

# ENEMIES NO MORE

## SESSION 1

Knocking Down the Dividing Walls of Hostility  
*Individual*

### Sharing Life

(20 minutes)

**Gather:** Welcome to Enemies No More! Thank you for participating with others in this special time of spiritual growth and life application. Begin this first session by getting better acquainted with your Life Group members! Please take turns sharing briefly:

- your name
- family information
- where you live
- what you do for work or how you spend your time
- one reason why you are excited to be a part of this Life Group

**Discuss:** What words or phrases come to mind when you hear the word “unity?” Write down some of your Life Group responses.

What do you think might be unique about a biblical understanding of unity?

**Read:** As you begin this eight-week Transformation Church Life Group Series on the book of Ephesians, remember that you are not alone. You will have the support of others who may include your pastor, church family and fellow Life Group participants. Most importantly, you will have the support of a God who loves you and wants the very best for your life. Only Jesus can bring about genuine and lasting change as he speaks to us through his Word and we are drawn through the Holy Spirit into a deeper relationship with him. Only Jesus can use us to bring about lasting transformation in the world. So please join your hearts together wherever this opportunity finds you today and share as a group in this prayer of dedication.

**Pray Together:** Dear God, thanks for this opportunity to gather together with friends to study your Word, be impacted by your eternal truth and apply these teachings to our daily lives. We ask that during these next weeks you would help us grow in our relationship with Jesus and with one another. Help us learn to rely more on your strength than our own. Use us to build greater unity in the Church and in the world. Teach us how to break down the *“dividing walls of hostility”* that have kept us angry, fearful and isolated even from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Bless us to be instruments of transformation in this world that you love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# Transformed Thinking

(30 minutes)

**Read:** What might happen if the millions upon millions of people who claim to believe in Jesus in this world actually started living like him? What if we started loving like he loved? What if we started really treating our family members, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, strangers and even enemies like Jesus treated the people he met as he walked this earth?

A peaceful revolution would ensue! The walls that divide us would come down. Love and unity in the name of Christ would increase. The world as we know it would be transformed! This is the calling and challenge of the New Testament book of Ephesians.

The key theme of Ephesians is “unity.” Not just a “let’s all be nice to one another” kind of superficial unity but real unity that has been bought with the price of Jesus’ life on the cross! Think of it as “unity with a purpose!” When people see and experience this kind of deep, authentic, lasting unity, it provides a powerful and compelling witness to the world that Jesus and his promises are real!

Jesus prayed for unity when he was alive. But even more, Jesus died for unity on the cross... first to restore our broken relationship with God our Father... and then to make possible the healing of our broken relationships with one another.

Read together this passionate prayer of Jesus from *John 17:20-23*:

*“My prayer is not for them alone. (those who already believe) I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

**Discuss:** In what ways does the lack of unity in the Church today have a negative effect on our witness to non-believers?

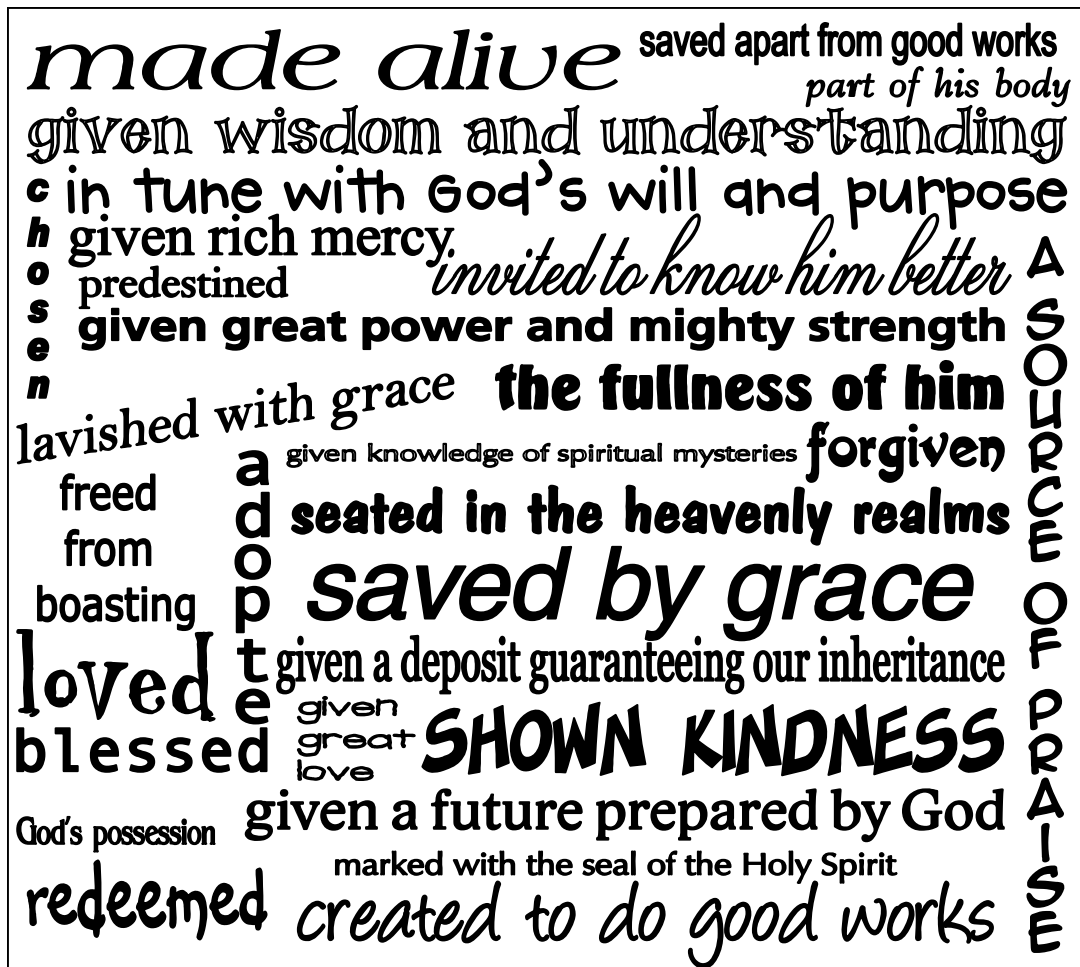
**Read:** Paul’s letter to the Ephesians starts with an overview, the big picture of our relationship with God and his amazing plans and purposes for reclaiming everything that was lost to sin. In the very first chapter of Ephesians, we read:

*“And he (God the Father) made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” Eph. 1:10b*

Underline key words and phrases in this verse: *made known, mystery of his will, his good pleasure, he purposed, all things, together under one head.*

Paul is laying the foundation for the rest of Ephesians. The effect of sin is division, separation and disunity. The ongoing purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection is to defeat sin and restore unity and relationship with God and one another. True unity is possible when we come **"together under one head,"** Jesus Christ. We can't manufacture this unity. We can't fake it, at least not for long. It is only the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus that makes true unity possible in the Church and the world.

Check-out this collage of amazing benefits described in the book of Ephesians that belong to each person who is connected to Jesus Christ through faith. You will quickly see that you are blessed to be a blessing!



**Discuss:** Circle three or four of these amazing benefits of being a child of God that really speak to your life in a personal way. Share one with your Life Group and tell why.

**Read:** This theme of unity continues throughout Ephesians as well as other New Testament letters written by the Apostle Paul. Take turns reading the following examples. When there are words in parenthesis that follow a scripture passage throughout this series, they represent my brief summary or interpretation of the text. You may receive a different interpretation as you read.

***“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”***  
***Eph. 4:3*** (Unity takes some work! It doesn’t just happen.)

***“There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*** ***Eph. 4:4-6*** (Our unity in Christ trumps all other false divisions created by man.)

***“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*** ***Eph. 5:1-2*** (Unity is not a philosophical position. It’s a way of life.)

***“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*** ***Galatians 3:26-28*** (Faith in Jesus is the great equalizer. Every human being comes before God in the same way. Therefore, our own status or “claim to fame” means nothing!)

***“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*** ***Romans 3:22b-24*** (The playing field has been leveled. We are all sinners in need of a Savior!)

***“I appeal to you, brothers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.”*** ***I Corinthians 1:10*** (The basis of this unity is our common faith in Jesus Christ. It is the “calling card” that supersedes any personal needs and agendas.)

**Discuss:** What are some of the factors that prevent the Church from experiencing this kind of unity today?

**Read:** This call to unity in Christ represented a “paradigm shift” for the Ephesians and the early Christian Church. A “paradigm shift” means a different way of looking at or understanding the world around you. The Ephesians lived in a world greatly divided by religion, race, gender and socio-economic class. Paul’s bold message of unity in Christ challenged the Ephesians to look at their world through a different lens – with the eyes of Jesus Christ and his love for the whole world and everyone in it.

The Ephesians needed to experience a heart-deep transformation in relationship to God and one another. The Christian Church today desperately needs this same transformation in order to break out of its theological and cultural boxes, isolation and judgment, and become the “body of Christ” in all its fullness.

What will it take to bring about such a transformation? Ed Silvano, in his book called “Transformation,” (Regal Books, 2007) describes five biblical paradigm shifts that are necessary for the Church today to come together in greater unity for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. Take turns reading these “paradigm shifts” out loud:

1. **The Great Commission is about discipling nations, not just individuals.** (Our mission in the Church shifts from just individual conversions to city and nation transformation.)
2. **The marketplace (the heart of the nation) has already been redeemed by Jesus and now must be reclaimed by His followers.** (As partners with Christ we declare redemption, model reconciliation and work together to reclaim everything that was lost.)
3. **Every Christian is a minister, and labor is worship.** (The understanding of “calling” shifts from a hierarchical emphasis on ordained clergy to our common calling as ministers of the Gospel, whether in the pulpit or the marketplace of everyday life.)
4. **Our primary call is to take the kingdom of God to where the kingdom of darkness is entrenched in order for Jesus to build His Church.** (Our strategy shifts from Church Growth to Kingdom Growth. When we go on the offense for the sake of the kingdom of God, Jesus grows the Church!)
5. **The premier social indicator that transformation has taken place is the elimination of systemic poverty.** (Our testimony in the Church shifts from programs that provide “acts of charity” to our prophetic calling to challenge the very systems that hold people in poverty.)

**Discuss:** Which of these biblical “paradigm shifts” strikes you as having the greatest potential to break down *“dividing walls of hostility”* and contribute to unity... in the Church... in the world? (A summary chart of these biblical paradigms of nation transformation can be found in the Appendix of this study.)

**Quote:**

“This book is about transformation and the paradigms and principles that undergird it. Transformation does not happen in a vacuum. It is brought about by people who have tapped into a well of resolve and a sense of purpose deep and powerful enough to enable them to overcome the ominous and menacing challenges that stand at its gates like intimidating guardians.” (Silvano, Transformation, p.15)

**Transformation Church Insights:**

- The key theme of the Ephesians is unity.
- The concept of biblical unity is authentic, deep, and lasting, and is made possible because of Jesus Christ.
- Unity in Christ is a theme throughout the New Testament.
- In order to experience true unity, the Christian Church must implement biblical paradigms that have been lost, neglected or misused.
- God’s purpose is to bring the world into a place of true unity that reflects faith in Jesus Christ and the amazing benefits of the cross for every person.

# Transformed Living

(40 minutes)

**Read:** The pivotal verse for this Enemies No More series is *Ephesians 2:14*. Referring to Jesus and his finished work on the cross, Paul declares,

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...”*

When you think of “dividing walls” in history, what comes to mind... the Berlin Wall... the Great Wall of China... the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem? Or do you think more philosophically of the walls of race, denomination, gender, generations, governments and societies?

The Bible tells us that the “greatest wall of all time” is the “wall of sin” that separates human-kind from God. Sin is both a “condition” and an “action.” It means “missing the mark” of God’s perfect intentions for our lives. The Bible says that there is no difference between us because “... *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*” *Romans 3:23*. This is the short answer to why our world is so filled with anger and dissension today.

You see, if there is little or no unity in your **individual** relationship with God, there will be little or no unity in your relationships with others. We all know that life can get “messed-up” real fast! Our sin becomes a vicious cycle. Thankfully, God has already provided an amazing way to knock down this huge **individual** “*dividing wall of hostility*” that we call sin. Jesus Christ, our “peace-maker” is also the “wall-breaker!”

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*  
*John 3:16-17*

*“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”* *John 1:12*

When you believe in Jesus and receive his promises by faith, the **individual** “*dividing wall of hostility*” comes down. You become a child of God. The Bible teaches that it is like being “*born again.*” *John 3:3b* The Apostle Paul describes our personal transformation this way:

*“If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”* *II Corinthians 5:17*

Believe it!! Through Jesus a fresh start is possible. His death and resurrection are the power that breaks down the **individual** “*dividing wall of hostility*” created by sin. Through the gifts of forgiveness and salvation we become “new creations in Christ” and experience a new way of believing, thinking and acting that is in unity with God’s love and purpose for our lives.

In *Ephesians 1:17-20*, Paul expresses his deep desire that every person in Ephesus would experience this personal transformation. His words also represent God’s personal invitation to each one of us:

*“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms...”*

**Discuss:** Would you like to “*know him better*” and experience more of his “*great power for us who believe?*” Which of these phrases best describe your relationship with Jesus right now? Share your response with your Life Group – no need to explain your answer.

- Alive and growing.
- Religious but bored.
- Took the wrong turn.
- Lots of questions.
- Ready for breakthrough.

**Read:** In *Ephesians 2:8-10*, Paul makes a key theological statement about salvation and the implications of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Did you catch it? We are saved by the grace of God. We can’t earn it or deserve it. Forgiveness and heaven are a free gift! Our response is to receive these blessings by faith!

But there’s more! We are saved for a purpose. We are “*God’s workmanship*,” meaning that with the Holy Spirit now residing in us, we are called to do good works in Jesus’ name. Without this personal relationship with Jesus, we will just be religious people doing a few good things. Instead, God calls us to be partners in transformation!

**Discuss:** What are some thoughts or phrases that you would use to describe the difference between “being religious” and having a “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ?

**Read:** The individual “*dividing walls of hostility*” that have kept us from God and others begin to come down when we discover the blessings of “relationship” over “religion.” The Good News is that when we come to God through faith in Jesus Christ we are “**redeemed, reconciled**”

**and reclaimed”** as sons and daughters of a heavenly Father! It is in the confident strength of this relationship that we can now reach-out to others with this same love. The Bible teaches that:

- By the grace of God we are **redeemed** from sin.

*“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from our forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” I Peter 1:18-19*

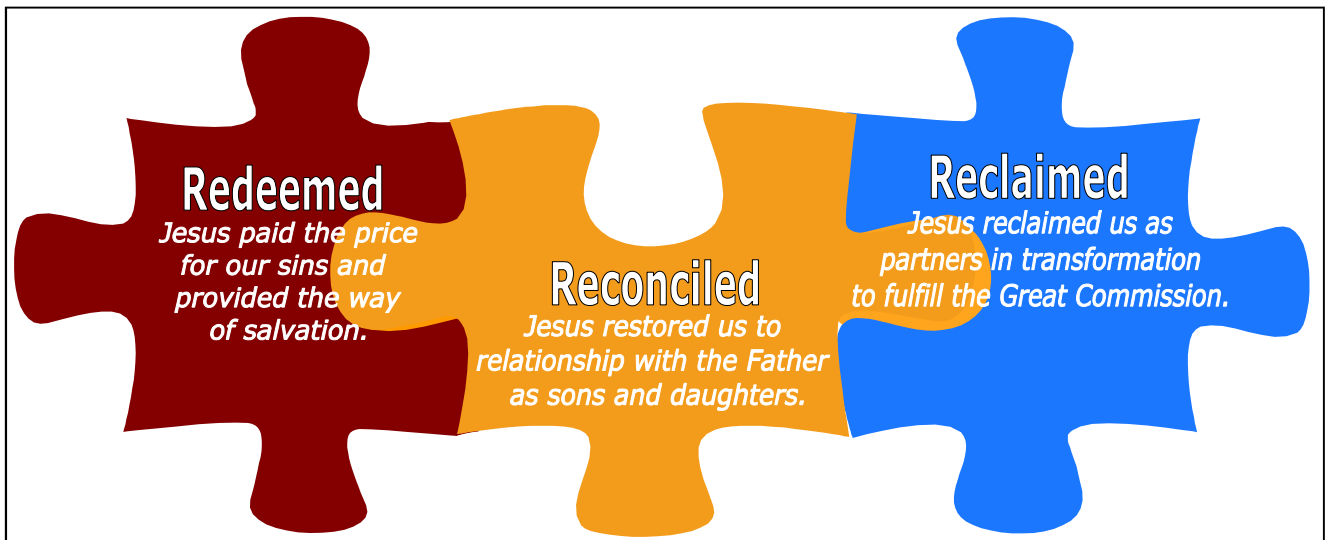
- By the love of God we are **reconciled** to the Father as sons and daughters.

*“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Jesus), and through him to reconcile to himself all things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” Colossians 1:19-20*

- By the plan and purpose of God we are **reclaimed** as partners in transformation here on earth.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... we are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” II Corinthians 5:17-18, 20a*

Get this! It’s absolutely critical to becoming Enemies No More! We will never experience greater unity in our world if we are living as spiritual orphans, isolated from God and from one another, trying to function by our own strength and power. It is only through Jesus that the pieces of life’s puzzle come together. We must have Christ working “in us” and “through us” in order to be agents of transformation in the world “around us.”



**Discuss:** Pause right now and take a couple of minutes for personal prayer. Thank God for these amazing promises from his Word. If you have never received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, now would be a great time to pray the following prayer. For many of you this prayer can serve as a recommitment of your life to Jesus Christ. So take a moment right now for silent prayer within your Life Group.

**Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me so much that you would give your life for my sins. I confess that I have fallen short of your perfect love and am in need of your forgiveness, healing and restoration. I put my trust in you, not on the basis of my goodness, but yours. I receive the promises of the Bible by faith. And now, I commit myself to loving you, following you and serving you everyday. Please give me grace and strength to share the message of Christ and make a difference in this world. Amen.**

**Read:** Remember, the “peace-maker” is the “wall-breaker.” Jesus came to knock down the individual “*dividing wall of hostility*” called sin because he loves you and wants to be a part of every aspect of your life. Everything that follows in this Enemies No More series is directed at Christians who are fully committed to live their lives for Jesus and serve as partners in transforming this world that God loves.

**Quote:**

“What are you going to do with the rest of your life? Are you going to stand immobilized at the head of the trail leading to your destiny, caving in to the prospect of failure while being buffeted by fear and feelings of inadequacy? Remember, your destiny awaits you at the end of a path blocked by menacing giants. To achieve it, you need to overcome those giants, and there is only one right way to do that: with God at your side.” (Silvoso, Transformation, p.24)

**Transformation Church Insights:**

- The individual “*dividing wall of hostility*” called sin keeps us separated from God.
- Through his death and resurrection, Jesus knocked down this dividing wall of sin in order to redeem, reconcile and reclaim us for his purposes.
- Salvation is a free gift of God to be received through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Transformation begins in every individual heart making us new creations in Christ.
- We can only reach-out to others when we are secure in our relationship as sons and daughters of a heavenly Father.

## Life Application Challenges

(10 minutes)

**Read:** Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge for the coming week is to establish the discipline of Daily Devotions and Prayer. As we have seen, reading and reflecting on God’s Word is a key to growing in Christ and discovering more about his purpose for your life. Use the Daily Devotions schedule at the end of this session to help you prepare for the transformation that God will bring into your life during the next eight weeks. Next week you will be asked to give a report on how you did at developing this positive discipline.

Your *Group* Life Application Challenge is to complete the Roster information for your Life Group on the page provided near the front of this workbook. (Please pause and complete this task as a group right now.)

You may also want to create a “group email” or other means of staying connected for announcements and support throughout the week. Assign this task to someone in your Life Group.

Now, make it a point to really get to know the names of your Life Group members so that next week you can call everyone by name.

Your *City-Transformation* Life Application Challenge is to read the whole book of Ephesians this coming week. It is a book written to a city. So, if you desire to reach your city, reading Paul’s entire letter will serve as a good overview for what is to come in the weeks ahead. Read all six chapters in Ephesians and underline key verses that jump-out at you.

The translation used for the scripture quotes for our Enemies No More series is the New International Version. Any reputable translation of the Bible will be just fine for your personal reading.

## Prayer Support

(15 minutes)

Every week you will be encouraged to take a few moments to share personal prayer requests within your group. Go ahead and do that now. You may write them down here:

Now, close with a group prayer for these needs and continue to include them in your prayers throughout the week.

## Details

(5 minutes)

Finalize any details with your Host/Leader and Life Group members. Remember to share responsibilities, especially refreshments and childcare as needed.

Our next Life Group Session is:

Date:

Location:

Time:

Remember to bring:

### Memory Verse Challenge

*Ephesians 2:8-10*

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

# Daily Devotions

**Read:** It is important for your Christian growth to cultivate a daily routine of personal Bible study, reflection and prayer. The best and most optimal results of transformation will be yours by giving your mind and spirit as much fuel as possible. Below you will find some passages of scripture for each day of the coming week starting with Day One tomorrow. These passages connect with the Enemies No More session you have just completed.

Establish a time for these daily devotions that is consistent and workable with your lifestyle. What will work best for you; morning, noon, or evening? Begin your devotional time with prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your reading of God's Word. Read the scripture, perhaps more than once. Reflect on the questions and others that will come to your mind. Consider applications to your daily life.

Then, take a longer time in prayer. Come before the Lord with confession, praise and thanksgiving. Pray for the needs in your personal life, family, church and community. Take time to listen as well. *Psalm 46:10* says, ***“Be still and know that I am God.”*** The time frame for these daily devotions may vary from 10 or 15 minutes to an hour or more as your prayer life deepens. Be disciplined, but let the Lord lead. Know that others are praying for you as well.

## **Day One – Acts 2:42-47**

Make a list of the things that captured the devotion of the first Christian believers. Which of these things are you equally committed to? Are you seeing results?

## **Day Two – Psalm 133:1-3**

Why does greater unity always lead to greater blessing? What is so precious about genuine unity? How is God pouring out a blessing in your life right now?

## **Day Three – John 1:1-14**

Who is “the Word?” How does this recognition enhance our understanding of the truth and authority of the Bible? What is the promise given to all who “believe and receive?” vs.12 Reflect on the distinction between “grace and truth.” vs.14, vs.17

## **Day Four – Romans 10:5-13**

When did God's Word first come “near you?” vs.8 When did you first “confess with your mouth that ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart...?” vs.9 How has your relationship with Jesus continued to grow? Who can be saved? vs.11, vs.13

## **Day Five – Luke 8:1-15**

The seed is the word of God. vs.11 How has God's seed been received in your life? Where has it landed? How has it grown? What kind of a crop would you like to produce in your life for God and others?

## **Day Six – Galatians 5:16-26**

Notice that “dissensions and factions” are included in the list of “acts of the sinful nature.” Why does division among people always indicate a deeper root of sin that must be removed? What kind of fruit are you producing on a daily basis that indicates that you are “keeping in step” with the Spirit? vs.25

## **Day Seven – Your Life Group meets today!**

