



BETHANY CHURCH

NEWSLETTER ❖ OCTOBER '26

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A few years ago a lady from our Wisconsin church texted me this quote:

"Church must not be the goal of the gospel anymore. Church should not be the focus of our efforts or the banner we hold up to explain what we're about. Church should be what ends up happening as a natural response to people wanting to follow us, be with us, and be like us as we are following the way of Christ."

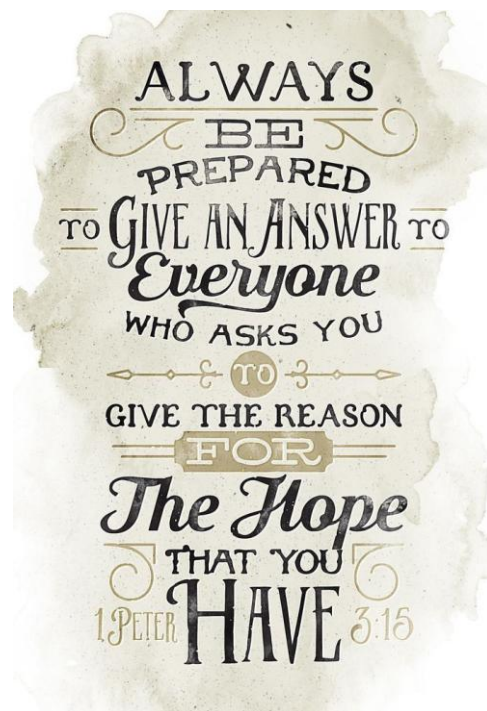
The thought resonated with her as she was trying to pray a way to get her prodigal older, divorced, father of three brother back to church. What she concluded was: all she could do was love him with the love of Christ. Pushing him into a pew on Sunday morning wouldn't be a true answer to her prayers.

Let me unpack this thought further with you. I don't take this to mean the Church is obsolete and to be left behind. My take is: being a member of an organization (a church) is not what's going to infuse the Good News into others. Christians are called and commissioned to be like Christ...to be light in the darkness...to be salt in a tasteless spoiled world. We have to demonstrate a Christ-like level of character everywhere we go with everyone we have contact with. If we're not walking with and talking like Jesus out in the world, who would be attracted to the idea of coming to church with us to find out more about the Jesus we confess to follow?

Do you pray for the Holy Spirit to make you a brighter witness for Christ? Do you seek out ways to connect with people all week long in ways that may seem unusual and too good to be true? That's the work Jesus calls us to, right? "My Kingdom is not of this world."

As people experience a love that is unnatural to us because the Spirit in us is guiding and empowering us; they are going to pause and eventually ask questions. And when the questions come, have an answer ready. Be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you. Even though you may face ridicule and rejection, point to Jesus who wants to give grace freely and unconditionally. Your answers don't have to be long—just be honest. Trust God will lead you what to say.

Let's trust God to grow our church family spiritually and numerically. It probably won't happen with invitations to come to a Sunday church service. But as we follow Christ in our lives regularly, consistently, publicly, others will take note that we have been with Jesus. Pastor Rob



REACH

LOVE

SERVE

Puzzle!

NAMES OF GOD

Every name of God tells us something about his power, love and care for his people. Use the Scripture clues to uncover just some of these special names.



F _____ (Matthew 6:9)

A _____ and O _____ (Revelation 1:8)

I A ____ (Exodus 3:14)

Y _____ (Exodus 6:2-3)

G _____ M _____ H _____ (Genesis 14:19)

G _____ A _____ (Genesis 17:1)

R _____ (Psalm 18:2)

J _____ (Psalm 75:7)

F _____ (Psalm 18:2)

H _____ O _____ (Isaiah 40:25)

Charging Forward in Stewardship



Rhinoceroses are remarkable creatures. Strong, sturdy and surprisingly fast, a rhino is built to protect. When it senses danger, especially near its herd or its young, it does not hesitate. It moves with focus, strength and purpose.

There may be a stewardship lesson for us in that. God has entrusted each of us with gifts, time and resources to use for his kingdom. When opportunities come to serve, give, encourage or help, faithful stewards do not stand still and wait for someone else to go first. They respond with willing hearts and steady faith.

Stewardship is not passive. It calls us to move with purpose, give with conviction and serve with the strength God provides. May we be quick to answer God's call, bold in putting our faith into action and faithful in caring for the people and work God has placed before us.

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## What is lament?

The spiritual discipline of lament may not come naturally, and churches rarely teach it. Because we're raised to stay silent if we can't say something nice, passionately pouring out our sorrow just doesn't seem right.

My opinion changed when I heard author Sharon Garlough Brown explain this spiritual practice from God's perspective. As parents can attest, toddlers have an innate ability to find foreign objects and put them in their mouths. Concerned parents bend down and coax the child to remove the toy, bottle top, coin or rock. "Spit it out." "Let me have it." "It's not good for you to swallow that." As a concerned parent, God sees and knows what's troubling us. He knows that this world's woes and trials will hurt us if we keep them all inside. God, our good and gracious Father, wants us to passionately pour out our grief, so he bends down, looks us in the eyes, and says, "Spit it out." "Let me have it." "It's not good for you to swallow that."

Spend time with God, sharing your laments. God loves you and is faithful to listen well.

—Janna Firestone

# Luther and the Bible



**Reformation Day is celebrated by many Protestant churches on October 31. It commemorates the Reformation and honors leaders such as Martin Luther, whose courage and conviction helped shape church history.**

**Luther's life was threatened because he spoke out against practices he believed did not reflect the true mission of the Church. Forced into hiding, he found refuge at Wartburg Castle as the guest of the ruler of Saxony.**

**While there, Luther took on an enormous task: translating the Bible from the original languages into German. This was no**

**simple project. At the time, Germany was made up of many regional dialects, making communication difficult from one area to another.**

**Luther wanted ordinary people to clearly understand God's Word. To make sure his translation used everyday language, he is said to have listened carefully to common speech, even consulting the castle's butcher for familiar expressions and wording.**

**Luther's translation became a tremendous gift to the German people. Not only did it place Scripture into the hands of everyday readers, but the language he used also helped unify the many German dialects. In that sense, Martin Luther is often considered one of the fathers of the modern German language.**

One-way ticket

# Seeds of Victory

Months before the U.S. victory at the World War II Battle of Midway, important work was happening far from the ocean. Code analysts were quietly studying Japanese messages, using early tools that came long before the computers we know today. Their careful work helped crack a code and gave American forces the warning they needed to avoid an ambush. It makes you wonder what those long days felt like. Did the analysts ever grow tired of searching for answers? Did they wonder whether their efforts mattered? Did they feel discouraged when the breakthrough had not yet come? We can understand that feeling. Christians sometimes grow weary, too. We wonder whether teaching children about Jesus is making a difference. We wonder whether small acts of kindness, quiet prayers or faithful service will ever bear fruit. We see sin, sorrow and brokenness around us and wonder how victory will come.

But God sees what we cannot. No faithful work done for him is wasted. The Spirit who helps us plant seeds of truth and love is also able to bring the harvest. And because of Christ, the final victory is already secure.

### One-way ticket

**While on a red-eye flight from California to Philadelphia on a stormy night, evangelist Tony Campolo sat near someone who wanted to chat. Upon learning that Campolo was a Christian, the seatmate said, "I believe that going to heaven is like going to Philadelphia," meaning you can get there by various modes of transportation. "We all end up at the same place." When Campolo woke from a nap and saw that the descending airplane was circling Philly in the fog, he told his neighbor, "I'm glad the pilot doesn't agree with your theology." Confused, the man asked what Campolo meant. "The people in the control tower are giving instructions to the pilot: 'Coming north by northwest, three degrees, you're on beam, don't deviate from the beam.' I'm glad the pilot's not saying, 'There are many ways into the airport. There are many approaches we can take.' I'm glad the pilot's saying, 'There's only one way we can land this plane, and I'm going to stay with it.'"**

# BOUNDLESS JOY

JOEL KIM

**W**hat makes Christianity unique is its ability to see reality from a different perspective. Paul knew something about this. Paul faced unspeakable challenges, an uncertain future, and physical discomforts. Yet he reminds us to rejoice.

Writing from a Roman prison cell, awaiting a verdict that could end his life, Paul does something that defies our categories: He rejoices. Not as a performance, not as a coping mechanism, but as an overflow of something tethered to realities far more durable than his present suffering. It is difficult to miss the repeated mentions of rejoicing in the book of Philippians (see 1:4, 18a, 25; 4:4). “Yes,” he writes, “and I will rejoice” (1:18b). Paul’s joy is not a past memory that he is trying to recover; it is a confidence about what lies ahead.

The ground of that confidence appears in Philippians 1:19, where Paul borrows the words of Job. Standing before a divine tribunal that his accusers believed had condemned him, Job declared, “This will be my salvation” (Job 13:16). Likewise, Paul says of his circumstances, “This will turn out for my deliverance.” The word that Paul uses for “deliverance”—*sōtēria*—echoes that same courtroom. Like Job, Paul faces two verdicts simultaneously: the uncertain ruling of a Roman court and the certain verdict of the heavenly court. One may sentence him to death; the other has already declared him righteous because of Jesus Christ. And Paul has no doubt which verdict is the final one.

This is what frames everything. Paul is not indifferent to outcomes—he speaks with genuine transparency about his preference to go and be with Christ (Phil. 1:23), but he

knows that he will remain for the Philippians’ sake (vv. 24–25). But the outcome does not determine his standing. He has been adopted into God’s family—not as a foster child in a provisional and probationary arrangement but as a fully and permanently incorporated son. “If children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). No Roman court can reverse that inheritance.

It is this identity that produces Paul’s extraordinary declaration in Philippians 1:21: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The symmetry is remarkable. Both possibilities—life and death—are gains, because both are saturated with Christ. To remain in the flesh means fruitful labor, gospel advance, and the joy of the Philippians. To depart means to finally, fully arrive at home where his Father is. As R.C. Sproul once observed, “A person can have biblical joy even when he is mourning, suffering, or undergoing difficult circumstances.”

This boundless joy tied to the good news is what makes Christianity unique. We do not rejoice because our circumstances have improved. We rejoice because our status has been irrevocably secured by the One who “began a good work” and will bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6). Our joy is anchored not to what is temporary but to what is eternal. In Christ, even prison is a place of praise and rejoicing. May this boundless joy in Christ Jesus lead you to joyful worship. ■

**REV. JOEL KIM** is a Ligonier Ministries teaching fellow, president and assistant professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary California in Escondido, Calif., and a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America.

Lord, fill my heart with lasting joy that isn't dependent on my circumstances. Help me focus on Your faithfulness instead of my struggles. Let Your joy strengthen me, encourage others thru me, and remind me that my hope is always secure in You. Amen

# HOW TO HELP CHILDREN TAKE INITIATIVE WITHOUT CONSTANT REMINDERS



- ✓ Homework
- ✓ Feed the dog
- ✓ Clean room
- ✓ Practice
- ✓ Pack bag



**Dr Scott Turansky**  
**Biblicalparenting.org**

Many parents feel like they're carrying the mental load for the entire family. They remind children to brush their teeth, finish homework, feed the dog, clean bedrooms, put away laundry, pack backpacks, and get ready on time. After a while, parenting can start to feel like a full-time job of reminding, prompting, and repeating the same instructions over and over again.

If you've ever wondered why your child seems unable to remember responsibilities without constant reminders, you're not alone. Most children naturally depend on external prompts when they're young. The problem is that many families unintentionally get stuck there. The parent becomes the child's external conscience, constantly supplying the motivation and reminders that should eventually come from within.

The good news is that initiative can be taught. Children can learn to notice responsibilities, manage tasks independently, and take ownership of their actions. But helping them develop that skill requires a shift in the way parents think about responsibility training.

The goal isn't simply getting the task done today. The goal is helping children learn how to manage themselves tomorrow.

## **When Parents Become the "Middleman"**

Many family conflicts begin with a simple pattern:

The parent notices a responsibility. The parent reminds the child. The child delays.

The parent reminds again. The child delays again. The parent becomes frustrated.

The child becomes annoyed. The relationship suffers.

The task eventually gets completed, but the process drains energy from everyone involved.

In this pattern, the parent has become the middleman between the responsibility and the child. The child isn't responding directly to the task itself. Instead, the child is responding to the parent's voice.

Over time, children can become dependent on that voice. They stop noticing responsibilities because they've learned that Mom or Dad will eventually remind them. In essence, the parent's reminders become part of the child's organizational system.

The challenge is that this approach doesn't build initiative. It builds dependence.

Children may become quite skilled at responding to reminders without ever learning how to manage responsibilities on their own.

That's why wise parents gradually work to remove themselves from the middle.

## **Teaching Children to Notice Environmental Cues**

One of the most powerful ways to build initiative is helping children connect responsibilities directly to cues in their environment rather than to a parent's voice.

Think about how adults manage many responsibilities.

We don't usually wait for someone to remind us to stop at a red light. The red light itself serves as the cue. We don't need someone to tell us to answer the phone when it rings.

The ringing becomes the reminder. Children can learn the same principle.

For example, a clock on the wall can become a cue for bedtime preparation.

A whining dog can become a cue that it's time for feeding or a walk.

A backpack sitting by the door can become a cue to check for homework.

The family dinner table can become a cue for setting places and preparing to gather.

Instead of saying, "Don't forget to feed the dog," a parent might ask, "What tells you it's time to feed the dog?"

That simple question shifts attention away from the parent and toward the environment.

Over time, children begin developing awareness of the signals around them. They start noticing what needs to be done without waiting for instructions.

That's where initiative begins.

## **The Power of the Honor Look**

Many children learn to complete tasks. Fewer learn to take ownership.

That's where what we call the "Honor Look" becomes so valuable.

The Honor Look means looking beyond the minimum requirement and asking, "What else would help here?"

Imagine a child who has been asked to clean the table after dinner. A child focused only on compliance may wipe the table and leave. A child who has learned the Honor Look may notice crumbs on the floor and sweep them up without being asked.

The difference is significant. One child completed the assignment. The other child took ownership.

The Honor Look teaches children to move beyond merely doing what's required and begin contributing in meaningful ways. It helps them think relationally instead of transactionally.

This skill serves children throughout life because employers, teachers, coaches, and future spouses all appreciate people who notice needs and respond proactively.

Initiative often begins with one simple question: "What else would help?"

## **The Privilege of Self-Management**

One of the best illustrations of initiative comes from children who learn to manage themselves. Consider a group of nine-year-olds who were given alarm clocks and taught to wake up independently each morning. Instead of parents repeatedly entering bedrooms and issuing reminders, the responsibility gradually shifted to the children.

Something interesting happened. The children became proud of managing themselves.

What had once been a source of conflict became a source of ownership.

That's because initiative feels good.

Children often rise to challenges when they're trusted with responsibility and given appropriate support. They begin to see self-management as a privilege rather than merely an obligation.

Of course, parents still coach and guide. This isn't about abandoning children to figure everything out alone. It's about gradually transferring responsibility in age-appropriate ways. Every time a child successfully manages a task independently, confidence grows. And confidence often fuels more initiative.

### **What This Means for Parents**

Most parents don't enjoy nagging. They do it because they want their children to succeed. The irony is that too many reminders can actually delay the development of responsibility. Children may become dependent on external prompts instead of learning to manage themselves.

By helping children recognize environmental cues, practice the Honor Look, and take ownership of responsibilities, parents begin transferring the weight of responsibility from their own voice to the child's heart.

That's where lasting growth happens.

Children who develop initiative become less dependent on reminders and more capable of managing life independently.

And that's one of the greatest gifts parents can give.

### **Parenting Takeaways**

- Avoid becoming the middleman between responsibilities and your child.
- Help children identify environmental cues that signal action.
- Use questions rather than constant reminders.
- Teach the Honor Look by encouraging children to notice one extra helpful action.
- View self-management as a skill that develops over time.
- Celebrate initiative whenever you see it.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **At what age can children begin managing responsibilities independently?**

Even young children can begin learning simple routines and responding to environmental cues. Independence grows gradually as children mature.

#### **What if my child ignores the environmental cues?**

Children often need coaching and practice. The goal isn't perfection immediately but gradual growth in awareness and ownership.

#### **Should I stop reminding my child altogether?**

Not necessarily. Parents should reduce reminders strategically while increasing coaching and responsibility transfer.

#### **What's the difference between responsibility and initiative?**

Responsibility means completing what's expected. Initiative means noticing needs and acting without being prompted.

### **Conclusion**

Children aren't born with initiative. It's a skill that develops through training, practice, and opportunity. When parents stop serving as the constant middleman and begin helping children respond directly to responsibilities, something powerful happens. Children start noticing, thinking, and acting independently. Over time, the reminders decrease, ownership increases, and responsibility moves from the parent's voice into the child's heart.

Sunday, October 4, 2026

## Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

***Say what you will about the Ten Commandments, you must always come back to the pleasant fact that there are only 10 of them. —H. L. Mencken***



I love the way children can so often help simplify what the Bible teaches. Oh, they don't always get it right, but the spirit of the law is spot on. Think of the Ten Commandments, for example. One little girl summarized the commandments this way: "Do not lie, cheat or smoke." Another child insisted that the fifth commandment was, "Honor your father and your mother ... and clean your room." A boy proudly announced he had memorized, "Thou shalt not take the covers off thy neighbor's wife." And one earnest second-grader confidently explained the 10th commandment as, "Thou shalt not take your neighbor's ox — unless you ask first."

The Ten Commandments. It's striking *how practical they are*. Don't chase idols, because idols take from you and never give back. Don't misuse God's name, because speaking lightly of God can lead to living lightly *before* God. Rest one day a week — because no human being is built to run without pause. Honor your parents — because stability begins in the household. Tell the truth, keep your marriage promises, protect life, respect boundaries and be content with what you have. When you think about it, these are amazingly wise rules for living a good life and staying out of trouble!

For us, especially in seasons when life feels fragile, the commandments remind us that God still desires our good. These 10 basic rules aren't CliffsNotes, terms and conditions, house rules, suggestions, user instructions or some sort of divine GPS. This is timeless wisdom. These imperatives speak to people of every age, including those of us who now move more slowly, whose days carry memories of joys and regrets. God still calls us to lives of integrity, rest, honesty and trust.

And here's the hopeful part: even when we fail, even when we fall short of these words, the God who spoke them is the God who brings us out of bondage — again and again — into freedom.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: God who speaks life, teach us to love your commandments not as restrictions but as gifts. Shape our hearts so that we walk in honesty, rest, gratitude and trust. May your ancient words guide our days and give peace to our spirits. Amen.*

# **HOME TOUCH®** Activity Page

Week of October 4, 2026

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS

**Sunday:** 1 Corinthians 5-8  
**Monday:** Ezekiel 37-39  
**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 40-42  
**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 43-45  
**Thursday:** Ezekiel 46-48  
**Friday:** Daniel 1-6  
**Saturday:** Psalms 112-118

## Today is World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday began at Shadyside Presbyterian Church and was adopted by Presbyterians in 1936. It is now celebrated the first Sunday in October as a special Sunday when churches around the world give thanks to God for our oneness in Christ, who calls us to serve in the midst of a world of people alienated from him and often estranged from each other. Let's thank God today for God's church, pray that it may be an effective agent for positive change in the world about us, and that many people might hear the good news of Jesus!

## QUOTE FALL

**Directions:** In the box below is a quotation attributed to Henry Ward Beecher. The quote will "fall" into place as you choose the correct letter from each column. For example, in the first column below, the first letter of the first word will be either an I, W, M or T. The second letter of the first word will be an A, E, T or A. We've dropped the first word for you.

|              |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| W            | E            | K | E |   | U | N |   | B | P | T |   | H | T | A | W |   |
| M            | <del>T</del> |   | E | S | V | U |   | T | U |   | H | A | A | T |   |   |
| T            | A            | K | I | S |   | E | O |   | R | I | T | W |   |   |   |   |
| I            | T            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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**ODD WORD OUT:** Circle the word in each group that does NOT belong with the others.

Group 1: lions, tigers, bears, dogs, giraffes

Group 2: peas, corn, carrots, apples, beans

Group 3: Monday, May, Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday

### Quote Fall:

It is not what  
we take up but  
what we give  
up that makes  
us rich.

### Odd Word

### Out:

Group 1 —

dogs;

Group 2 —

apples;

Group 3 —

May.

Sunday, October 11, 2026

## Scripture Reading: Exodus 32:1-14

***The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it. — Arnold H. Glasow***

Consider the following scenario. You decide to bake a cake for your grandson's birthday. You haven't made a cake from scratch since the Carter administration. So you carefully follow the recipe, measuring the flour, cracking the eggs, and mixing the batter until it's perfectly smooth. You place the pan gently into the oven and set the timer.

So far so good. But you get impatient. Every few minutes, you open the oven door "just to check." Each time you peek, the warm air escapes, and the cake sinks a little more. By the time the timer buzzes, the poor cake looks like a sad, deflated hat, like something you sat on. You just couldn't leave it alone long enough for it to do what it was supposed to do.

Impatience rarely ends well — especially when we meddle with things that need time to rise.

The Israelites understood this all too well. In Exodus 32, Moses had been on the mountain longer than expected. The people grew anxious. They wanted reassurance. They wanted something they could see. So, instead of waiting for God's timing, they took matters into their own hands and fashioned a golden calf. Their impatience led to disaster.

We may smile at their foolishness, but if we're honest, most of us have had golden calf moments of our own. When prayers seem unanswered, when days feel long and lonely, when God seems silent, the temptation is strong to rush ahead, make our own solutions, or cling to anything that promises quick comfort.

But the Bible reminds us that God's rarely early and never late. God works on a timetable different from ours, with a wisdom deeper than we can see. What feels like delay is often preparation. What feels like silence is often the yeast working and the bread rising. And what feels like absence is often God holding us quietly and faithfully.

The good news in Exodus 32 is that God remained patient even when the people weren't. God listened, God relented, God continued to walk with them. The story is less about human impatience and more about divine mercy.

And this is good news for anyone feeling the pangs of impatience today!

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Merciful God, keep us from rushing toward easy answers when waiting is hard. Calm our fears, quiet our impatience and turn our hearts away from false sources of comfort. Amen.*

Week of October 11, 2026

## Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** 1 Corinthians 9-12

**Monday:** Daniel 7-9

**Tuesday:** Daniel 10-12

**Wednesday:** Esther 1-3

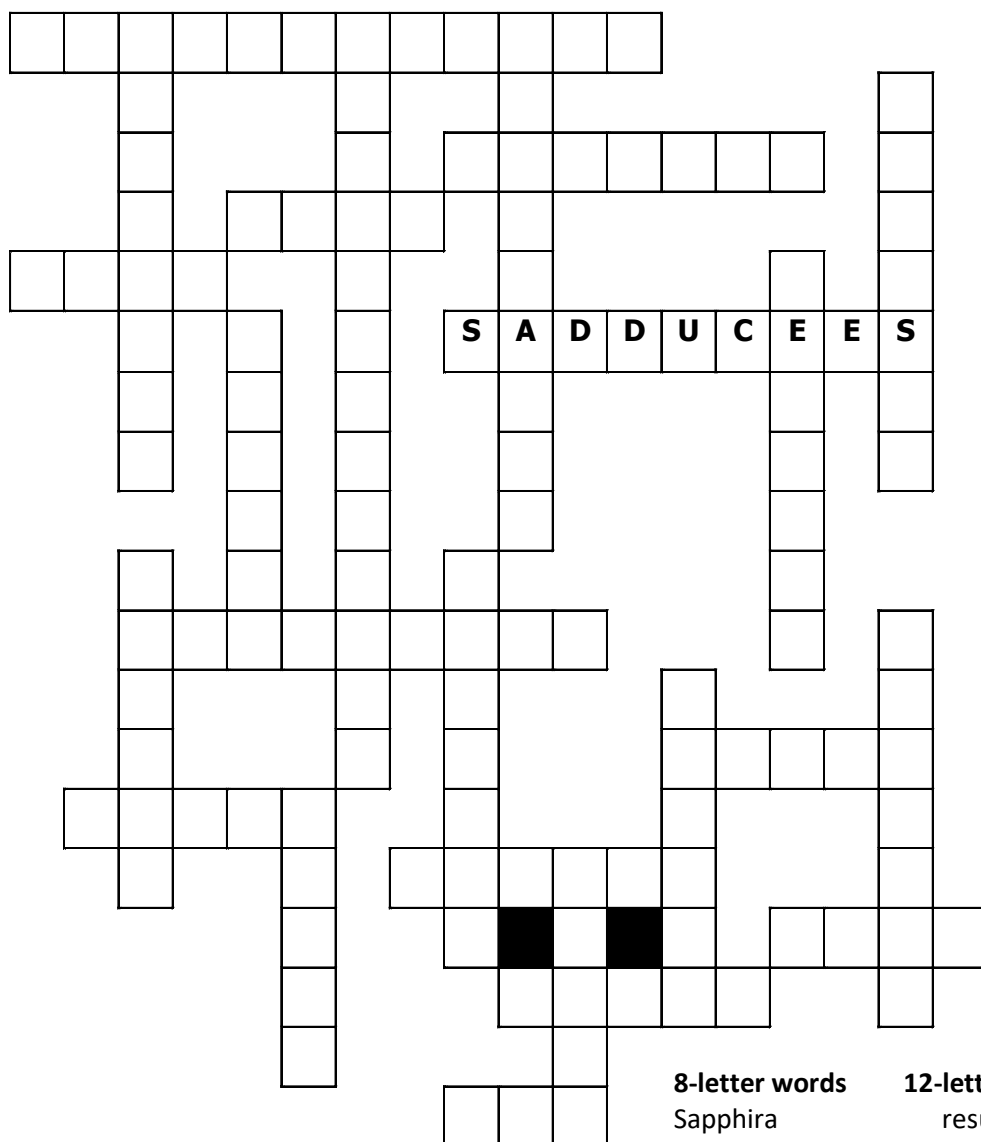
**Thursday:** Esther 4-7

**Friday:** Esther 8-10

**Saturday:** Psalm 119

## CLUELESS CROSSWORD

This crossword has no clues! Fill in the squares according to the length of the words. We've filled in one word to get you started.



### 3-letter words

God

### 4-letter words

holy

John

plot

### 5-letter words

faith

guard

Jesus

Peter

Satan

### 6-letter words

beggar

Israel

nation

Spirit

### 7-letter words

Ananias

miracle

priests

prophet

servant

### 8-letter words

Sapphira

### 12-letter words

resurrection

### 9-letter words

ignorance

Sanhedrin

### 13-letter words

encouragement

**"Autumn is a second spring when  
every leaf is a flower."**

—Albert Camus

Sunday, October 18, 2026

## Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:15-22

***Your priorities must be God first, God second and God third, until your life is continually face to face with God. —Oswald Chambers***

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When we lived in China, Chairman Mao's face was plastered on just about every banknote. In Canada, where I grew up, Queen Elizabeth II appeared on bills and coins as naturally as maple leaves. Here in the United States, the loose change in our pockets bears the image of some of our presidents, like Lincoln (penny), Roosevelt (dime), Washington (quarter) and JFK (half dollar).

And if you travel the world, you find the same pattern: leaders, queens, poets, inventors or national heroes stamped on the money of their countries. Currency always tells you something about who holds authority and whose image carries weight.

The Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus with a trap disguised as a question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor?" If Jesus said yes, he'd anger the Jewish faithful. If he said no, he'd be accused of rebellion. Either way, they thought they had him.

But Jesus was never trapped by the narrow choices others tried to impose. He asked for a coin and held it up: "Whose image is this?"

"Caesar's," they said.

"Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's," Jesus replied, "and to God what is God's."

It's a brilliant answer, but it's also a deeply spiritual one. Coins bear Caesar's image. But we bear God's. The real question isn't whether to pay taxes, but whether we're giving God what belongs to God: our hearts, our trust and our daily lives.

Matthew's telling of this encounter should be encouraging. Even if abilities have changed, even if roles have shifted, the image of God in us hasn't faded. We still belong to God. We still matter to God. We still carry divine dignity.

The world often treats people according to usefulness, productivity or youthfulness. But God sees something deeper. God sees God's own imprint stamped upon your very being. Paying taxes may be part of civic life, but offering ourselves to God is part of eternal life.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: O God, whose image we bear, help us to give our lives back to you with joy. When we feel diminished, remind us of the dignity you have placed within us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** 1 Corinthians 13-16

**Monday:** Ezra 1-4

**Tuesday:** Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1-2

**Wednesday:** Zechariah 3-6

**Thursday:** Zechariah 7-10

**Friday:** Zechariah 11-14

**Saturday:** Psalms 120-123

## Verse to Remember

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;  
and the greatest of these is love.*

—1 Corinthians 13:13

# WORD CHAIN

**DIRECTIONS:** Work with the words below to get from the first to the last by changing just one letter in each step. Each word must be a real word! Give it a try!

### Example:

Change Diver to Major

**DIVER**

DINER

MINER

MINOR

MANOR

**MAJOR**

**RIDER**

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**HOPES**

**RIPEN**

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**LONER**

### Which statement is false?

1. Isaiah was a prophet to the southern kingdom.
2. Isaiah served in the court of King Hezekiah.
3. Before going to the court of the king, Isaiah was a shepherd.
4. When Isaiah's king was dying, the king prayed, and God added 15 more years to his life.

### Answers to Word Chain:

Rider, riser, rises, roses,  
hoses, hopes; ripen, ripen,  
river, liver, lover, loner.  
Statement 3 is false.



Sunday, October 25, 2026

## Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:34-46

***Better is a neighbor who is nearby than kindred who are far away.***  
**—Proverbs 27:10, NRSV**

I don't particularly enjoy watching media clips of some ideologue on a university campus who is facing students with questions. It's an adversarial atmosphere. Everyone knows that the student with the mic is going to try to trap the speaker into an embarrassing or illogical admission. It rarely works.

And it didn't in today's text, when the Pharisees and Sadducees went after Jesus with questions about taxes, resurrection and legal disputes. It had turned into a theological chess match. Then a lawyer stepped forward with one more question: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

Jesus didn't hesitate. He didn't need to consult a scroll or recite a list. He answered with the center of Scripture itself: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (vv. 37-39).

Everything hangs on love. Not ritual. Not rule-keeping. Not intellectual bandwidth. Love is the hinge upon which the entire life of faith turns.

This is both liberating and comforting. Many people can no longer do what they once did — volunteer, serve, lead, host, travel. Yet Jesus reminds us that the greatest commandments are still within reach. To love God in prayer, gratitude and trust; to love neighbor through kindness, forgiveness and intercession. These holy acts remain possible for every believer, no matter the season of life.

Jesus then asks his own question, turning the tables: "What do you think of the Messiah?" Suddenly, the conversation shifts from rules to relationship. The question isn't simply how to live but *whom* we follow. Jesus says that love begins with recognizing who he is: David's son, yes, but also David's Lord.

When the dust settles, the religious leaders fall silent. Their debates cannot match the clarity of love. Their tests cannot box Jesus in. And their arguments cannot overshadow the truth he places before them: *To love God and neighbor is the heart of holiness.* To know the Messiah is the beginning of wisdom.

For all who feel weary or uncertain, Jesus offers simplicity: start with love. Stay with love. End with love.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: God of love, help us to center our lives on what matters most. When we feel scattered or burdened, draw us back to your command to love you and love others. Amen.*

**Daily Bible Readings**

**Sunday:** Acts 19:11-41,

2 Corinthians 1-3

**Monday:** Ezra 5-7

**Tuesday:** Ezra 8-10

**Wednesday:** Nehemiah 1-3

**Thursday:** Nehemiah 4-6

**Friday:** Nehemiah 7-9

**Saturday:** Psalms 124-126

*Verse to Remember*

*May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.  
Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.*

—Psalm 126:5-6

# MYSTERY WORD!

A B C D E

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | J | O | X | V | N |
| 2 | T | L | W | U | D |
| 3 | A | N | S | T | G |
| 4 | F | I | K | C | B |
| 5 | E | M | P | O | R |

- Use the box to the left to fill in the letters in the grid below.
- There are seven letters in the mystery word corresponding to the seven columns in the grid below.
- In the grid, the correct letter may be the bottom one or the top one. Hint: Fill out all the boxes. Then see if you can find the word.

**What is the word?**

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| B5 | D2 | C3 | B1 | D5 | D4 | E2 |
| A1 | A5 | E5 | D3 | B4 | A3 | A5 |

**RIDDLE:** I am round on both ends and high in the middle. I have two friends that have the same first initial. What U.S. state am I?

**Answer to  
Mystery  
Word:** Justice.  
**Answer to  
Riddle:** Ohio.

# Please be Praying for...

## Our Missionaries ~ detailed info available by church office

David Ford ~ Wycliffe Bible Translators

Joshua & Erica Bode ~ Al Amana Centre

Barry & Terryl Bruce ~ The Way Out Ministries

Grace Covenant Ministries      Tori Jeseritz ~ Youth With A Mission

Jeffery & Chelsea Lampen ~ Reformed English Language International Service

Justin & Stephanie Meyers ~ Al Amana Centre

Dan Pennings ~ Global Grace

Albino & Sandy Rodriguez ~ La Casa Maestro

Jeff Schmitz ~ Ridgewater College

Urban Ventures

Words of Hope Radio

## Deacons

Kyle Goeman '26, Deacon Chair & General Fund Treasurer

David Struxness '26, Building Fund & Cemetery Fund Treasurer

Tyler Wrede '26, Mission Fund Treasurer

Ryan Ammermann '27

Dylan Johnson '27

Dalton Ruiter '27

Rachel DuHoux '28

Bryan Pauling '28

Wyatt Plante '28

## Elders

Gary Aeikens '26

Aaron Ahrenholz '26, Clerk

Tim Beseman '26, Consistory VP

Marlin Ammermann '27

Ryan Niemeyer '27

Jerry Schwitters '27

Scott Abbas '28

Lee Hagemeyer '28

Joyce Hinrichs '28

## Committees: \*denotes chairperson

### Education & Youth

\*Tyler Wrede ~ Dalton Ruiter ~ Wyatt Plante ~ Todd Henker

### Fellowship/Congregational Care

\*Kyle Goeman ~ Dylan Johnson ~ Tim Beseman ~ Rachel DuHoux

### Leadership

\*Tim Beseman ~ Kyle Goeman ~ Ryan Ammermann ~ Jerry Schwitters ~ Pastor Rob Ford

### Mission/Outreach

\*Gary Aeikens ~ Tyler Wrede ~ Ryan Ammermann ~ Scott Abbas

### Property

\*Aaron Ahrenholz ~ David Struxness ~ Marlin Ammermann ~ Ryan Niemeyer ~ Bryan Pauling

### Worship

\*Jerry Schwitters ~ Lee Hagemeyer ~ Joyce Hinrichs ~ Emily Dirksen

BETHANY  
CHURCH



We are a gathering called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ both here and everywhere.