

3RD QUARTER 2026

Holiness
unto the
Lord!

The Church of God
WEEKLY BIBLE LESSONS

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A Warm Welcome to This Quarter's Lessons

As you journey through these lessons, you will find encouragement and guidance for your own walk with God. Whether you're seeking a deeper sense of purpose, struggling with daily challenges, or longing to serve your church and community more effectively, these studies are meant to meet you where you are. My hope is that you will discover not only biblical truths, but also practical steps that help you grow in faith and experience God's presence in everyday life. By engaging with each topic, you'll be equipped to live out holiness in your unique circumstances and, together with others, advance the mission God has placed on your heart.

Lesson 1 — Called to Holiness: Set Apart for God's Service. Defines holiness as God-centered distinctness and consecration, showing why holiness is essential and how it grows through daily obedience. It calls the church to visible integrity that reflects God's character.

Lesson 2 — Freedom From Bondage: Honoring God With Our Bodies. Applies Christian liberty to addictive and harmful practices, calling believers to refuse mastery and live in sober stewardship. Emphasizes love, wisdom, and a clear witness.

Lesson 3 — Wholesome Leisure: Temperance in Recreation and Entertainment. Teaches moderation and discernment so rest renews the soul and entertainment supports purity and peace. Offers practical questions for choosing what builds up.

Lesson 4 — Modesty That Becomes Holiness in the Christian Life. Grounds modesty in worship and love of neighbor, offering biblical principles for dress and grooming without legalism. Helps believers honor God in everyday presentation.

Lesson 5 — Let Your "Yes" Be Yes: Truthful Speech Without Oaths. Explains Christ's call to plain, trustworthy speech and shows how honesty strengthens relationships and witness. Encourages truth spoken with gentleness and respect.

Lesson 6 — Restitution: Making Wrongs Right. Connects repentance to repair, guiding believers to restore what was harmed with wisdom, humility, and care. Shows how restitution protects integrity and rebuilds trust.

Lesson 7 — Temperance and the Law of Liberty: Freedom Without Compromise. Presents liberty as love-governed self-control, warning against both legalism and indulgence. Equips believers to make wise decisions in "gray areas."

Lesson 8 — Hope for the Brokenhearted: A Christian Response to Suicidal Despair. Offers a sensitive, pastoral approach rooted in Scripture, urging compassion, safety, and hope in Christ. Guides the church in caring well for those who suffer.

Lesson 9 — Sent With Authority: The Gift and Calling of the Apostle. Explores apostolic "sentness," foundations, and accountability that strengthen churches and multiply servants. Highlights mission, doctrine, and healthy oversight.

Lesson 10 — Speaking God's Word: The Gift and Calling of the Prophet. Clarifies prophetic purpose for strengthening and correction, with biblical safeguards for testing and humility. Calls the church to truth in love and holy watchfulness.

Lesson 11 — Good News on the Move: The Gift and Calling of the Evangelist. Centers evangelism on the Gospel, connecting outreach to discipleship and training every believer to witness. Encourages boldness that remains gentle and respectful.

Lesson 12 — Shepherding the Flock: The Gift and Calling of the Pastor. Describes shepherding care, protection, discipleship culture, and integrity that models Christlike leadership. Shows how healthy pastoral ministry nurtures healing and growth.

Lesson 13 — Grounded in Truth: The Gift and Calling of the Teacher. Shows why accurate, loving teaching produces discernment, obedience, and unity in the body of Christ. Emphasizes handling Scripture well so believers mature and serve.

– Bishop Timothy Miller

“CALLED TO HOLINESS: SET APART FOR GOD’S SERVICE”

Lesson 1 ■ For week ending July 4, 2026

Holiness is not an optional extra for a few devoted believers; it is the normal mark of God’s people. From the first pages of Scripture, the Lord calls His covenant community to be distinct in conduct, worship, and desire. In a world that presses us toward compromise, holiness keeps our lives aligned with God’s character and God’s will. It shapes how we speak, what we pursue, and how we treat others when no one is watching. This lesson explains biblical holiness in clear terms—what it is, why it matters, and how it guides daily living for both leaders and laypeople.

KEY TEXT: *“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life”* (1 Thessalonians 4:7, NIV).

1. God’s holiness sets the standard, so His people must pursue a life that reflects His character.

• When God says, *“Be holy, because I am holy”* (Leviticus 11:44–45), He anchors holiness in His Own nature—not in human tradition. Israel’s call to be set apart distinguished them from surrounding nations shaped by idols, where worship often blended with immorality. In Christ, God still calls His people to reflect His purity in everyday choices (1 Peter 1:15–16), so our distinctness is meant to be visible and gracious. **DISCUSSION:** How does God’s character shape your definition of holiness? Where do you feel pressure to blend in? What would faithful distinctness look like there?

2. Holiness means being set apart for God, so it includes both separation from sin and devotion to His purposes.

• In Scripture, holiness is consecration—belonging to God for His service (Romans 6:13). We turn from what defiles and present our lives to Him as worship (Romans 12:1–2), which includes what we allow to shape our minds and habits. Holiness becomes practical in what we do with our bodies, words, relationships, time, and resources, because devotion always shows up in decisions. **DISCUSSION:** Where should “set apart” change your habits? How can devotion to God show up in your routine this week? What is one choice you can make today that reflects consecration?

3. Without holiness no one will see the Lord, so believers must treat holiness as essential, not optional.

• The book of Hebrews urges believers to pursue holiness: *“without holiness no one will see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14). Holiness is not salvation by works; it is the fruit of salvation—grace teaching us to deny ungodliness and live godly lives now (Titus 2:11–12). A holy church makes Christ visible through transformed lives, and that witness is especially needed in confusing times. **DISCUSSION:** Why does Scripture speak so strongly about holiness? What would change if holiness became a shared priority? What is one area where you need to take holiness more seriously?

4. God supplies promises and grace, so we should cleanse ourselves and keep growing toward mature holiness.

• Paul calls believers to cleanse themselves *“from everything that contaminates body and spirit”* and to keep growing in holiness (II Corinthians 7:1). This growth is shaped by Scripture and Spirit-empowered obedience (John 17:17; Galatians 5:16), often through daily repentance and renewed thinking. The goal is inward purity that prepares the church to stand ready for Christ (Ephesians 5:27). **DISCUSSION:** What practices help you pursue holiness consistently? Who can support you with prayer and accountability? What next step of obedience have you been delaying?

“FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE: HONORING GOD WITH OUR BODIES”

Lesson 2 ■ For week ending July 11, 2026

Holiness is more than avoiding a list of wrongs; it is living as people who belong to Christ. Some practices that appear harmless can slowly become bondage, shaping desires, weakening judgment, and dulling our witness. Scripture calls believers to sobriety and self-control, not because God withholds joy, but because He protects freedom. In this lesson we think biblically about alcohol, drugs (including misuse of prescriptions), tobacco, and gambling, asking what truly benefits the soul. The Lord’s aim is not condemnation but deliverance and faithful stewardship.

KEY TEXT: *“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything”* (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV).

1. God’s people are called to freedom, so we must refuse anything that masters us.

• Even when something is allowed, it may not be helpful (1 Corinthians 10:23). The test is mastery: if a habit controls the body, time, money, or mind, it rivals Christ’s lordship. Scripture warns against intoxication and calls us to self-control (Ephesians 5:18; Titus 2:11–12). Freedom in Christ includes the ability to say “no” without fear or craving. **DISCUSSION:** What signals that a choice is moving from liberty to bondage? Where do you need wise limits? Who could help you stay accountable?

2. Drunkenness and impairment are condemned in Scripture, even though wine appears in biblical history.

• Wine appears in everyday life in Scripture (John 2:1–11), yet drunkenness is consistently condemned (Proverbs 20:1; Romans 13:13). The issue is impairment—loss of sobriety and self-governance—which dishonors God and harms others. Love also considers influence, refusing choices that confuse our testimony or damage a weaker believer (Romans 14:13–21). In biblical times, public drunkenness was often linked to pagan feasts, making Christian sobriety a clear witness. **DISCUSSION:** How do you distinguish use from abuse biblically? How should love for others shape your decisions? What does a good witness require in your context?

3. Because our bodies belong to the Lord, we should avoid practices that harm health or nurture impurity.

• Because we belong to the Lord, we are to honor Him with our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Addictive and harmful practices can weaken stewardship and spiritual alertness (Romans 12:1–2; 1 Peter 2:11), and they often hide beneath secrecy and shame. Where bondage is present, the church should combine truth, compassion, and practical help, pointing people to Christ and to wise support. **DISCUSSION:** What does honoring God with your body look like this week? Who can you invite to pray and walk with you? What step toward freedom needs to happen now?

4. Gambling’s love of money can distort trust in God and damage families, so believers should pursue contentment.

• Gambling can feed love of money and desire for quick gain, which Scripture warns can lead to ruin (1 Timothy 6:9–10). It can also fuel covetousness and put family responsibilities and generosity at risk (Hebrews 13:5; Proverbs 28:20). When the heart begins to trust “chance” for provision, faith is quietly replaced by superstition and risk. God calls His people to contentment and stewardship, trusting Him as Provider. **DISCUSSION:** How can gambling reshape your view of work and provision? What practices help you grow in contentment? Where do you need to rebuild trust in God’s provision?

“WHOLESONE LEISURE: TEMPERANCE IN RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT”

Lesson 3 ■ For week ending July 18, 2026

God does not call His people to a joyless life. He gives rhythms of work and rest, and Jesus invited His disciples to step away from constant demands. Yet leisure can either renew the soul or quietly reshape it, training our loves and habits. Entertainment choices influence what we tolerate, what we desire, and what we find “normal.” In this lesson we apply temperance—self-control and moderation—to recreation and entertainment so our rest stays wholesome and our hearts remain anchored in holiness.

KEY TEXT: *“He said to them, “Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest”* (Mark 6:31, NIV).

1. Jesus affirms the need for rest, so believers should receive leisure as stewardship rather than escape.

• Jesus called His weary disciples to rest (Mark 6:31), reminding us that fatigue can weaken spiritual alertness and patience. Scripture presents rest as renewal that strengthens obedience (Exodus 20:8–11; Isaiah 40:31). Temperance helps us choose leisure that restores body and spirit rather than feeding avoidance or excess. **DISCUSSION:** Does your recreation renew you for faithfulness? What boundary would make your rest healthier? What kind of rest do you most neglect?

2. Temperance applies to entertainment, so we should practice moderation and self-control in what we consume.

• Self-control is part of Spirit-formed maturity (Galatians 5:22–23), and even “neutral” activities can become excessive when they dominate time and attention. Paul’s question is what is beneficial and builds up (1 Corinthians 10:23), not what merely fills hours. Moderation protects prayer, family life, and service, and it also trains the will to obey in harder areas. **DISCUSSION:** What entertainment most competes with devotion to God? What limit will you set this week? What will you do with the time you regain?

3. Because God calls us to hold fast to what is good, we should avoid entertainment that nurtures sin or normalizes evil.

• Believers are told to test what they take in and refuse what trains the heart toward evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22). Entertainment can stir lust, contempt, or cruelty, so Scripture calls us to turn from evil and pursue what is good (Psalm 101:3; Psalm 34:14). Discernment is a practical form of holiness because it guards what becomes familiar to the soul. **DISCUSSION:** What content weakens your spiritual focus? What wholesome alternative could you choose? What standard will guide your decisions going forward?

4. When our minds stay fixed on the Lord, we find true peace, so our leisure should support worship, purity, and a steady mind.

• God gives peace to a mind that is steady and trusting (Isaiah 26:3), so leisure should leave us clearer, not more restless. Jesus offers rest for the soul (Matthew 11:28–30), so we choose recreation that supports worship, purity, and love of neighbor. Wholesome leisure often includes people—shared meals, conversation, service, and simple joy that strengthens community. **DISCUSSION:** After your usual entertainment, are you more ready to pray and love others? What change would help you pursue true rest? How could your leisure better strengthen your family or church?

“MODESTY THAT BECOMES HOLINESS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE”

Lesson 4 ■ For week ending July 25, 2026

The Christian life is lived before God and before others, so even ordinary choices—like dress and grooming—can support holiness or distract from it. Scripture does not demand one style for all people, but it does call believers to modesty, good judgment, and reverence. In every culture, clothing communicates values and intentions. For that reason, Christians should dress honorably, avoid excess, and refuse anything designed to stir lust. In this lesson, we consider how modesty adorns the gospel in practical ways.

KEY TEXT: *“I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God”* (1 Timothy 2:9–10, NIV).

1. Modesty is a form of worship, so our appearance should point attention to Christ rather than to ourselves.

• Paul’s instruction in 1 Timothy 2:9–10 contrasts outward display with the beauty of “good deeds,” reminding us that godliness is our true adornment. In the ancient world, elaborate dress and jewelry often signaled status and wealth; the church was to model different values. Modesty is thoughtful restraint—choosing what supports worship and witness rather than self-display. **Another Scripture reference:** 1 Peter 3:3–4 also teaches, *“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”* **DISCUSSION:** What messages does your appearance communicate? How can you dress in ways that point attention to Christ?

2. Because believers are called to purity, we should guard against clothing that exposes nakedness or is designed to provoke lust.

• Scripture calls God’s people to flee sexual immorality and pursue holiness (Matthew 5:27–28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5). Clothing meant to be seductive works against that calling by feeding lust and the *“works of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:19–23). Modesty is also love for neighbor, refusing to become a stumbling block (Romans 14:13). **DISCUSSION:** What principles help you tell the difference between fashionable and provocative? What change would most support purity in your context?

3. Because God values the heart, we should avoid both prideful show and harsh judgment, pursuing humility and honor.

• God looks beyond outward appearance to the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), so modesty must not become a tool for pride or control. Yet believers are still called to be honorable and above reproach (Titus 2:7–8). Humility guards us from two extremes: flaunting ourselves on one side and harshly judging others on the other. **DISCUSSION:** Where are you tempted toward pride in appearance? Where are you tempted to judge, and how can you respond with grace?

4. Wise stewardship includes modest cost and appropriate grooming, so believers should dress suitably for their environment and ministry.

• Believers live and minister in varied environments, yet the principle remains: dress should be decent, modest in cost, and appropriate to the work God has given (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). Excessive ornamentation can feed vanity and divert resources from generosity and responsibility (1 Timothy 6:17–19). A neat, honorable appearance can also remove distractions so the message is heard clearly. **DISCUSSION:** What does “appropriate” look like in your daily life and ministry? Where could you simplify for better stewardship?

“LET YOUR “YES” BE YES: TRUTHFUL SPEECH WITHOUT OATHS”

Lesson 5 ■ For week ending August 1, 2026

Words are never neutral in the kingdom of God. Jesus teaches that our speech reveals what rules the heart, and the health of a church can often be measured by the honesty of its conversations. In a world where people feel pressure to exaggerate, manipulate, or protect themselves with impressive promises, Christ calls His followers to plain truth. The goal is not clever wording but dependable integrity—speech that can be trusted without added guarantees. This lesson explains why believers should avoid oath-taking in ordinary talk and how truthful speech strengthens witness, relationships, and holiness.

KEY TEXT: *“All you need to say is simply “Yes,” or “No”; anything beyond this comes from the evil one”* (Matthew 5:37, NIV).

1. Jesus commands simple truthfulness, so believers should speak plainly without trying to strengthen their words with oaths.

• In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus corrects a culture where people used elaborate formulas (“by heaven,” “by the earth”) to make statements sound more binding (Matthew 5:34–37). His point is that truth should not depend on special phrases; a disciple’s normal speech should already be reliable. When we feel the need to add dramatic assurances, it can reveal insecurity, pride, or a habit of exaggeration. Christian integrity aims for words that match reality, without performance. **DISCUSSION:** When are you most tempted to exaggerate or add extra promises? What would it look like to practice calm, plain truth in those moments?

2. Truthful speech flows from a changed heart, so holiness includes rejecting deception, half-truths, and manipulative speech.

• Scripture calls believers to put away falsehood and speak truthfully because we belong to one another (Ephesians 4:25). That includes more than outright lies; it also includes misleading impressions, selective stories, and words designed to control outcomes. God “delights in people who are trustworthy” (Proverbs 12:22), and the Spirit forms a people whose speech is clean and dependable. Where honesty is practiced, trust grows; where it is neglected, relationships weaken. **DISCUSSION:** What kinds of “small” dishonesty are most accepted in your environment? How can you replace them with truthful, loving speech?

3. Because our words represent Christ, we should protect our witness by keeping commitments and correcting mistakes quickly.

• James echoes Jesus: *“Do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else”* (James 5:12). Instead, the believer’s credibility is built over time through consistency: doing what we said we would do, admitting when we cannot, and owning our failures without excuses. The Early Church grew in part because Christians became known as people whose word could be trusted even under pressure. Honesty with follow-through is a quiet but powerful testimony to the Lord we serve. **DISCUSSION:** Where do you need to repair trust with more consistent follow-through? What is one commitment you should either keep promptly or revise honestly?

4. Truth must be spoken in love, so we should pair honesty with gentleness, self-control, and respect for authority.

• Biblical truth means integrity shaped by love—not harshness. Scripture urges us to avoid harmful talk and use words that build others up (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6). When society requires oaths or pledges, believers should be truthful and respectful, keeping a clear conscience before God (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 3:15–16). The goal is to honor Christ with honesty and dignity. **DISCUSSION:** How can you speak truthfully without hurting others? When do you need wisdom to maintain respect and a clear conscience?

“RESTITUTION: MAKING WRONGS RIGHT”

Lesson 6 ■ For week ending August 8, 2026

Sin is never only “between me and God.” When we wrong another person, love and justice require more than words—we must make things right as far as we are able. From Moses’ Law to Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus, Scripture shows restitution as a fruit of real repentance. This lesson explores why restitution matters, what it looks like, and how it protects the witness and integrity of God’s people. Genuine repentance moves us beyond confession to action, prompting us to restore what was lost, repair damaged relationships, and demonstrate that our faith produces tangible change. By practicing restitution, believers reflect God’s character and invite healing within the community.

KEY TEXT: *“If the wicked person gives back the pledge, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life and does no evil, that person will surely live; they will not die”* (Ezekiel 33:15, NIV).

1. True repentance moves beyond confession to repair, so believers should seek to make wrongs right.

- God welcomes the repentant, but repentance is not merely emotional regret; it is a turning that bears fruit (Matthew 3:8). When harm has been done, love seeks restoration, not minimum compliance (Matthew 5:23–24). Restitution is often the practical step that shows we are no longer protecting sin, excuses, or gain. **DISCUSSION:** Is there any wrong you have confessed to God but not yet addressed with the person affected?

2. God’s Law teaches restitution as justice, so we should restore what was taken or damaged whenever possible.

- In Israel, restitution was not optional; it was part of righteous living in community (Exodus 22:1). The goal was more than returning an item—it was restoring trust and acknowledging the seriousness of the wrong. Today, restitution may involve returning property, paying a debt, repairing a reputation where possible, or correcting a harmful record. **DISCUSSION:** What would “restore” mean in your situation—time, money, property, reputation, or opportunity?

3. Restitution flows from a changed heart, so we should let Christ transform how we handle money, power, and truth.

- Zacchaeus did not bargain with Jesus; he responded with generous repair because grace had exposed his sin (Luke 19:8–9). Restitution is not a way to purchase forgiveness, but it is a Spirit-led response to forgiveness that refuses to profit from wrongdoing. It also trains believers to fear God more than embarrassment or loss (Proverbs 28:13). **DISCUSSION:** What fear most keeps people from making restitution, and how does the gospel address that fear?

4. Restitution protects the church’s witness, so leaders should teach it with wisdom, humility, and care.

- Scripture ties righteousness to honest dealing and restored relationships (Ezekiel 33:12–15; II Corinthians 8:21). Yet restitution must be guided by truth and prudence: some situations involve legal constraints, safety concerns, or harms that cannot be fully reversed. Wise pastoral guidance helps believers pursue what is right without creating new wrongs, and it emphasizes that Christ also heals what we cannot repair completely. **DISCUSSION:** Where do you need wisdom to pursue restitution in a way that is both honest and safe?

“TEMPERANCE AND THE LAW OF LIBERTY: FREEDOM WITHOUT COMPROMISE”

Lesson 7 ■ For week ending August 15, 2026

The New Testament teaches that true freedom in Christ means being released from sin, condemnation, and man-made rules, but not a license for self-indulgence. God transforms believers' hearts, leading to self-control and choices rooted in love and wisdom. Unlike legalism, temperance requires internal change. This lesson explores how the “law of liberty” protects Christians from both strict rule-keeping and excess, encouraging loving service to others.

KEY TEXT: *“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:13–14, NIV).*

1. Christian liberty is a calling to love, so freedom must express itself through humble service rather than self-indulgence.

• Paul places a clear boundary on liberty: it must not become *“an opportunity for the flesh,”* but a pathway to loving service (Galatians 5:13–14). James describes God’s will as the *“law that gives freedom”* and urges believers to be doers, not forgetful hearers (James 1:25). This means liberty is not measured by how much we can get away with, but by how faithfully we can love God and neighbor with a willing heart. **DISCUSSION:** Where do you feel most tempted to interpret freedom as permission? What would it look like to use that same freedom to serve someone this week?

2. The Law of Liberty rejects legalism, so righteousness should never be reduced to man-made codes or appearance-based standards.

• The New Testament cautions against relying on rules instead of genuine heart change, noting that salvation can’t be achieved through legislation. James urges believers to follow the *“royal law”* of love and live under the law of liberty (James 2:8, 12). Overemphasizing human checklists in churches can foster pride and judgment (Romans 14:4). Temperance keeps the focus on inner holiness, demonstrated by love, rather than outward performance. **DISCUSSION:** What are signs of growing legalism in a group, and how can leaders encourage holiness without promoting suspicion or pride?

3. The Law of Liberty also warns against abuse, so believers must not use “freedom” as a cloak for sin or harm to others.

• Peter warns believers to live as free people without using freedom as a cover for wrongdoing, but as servants of God (1 Peter 2:16). Paul applies the same principle to everyday choices: if a brother or sister is grieved or harmed, our liberty is no longer loving (Romans 14:15). False teachers, however, promise liberty while being enslaved to corruption (II Peter 2:18–19). Temperance helps us ask not only, *“Can I?”* but also, *“Should I?”* and *“Will this build up?”* (1 Corinthians 10:23). **DISCUSSION:** In what ways can “Christian freedom” be used to excuse sin today? How should love for others shape what you choose to do or avoid?

4. Temperance is the practical guide for matters not directly commanded, so believers should practice self-control that honors Christ and protects the conscience.

• Scripture does not give a detailed rule for every modern decision, but it does give a mature way to decide. Paul teaches that not everything lawful is beneficial, and a disciple must refuse anything that begins to master the heart (1 Corinthians 6:12). Temperance trains believers to evaluate motives, consequences, and spiritual effects, choosing what helps devotion and preserves a clean conscience before God (1 Timothy 1:5). This is the path of Christlikeness: abstaining from evil while using liberty wisely, without drifting into either harsh legalism or careless indulgence. **DISCUSSION:** What “gray area” decisions require temperance in your life right now? What questions can help you choose what is truly beneficial and Christ-honoring?

“HOPE FOR THE BROKENHEARTED: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO SUICIDAL DESPAIR”

Lesson 8 ■ For week ending August 22, 2026

Some burdens feel heavier than words can carry. Scripture never treats suffering lightly, and the church must not respond to deep emotional pain with shame or quick answers. When a person is overwhelmed by despair, they may not truly want life to end—they may feel they cannot see a way for the pain to stop. In this lesson we speak with compassion and clarity: life is God’s gift, despair is not the end of the story, and help is part of God’s care. As we look to God’s Word, we will learn how to seek help, resist spiritual attack, and bear one another’s burdens with hope in Christ.

KEY TEXT: *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:18, NIV).

1. God draws near to the hurting, so the church should respond to despair with compassion rather than condemnation.

• Psalm 34:18 teaches that God is not distant from those who are crushed in spirit. When people struggle with depression, anxiety, or overwhelming grief, the church’s first responsibility is presence—prayer, listening, and patient support (Romans 12:15). Bearing burdens is not optional; it is part of fulfilling the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). We speak truth about life and hope while also treating suffering as real, not as a spiritual embarrassment. **DISCUSSION:** How can a church create a culture where people can admit pain without fear? What practical ways can you show Christlike presence to someone who is struggling?

2. Because human life is sacred, believers should affirm God’s gift of life while urging wise, immediate help in times of crisis.

• Scripture presents life as a gift held in God’s hands, and despair must never be treated as a private matter to hide. Seeking help is not weakness; it is wisdom, and it often includes medical care and counseling alongside prayer and pastoral support (Proverbs 11:14). If you or someone you know is having thoughts of self-harm, it is important to speak to a trusted person right away and contact a healthcare professional immediately. The church’s role is to help people move toward safety and support, not to leave them alone with unbearable pain. **DISCUSSION:** What keeps people from seeking help when they need it? How can believers encourage help-seeking without shame or stigma?

3. Spiritual warfare is real, so believers should resist the enemy’s lies with Scripture, prayer, and steadfast faith.

• Peter warns that the Devil seeks to devour, so believers must be sober-minded and alert (1 Peter 5:8). In temptation, Jesus answered the adversary with the written Word and refused self-destruction, choosing trust and obedience (Matthew 4:5–7). God’s Word exposes lies and strengthens a weakened mind (Hebrews 4:12–13). Temperance in the inner life includes guarding thoughts, refusing hopeless narratives, and leaning on the prayers of the church. **DISCUSSION:** What lies tend to feed despair and isolation? What Scriptures and practices help you resist destructive thoughts and stay anchored in truth?

4. Christ heals the brokenhearted, so we should hold fast to hope and walk with families in grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

• God seeks to heal the brokenhearted and comfort those who mourn (Isaiah 61:1–3). After a suicide, the church should avoid judgment and offer care, trusting God’s **justice** (Psalm 50:6). Families face complex grief and need prayer, support, and patience. The Gospel invites forgiveness and healing where guilt and anger remain (Matthew 6:14–15). **DISCUSSION:** How can churches support grieving families long-term? Where do you need God’s help for healing and forgiveness?

“SENT WITH AUTHORITY: THE GIFT AND CALLING OF THE APOSTLE”

Lesson 9 ■ For week ending August 29, 2026

Jesus does not leave His church without leadership and direction. In the New Testament, one of Christ’s gifts to His people is the apostle—one who is “sent” to establish, strengthen, and extend the work of the Gospel. Apostolic ministry is not about personal status; it is about sacrificial service, doctrinal faithfulness, and Spirit-empowered mission. When healthy, it helps the church stay anchored in truth while moving outward in bold obedience. In this lesson we will consider the biblical purpose of apostles and how their work serves the maturity and unity of the body of Christ.

KEY TEXT: “So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11–12, NIV).

1. Apostles are Christ’s sent servants, so apostolic ministry should be measured by faithfulness to Jesus and His mission.

• In Scripture, an apostle is a “sent one,” commissioned to advance the Gospel and strengthen the church (Acts 13:2–3). Paul repeatedly ties his apostleship to obedience to Christ and to the stewardship of preaching the gospel (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 9:16). True apostolic ministry therefore emphasizes sacrifice, perseverance, and accountability, not personal empire-building (II Corinthians 11:23–28). **DISCUSSION:** What evidences of faithfulness should a church look for in apostolic leadership? How can we keep “sentness” connected to humility?

2. Apostolic ministry helps establish churches, so it should strengthen doctrine, order, and spiritual stability.

• The Apostles laid foundations by teaching Christ-centered doctrine and appointing leadership for healthy congregational life (Acts 2:42; Titus 1:5). This foundation was not human tradition but the Gospel of Christ, guarding believers from drifting into error (Galatians 1:8–9). In the first-century church, rapid growth required clear teaching and wise oversight; the apostolic gift served that need so believers could mature rather than be “tossed back and forth” (Ephesians 4:14). **DISCUSSION:** Where do you see the church needing stronger foundations today? How can leaders strengthen stability without becoming controlling?

3. Apostles equip others for ministry, so their success is seen in multiplying servants, not gathering dependents.

• Ephesians teaches that Christ’s gifts equip the saints for works of service, building up the whole body (Ephesians 4:12). Apostolic leaders therefore develop other leaders—training, delegating, and releasing people into their callings (II Timothy 2:2). When apostolic ministry is healthy, it creates movement: new works planted, believers mobilized, and communities reached, all under the lordship of Christ. **DISCUSSION:** Are you being equipped to serve, or only encouraged to watch? What could your church do to multiply workers more intentionally?

4. Apostolic authority must remain under Christ, so churches should test claims, discern fruit, and practice accountability.

• The New Testament expects discernment: the church is to test teaching and refuse deception (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Paul himself submitted his message to the wider church for confirmation (Galatians 2:1–2), modeling accountability. Apostolic authority is never absolute; it serves the Word of God and the good of Christ’s people. Where accountability is absent, abuse becomes likely; where humility and testing are present, the church is protected and built up. **DISCUSSION:** What practices help a church discern true spiritual authority? How can leaders invite accountability without undermining their calling?

“SPEAKING GOD’S WORD: THE GIFT AND CALLING OF THE PROPHET”

Lesson 10 ■ For week ending September 5, 2026

God’s people need more than information—they need a Living Word that calls them back to covenant faithfulness. In Scripture, prophets speak with a burden for God’s honor, exposing sin, strengthening the weary, and pointing the church toward Christ. Prophetic ministry is not primarily about prediction; it is about proclamation—declaring God’s message with clarity and courage. When exercised biblically, it brings conviction without cruelty and comfort without compromise. This lesson explores the purpose of prophetic ministry and the safeguards Scripture gives so the church is built up in truth and love.

KEY TEXT: *“But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort”* (1 Corinthians 14:3, NIV).

1. Prophetic ministry strengthens the church, so it should build up believers in courage, repentance, and hope.

• Paul describes prophecy as speech that strengthens, encourages, and comforts (1 Corinthians 14:3), which means it serves the church’s maturity rather than personal spotlight. In both Testaments, God’s Word through prophets confronted sin and called people back to faithful worship (Jeremiah 6:16), but it also lifted the downcast with promises of God’s steadfast love (Isaiah 40:1–2). Healthy prophetic ministry can awaken a congregation from spiritual drift and renew a sense of holy purpose. **DISCUSSION:** What is the difference between conviction and condemnation? How can prophetic speech produce courage rather than fear?

2. Prophets must be rooted in Scripture, so prophetic words should agree with the Bible and exalt Jesus.

• God never contradicts Himself, so any message claiming to be from the Lord must align with His written Word (2 Timothy 3:16–17). New Testament prophecy is to be weighed and tested within the church (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 John 4:1). A key mark of sound prophetic ministry is that it honors Christ and leads to obedience, not confusion, manipulation, or personality-driven control (Revelation 19:10). **DISCUSSION:** What does it mean to “test” a prophetic message biblically? What safeguards help a church stay open to God while resisting deception?

3. Prophetic ministry calls out sin, so it should speak truth with holiness, humility, and love.

• Scripture commands believers to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Prophets often address difficult issues—idolatry, injustice, hypocrisy, and compromise—but their tone should reflect God’s character, not human anger. In biblical history, prophets were accountable to God and often suffered for faithful speech (1 Kings 18:17–18; Matthew 5:11–12). When prophetic ministry is harsh, boastful, or sensational, it misrepresents the Holy One; when it is humble and clear, it becomes a mercy to the church. **DISCUSSION:** How can truth be spoken clearly without becoming harsh? What heart attitudes must be guarded in anyone who brings correction?

4. Prophetic ministry helps keep the church ready, so it should awaken watchfulness and a desire for holiness.

• Christ gives gifts to equip His people until the church grows into maturity (Ephesians 4:11–13). Prophetic ministry contributes by stirring spiritual alertness and keeping eternal realities in view (Matthew 24:42). It reminds believers that God’s promise and warning are both expressions of love—calling us away from destruction and toward life. Properly received, prophetic ministry leads to prayer, repentance, and renewed devotion. **DISCUSSION:** What practices help you stay spiritually watchful? How does prophecy, when biblical, help the church prepare as Christ’s faithful people?

“GOOD NEWS ON THE MOVE: THE GIFT AND CALLING OF THE EVANGELIST”

Lesson 11 ■ For week ending September 12, 2026

The church exists because the Gospel was preached. Evangelists are Christ’s gift to keep the church outward-facing—compelled by love for the lost and confidence in the saving power of Jesus. Evangelistic ministry does more than hold meetings; it announces the message of repentance and forgiveness and helps believers learn to witness with clarity and compassion. In many generations, God has used evangelists to awaken communities and to remind churches that mission is not optional. This lesson explains the purpose of the evangelist and how evangelistic ministry strengthens the whole body, not just the people who preach publicly.

KEY TEXT: *“In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”* (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).

1. Evangelists proclaim Christ, so evangelistic ministry should center on the gospel, not personality, pressure, or performance.

• The Gospel message is clear: Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again, and He calls people to repentance and faith (1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Acts 2:38). Evangelists keep this message central, resisting the temptation to replace it with entertainment or manipulation. In Acts, Philip preached Christ and brought people to baptism and new life (Acts 8:5–8, 12). When evangelism is faithful, it magnifies Jesus, not the messenger. **DISCUSSION:** What are signs that evangelism has drifted from the Gospel? How can we share Christ with conviction while avoiding pressure tactics?

2. Evangelists help gather the harvest, so their work should lead people into discipleship and connection to the church.

• Jesus commands not only going, but making disciples (Matthew 28:19–20). New believers need grounding in Scripture, baptism, fellowship, and learning to obey Christ (Acts 2:41–42). Evangelists therefore serve best when they work with pastors and teachers so converts become stable disciples rather than isolated decisions. In the New Testament, evangelistic preaching was often followed by intentional instruction and community formation. **DISCUSSION:** What helps new believers become rooted and stable? How can evangelism and discipleship be better connected in your congregation?

3. Evangelists equip the saints, so every believer should be trained to witness with gentleness and clarity.

• While some are specially gifted, all believers are called to be Christ’s witnesses (Acts 1:8). Evangelists often stir courage and provide practical training—how to tell your testimony, how to explain the Gospel, and how to answer questions with patience (Colossians 4:5–6). 1 Peter 3:15 ties witness to both preparation and character: gentleness and respect. The goal is a witnessing church, not a few witnessing individuals. **DISCUSSION:** What keeps believers from sharing their faith? What simple step could you take this week to be better prepared to give an answer?

4. Evangelistic ministry often meets resistance, so evangelists and churches must rely on prayer, holiness, and the Spirit’s power.

• Scripture shows that spiritual opposition accompanies the Gospel’s advance, so prayer and holiness are not optional (Ephesians 6:18–20). Paul asked for prayer *“that I may declare it fearlessly”* (Ephesians 6:19), and the Early Church prayed for boldness amid threats (Acts 4:29–31). Evangelists also model perseverance, trusting that only God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). **DISCUSSION:** Where do you see resistance to the Gospel in your setting? How can your church support evangelistic work through prayer, holiness, and practical partnership?

“SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK: THE GIFT AND CALLING OF THE PASTOR”

Lesson 12 ■ For week ending September 19, 2026

Christ loves His church like a shepherd loves his flock. Pastors are given as a gift to help believers be cared for, protected, fed spiritually, and guided toward maturity. Pastoral ministry is not merely preaching; it is watching over souls, strengthening the weak, correcting the wandering, and fostering unity. Because people’s lives are complex, shepherding requires patience, courage, and tenderness, all under the authority of Scripture. When pastoral ministry is healthy, the church becomes a safe place for healing and growth, and believers learn to follow Christ more faithfully. This lesson explores the purpose of pastors and the biblical qualities that mark faithful shepherds.

KEY TEXT: *“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve”* (1 Peter 5:2, NIV).

1. Pastors shepherd people, so pastoral ministry must be relational care, not distant management.

• Peter frames shepherding as personal oversight marked by willingness and eagerness to serve (1 Peter 5:2). In Scripture, shepherds know the flock and guard it, and Jesus presents Himself as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep (John 10:11–14). Pastoral ministry follows that pattern through presence: listening, praying, counseling, and walking with people through seasons of joy and pain (Romans 12:15). **DISCUSSION:** What kinds of pastoral care most strengthen believers in your church? How can leaders balance visibility with real relational shepherding?

2. Pastors protect the flock, so they must guard doctrine and confront harm with courage and gentleness.

• Shepherding includes protection from false teaching and destructive influences (Acts 20:28–30). Pastors must be able to encourage with sound doctrine and refute error (Titus 1:9), while also correcting people with patience and care (II Timothy 2:24–25). In every age, wolves come in different forms—abuse, deception, division, and moral compromise—and faithful shepherds act to protect the vulnerable. **DISCUSSION:** What threats most commonly harm churches today? How can correction be practiced in a way that protects people without becoming harsh or fearful?

3. Pastors nurture growth, so they should build a culture of discipleship, accountability, and mutual care.

• Pastoral ministry aims at maturity, helping believers grow into Christlikeness (Ephesians 4:13–15). This includes forming habits of prayer, Scripture, service, and fellowship, and encouraging believers to carry one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:1–2). Healthy churches do not depend on one person for care; pastors equip a body that learns to love, serve, and restore one another. **DISCUSSION:** Where is your church strong in discipleship, and where is it weak? What step could strengthen mutual care and accountability?

4. Pastors model Christlike leadership, so they must lead by example, integrity, and humility.

• Peter warns against lording authority over others and calls leaders to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Paul likewise told leaders to watch their life and doctrine closely (1 Timothy 4:16). Pastoral authority truly exists, yet it is defined by the humility demonstrated by Christ (Mark 10:42–45) and takes on a cross-shaped, sacrificial nature. When a pastor’s character matches his message, the church is strengthened; when it does not, the church is wounded. **DISCUSSION:** What character qualities should be most visible in spiritual leaders? How can churches support pastors in integrity, rest, and accountability?

“GROUNDED IN TRUTH: THE GIFT AND CALLING OF THE TEACHER”

Lesson 13 ■ For week ending September 26, 2026

The church cannot mature without sound teaching. Teachers are Christ’s gift to help believers understand Scripture, discern truth from error, and apply God’s Word to daily life. In every generation, confusion and false teaching threaten the church’s unity, but faithful teaching anchors believers in the Gospel and forms stable disciples. Teaching is more than information transfer; it is shaping minds and hearts to love God and obey Christ. When teaching is healthy, the church becomes rooted, wise, and equipped for service. This lesson explains the purpose of the teacher and why teaching ministry is essential for the building up of the body of Christ.

KEY TEXT: *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”* (II Timothy 2:15, NIV).

1. Teachers explain Scripture, so teaching ministry must handle God’s Word accurately and responsibly.

• Paul commands careful handling of *“the word of truth”* (II Timothy 2:15), which includes context, sound doctrine, and faithfulness to the Gospel. In the Early Church, apostolic teaching formed the foundation of belief and practice (Acts 2:42). Because Scripture is God-breathed, teachers serve the church by helping believers understand what God has said and what it means (II Timothy 3:16–17). **DISCUSSION:** What are the dangers of careless Bible interpretation? What habits help you become a better listener and learner of Scripture?

2. Teachers protect the church from error, so sound teaching should produce discernment and stability.

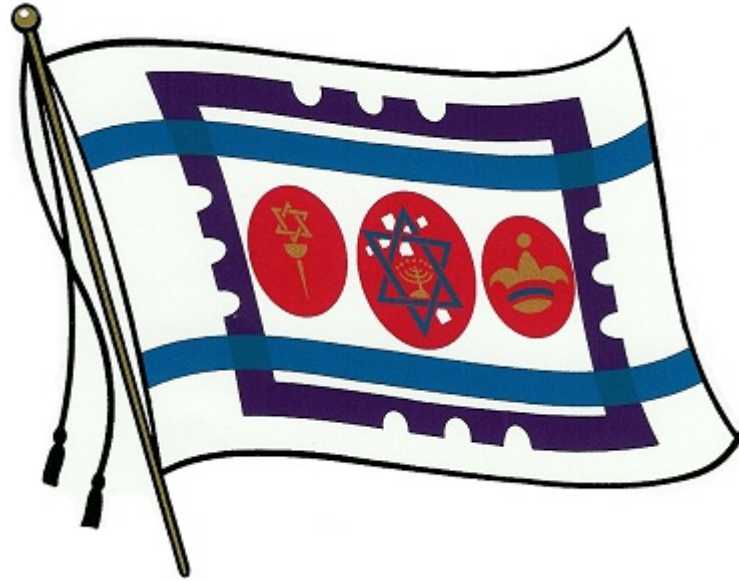
• Ephesians warns against believers being *“tossed back and forth”* by every wind of teaching (Ephesians 4:14). Teachers serve as stabilizers, helping the church recognize false doctrine, unhealthy trends, and manipulative messages. Discernment grows as believers learn the whole counsel of God and compare teaching with Scripture (Acts 17:11). Sound teaching produces steady faith, not constant novelty. **DISCUSSION:** What teachings most commonly confuse Christians today? How can a church develop discernment without becoming suspicious or argumentative?

3. Teachers equip believers for obedience, so true teaching should lead to transformed lives, not merely increased knowledge.

• Scripture warns that knowledge without obedience can become self-deception (James 1:22). Jesus taught that the wise person hears His words and puts them into practice (Matthew 7:24). Therefore, teaching should connect doctrine to discipleship—helping believers obey Christ in family life, work, relationships, and ministry. When teaching is faithful, it produces humility, repentance, and practical holiness. **DISCUSSION:** Where are you tempted to stop at understanding without obeying? What specific truth from Scripture do you need to practice this week?

4. Teachers serve the unity of the body, so they should teach with love, clarity, and a desire to build up others.

• Christ’s gifts aim at building up the body until it reaches unity and maturity (Ephesians 4:12–13). Teachers therefore avoid quarrelsome spirit and instead aim to instruct with patience (II Timothy 2:24–25). Good teaching strengthens families, helps leaders lead, and equips new believers, creating shared understanding across the congregation. When teachers teach with love, truth becomes a bond rather than a weapon. **DISCUSSION:** How can truth be taught clearly without becoming divisive? What teaching topics would most help your church grow in unity and maturity?



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