places the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus under Christ’s lordship and within the shared life of the church.

Why Does This Matter? Philemon confronts the church with urgent questions: How does the gospel transform relationships marked by unequal power? How do Christian communities move beyond words of welcome toward relationships that honor dignity, repair harm, share responsibility, and make space for true belonging?

Philemon is a personal letter with public implications. Paul writes about Onesimus, whose life is entangled with slavery. Paul does not treat Onesimus as property or a problem to be managed. He appeals to Philemon to receive him as a beloved brother in Christ. The letter does not give us a simple solution to every question it raises, but it calls the church to examine how the gospel challenges relationships marked by power, exclusion, and unequal dignity.

- What part of this historical background helps you understand why Philemon is such a challenging letter?
- What questions does this letter raise about Christian partnership, reconciliation, and dignity?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to reflect on their experience of reading 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon during the final week of the study. Remind the group that Read a Chapter a Day is not simply a six-week task. It is an invitation to establish an ongoing rhythm of scripture reading, prayer, reflection, and faithful action.

Ask one or both questions:

- What has been easiest or most challenging about reading one chapter a day over these six weeks?
- Where did you experience God speaking, comforting, challenging, or surprising you through 2 Timothy, Titus, or Philemon?

Allow three or four participants to share briefly. If the group is large, invite concise responses so that several voices can be heard.

Leader Note: This final gathering provides an opportunity to acknowledge growth without making participants feel they must report dramatic changes. Some may be grateful for a new habit; some may name interruptions, questions, or continued struggles.

You might say, “Thank you for walking together through these readings. The goal was never perfect consistency or complete understanding. The goal was to make room for God’s Word in our daily lives. Consider what practice, question, verse, or invitation you want to carry forward from this experience.”

Spiritual Practice: Savor (7 min)

This week’s spiritual practice is **Savor**. Savor invites us to identify a word, phrase, or verse from scripture that remains with us and that we want to carry into the days ahead. It may be a comfort, a challenge, a question, a call to action, or a promise.

For this practice, focus on **Philemon 1:4–7**, especially verse 6.

Instruction: Provide index cards, Savor notes, or journals. If meeting online, invite participants to use a note on their phone or computer or to write in a journal.

Scripture: Read Philemon 1:4–7 aloud slowly. Then invite participants to sit quietly and consider these questions:

- What word, phrase, or verse from Philemon has stayed with you?
- What word or phrase from the wider six-week study do you want to carry forward?
- What might God be saying to you through this word for the coming week or season?

Response: As we come to the end of this six-week journey, choose one word, phrase, or verse that you want to carry with you. It may come from Philemon, from another passage we have read this week, or from any point in the Read a Chapter a Day journey. Write it down. Let it become a simple prayer, a reminder, or an invitation that can remain with you.

- Allow two minutes for reflection and writing. Then ask, “What word, phrase, or verse do you want to carry forward? If you are comfortable, share why it matters to you.”

God’s Word continues to work in us after the page is closed and the group has ended. Carry this phrase with you. Return to it in prayer, place it somewhere you will see it, and allow it to shape your attention, actions, and relationships in the days ahead.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **Faith made effective:** What do you think Paul means when he prays that the sharing of Philemon’s faith will become effective?
- **Recognizing the good:** Where have you seen “all the good” that God is doing among people in your congregation, family, neighborhood, or community?
- **Grace and good works:** Titus teaches that grace forms people eager to do good. What is one good work or urgent need that God may be inviting us to notice?
- **Receiving one another:** What might it look like to receive another person not according to status, usefulness, power, or social category, but as a beloved sibling in Christ?
- **Partnership and accountability:** How can Christian partnership move beyond good intentions toward concrete support, shared responsibility, and repair of harm?
- **Continuing the practice:** What has this six-week reading practice taught you about how you want to continue engaging scripture?

Leader Note: If the discussion becomes abstract, return to the text: “Where do you see that in Philemon? What word or phrase helps us hear Paul’s appeal more clearly?”

If time allows, connect Philemon and Titus with John Wesley's understanding of social holiness:

- *God's grace forms us personally and communally.*
- *Holiness is expressed through love of neighbor, mercy, justice, generosity, and shared responsibility.*
- *Christian faith becomes visible through communities that honor the dignity of every person.*

Emphasize that spiritual growth is never only private. It becomes visible in relationships and concrete acts of love.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What is one phrase from scripture that you will carry with you after this study ends?
- What is one concrete way you can make your faith effective through partnership, reconciliation, encouragement, generosity, or service this week?
 - Examples may include reaching out to someone who feels isolated, practicing more attentive listening, supporting a local need, repairing a strained relationship when safe and appropriate, continuing a daily reading habit, or sharing an encouraging scripture with another person.

As we move into prayer, hold before God the word you are carrying forward and the next faithful step you are being invited to take.

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A relationship in need of healing, truth, or reconciliation
- A concern for justice, dignity, or the well-being of a neighbor
- A hope for continuing to grow in scripture and prayer

You may say, "As we prepare to pray, you may name a personal concern, a relationship or situation where you long for healing, a need in the church or world, or a hope you are carrying from this study."

Closing Prayer

God of grace and reconciliation, we thank you for the words of scripture and for the fellowship we have shared in this study. Help us recognize the good you are doing among us and make the sharing of our faith effective in love. Teach us to receive one another as beloved siblings in Christ. Give us courage to confront injustice, humility to seek reconciliation, generosity to meet the needs of our neighbors, and faithfulness to continue in your Word. Send us forth as partners in the gospel, bearing witness to the grace and peace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Closing Comments

- Thank participants for their faithful engagement in the six-week Read a Chapter a Day journey.
- Invite them to continue a regular rhythm of scripture reading, prayer, and reflection.
- Encourage participants to remain connected through their local congregation, small group, Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group, and weekly email resources.
- Invite them to share the practice with a friend, family member, or ministry group.

Leader Notes & Reflection

Looking Ahead

- What scripture, question, or practice will you carry forward?
- Who might you invite into a regular rhythm of scripture reading?
- What support would help you continue this practice beyond Read a Chapter a Day?

Notes

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