



***Week 1***

***March 1, 2020***

***Renewing Our Minds  
Discerning God's Will***

## PREPARING FOR SUNDAY

# HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL

God wants to transform you into a new version of you that will renew the way you think and help you discern His will for your life.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. . . . *Romans 2:1-2 (NLT)*

Have you ever noticed how younger siblings try to do exactly what they see their older sibling doing? For the older sibling, this can become annoying at times. In fact, when an older sibling has become fed up with this somewhat constant "echo," you may hear them say something like, "Stop being a copycat!" If you are an older sibling, I'm sure you can relate to this behavior as you and your younger sibling were growing up.

In Romans 12, we see our older brother Paul saying the same thing, "Stop being a copycat!" But the difference here is that he wants us to STOP mimicking the behaviors, customs, actions, etc., that we have learned from our fallen and lost world. Instead, he wants us to allow God to begin transforming us into new versions of ourselves. This godly transformation will only happen if and when we begin trusting God to change the way we think. This transformation and new way of thinking will open the door into discerning God's will for your life. And His will for your life is one that is good, pleasing and perfect!

*What can you do to join us in this transformation and new way of thinking for your life and our church?*

# ***DAILY PRAYER FOCUS***

## **MONDAY**

Lord, my thoughts are not Your thoughts, but I know You can help me know You better by reading Your Word. . . .

## **TUESDAY**

Lord, it is hard to be in this world but not of this world. Show me where I am too much of this world, and help me to. . . .

## **WEDNESDAY**

We feed our stomachs and neglect our spiritual souls. Our souls crave Your Word; instead, we try to fill them with things of this world. Lord, show me worldly areas that I could fast: I know that. . . .

## **THURSDAY**

Lord, Your ways are higher than my ways. God, You are very generous with giving; everything I have is from You. You gave the world Your only Son. Show me ways that I can be like You. . . .

## **FRIDAY**

Lord, I pray that I may know and further Your will. We cannot discern Your will if we do not renew our minds. I know that I can renew my mind if I read Your Word and pray every day. I'm asking You for. . . .

## **SATURDAY**

God, You are my defense against the tempters of this world. I need Your help with temptations in my life. . . .

# ***DAILY CLOSING PRAYER***

Lord, my thoughts are not Your thoughts, and my ways are not Your ways. I easily get caught up in the things of this world. Soften my heart, and open my eyes to enjoy Your Word. Let me anticipate getting to read the Bible. You are transforming our church to be generous, just as You are. Renew our minds and our church so that we can bring many more disciples into Your glory. Amen.

# SUNDAY

[M]y thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. . . .  
*Isaiah 55:8-9*

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed . . . that you may discern what  
is the will of God. . . . *Romans 12:1-2*

If you are the Son of God . . . . Away with you, Satan!  
*Matthew 4:1-11*

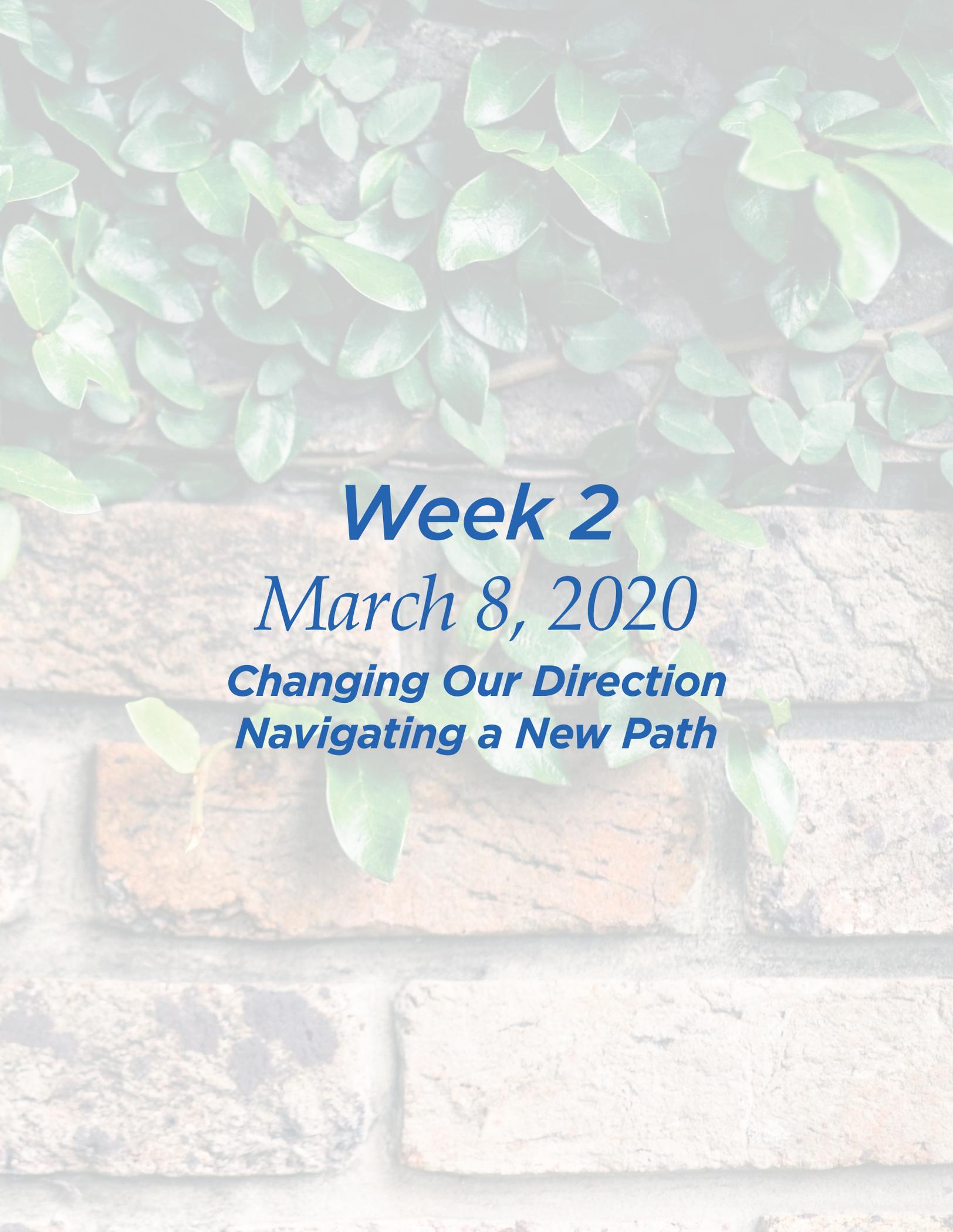
## *Sermon Summary*

The Christian life begins with the realization that a choice is before us: yielding to the Lord or continuing to follow our own way. As we mature and grow, we realize that our ways are not God's ways, and our will is not God's will. But how are we to follow a God whom we do not know, a God whom we cannot see? Jesus came that we might both see God and know Him. We are to resist being conformed to this world, to its false logic, its depraved culture and its despairing mindset. Rather, by God's grace, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Then we are to obey that will as individuals and as a church.

## *Sermon Notes*

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1.** Do you believe that, at this point in history, a critical spiritual choice is before us? Why or why not?
- 2.** In what areas of life do you see that God's ways are not our ways?
- 3.** Where can you identify false logic, a depraved culture or a despairing mindset in our society?
- 4.** Why is it important for us as a church to discern God's will and to follow it?  
*How does that happen?*



# ***Week 2***

***March 8, 2020***

***Changing Our Direction  
Navigating a New Path***

## PREPARING FOR SUNDAY

# HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL

Repentance and believing in the Good News is the best change of direction you can make to lead you on your new path.

[R]epent, and believe in the good news. . . . he saw Levi . . . and said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. . . . *Mark 1:14-15, 2:13-17*

Barry Sanders: you may have heard of him. He is a former American professional football player who played running back for the Detroit Lions from 1989 to 1998. He was an electrifying football player to say the least. But what he was best known for was this uncanny ability to change direction and avoid defenders with ease. He would stop, watch a defender fly by him, start running again, and then stop and make another defender miss. He would do this numerous times up and down the field. It was something special to watch. What if you could change direction like Barry Sanders, but instead of on the football field. . . in your Christian journey.

God desires for us to change our direction through repentance of our sins and believing in Him. But as we see in the scriptures, repenting and believing meant giving up a lot, and in some cases, it meant leaving a lucrative lifestyle behind. While working at his tax booth one day, Levi was faced with this decision to change his direction, stop what he was doing and follow a new path.

The new path was unknown for him, but he took Jesus up on his offer and didn't look back. In the same way, our church has been met with this same challenge to change direction and to navigate toward a new path. We believe that since God has called us to this new path, it will be a path worth taking together as a church.

*How will you seek to join us on this change of direction and new path for our church?*

# ***DAILY PRAYER FOCUS***

## **MONDAY**

Our world is a wilderness, a desert where Your righteousness is needed in the most urgent way. Not only do I remember the former things, but I am still engaged in them. I pray that You help me perceive the new things. . . .

## **TUESDAY**

Lord, You generously give us Your Word amidst this desert so that we may know You and Your path and praise Your holy name. Please remind us to praise You even in our struggles. I know that during the week I should. . . .

## **WEDNESDAY**

Father, we know Your healing power. You came as Jesus Christ to save us from our inherited plague of sin. Please forgive me of my sin, and help me to turn from my sin. Be with me today, and protect me from. . . .

## **THURSDAY**

Your disciples dropped everything, turned around and followed You. By Your grace, give me courage and complete faith in You. Help me to. . . .

## **FRIDAY**

I know it is important not only to confess my sins, but also to repent of those sins. Not just once, but with continual faithfulness toward You. Guide me to. . . .

## **SATURDAY**

We thirst for Your presence, yet we try to quench that thirst with content of this world. We could change the path of the world by indulging in Your content and following Your ways. Instill in me. . . .

# ***DAILY CLOSING PRAYER***

God, Your righteousness is needed in the most urgent way. You generously gave us Your Word amidst this desert so that we may know You and Your path and praise You. You came to us as Jesus Christ. Your disciples dropped everything to follow You. Today, we focus on ourselves and don't know what sacrifice is. Thank you for Your Word and the examples in it. Please forgive me of my sins, and help me to turn from them. Fill me with your presence, and help me change the path of this world. Amen.

# SUNDAY

Do not remember the former things. . . . I am about to do a new thing; . . .  
*Isaiah 43:18-21*

[R]epent, and believe in the good news. . . . he saw Levi . . . and said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. . . . *Mark 1:14-15, 2:13-17*

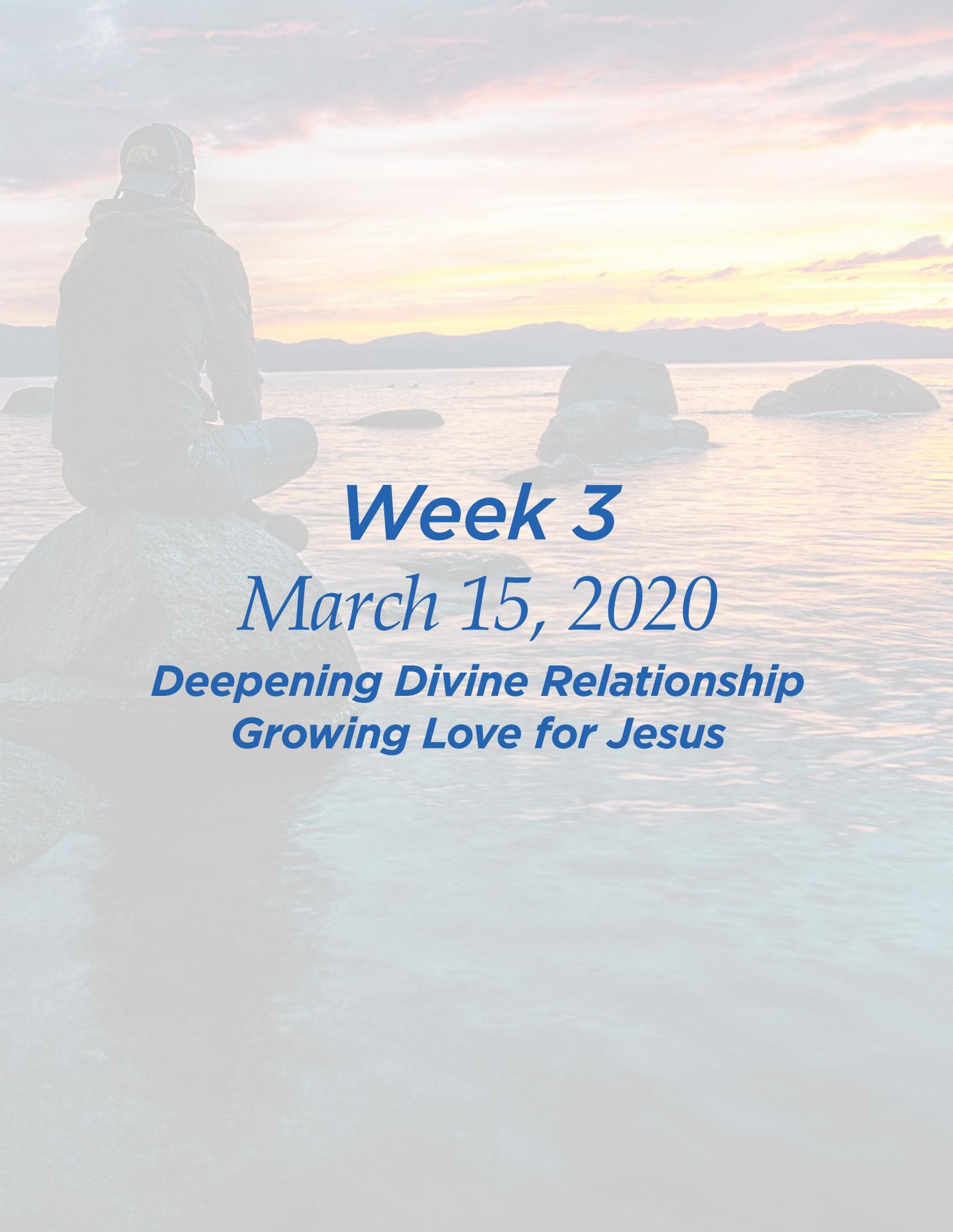
## *Sermon Summary*

One of the hardest things to do when driving is to realize and admit you are headed in the wrong direction. Then you must stop, get your bearings and turn around to get on the right road. The same is true in life and in the church. It is painful to admit that your choice of direction was wrong. But the Lord desires for us to humble ourselves, to repent and to let Him put us on the right path. God is doing a new thing, and can make a way in the desert. A corrupt tax-collector can take a new direction and become Jesus' disciple. And our church can take a new direction and a new path given us by Jesus.

## *Sermon Notes*

## *Reflection Questions*

1. Why is it hard to change our direction, in driving and in life?
2. Why do you think Jesus began his public ministry by saying “Repent and believe the good news”?
3. When does our comfort with “things as they are” become a sinful stubbornness to change?
4. How must the church change in order to reach out to new generations of seekers and disciples?

A person wearing a dark hoodie and a cap is sitting on a large rock in the foreground, looking out over a body of water towards a sunset. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. In the distance, there are low mountains or hills. Several other large rocks are scattered in the water.

# ***Week 3***

***March 15, 2020***

***Deepening Divine Relationship  
Growing Love for Jesus***

## PREPARING FOR SUNDAY

# HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL

Deepening our relationship with the Lord and our growing love for Him is very important. In fact, it's our greatest commandment; love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself. . . . *Matthew 22:34-40*

You may have heard the title, "What's Love Got to Do with It?" In 1984, it was a song released by the American singer Tina Turner. It was ranked 309 on *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of "The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time" and ranked 38 on the Songs of the Century list. In 2012, it was also inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. To say this song is a popular song is an understatement. It is one the most remembered songs in American music history.

When we think about the phrase, "What's Love Got to Do with It," from the perspective of Tina Turner, it leads us to a more human perspective of what love truly is. It is very well documented that Tina Turner experienced lots of pain and heartache from her abusive relationship with Ike Turner. So, for her, love brought many bad memories. But if we look at this phrase from a biblical standpoint, then it can have a whole new meaning.

"What's Love Got to Do with It," from a biblical sense, teaches us, Christians, that love is an action and not so much a feeling. It requires us to work at it and not just verbalize it. Love has "a lot to do with it," but it must start with our love for the Lord. This love that Jesus reminds us of in Matthew uses words like, "you shall." This is to remind us that love is an action and not something we just say. But if you notice, it doesn't say "you shall" love your neighbor as yourself first, it clearly tells us whom we shall love first, and that is the Lord. It also uses words like, "with all." This is to remind us that when we love the Lord and our neighbors, we should put all our effort, energy and strength into it. This is again to signify love as being an action on our part.

Last, when we love the Lord, it should be done with the heart, soul and mind. God is clearly letting us know that loving with just one of these nouns is not enough. It is going to take all three. So, when we hear the phrase, "What's Love Got to Do with It," let us be reminded that it has everything to do with our love for the Lord first, our neighbor, and it is something we "shall" do with "all" of our heart, soul and mind.

*What does it mean for you to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself?*

# ***DAILY PRAYER FOCUS***

## **MONDAY**

Lord, please strengthen my inner being with Your Holy Spirit. With love, I ask Christ to dwell in my heart. I ask that I put all faith in You, and I turn to You with. . . .

## **TUESDAY**

Father, I was created for You and by You. You are the head of our church, and Your glory dwells within us. Help our church to reflect Your awesomeness, and open our eyes to see the growth that will come. You can accomplish all things; use me to. . . .

## **WEDNESDAY**

Teacher, I need Your help. I rely on myself and tend to love myself more than I love my neighbors. We as a church have a unique relationship with You that can bring others to love you as we do. Many may not give us that chance with our current building setup. Help me love my neighbor as myself by being generous. Grant me ideas. . . .

## **THURSDAY**

I want to be rooted in Your love, and I know it is far bigger than I or anyone can comprehend. With this love, You can accomplish through me and Your church far more than we can imagine. Show me what You can do through me. . . .

## **FRIDAY**

For Your Son, all things in heaven and on earth were made, including our church. A lot of the changes that are needed are visible and exciting, but like Your creation, much of it is invisible, or behind the scenes. Show me how I can honor Your creation and sacrifice on the cross. . . .

## **SATURDAY**

When money isn't an issue, I enjoy spending money on. . . . I want to love You with my whole heart, soul and mind. Help me imagine the possibilities You could do with that money. . . .

# ***DAILY CLOSING PRAYER***

Dear God, please fill me with Your love and Holy Spirit. I ask for Christ to dwell in my heart. I know that I am to love You with my whole heart, mind and soul, and to love my neighbor as myself. In updating our church, some who may have never given us a chance may come to You, and my commitment will be one way that I am loving my neighbor as myself. Root our church in Your love and Word, and I have faith that we will accomplish great things through You. Amen.

# SUNDAY

the breadth of . . . the love of Christ. . . able to accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine. . . *Ephesians 3:14-21*

so that he might come to have the first place in everything. . . .  
*Colossians 1:15-20*

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself. . . . *Matthew 22:34-40*

## *Sermon Summary*

Modern Christians tend to focus on God's love for us (a good thing), but many have lost sight of the greatest commandment, that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. To claim Jesus as our Lord, we must put him in the first place in our lives. When Jesus is only one of many priorities in our lives, we have lost our way. The church then becomes a merchant of religious goods and services, rather than the very Body of Christ, proclaiming the gospel of Christ as Savior and Lord. Recovering the Lordship of Jesus Christ is foundational to transformation and renewal in the Church. The world needs a Church that boldly proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord.

## *Sermon Notes*

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1.** How can we learn to focus on both God's love for us, and our love for Him?
- 2.** Why do some people struggle to develop a strong relationship with Jesus Christ?
- 3.** What are the challenges to keeping Christ as Lord, and in the first place in our lives?
- 4.** How can we be a church that demonstrates our love for Jesus and our love for our neighbors?



***Week 4***

***March 22, 2020***

***Deciding for Discipleship  
Following Jesus***

## PREPARING FOR SUNDAY

# HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL

True discipleship is a decision that requires us to follow Jesus at all costs.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me. . . . *Matthew 10:37-39*

Over the last few months, I'm sure many of us have thought and spoken the word "LOVE" thousands of times. Some may think back on the day they had their first-born child and how that moment immediately captured their hearts. Others remember the day they exchanged vows on their wedding day and all that goes into loving a spouse. You may place a special note in each other's lunch bags, hold hands, pray together, hug and kiss one another, share encouraging words, and make sacrifices for each other. At the end of the day, we want to make sure the other feels loved.

Expressing love to those closest to us is necessary and vital for our relationships. But, what does it look like for us to truly love Jesus? In Matthew 10, Jesus makes us think about the love we have for those closest to us: father, mother, daughter and son. Then, he makes us think about how our love for them stacks up against our love for Him. Do we love them more than we love Him? To Jesus, the answer to this question should be no.

Jesus wants us to love him above anything else and follow him no matter what. Does this mean we should not love those closest to us? Absolutely not! It just means that our first love and focus in our lives should be Jesus. Once we make this a priority, then our calling is to be His disciples who then make other disciples. This is a call that will transform us into His likeness and unite us, so that others will come to know Him as Lord and Savior.

*How can you join us on this journey of loving Jesus, following Him, and true discipleship?*

# ***DAILY PRAYER FOCUS***

## **MONDAY**

Your gospel tells us that many wanted to follow You, but their priorities prevented them from being fit to be Your disciples. I want to make sure that You are my priority and that nothing keeps me from being able to follow You. Reveal to me. . . .

## **TUESDAY**

I know that I cannot enter the kingdom of heaven by any other means than You. That means trusting in You completely, following Your commands and repenting of my sins. In these areas of my life, I need help trusting You more. . . .

## **WEDNESDAY**

Jesus told me that if I lose my life for Your sake, I will find it. I have tried to find meaning or purpose in so many things. . . but none of them compare to the life You give. I want to follow you in all I do. Guide me to. . . .

## **THURSDAY**

Jesus said, "Go and proclaim the kingdom of God." I confess that I rarely tell others of the kingdom. However, the changes that are coming are exciting, and I find myself wanting to tell friends and family. I realize I should be excited about both: sharing my faith and talking about our church. Thank you for. . . .

## **FRIDAY**

You are the Good Shepherd, but I have not always listened to You. At times, I have even listened to other creations of this world, full of empty promises and keeping me from following You. Help me to listen for Your voice alone, and in doing so, actually follow Your commands. I can better listen for Your voice by. . . .

## **SATURDAY**

I know that if I love my parents more than You, I am not worthy of You. And similarly, if I don't take up the cross and follow You, I am not worthy of You. I want to identify things in this world that keep me from being worthy. Please help me. . . .

# ***DAILY CLOSING PRAYER***

Father, I want to make sure that You are my priority and that nothing keeps me from being able to follow You. Help me trust in You completely, following Your commands and repenting of my sins. Our church has been a community leader in the past, and it is time for it to lead again. Let us be excited and tell everyone about the changes that are coming so that we can fill our community with Your love. Help us to be discerning of the voices we hear and to listen only for Your words. Thank you for calling our church congregation to this challenge. We can do all things with Your help. Amen.

# SUNDAY

I will follow you Lord; but let me first. . . .  
*Luke 9:57-62*

[T]he sheep follow him because they know his voice. . . .  
*John 1:1-10*

Whoever loves father or mother more than me. . . .  
*Matthew 10:37-39*

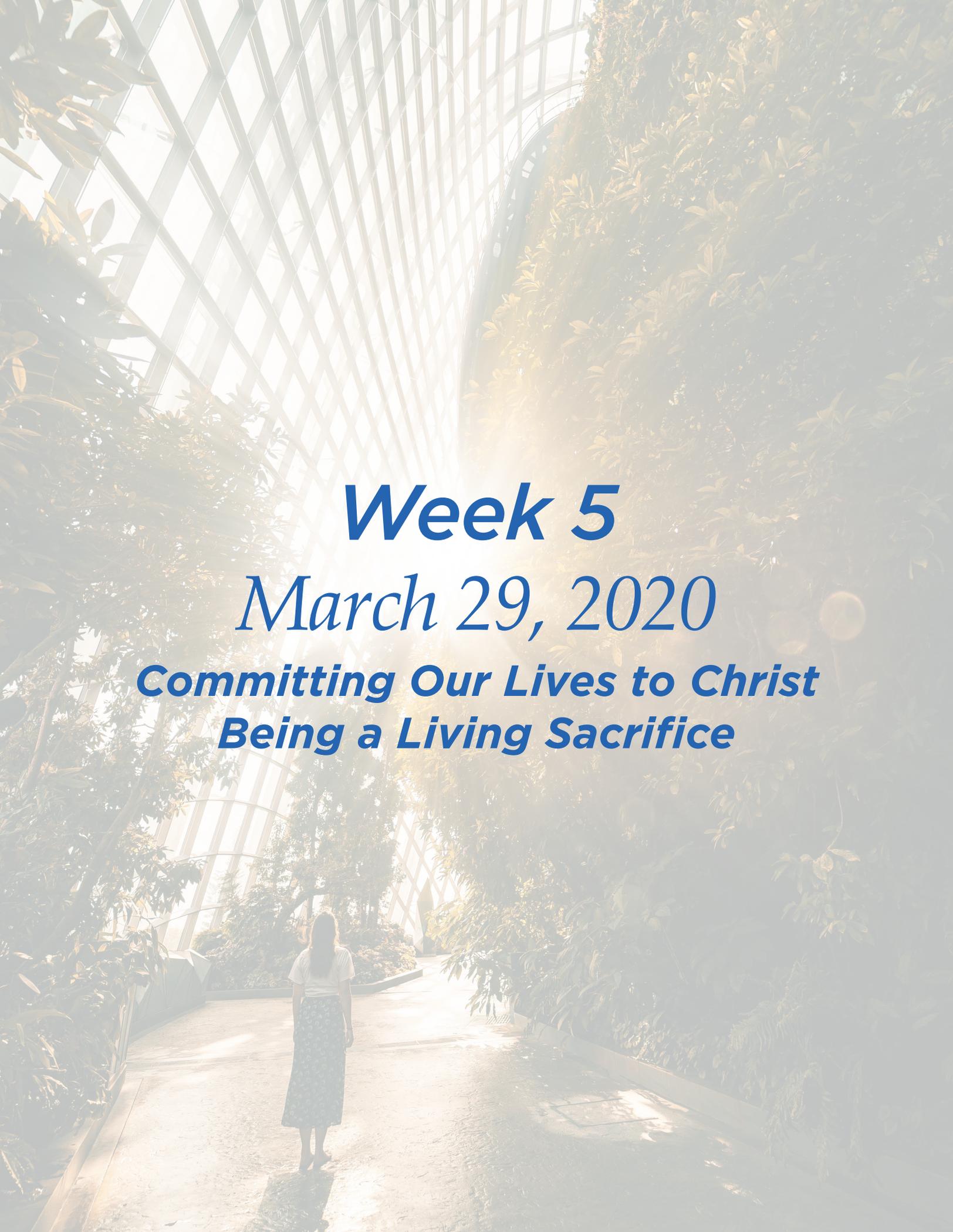
## *Sermon Summary*

In much of the American church, we have turned discipleship into an intellectual exercise rather than a physical training exercise. In order to follow Jesus as disciples, we must leave our familiar surroundings and literally go to where he calls us, obeying his commands and following in his footsteps. And our calling is to be disciples who make other disciples. But we have settled for a Christian life full of inspiration in our minds without any consecration in our bodies. As we learn to truly follow Jesus, our words and our actions begin to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and we begin to grow in Christ-likeness, united in Christ and serving others.

## *Sermon Notes*

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1.** Why do you think that many American Christians lack depth in their faith and the practice of it?
- 2.** What are some of the excuses that we use for not worshiping, following and serving Jesus?
- 3.** What do you think are the keys to experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in our ministries?
- 4.** Where do you see a need for greater obedience to the Lord in your life and in the church's life?

A woman in a white t-shirt and a patterned skirt is walking away from the camera down a paved path in a conservatory. The conservatory has a high, arched ceiling made of a white metal lattice structure. The walls and ceiling are covered in lush green plants and foliage. Sunlight filters through the lattice, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

***Week 5***

***March 29, 2020***

***Committing Our Lives to Christ  
Being a Living Sacrifice***

## PREPARING FOR SUNDAY

# HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL

As Christians, we must be ready to commit our lives to Christ and be living sacrifices for the work of the Kingdom.

[L]et them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. . . . [W]hat will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? . . . *Matthew 16:24-26*

In life, just about all of us are committed to something. As the new year is upon us, some of us are committed to losing weight. Others are committed to their favorite sports teams. Commitment is a big part of our lives. But, if you have lived long enough, I'm sure you have learned that our commitments sometimes start out strong, but somewhere along the line we may become less committed. This happens to all of us, so you are not alone in this.

But, what about our commitment to Christ? Has it been a commitment that started out strong and then fizzled as time has gone along? I think we can all agree that committing our lives to Christ and being living sacrifices can be hard at times. It's hard because it requires us to give up a lot. If we look at the lives of those Christians that came before us, we see how difficult it was for them. Some even lost their lives committing their lives to Christ.

In Matthew 16, Jesus makes it clear that committing our lives to Him will most definitely be a sacrifice. He reminds us that we will have to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. Our walk with Jesus is not one to take lightly. But when we commit our lives to Christ and become living sacrifices, we will experience God's grace and salvation power. It is no easy task, but one that we as Christians are called to today and forever.

*How will you commit your life to Christ and be a living sacrifice for the work of the Kingdom?*

# ***DAILY PRAYER FOCUS***

## **MONDAY**

King David knew that an offering to God required full price. God wants me to be a giver like Him, and He has given us His best. Let me do the same for Him. Let our church be a shining example of us worshipping God, and let no one be able to deny our commitment to Him. I love. . . .

## **TUESDAY**

Lord, I thank You for showing me how to be a living sacrifice. In my life, speak to me with Your Holy Spirit how You want me to be that living sacrifice. I want my daily life to be spiritual worship of You. Each day, I can find time for You by. . . .

## **WEDNESDAY**

Jesus said that for me to follow Him, I must deny myself and carry my cross. To help Your church, I am going to need to find where I can deny myself and give to You. Help me to give generously. . . .

## **THURSDAY**

It is amazing how You transform our minds through the knowledge of Your Word. This helps us to get a glimpse of Your will and guide us to what You want us to do to further it. According to Your Word, transform in my life. . . .

## **FRIDAY**

God, You bought me for a price. It cost You everything: Your only Son. I am humbled by Your sacrifice for me, and I want to be sacrificial in my generosity for others, which ultimately brings glory to You. You are the ultimate inspiration, and I can sacrifice. . . .

## **SATURDAY**

Jesus, You told me that if I want to find my life, I must lose it first for Your sake. And I will surely lose it if I am trying to save it with my own will power. I don't want to forfeit my soul for what the world has to offer. I know that I can lose. . . .

# ***DAILY CLOSING PRAYER***

God, You made me. Everything I am and everything I have belong to You. You have entrusted me to manage the things You have given me. I trust that Your will for our church is for each of us to be a living sacrifice by sacrificing our wants and to give generously to Your church so that it can be a place where many more believers come to love You. Thank you for: the sacrifice of Your only Son; teaching us how to bear our cross to follow You; and for Your transforming Word. Let our transformation be evident not only in us, but also in our place of worship. We love You. Amen.

# SUNDAY

I will not take for the Lord . . . offerings that cost me nothing.  
*1 Chronicles 21:24*

[P]resent your bodies [yourselves] as a living sacrifice, . . .  
*Romans 12:1-2*

[L]et them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. . . . [W]hat will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? . . . *Matthew 16:24-26*

## *Sermon Summary*

It is a rare occasion when Christians come together to do something truly significant for God's kingdom. It happened in the early church, when the disciples (followers) of Jesus took His great commission and became his apostles (sent ones) in a world desperate for the good news of the arrival of God's reign (or kingdom). It happened in the Middle Ages when Christians lived as salt and light, preserving both learning and civilization. It happened in the Reformation when Christians rediscovered the grace of God as the means and the power of salvation. It happens whenever the Church responds to the Lord by taking up our cross and following Jesus. It is time for us at FPCA to come together and answer the call of the Lord like our predecessors did. We must become living sacrifices for Christ, who are not conformed to this world, but who are transformed and committed to doing God's will in this time and place. May that unity and transformation become evident through our **Transform** capital campaign.

## *Sermon Notes*

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1.** Both the people who founded FPCA (1888), and the people who built our current building (1956), faced great costs and hardships in doing so. What does trusting the Lord and honoring our heritage from them look like today?
- 2.** Every renewal, awakening and revival in the church happened when a committed group of Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, put the Lord and his kingdom work ahead of their personal needs and wants. How can we pray and work for such renewal in the church?
- 3.** Prayer has preceded and accompanied every significant act for God's kingdom work. How can prayer become the DNA of this effort for the Lord?
- 4.** The Lord will be speaking to the hearts of those who are open to being living sacrifices for Him. How can you prepare your heart to hear the voice of the Lord?