

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #25 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026**

**Discovering the Bible**

**April 7 & 8, 2026**

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**Review – The Journeys**

1. News of Jesus was shared by his disciples as they went about their daily lives and also as they purposely traveled to take the news far and wide across the Roman Empire
2. New congregations were formed, and people such as Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy nurtured them into growth and maturity
3. With advantages brought about because of the existence of the Empire, and with selfless determination to prevail even when serious obstacles arose, people from all walks of life began to follow Christ and engage in fellowship through the church
4. Driven by the Spirit, the Church pressed further and further into the world

**The Proclamation**

**5. General Thoughts**

- a. What, exactly, was the message that the first followers of Jesus shared? In other words, what was the specific content of the Gospel?
- b. The earliest and simplest message the church shared was the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection
- c. But there was more to the story than that. Who was Jesus? What did he accomplish?
- d. The church proclaimed that Jesus is Lord (Christ and Messiah): a profound statement of faith
- e. What did it mean, then, to believe and to live with Jesus as Lord? This also formed some of the content of the message. How to live based on what you believe is the central theme of the New Testament in the letters and theological writings that follow the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' life.

**6. Romans 1:16-17**

- a. Likely composed between 55-58 AD, Romans is Paul's longest and most carefully constructed letter
- b. To pave the way for his hoped-for visit to Rome, Paul writes the most complete explanation of the essential message of Christian faith
- c. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'"*
- d. Who Jesus was, what he said, and what he did, was seen by the church as nothing less than work of God to redeem his creation and to restore the proper relationship between God and humanity
- e. This power is appropriated through faith – not through works of righteousness or law
- f. This faith is available and effective for all people – Jew & Gentile alike
- g. It is *God's* righteousness, not our own, that accomplishes the work of salvation – righteousness that is expressed in the person and work of Christ
- h. Based on this faith, one then begins to live a life of faithfulness (or righteousness) – now through the power of God, not of the person

**7. Romans 5:1-11**

- a. *"Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...."*
- b. Faith in God's loving grace re-establishes the relationship between Creature and Creator that was lost in The Fall
- c. This peace results in a new life, where suffering leads to growth of the soul, where hope and love become the dominant features of spiritual life
- d. Christ's willing death makes this peace possible, not our own actions
- e. Christ's sacrifice is proof of God's love, love that existed *before* our faith or actions – this is called *prevenient grace*
- f. All the emphasis is on God's action the accomplishes the reconciliation between us and God

**8. I Corinthians 1:18-31**

- a. *"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

- b. Human religion, including Judaism, emphasizes the requirement for people to act a certain way in order to earn God’s love. Christian faith, however, states that God’s love comes first, and expresses itself in Jesus’ death on the cross. This is “foolish” in comparison to what all other religions teach. But it is, in fact, the good news of the Gospel.
- c. “The world” tries to be wise and good, but only God’s wisdom and goodness accomplish our salvation
- d. God’s condescension – giving up power and prerogative – is the source of our life

**9. I Corinthians 15:1-11**

- a. Here is one of the earliest summary statements of faith, that Christ died for us, was buried, was raised for us, and then appeared in his resurrected glory
- b. Here, the resurrection of Jesus is placed into the central location of God’s saving work
- c. This news (or witness) about Jesus is now passed from one believer to the next person, who then – in the gift of faith – also becomes a believer
- d. This news of God’s saving love expressed on the cross and in Jesus’ death and then vindicated and proven once and for all in the resurrection, saves anyone and everyone
- e. This love has saved even one like Paul, who was an overt enemy of Jesus

**10. II Corinthians 4:1-15**

- a. *“For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake.”*
- b. Jesus’ witnesses have rearranged their lives in order to live by the Gospel and proclaim it
- c. This news of Jesus and of God’s love in Jesus brings light to darkness and reveals the truth about us and God, truth that issues in knowledge
- d. This knowledge and relationship with God enables one to withstand any challenge
- e. In the end, the Christian is one who is convinced that he or she will also be raised into eternal life

**11. Galatians 1:1-10**

- a. *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel....”*
- b. God’s free gift of love, redemption, relationship, and salvation were hard to accept, and early believers (and believers of today) sometimes fall back into a works-based righteousness, trying to earn God’s love
- c. Again, Paul states the essential gospel: It is grounded in God’s grace and issues forth in peace with God, through God’s gift of forgiveness of sin

**12. Colossians 1:15-23**

- a. *“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile o himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”*
- b. Here is another (likely) early summary or creed of the church, describing in rich and nuanced theological detail just who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and the results or impact in human relations with God
- c. Jesus is “the image” of God – or God himself, making visible in human form the invisible God
- d. Jesus is God and as such, also Creator
- e. As God, Jesus is the one on whom all Creation depends and in whom all Creation exists
- f. As firstborn/resurrected from the dead, Jesus is head of the Church
- g. In Jesus, God is fully expressed and God’s work is fully accomplished, the reconciliation of all things, or the restoration of all of creation
- h. Jesus’ work was shedding his blood, dying, God dying for the sake of giving new life to his creation
- i. The effect of all this is to restore humanity to its intended place – in perfect relationship to God

**Questions for Your Life Today**

- A. In what ways have you tried (and maybe still do) to earn God’s love?
- B. Are there people whom you love with no conditions attached?
- C. What challenges your faith in God’s prior and unconditional love for you?
- D. How does God’s unshakeable love encourage, challenge, and instruct you as you live your daily life?

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*Primary Source: Discovering the Bible: A New Generation, published by The Kerygma Program, Pittsburgh, PA. Boyd Lien, author.*