

KINGDOM STRATEGIES FREE RESOURCE BIBLE STUDY

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PURPOSES OF GOD

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

God's purpose extends beyond the individual believer's life and lifespan. The Scripture cited in this chapter presents a continuum of faith in which believers of every generation lay hold of promises greater than themselves, are surrounded by those who have gone before, and are called to keep speaking and not remain silent until God's purpose is accomplished in the earth.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Luke 2:49 (NKJV)
- Hebrews 11:13 (NLT)
- Hebrews 11:39-40 (NKJV)
- Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)
- Esther 4:13-14 (NKJV)
- Isaiah 62:1, 6-7 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

In **Luke 2:49**, Jesus at twelve years old identifies His obligation to His Father's business — purpose framed as something owed, not merely enjoyed.

Hebrews 11:13 describes those who died still believing, having seen the promise from a distance and welcomed it, calling themselves foreigners and nomads on the earth. **Hebrews 11:39-40** adds that they did not receive the promise because God had provided something better, so that they would not be made perfect apart from us. Their completion is bound up with those who come after them.

Hebrews 12:1-2 builds directly on that: because such a crowd of witnesses surrounds the life of faith, the believer strips off hindering weight and besetting sin and runs with endurance, eyes fixed on Jesus, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him and is now seated beside God's throne.

Esther 4:13-14 shows Mordecai warning Esther that silence at a decisive moment would not preserve her — deliverance would come from elsewhere, but she and her father's house would perish. He raises the possibility that she came to the kingdom for that very hour.

Isaiah 62:1, 6-7 gives the pattern for persistent intercession: God Himself will not hold His

peace for Zion's and Jerusalem's sake, and He sets watchmen who never keep silent day or night, giving Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In Luke 2:49, Jesus speaks of a "must" concerning His Father's business. Reading only that verse, what does His sense of obligation suggest about how you regard God's purposes?
2. Hebrews 11:13 says these people died still believing, having seen the promise from a distance. What does that verse show about faith that outlasts a lifetime?
3. Hebrews 11:39-40 says they would not be made perfect apart from us. What does this verse indicate about your connection to believers who came before you?
4. Hebrews 12:1 speaks of stripping off weight and besetting sin. Examining your own life, what specifically slows your endurance in the race?
5. Mordecai's words in Esther 4:13-14 confront the option of silence. Where might silence be the greater risk in your own situation?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Hebrews 11 describes people who welcomed the promise from a distance without receiving it. How does that shape the way a group prays for outcomes it may never see?
2. Isaiah 62:6-7 describes watchmen who do not keep silent and give God no rest. What does that kind of persistence look like practically for a group like ours?
3. Hebrews 12:2 sets Jesus before us as the one who initiates and perfects faith. How does keeping our eyes on Him change how we handle the weight described in verse 1?
4. Esther was told that deliverance would come from another place regardless. What does that tell us about the difference between God's purpose being accomplished and our participation in it?
5. Reading Hebrews 11:39-40 and 12:1 together, what does it mean for our group to be part of something unfinished?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, I come to You in the name of Jesus. Your Word says that those who went before died still believing, seeing the promise from a distance and welcoming it, and that You provided something better so they would not be made perfect apart from us. I confess that I have often thought of my life as my own — small, self-contained, measured by what I can see and receive in my own years. Search my heart. Show me every weight that slows me down and the sin that so easily trips me up, and give me grace to strip it off rather than defend it.

Jesus, You said You must be about Your Father's business. Teach me that same obligation. You endured the cross for the joy set before You and are now seated at the place of honor beside God's throne — let my eyes stay on You as the one who begins and completes my faith. Like Esther, I do not want to remain silent at the very hour I was placed here for. Make me one who does not keep silent day or night, who gives You no rest until You establish and make Your purpose a praise in the earth. I surrender my plans, my calling, and my time to Your greater purpose. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following the pattern of Isaiah 62:6-7, choose one specific thing you know God has purposed — for your church, your city, or your nation — and commit to bringing it before Him daily for the next seven days, refusing to stop mentioning it until you see it established.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

God's plan advances not by human zeal, might, or power, but by His Spirit. Using the cited Scripture on John the Baptist and Elijah, this chapter shows that both prophets prepared the way of the Lord by first hearing from God and then obeying — and that God dispenses His anointing across many seats of authority to accomplish purposes that outlast the one who prays.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

John 10:41

Luke 1:76 (AMPC)

Mark 1:2-3 (AMPC)

Isaiah 40:3-5 (AMPC)

Luke 1:17 (NLT)

1 Kings 17:1 (NKJV)

1 Kings 18:1

1 Kings 18:17-40

1 Kings 18:21

James 5:7-8

James 5:17 (AMPC)

1 Kings 19:10 (NLT)

Luke 9:51-56; Luke 9:55-56 (NKJV)

1 Kings 19:13 (NKJV)

1 Kings 19:15-17 (NKJV)

1 Kings 19:17 (NKJV)

2 Kings 8:7-13

2 Kings 9:1-10

2 Kings 9 and 10

2 Kings 10:28, 31 (NLT)

2 Kings 12 and 13

Ephesians 3:10 (AMPC)

Zechariah 4:6 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

John the Baptist's assignment. **Luke 1:76** declares he would be called a prophet of the Most High who goes before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways. **Luke 1:17** adds that he would come with the spirit and power of Elijah, prepare the people, turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and bring the rebellious to accept godly wisdom. **Mark 1:2-3**, quoting **Isaiah 40:3-5**, describes this preparation as road work: obstacles cleared, valleys lifted, mountains brought low, crooked places made straight, rough places made level — so that the glory of the Lord is revealed and all flesh sees it. **John 10:41** notes John performed no sign; the work was done by his voice, not by miracles.

Elijah's zeal and Elijah's commission. In **1 Kings 17:1** Elijah declares no dew or rain except at his word. **1 Kings 18:1** records God telling him rain would come; **1 Kings 18:17-40** and **18:21** show the Mount Carmel confrontation and the challenge to serve the Lord if He is God. Yet the promise God actually gave — rain — required persevering prayer, and **James 5:7-8** holds up that perseverance as a pattern for believers awaiting the Lord's coming.

Human weakness. **James 5:17** states plainly that Elijah shared a nature like ours. In **1 Kings 19:10** he reports his zealous service, the broken covenant, the torn-down altars, and his sense of standing alone under threat. **Luke 9:51-56** shows the disciples proposing to call down fire as Elijah did, and Jesus rebuking them in **9:55-56** — they did not know what manner of spirit they were of, and the Son of Man came to save, not destroy.

The still small voice and the anointing. **1 Kings 19:13** records Elijah wrapping his face in his mantle; **1 Kings 19:15-17** gives the instruction that followed — anoint Hazael king over Syria, Jehu king over Israel, and Elisha prophet in his place, each accomplishing what the others did not. **2 Kings 8:7-13** shows Hazael's rise, **2 Kings 9:1-10** the anointing of Jehu by a young prophet rather than by Elijah or Elisha, and **2 Kings 9 and 10** his violent execution of the commission. **2 Kings 10:28, 31** records that Jehu destroyed every trace of Baal worship yet did not obey the Law with all his heart and refused to turn from Jeroboam's sins — the anointing accomplished God's objective through a man who was not himself faithful. **2 Kings 12 and 13** show God using Hazael, a heathen king, in judgment on Israel.

The wider audience and the operating principle. **Ephesians 3:10** states that through the church the many-sided wisdom of God is made known to the angelic rulers and authorities in the heavenly sphere. **Zechariah 4:6** supplies the summary: not by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Isaiah 40:3-5 describes valleys lifted, mountains lowered, and rough places made

THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH

level. Reading only that passage, what kind of preparation does the way of the Lord require?

2. In Luke 9:55-56 Jesus tells His disciples they do not know what manner of spirit they are of. Where have you assumed your zeal was the same thing as God's direction?
3. James 5:17 says Elijah had a nature like ours. How does that verse change how you read his complaint in 1 Kings 19:10?
4. Elijah had to be still enough to hear (1 Kings 19:13-15). What in your life currently makes that stillness difficult?
5. In 2 Kings 10:28, 31 an unfaithful man accomplishes God's objective. What does that tell you about where God may be working right now?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. John performed no sign (John 10:41), yet Luke 1:17 says he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. What does that combination suggest about what spiritual power actually is?
2. James 5:7-8 points to Elijah's persevering prayer as an example for those awaiting the Lord. How do we tell the difference between persevering prayer and simply repeating ourselves?
3. Compare 1 Kings 18:17-40 with 1 Kings 19:15-17. What is different about the two assignments, and why might that matter for how we pray?
4. Ephesians 3:10 says God's wisdom is made known through the church to rulers and authorities in the heavenly sphere. How does that verse shape our understanding of who hears our prayers?
5. Zechariah 4:6 rules out might and power. Where does our group most often default to might or power instead of the Spirit?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I come to You. Your Word says it is not by might nor by power, but by Your Spirit. I confess how often I have measured spiritual work by what is visible, dramatic, and impressive, and how often my own zeal has run ahead of Your voice. Like the disciples, I have wanted fire when You were seeking to save. Show me what manner of spirit I have been of, and forgive me where I have acted for You without hearing from You.

Teach me the stillness of the mantle over the face — where my confidence rests not in my abilities or my reading of the situation, but in Your calling and Your grace. Let my eyes and

senses stop distracting me from Your voice. Quiet me until I hear You clearly, and then make me obedient even when obedience looks small.

Give me perseverance in prayer, that I would not release a promise You have given until I see the answer, however small the first sign may be. Widen my sight, Lord. Let me not be surprised or offended at where I see Your anointing, but let me recognize Your hand in leaders, authorities, and people I would not have chosen. Prepare Your way through me, and let Your glory be revealed. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following the pattern of 1 Kings 19:13-15, set aside a deliberate block of silence this week — no music, no phone, no input — and go in asking God for direction rather than presenting Him with your own plan. Write down what you hear, and act on the first thing He tells you to do, even if it seems unimpressive.

CHAPTER THREE

OUR AUTHORITY TO PRAY

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

The believer's authority in prayer rests on being indwelt by the Holy Spirit and created to speak God's words in the earth. The Scripture cited here shows that God created humanity to have dominion by speech, that the least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist because Christ now dwells within, and that effective prayer speaks only what originates in heaven.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

Luke 3:4 (NKJV)

Matthew 11:10 (NLT)

Luke 7:28 (NLT)

Matthew 11:11 (NLT)

Luke 1:15 (AMPC)

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV)

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NLT)

Hebrews 11:3

Genesis 1:1-7; Genesis 1

Genesis 2:7 (AMPC)

Genesis 2:19; Genesis 2:20

2 Corinthians 4:13

Matthew 16:19 (AMPC)

1 Corinthians 2:16 (AMPC)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The voice that prepared the way. **Luke 3:4** identifies John as a voice crying in the wilderness, calling for the way of the Lord to be prepared. **Matthew 11:10** and **Luke 7:28** confirm his standing as the promised messenger sent ahead, greater than any who lived before him. **Luke 1:15** explains part of that greatness: he was filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

Why the least in the kingdom is greater. **Matthew 11:11** states that no one who ever lived was greater than John, yet the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater still. **Colossians 1:27** supplies the reason the chapter points to — Christ in you, the hope of glory. What came

upon the prophets now *dwells within* the believer, and **1 Corinthians 2:16** says believers have the mind of Christ and hold the thoughts and purposes of His heart.

Authority, lost and reclaimed. **2 Corinthians 4:4** names Satan as the god of this world, describing the present state of usurped authority. The chapter reads the creation account as establishing human dominion by speech: **Hebrews 11:3** states that everything was framed by God's word; **Genesis 1:1-7** shows God speaking and creation responding; **Genesis 2:7** describes the forming of man as a living being (the chapter treats the Hebrew as pointing toward a speaking spirit); and **Genesis 2:19-20** shows Adam exercising dominion by naming the animals, so that what he called them is what they became.

Speaking by faith, within limits. **2 Corinthians 4:13** gives the operating posture — having the same spirit of faith, we believe and therefore speak. But **Matthew 16:19** sets the boundary: what is bound on earth must be what is already bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven. Words that do not originate in heaven carry no authority for unfolding God's plan.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Matthew 11:11 says the least in the kingdom is greater than John. Reading that verse alongside Colossians 1:27, what accounts for the difference?
2. Genesis 2:19-20 shows Adam naming the animals and that becoming what they were. What does that pattern suggest about the weight your words carry?
3. Matthew 16:19 restricts binding and loosing to what is already settled in heaven. Where have you spoken declarations you never checked against Scripture?
4. 2 Corinthians 4:13 says we believe and therefore speak. Examine the order in that verse — which comes first in your own practice?
5. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says believers hold the thoughts and purposes of Christ's heart. What would change in your prayers if you approached them expecting to know His mind?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Luke 1:15 says John was filled with the Spirit from the womb, yet Matthew 11:11 places the least believer above him. How do we hold both of those verses honestly?
2. Hebrews 11:3 says the worlds were framed by God's word. What does that establish about how God works, and how does it inform the way we pray?
3. According to Matthew 16:19, our words must match what heaven has already declared. How does a group discern that before it speaks?

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4. 2 Corinthians 4:4 describes an adversary with real influence in this world. How should that verse shape our expectations without shaping our fears?
5. If Genesis 2:7 and 2:19-20 point to humanity created to speak with dominion, what responsibility does that place on the ordinary conversations of our week?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I thank You that You framed the worlds by Your word, and that You made me to speak in Your image. I confess that I have often used my mouth carelessly — speaking my own opinions, my fears, and my frustrations as though they carried the same weight as Your Word. Search my heart and show me where my speech has worked against Your purposes rather than with them.

Thank You that Christ is in me, the hope of glory, and that Your Spirit does not merely come upon me but dwells in me. I do not take that lightly. Teach me to draw on the mind of Christ, to hold the thoughts and purposes of Your heart, and to speak from what I have first received from You.

Jesus, You entrusted the keys of the kingdom, but only for what heaven has already settled. Guard me from declaring anything You have not declared. Give me the humility to search Your Word before I speak, and the boldness to speak fully once I know it is Yours. I believe, and therefore I will speak. Let my mouth serve Your plan in the earth. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following Matthew 16:19, take one situation you have been praying over and find the specific Scripture that establishes God's position on it. Write the verse out, and pray only what that verse permits you to say — for one week, refuse to declare anything over that situation you cannot anchor in the text.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAY WHAT YOU SEE

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

Prayer that unfolds God's plan begins with seeing and hearing from God, then returning His words back to Him. The cited Scripture establishes the pattern in Jesus, who did only what He saw the Father do; in Habakkuk and Jeremiah, who watched and reported what they saw; and in Ezekiel's watchman, who is accountable to sound the alarm.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV)
- Hebrews 11:3 (AMPC)
- Matthew 6:10 (NKJV)
- John 5:19 (NKJV)
- John 5:30 (NKJV)
- John 8:28 (NKJV)
- Romans 8:26 (AMPC); Romans 8:26-28
- 1 Corinthians 2:10, 16 (NLT)
- Ephesians 2:6 (AMPC)
- Habakkuk 2:1 (AMPC)
- Jeremiah 1; Jeremiah 1:10 (AMPC); Jeremiah 1:11-12 (AMPC); Jeremiah 1:13
- 1 Corinthians 14:14
- 1 Corinthians 2:13 (AMPC)
- 1 Corinthians 14:13 (AMPC)
- Romans 11:36 (AMPC)
- John 16:28-29 (NKJV)
- Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)
- Ezekiel 33:6 (NKJV)
- Lamentations 3:51 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

Words and God's will. Proverbs 18:21 places death and life in the power of the tongue. Hebrews 11:3 says the ages were framed by God's word, so that what is seen was not made from

visible things. **Matthew 6:10** gives the direction of prayer: Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven — heaven's settled will brought to earth through what is spoken.

The pattern in Jesus. **John 5:19** says the Son can do nothing of Himself, only what He sees the Father do. **John 5:30** adds that He judges as He hears and seeks not His own will but the Father's. **John 8:28** completes it: He speaks what the Father taught Him. Seeing and hearing precede speaking and doing.

Access to God's mind. **Romans 8:26** admits we do not know what to pray or how to pray as we ought, and says the Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. **1 Corinthians 2:10, 16** says the Spirit searches everything and reveals God's deep secrets, and that believers have the mind of Christ. **Romans 8:26-28** assures that the Spirit's help is at work even in our uncertainty. **1 Corinthians 14:14** notes that praying in a tongue engages the spirit rather than the understanding; **1 Corinthians 2:13** speaks of truths set forth in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language; and **1 Corinthians 14:13** instructs the one who speaks in an unknown tongue to pray for interpretation.

Position determines perspective. **Ephesians 2:6** says believers were raised up together with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly sphere. That seating is where seeing happens.

Watch, then report. **Habakkuk 2:1** shows the prophet stationing himself on his watchtower to see what God would say within him and what answer he would make as God's mouthpiece — not watching the invader, but watching God. In **Jeremiah 1:10** God appoints Jeremiah over nations to root out, pull down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant. **Jeremiah 1:11-12** shows the method: God asks what he sees, Jeremiah answers plainly that he sees an almond branch, and God commends him and declares that He is alert and watching over His word to perform it. **Jeremiah 1:13** repeats the question, and Jeremiah reports a boiling pot. Reporting what is seen, even without understanding it, is the assignment.

The circle of prayer. **Romans 11:36** states that all things originate from Him, live through Him, and center and consummate in Him. **John 16:28-29** shows Jesus describing His coming from the Father and returning to the Father, at which point His disciples said He was finally speaking plainly. **Isaiah 55:11** declares that God's word will not return to Him void but accomplishes what He pleases and prospers in what He sent it to do — a word that goes out and comes back.

Accountability of the watchman. **Ezekiel 33:6** warns that if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the trumpet, the blood of those taken is required at his hand. **Lamentations 3:51** notes that what the eyes take in brings suffering to the soul — a reason to guard what we look at if we intend to see clearly.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. John 5:19 and John 8:28 say Jesus did and said only what He first received from the Father. Where in your prayer life do you speak before you have received?
2. Romans 8:26 says we do not know what to pray as we ought. How does admitting that verse to be true about you change how you begin to pray?
3. Habakkuk 2:1 shows the prophet watching God rather than the threat. What are you currently watching more closely than you are watching God?
4. In Jeremiah 1:11-12, God commends an answer that seems trivial. What have you dismissed as too small or unclear to bring back to God?
5. Ezekiel 33:6 makes silence costly. Where has God shown you something you have not yet spoken back to Him?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Matthew 6:10 asks for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven. How does a group discover what heaven has already settled about a specific situation?
2. 1 Corinthians 2:10, 16 says the Spirit reveals God's deep secrets and that we have the mind of Christ. What guardrails keep that from becoming a claim of private authority over others?
3. Compare Jeremiah's simple report in Jeremiah 1:11 with the enormous commission in Jeremiah 1:10. What does that gap teach us about how God accomplishes large things?
4. Isaiah 55:11 says God's word does not return void. What does it look like practically to send God's word back to Him in prayer?
5. Lamentations 3:51 links the eyes to the soul. What would guarding our eyes together as a group actually involve?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I come to You and admit what Your Word already says — I do not know how to pray as I ought. Thank You for Your Spirit who helps me in that weakness, who searches out the deep things of You and shows them to me. Thank You that You have raised me up and seated me with Christ, and that from that place I can see what I could never see with natural eyes.

Jesus, You did nothing of Yourself, only what You saw the Father do; You spoke only what

He taught You. Search my heart and expose the places where I have run ahead with my own words, my own analysis, and my own alarm. Forgive me. Teach me to take my post like Habakkuk and watch to see what You will say, rather than fixing my gaze on what threatens me.

Like Jeremiah, I want to answer honestly when You ask what I see — even when it seems small, even when I do not understand it. Guard my eyes, Lord, from what would cloud them; I do not want to entertain what I will later have to fight. Give me a hearing heart and an obedient mouth. Send Your word out through me and let it return to You, not empty, but accomplishing what You please. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following the pattern of Jeremiah 1:11-13, spend ten minutes in quiet prayer this week and ask God directly, "What do You want me to see?" Write down whatever comes — an image, a phrase, a sense — without editing or evaluating it, and pray it straight back to Him rather than analyzing it or taking it to anyone else first.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOUNDATIONAL WORLDVIEW

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

A biblical worldview recognizes that the visible world is not all that exists. The Scripture cited here establishes Jesus as the only access to the realm of the spirit, names the participants of God's kingdom in heaven and on earth, identifies the three groups of people God sees in this age, and anchors the believer's life between Christ's first and second comings.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- 1 Corinthians 2:9-11
- John 10:9 (NLT)
- 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NLT)
- Hebrews 12:22-24 (NKJV)
- Hebrews 8:6-10 (NLT)
- 1 Corinthians 10:32
- Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 14:2
- Ephesians 2:14-16 (NLT)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Philippians 3:20 (NKJV)
- Acts 1:11
- 1 John 3:3
- 2 Timothy 4:8

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

enter through Him are saved, come and go freely, and find good pasture. **1 Corinthians 2:9-11** says the Spirit alone searches the depths of God and reveals what no eye has seen. **1 Corinthians 13:12** keeps this honest: what we presently see is imperfect, like a puzzling reflection, and our knowledge is partial until it is made complete.

The participants of the kingdom. **Hebrews 12:22-24** lists what the believer has come to: Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; an innumerable company of angels; the general assembly and church of the firstborn registered in heaven; God the Judge of all; the spirits of just men made perfect; Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and the blood

of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. This is not a distant list — it is what has been approached. **Hebrews 8:6-10** shows Jesus' ministry as superior, mediating a better covenant established on better promises.

Three groups on earth. 1 Corinthians 10:32 distinguishes Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God. **Deuteronomy 7:6** and **14:2** identify Israel as a people chosen and set apart to the Lord out of all the nations. **Ephesians 2:14-16** shows Christ making peace by breaking down the wall of hostility, ending the system of law with its commandments, creating one new people from the two groups, and reconciling both to God through the cross so that hostility itself was put to death.

New identity, dual citizenship. 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares that anyone in Christ is a new creation. **Philippians 3:20** states that our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for the Savior.

Two anchor points. Acts 1:11 promises that the same Jesus who was taken up will return in the same way He went. **1 John 3:3** says everyone who has this hope purifies himself, and **2 Timothy 4:8** speaks of the crown of righteousness laid up for those who love His appearing. Expectation of His return shapes present conduct.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. John 10:9 presents Jesus as the gate through which one comes and goes freely. What does that verse establish about how you approach God, and about any other route you may have considered?
2. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says our present knowledge is partial. How does that verse guard you when you sense you have seen something in prayer?
3. Read the list in Hebrews 12:22-24 slowly. Which item on it do you most consistently forget you have come to?
4. 2 Corinthians 5:17 calls you a new creation. Where does your thinking still run on your old identity rather than that verse?
5. 1 John 3:3 links hope in Christ's return to purifying oneself. What in your life would change if you truly expected Him soon?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Hebrews 12:22-24 names both heavenly and earthly members of one assembly. How does that passage shape the way we understand our prayer group's place in something larger?
2. 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 says the Spirit searches God's depths and reveals them. How do we pursue that without overstating what we know, given 1 Corinthians 13:12?

3. Ephesians 2:14-16 says the wall of hostility was broken down and one new people created. Where do we still see that wall standing among believers, and what does this passage require of us?
4. 1 Corinthians 10:32 identifies three groups. How might a group deliberately pray for each of them rather than only for its own?
5. Philippians 3:20 claims heavenly citizenship while we live in an earthly nation. How do we hold both loyalties rightly?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I thank You that Jesus is the gate, and that through Him I come and go freely and find good pasture. I want no other door. Forgive me for the times I have sought insight, security, or spiritual experience anywhere but in Him.

Thank You that Your Spirit searches the very depths of You and reveals what no eye has seen. Yet I confess with Your Word that what I see now is partial and imperfect. Keep me humble in what I claim, and keep me hungry for what You would show me. Guard me from confidence in my own perception.

Thank You that I have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the assembly of the firstborn, to You the Judge of all, to Jesus the Mediator of a better covenant, and to His blood that speaks better things. Let that reality steady me. Thank You that in Christ I am a new creation and my citizenship is in heaven.

Search my heart, Lord, and show me where hostility, preference, or pride still stands where Christ has already torn down the wall. Make me one who prays for all three groups You see, not merely for my own. And because I wait for His appearing, purify me. Let the certainty of His return shape how I live today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Using 1 Corinthians 10:32 as your framework, set aside one prayer time this week to pray deliberately for each of the three groups — Israel, the nations, and the Church — giving equal attention to each rather than defaulting to the one most familiar to you.

CHAPTER SIX

KINGDOMS AND ANCIENT THRONES

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

Christ created and has already triumphed over every throne, dominion, ruler, and authority. The Scripture cited here shows that God divided the nations and permitted lesser spiritual rulers over them, that Jesus disarmed those powers at the cross, and that the believer's assignment is delegated and limited — proclaim the gospel, resist the enemy, stay within our commission, and leave final judgment of the nations to Christ.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Colossians 1:16 (AMPC)
- Ephesians 1:19-22 (AMPC)
- Ephesians 6:12 (AMPC)
- Romans 8:38
- Ephesians 3:10
- Colossians 2:15; Colossians 2:14-15
- Daniel 10:20 (NKJV)
- Genesis 11
- Deuteronomy 32:8-9 (ESV)
- Acts 17:26-27 (AMPC)
- Mark 11:17
- Acts 2
- Psalm 2:8 (NKJV); Psalm 2 (TPT)
- Revelation 11:15
- Psalm 115:16
- Psalm 82:6-7
- Matthew 28:19 (NKJV)
- Colossians 1:13
- Ephesians 2:2
- 2 Corinthians 10:13 (AMPC)
- Jeremiah 1
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 1 John 5:19

- 2 Corinthians 11:14
- Ezekiel 28:14
- Isaiah 14:12
- John 8:44
- John 10:10
- Matthew 4:1-10
- Matthew 13:18; Matthew 13:25
- Luke 22:31
- Revelation 12:10
- James 4:7 (NKJV)
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

Christ over all authority. **Colossians 1:16** states that all things in heaven and earth — thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities — were created through Christ and for Him. **Ephesians 1:19-22** describes the power that raised Him and seated Him at God's right hand far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, in this age and the age to come, with all things under His feet and Him appointed Head of the church. The vocabulary of these beings appears in **Romans 8:38**, **Ephesians 3:10**, **Ephesians 6:12**, and **Colossians 2:15**.

The nations divided. **Genesis 11** records the confusing of language and dispersing of peoples at Babel. **Deuteronomy 32:8-9** says the Most High fixed the boundaries of the peoples when He divided mankind, while the Lord's own portion was His people, Jacob His allotted heritage. **Daniel 10:20** speaks of the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece — spiritual rulers associated with regions rather than natural political figures. **Psalms 115:16** notes that the heavens belong to the Lord but the earth was given to the sons of men.

God's intent toward the nations. **Acts 17:26-27** says God made all nations from one origin, determined their allotted times and boundaries, so that they should seek Him, feel after Him, and find Him — and He is not far from any one of us. **Mark 11:17** records Jesus calling the temple a house of prayer for all nations. **Acts 2** shows the reversal at Babel, as each person heard in his own language. **Psalms 2:8** gives the promise that the nations are the Son's inheritance for the asking, and **Psalms 2** as a whole shows the futility of rebellion, God's laughter at it, His King installed on Zion, and a summons to rulers to serve Him with reverence while blessing awaits those who take refuge in Him. **Revelation 11:15** declares the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. **Psalms 82:6-7** pronounces that those called gods will nevertheless die like men.

What Jesus accomplished. **Colossians 2:14-15** says Christ canceled the record of charges, nailed it to the cross, disarmed the rulers and authorities, and publicly displayed His triumph over them. **Colossians 1:13** says believers have been delivered out of darkness and transferred

into the kingdom of His Son. **Ephesians 2:2** still describes the ruler of the air working among the sons of disobedience.

Our assignment and its limits. **Matthew 28:19** commissions disciple-making among all nations with baptism into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **2 Corinthians 10:13** warns against boasting beyond the limits of the commission God allotted. **Jeremiah 1** models the pattern of simply saying what God shows.

The adversary named. **2 Corinthians 4:4** calls him the god of this world; **1 John 5:19** says the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. **2 Corinthians 11:14** notes he transforms himself into an angel of light; **Ezekiel 28:14** and **Isaiah 14:12** describe an anointed cherub and a fall from heaven. **John 8:44** identifies him as a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies; **John 10:10** as the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. **Matthew 4:1-10** shows Jesus resisting him with Scripture and dismissing him. **Matthew 13:18** and **13:25** show him stealing the word and sowing tares. **Luke 22:31** records his request to sift Peter. **Revelation 12:10** announces the accuser cast down. **James 4:7** gives the instruction: resist the devil and he will flee.

Our weapons. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** says our weapons are not carnal but mighty in God, pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. **Ephesians 6:12** locates the wrestling not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly sphere.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Colossians 1:16 says every throne and dominion was created through Christ and for Him. How does that verse change what you fear?
2. Acts 17:26-27 says God set the times and boundaries of nations so that people would seek Him. How does that reframe the way you view the news of your own nation?
3. 2 Corinthians 10:13 warns against boasting beyond our commission. Where have you assumed authority in prayer that God did not delegate to you?
4. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 locates the battle in arguments and thoughts. Which specific thought in your own mind currently exalts itself against the knowledge of God?
5. James 4:7 says resist and he will flee. Where have you been negotiating with something Scripture tells you simply to resist?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Colossians 2:14-15 says the powers were disarmed and publicly displayed as defeated. If that is already true, what exactly is left for us to do?

2. Ephesians 6:12 says our wrestling is not against flesh and blood. How does that verse guard us from treating people as the enemy?
3. Matthew 28:19 gives the commission to make disciples of all nations. How does that command relate to praying about spiritual influence over a region?
4. Read Psalm 2 together. What does it establish about the outcome of rebellion, and how should that shape both our confidence and our humility in prayer?
5. 2 Corinthians 10:13 speaks of a measuring line God has allotted. How can a group tell when it has moved outside its own?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank You that all things — every throne, dominion, ruler, and authority — were created through Christ and for Him, and that You raised Him and seated Him far above every one of them, with all things under His feet. He is Head over all, and He is Head over me.

Thank You that You canceled the record of charges against me, nailed it to the cross, and disarmed the rulers and authorities, displaying Your triumph openly. Thank You that You delivered me out of darkness and brought me into the kingdom of Your Son. I have no case against me; the accuser has been cast down.

Search my heart, Lord. Show me where I have been more impressed with the enemy's activity than with Your finished work, and where fear has crept in where Scripture gives me confidence. Forgive me. Show me also where I have overreached — declaring, binding, and speaking beyond the commission You allotted me. Teach me to keep within my measuring line, to report what You show me, and to speak only what You give me to say.

Pull down every stronghold in my thinking. Cast down the arguments and every high thing in me that exalts itself against the knowledge of You, and bring my thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Make me faithful in the work You did give me — to preach, to make disciples, to care for people, and to pray — so that more men and women come out of darkness and into Your Son's kingdom. You made the nations to seek You and find You. Let them find You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, identify one specific belief you hold that contradicts what Scripture says about God or about your identity in Christ. Write it down alongside the verse that refutes it, and each time the thought surfaces this week, answer it out loud with the Scripture rather than arguing with it in your own words.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MANY ASPECTS OF GOD

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

God reveals Himself progressively, and no part of Him is to be drawn back from. The Scripture cited here establishes that God is light to whom darkness and light are the same, that the Holy Spirit searches out the deep things of God, and that knowing Him is a lifelong, determined pursuit rather than a completed body of knowledge.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Psalm 97:11 (NKJV)
- Psalm 139:11-12 (NLT)
- Philippians 3; Philippians 3:10 (AMPC)
- 1 Corinthians 2:10 (AMPC)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

Light belongs to the righteous. Psalm 97:11 says light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart. Light is not withheld from those who walk with God; it is planted for them, which implies a harvest that comes over time rather than all at once.

No darkness in Him. Psalm 139:11-12 addresses the impulse to hide in darkness and declares that even darkness cannot conceal from God — to Him the night shines as bright as day, and darkness and light are the same. What appears dark to human perception is not dark to God. This is the verse the chapter rests on in arguing that the aspects of God people shrink from only seem dark from our side.

Knowing Him as a determined purpose. Philippians 3:10 frames knowing God not as information but as progressive acquaintance — becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing the wonders of His Person more strongly and clearly, coming to know the power of His resurrection, and sharing His sufferings so as to be continually transformed into His likeness. Paul calls it his determined purpose, which makes it deliberate rather than incidental.

The Spirit as the means. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says the Spirit searches diligently, exploring and examining everything, even sounding the profound and bottomless things of God. What

cannot be reached by study alone is accessible through the Spirit — including the parts of God that seem unfathomable.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Psalm 139:11-12 says darkness and light are the same to God. Is there an aspect of God's character you have avoided because it looked dark to you?
2. Philippians 3:10 calls knowing God a determined purpose. Examining your own life honestly, what would show that this is a determined purpose for you?
3. Psalm 97:11 says light is sown for the righteous. How does the image of sowing — rather than switching on — change your expectations about spiritual understanding?
4. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says the Spirit examines even the deepest things of God. Where have you settled for what you can figure out rather than asking the Spirit to search it out?
5. Philippians 3:10 includes sharing in His sufferings as part of knowing Him. What does that verse ask of you that you have not wanted to accept?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 139:11-12 removes any place to hide from God. Does that verse comfort you or unsettle you, and why?
2. Philippians 3:10 describes knowing God as progressive. How do we keep pursuing that without becoming impatient with where we currently are?
3. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says the Spirit sounds the bottomless things of God. How do we distinguish genuine revelation from our own speculation?
4. Psalm 97:11 pairs light with righteousness and gladness with uprightness. What does that pairing suggest about the relationship between how we live and what we understand?
5. Is there a part of God's character that our group has quietly avoided? What would it take to face it together with Scripture open?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I come to You wanting to know You — not merely to know about You. Your Word says that to You the night shines as bright as day, that darkness and light are the same to You. I confess that there are parts of Your character I have avoided because they looked

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dark to me, or frightening, or hard to reconcile with what I already loved about You. Forgive me for shrinking back from any part of who You are.

Search my heart, Lord. Show me where I have made You smaller and safer than You are, and where I have preferred a version of You that I could manage. I repent of that. Light is sown for the righteous — so let it come up in me. I do not need to see everything today; I need to keep walking with You.

Holy Spirit, You search everything and sound the very depths of God. Take me deeper than my own understanding can reach. Make Paul's determined purpose my own: to know Him, to know the power of His resurrection, to share in His sufferings, to be transformed into His likeness. Whatever it costs, I say yes. I trust You with the parts of Yourself I have not yet seen, because there is nothing in You that is not lovely. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Take Philippians 3:10 as a written commitment this week. Copy the verse out by hand, then name in writing one aspect of God's character you have avoided, and spend one prayer time asking the Holy Spirit to show you that part of Him from Scripture rather than from your assumptions.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

God's judgment is not a dark contradiction to His love but an expression of His righteousness. The Scripture cited here shows that God delights in exercising judgment in the earth, that judgments escalate to give opportunity for repentance, that vengeance belongs to God alone, and that believers face not condemnation but a review of their works.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Psalm 89:14 (AMPC)
- Jeremiah 9:24 (NKJV)
- Isaiah 61
- Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV)
- Hebrews 1:8-9 (NKJV)
- Acts 5:1-10
- Acts 12; Acts 12:7; Acts 12:23
- Romans 12:19 (AMPC)
- Deuteronomy 7
- Isaiah 45:1 (NKJV)
- Leviticus 18; Leviticus 18:25-30
- Genesis 4:10
- Revelation 20
- Romans 14:10
- 2 Corinthians 5:10
- Romans 8:1 (NLT)
- 1 Corinthians 3:12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:15 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The foundation of His throne. **Psalm 89:14** places righteousness and justice as the foundation of God's throne, with mercy, loving-kindness, and truth going before His face. **Hebrews 1:8-9** describes the scepter of His kingdom as a scepter of righteousness — an authority that has never been bent. **Jeremiah 9:24** says the one who glories should glory in knowing the Lord, who exer-

cises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, and delights in these. Judgment appears in the same breath as loving-kindness, as something God delights in.

A book closed mid-sentence. **Luke 4:18-19** records Jesus reading from **Isaiah 61** and stopping at the proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord — before the words that follow about the day of vengeance. The chapter reads this as Jesus opening a new dispensation without abolishing what comes after it.

Judgment did not cease. **Acts 5:1-10** records Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Holy Spirit and dying, with fear coming on the people. **Acts 12** shows the same angel who delivered Peter from prison in **verse 7** striking Herod in **verse 23**. Both occur after Pentecost, within the church age.

Vengeance reserved. **Romans 12:19** instructs believers never to avenge themselves but to leave the way open for God's wrath, because vengeance belongs to Him and He will repay. The chapter draws a practical consequence: taking retribution ourselves can obstruct God's.

How judgments come. **Deuteronomy 7** calls Israel to remember what God did in Egypt rather than fear. The chapter observes from that account that judgments escalated from lesser to greater, giving opportunity to repent at every stage. **Isaiah 45:1** shows God addressing Cyrus as His anointed, holding his right hand to subdue nations and open doors — God using an army and a foreign king as instruments. **Leviticus 18:25-30** describes the land itself becoming defiled and vomiting out its inhabitants when iniquity accumulates. **Genesis 4:10** shows Abel's blood crying out from the ground, establishing a link between what is done and what the earth registers.

Two judgments ahead. **Revelation 20** describes the Great White Throne — the end of all escalation for those who reject salvation. For believers, **Romans 14:10** and **2 Corinthians 5:10** speak of standing before the judgment seat of Christ. **Romans 8:1** settles the question of condemnation: there is none for those in Christ Jesus. **1 Corinthians 3:12-13** describes works tested by fire, and **1 Corinthians 3:15** says the one whose work is burned suffers loss yet is saved. Sin was paid for; service is reviewed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Jeremiah 9:24 says God delights in judgment alongside loving-kindness. Reading only that verse, what does it require you to adjust in how you think about Him?
2. Romans 12:19 tells you to leave the way open for God's wrath. Where have you been quietly settling a score that this verse asks you to release?
3. Deuteronomy 7 calls God's people to remember Egypt rather than fear. What has God done in your past that you have stopped remembering?
4. Romans 8:1 declares no condemnation, while 2 Corinthians 5:10 promises an accounting of works. How do you hold both verses at once without collapsing one into the other?

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5. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 says some works will not survive. Examining your own labors, which were directed by God and which were your own idea?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 89:14 and Hebrews 1:8-9 both tie God's throne to righteousness. Why might a righteous judge be a comfort rather than a threat?
2. Luke 4:18-19 shows Jesus stopping his reading of Isaiah 61 partway through. What does that choice tell us about the emphasis of this present age?
3. Acts 5:1-10 and Acts 12:23 occur after Pentecost. How should passages like these shape a group's reverence without producing fear of God's character?
4. Leviticus 18:25-30 speaks of land vomiting out its inhabitants. What responsibility, if any, does that place on those who pray for a nation?
5. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says each of us gives an account. How would our group's priorities change if we regularly kept that day in view?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I come to You and acknowledge that righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne, and that mercy and truth go before Your face. You are the Righteous Judge, and Your scepter has never been bent. I thank You for that. I would not want a God who overlooked evil.

Search my heart, Lord. Show me where I have resented You as Judge, or wanted mercy for myself and judgment for others. Forgive me. Show me too where I have taken vengeance into my own hands — in my words, my withholding, my quiet retaliation. Your Word says vengeance is Yours and You will repay. I release what I have been holding. I will not stand in the way of what You alone have the right to do.

Thank You that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. My sin was paid in full, and I do not stand before You as a defendant. But Your Word also says that each of us will give an account of what we have done. Let that day steady my choices today. Show me what in my labor is Yours and what is only mine, and give me the honesty to let go of what will not stand.

You delight in loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. Make me one who does the same. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following Romans 12:19, name one situation where you have been holding a grievance or waiting to even the score. In prayer, hand it over to God explicitly as His to judge, and this week take one concrete step that releases rather than retaliates.

This chapter deals with themes of judgment and accountability. If it stirs up guilt or fear that lingers, bring it to a pastor or trusted mature believer rather than carrying it alone.

CHAPTER NINE

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

In this age of grace, God delivers justice largely through civil authorities He has ordained, and the Church's assignment is to pray for that justice rather than to dispense it. The Scripture cited here identifies those in authority as God's ministers, calls the Church to cry out for the poor and vulnerable, and laments that no one pleads for justice.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Psalm 10:16-18 (NKJV)
- Psalm 58:11 (NKJV)
- Isaiah 26:8-9 (AMPC)
- 1 Peter 2; 1 Peter 2:13-14 (NLT)
- Romans 13; Romans 13:1-7 (NKJV); Romans 13:4; Romans 13:5
- Psalm 89:14 (NKJV)
- Acts 13:22, 36
- Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-3
- Romans 9:17 (NKJV)
- Isaiah 10:1-2 (NKJV)
- Psalm 72:4 (NKJV)
- Psalm 140:12 (NKJV)
- James 3:15-17 (NKJV)
- Proverbs 29:2 (NKJV)
- Isaiah 59:4 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

God hears the oppressed. **Psalm 10:16-18** declares the Lord King forever, says He has heard the desire of the humble, prepares their heart, and inclines His ear to do justice for the fatherless and oppressed so that man may oppress no more. **Psalm 58:11** says people will conclude there is a reward for the righteous and that God judges in the earth — visible justice produces recognition of God. **Isaiah 26:8-9** is a prayer of longing: the soul yearns for God in the night, because only when His judgments are in the earth do its inhabitants learn righteousness.

Civil authority as God's ministry. **1 Peter 2:13-14** instructs submission to human authority for the Lord's sake, noting these officials are sent to punish wrongdoing and honor right conduct. **Romans 13:1-7** is the fuller treatment: there is no authority except from God, existing authorities are appointed by Him, rulers are a terror to evil rather than to good works, and three times those in authority are called God's ministers. **Romans 13:4** calls the official an avenger executing wrath on the one who practices evil; **Romans 13:5** adds that submission is owed for conscience' sake, not merely from fear. **Psalm 89:14** grounds all of this in the throne itself: righteousness and justice are its foundation, with mercy and truth going before God's face.

The seat, not the person. **Acts 13:22, 36** shows God's use of David, a man after His own heart who served God's purpose in his own generation. **Isaiah 44:28** and **45:1-3** show God naming Cyrus — an unbelieving foreign king — as His shepherd and anointed, holding his hand to subdue nations. **Romans 9:17** records God's word to Pharaoh, that he was raised up for the purpose of displaying God's power and declaring His name in all the earth. The authority resides in the office, not in the character of the occupant.

Who justice is for. **Isaiah 10:1-2** pronounces woe on those who write unjust decrees to rob the needy, take what is right from the poor, prey on widows, and rob the fatherless. **Psalm 72:4** says He will bring justice to the poor, save the children of the needy, and break the oppressor in pieces. **Psalm 140:12** affirms that the Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor.

Two sources of wisdom. **James 3:15-17** contrasts wisdom that is earthly, sensual, and demonic — producing envy, self-seeking, and confusion — with wisdom from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality or hypocrisy. Those in authority operate from one or the other.

The gap prayer fills. **Proverbs 29:2** states that when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule the people groan. **Isaiah 59:4** names the failure directly: no one calls out for justice, nor does anyone plead for truth.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Romans 13:1-7 calls civil authorities God's ministers three times. How does that description differ from how you normally think and speak about them?
2. Isaiah 59:4 says no one pleads for justice. Has that been true of your own prayer life?
3. Isaiah 26:8-9 describes a soul yearning for God's judgments. What would have to change in you for that verse to describe your desire?
4. Isaiah 45:1-3 and Romans 9:17 show God using unbelieving rulers. Where has your judgment of a leader kept you from praying for them?
5. James 3:15-17 gives two marks of two wisdoms. Examining your own speech about political matters this month, which list does it resemble?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Romans 13:4 calls the official an avenger executing wrath on evildoers. How should that verse shape the way believers pray about courts and law enforcement?
2. Isaiah 10:1-2, Psalm 72:4, and Psalm 140:12 all center on the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. Who in our community fits that description, and are we praying for them?
3. The chapter argues the Church is not the dispenser of justice. Reading 1 Peter 2:13-14 and Romans 13:1-7, do you agree, and where do you see the line between mercy and justice in our own activity?
4. Proverbs 29:2 ties the people's wellbeing to who holds authority. How do we pray about that without our prayers becoming partisan?
5. James 3:17 lists the marks of wisdom from above. Which of those marks would most change our group's discussions if we asked God for it?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank You that righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne, and that mercy and truth go before Your face. You hear the desire of the humble. You maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor. You are not indifferent to suffering.

Your Word says that no one calls out for justice and no one pleads for truth. Search my heart, Lord — that has often been true of me. I have complained about leaders more than I have prayed for them. I have criticized systems I never once brought before You. Forgive me. I repent of a mouth that has spoken judgment where You asked for intercession.

I pray now for those who sit in seats of authority — judges, officials, law enforcement, lawmakers. Your Word calls them Your ministers, whether they know You or not. They cannot do what You appointed them to do without wisdom from above. So I ask You to give them that wisdom — pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, without partiality and without hypocrisy — and not the wisdom that is earthly and self-seeking. Restrain corruption. Straighten what is crooked. Let justice be done for the fatherless, the widow, the poor, and the ones whose voices no one hears.

Give me Your heart for those who suffer, and give me the discipline to pray rather than merely to be troubled. Use my voice for the ones who have none. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Acting on Romans 13:1-7 and Isaiah 59:4, name one specific person in a seat of civil authority — a local judge, official, or officer — and pray for them by name for the next seven days, asking God for wisdom from above and integrity in their office, regardless of whether you agree with them.

CHAPTER TEN

THE MERCY OF GOD

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

In this age, believers are called to call for mercy rather than pronounce judgment. The Scripture cited here shows that all have sinned without distinction, that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel, that judgment belongs to God alone, and that mercy triumphs over judgment.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Luke 7:47 (NLT)
- Romans 3:22-23 (NKJV)
- Ephesians 2:12-13 (NLT); Ephesians 2:13 (NKJV)
- Genesis 3:4-5 (NLT)
- Hebrews 12:24 (AMPC)
- Jude 1:9 (NKJV)
- Jude 1:14-21 (NKJV); Jude 1:20-21 (NKJV); Jude 1:22-23 (NLT)
- James 2:13 (AMPC, NKJV)
- John 20:22-23 (NKJV)
- Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

Forgiveness and love in proportion. **Luke 7:47** records Jesus saying that the woman's many sins were forgiven and so she showed much love, while the one forgiven little shows little love. The measure of felt forgiveness shapes the measure of love returned.

No spectrum of sin. **Romans 3:22-23** states there is no difference — all have sinned and fall short of God's glory. **Ephesians 2:12-13** describes the former condition as living apart from Christ, excluded, without God and without hope, and then declares that those once far off have been brought near through the blood of Christ. **Ephesians 2:13** repeats the point plainly. Sin's essence, in this chapter's reading, is estrangement from God rather than a ranking of offenses.

How humanity came to judge. **Genesis 3:4-5** records the serpent's claim that their eyes would be opened and they would be like God, knowing good and evil. The chapter observes that

this claim was not empty — humanity did gain the capacity to judge, but exercised it as rebels rather than as God does.

Two voices from blood. **Hebrews 12:24** contrasts the sprinkled blood of Jesus, which speaks of mercy, with the blood of Abel, which cried out for vengeance. The believer's speech represents one or the other.

Restraint even among angels. **Jude 1:9** records Michael the archangel, contending with the devil, refusing to bring a reviling accusation and saying only, "The Lord rebuke you."

The command in the middle of a judgment passage. **Jude 1:14-21** lists those under coming judgment — grumblers, complainers, mockers walking after their own lusts, causing divisions — and announces that the Lord comes to execute judgment on all. Then it pivots: **Jude 1:20-21** instructs believers to build themselves up in their most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep themselves in the love of God, and look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Jude 1:22-23** follows with the assignment: show mercy to those whose faith wavers, snatch others from the flames, and show mercy with caution, hating the sins that contaminate.

Mercy's verdict. **James 2:13** says judgment is without mercy for the one who showed no mercy, and that mercy triumphs over judgment. **John 20:22-23** records Jesus breathing on the disciples and giving them the charge concerning forgiving or retaining sins. **Micah 6:8** summarizes the requirement: do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Luke 7:47 ties love to forgiveness received. Have you ever underestimated how much you were forgiven, and how has that affected your love for Christ?
2. Romans 3:22-23 says there is no difference. Whom have you quietly ranked as worse than yourself?
3. Hebrews 12:24 contrasts two voices from blood. In your recent words about people and events, which blood have you been representing?
4. Jude 1:9 shows an archangel refusing to revile. Where does your speech go further than Michael's did?
5. Micah 6:8 requires doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly. Which of those three do you find hardest, and why?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Ephesians 2:12-13 defines the former condition as being without God and without hope. How does that definition of sin differ from the way it is usually discussed?
2. Genesis 3:4-5 suggests the capacity to judge good and evil came through disobedience. What does that imply about our confidence in our own assessments?

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3. Read Jude 1:14-23 together. Why do you think the passage turns from listing the guilty to commanding mercy?
4. James 2:13 says mercy triumphs over judgment. What does that look like practically when someone has genuinely done wrong?
5. John 20:22-23 speaks of forgiving or retaining sins. How do we hold that verse with the right seriousness rather than either ignoring it or overreaching with it?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I come to You, and I thank You that Your Word says all have sinned and fall short of Your glory — there is no difference. I once lived without You and without hope, and I have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Thank You that His blood speaks of mercy, a better and more gracious word than the blood that cried for vengeance.

Search my heart, Lord. Show me where I have taken up a judgment that was never mine to make — about people, about leaders, about nations, about those whose lives look nothing like mine. Even Michael would not bring a reviling accusation, yet I have done it freely. Forgive me. Cleanse my mouth of curse and complaint.

Your Word tells me to build myself up in faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep myself in Your love, and look for Your mercy. So I look for it, Lord. Show me Your mercy in my own heart, because You are there, and where You are, mercy is. Then teach me to extend it — to those whose faith is wavering, to those who need snatching from the flames, and to those I would rather see judged.

Let me do justly where the choice is mine, love mercy in every other instance, and walk humbly with You. Have mercy on my city. Have mercy on those in authority over me. Have mercy on the ones I have written off. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Acting on Jude 1:20-23 and James 2:13, name one person or group you have been inclined to condemn. Each time they come to mind this week, speak a specific prayer for God's mercy over them instead of your assessment of them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and God is able to speak through anyone who yields to Him. The Scripture cited here shows that no one's voice is exclusively claimed — the same Peter who spoke by the Father's revelation was moments later speaking from a human point of view — and that believers are therefore commanded to pray for those in authority rather than write them off.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Revelation 19:10 (AMPC)
- 2 Chronicles 20
- Matthew 16:13-17 (NKJV)
- Matthew 16:23-24 (NLT)
- Acts 5:3 (NLT)
- Luke 9:55
- John 11:50 (NLT); John 11:51 (NLT)
- 1 Samuel 19
- Romans 13; Romans 13:2
- 1 Timothy 2:1-2

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

Prophecy defined by Jesus. **Revelation 19:10** locates the essence of all prophecy in the testimony of Jesus — the inspiration behind all inspired preaching and interpretation of the divine will. Prophecy is not primarily prediction; it is inspired utterance centered on Christ.

Prophecy from unlikely places. **2 Chronicles 20** records the word coming not from the leader at the front but from within the assembled congregation, producing the battle strategy the nation followed. **1 Samuel 19** shows Saul's messengers, sent to kill David, prophesying when they encountered the prophets — and then Saul himself prophesying, before returning to his pursuit. **John 11:50-51** records Caiaphas, who incited Jesus' condemnation, speaking words the text says he did not say on his own but as high priest. The anointing to speak did not certify the character of the speaker.

No voice is exclusively claimed. **Matthew 16:13-17** shows Peter confessing Jesus as the Christ, with Jesus declaring that flesh and blood did not reveal it but the Father in heaven. **Matthew 16:23-24** shows the same Peter, verses later, rebuked as a dangerous trap for seeing things from a human point of view rather than God's — followed by the call to give up one's own way, take up the cross, and follow. **Acts 5:3** records Peter asking Ananias why he let Satan fill his heart, so that he lied to the Holy Spirit — a believer inside the church. **Luke 9:55** shows Jesus rebuking His own disciples for not knowing by what spirit they spoke. The consistent warning is that natural reasoning, sincerely held, can be the very thing used against God's purposes.

Therefore, pray. **1 Timothy 2:1-2** instructs that prayers be made for kings and all in authority. **Romans 13** identifies those authorities as God's ministers, and **Romans 13:2** warns that resisting the authority resists what God has ordained. The chapter's practical conclusion is that dishonoring a leader and interceding for that leader cannot occupy the same mouth.

This chapter also includes the author's personal account of a vision concerning the European Union. That account is her testimony rather than Scripture, and the study below stays with the verses cited.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Revelation 19:10 ties all prophecy to the testimony of Jesus. How does that verse help you evaluate what you hear presented as prophetic?
2. In Matthew 16:23, Peter's error was seeing things from a human point of view. Where have you assumed your natural reasoning was God's leading?
3. Luke 9:55 says the disciples did not know by what spirit they spoke. What recent words of yours would you want to test by that verse?
4. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 commands prayer for those in authority. Whom have you excluded from that command?
5. Romans 13:2 warns against resisting what God has established. Does your speech about leaders honor or resist that verse?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 16:13-17 alongside 16:23-24. What does the closeness of those two moments teach us about spiritual confidence?
2. John 11:50-51 shows God speaking through a hostile high priest. What does that account allow us to hope for, and what does it not permit us to conclude about the person?

3. 2 Chronicles 20 shows a word coming from within the congregation rather than from leadership. How should that shape how our group listens to one another?
4. Acts 5:3 describes Satan filling the heart of a church member. What safeguards does Scripture give us against being used this way?
5. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 and Romans 13:2 together set a standard for how we speak of leaders. Where does our group fall short of it, and what would repentance look like?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank You that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and that everything You speak points to Him. I want my mouth to serve that testimony and nothing else.

Search my heart, Lord. Your Word shows me Peter — commended one moment for speaking what the Father revealed, rebuked the next for seeing things from a human point of view. I have done the same. I have spoken with confidence out of my own reasoning and called it discernment. I have joined in mockery, jesting, and contempt toward leaders You told me to pray for. Forgive me. I do not want my voice used against Your purposes, even sincerely, even unknowingly.

Teach me to know by what spirit I speak. Guard my mouth from division, accusation, and complaint. Let me give up my own way, take up my cross, and follow You.

Your Word tells me to make prayers for kings and for all who are in authority. So I pray for them now — the ones I did not vote for, the ones whose policies grieve me, the ones I have dishonored with my words. I honor the seat You established. Give them wisdom from above. Let Your Spirit come upon them and put Your words in their mouths. Nothing is too hard for You; You spoke through Saul's messengers and through Caiaphas. Do it again, for the sake of Your plan and the coming of Your Son. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Acting on 1 Timothy 2:1-2, choose one leader you have spoken of with contempt. Stop making jokes or critical remarks about them for the next thirty days, and each time you are tempted to, pray for them by name instead — asking specifically that God would put His words in their mouth.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

The Church functions on earth as the body of Christ, seated with Him and sent to dispense what He is — light, truth, love, peace, and joy — rather than merely to oppose what is wrong. The Scripture cited here shows evil overcome with good, peace revealed as powerful rather than passive, and Jesus modeling both authority over unseen influence and the release of peace over people.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Ephesians 3:10 (AMPC)
- John 8:12; John 9:5 (NKJV)
- Matthew 5:14 (NKJV)
- Ephesians 3:18
- 1 Timothy 2:1-4
- Romans 12:21 (NKJV)
- Romans 5:8
- Philippians 4:7 (NLT)
- Colossians 3:15 (NLT)
- Romans 16:20 (NKJV)
- John 16:33 (NKJV)
- John 14:27 (NKJV)
- Ephesians 6
- Mark 4; Mark 4:35-38 (NKJV); Mark 4:39-41 (NKJV)
- Matthew 18:18 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The Church's purpose toward the unseen realm. **Ephesians 3:10** says that through the church the many-sided wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly sphere. The Church's existence is itself a declaration.

Light shared. **John 8:12** and **John 9:5** record Jesus declaring Himself the light of the world;

Matthew 5:14 applies that same designation to His followers. **Ephesians 3:18** speaks of comprehending the dimensions of Christ's love together with all the saints — the knowing is corporate.

God's stated desire. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 urges prayer for all people and states that God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. This is the aim the chapter builds everything else on.

The method: overcome with good. Romans 12:21 does not instruct believers to make war on evil but to refuse being overcome by it and to overcome it with good. **Romans 5:8** demonstrates God's own method — He commended His love toward us while we were still sinners, becoming the sacrifice rather than attacking the sinner.

Peace as a force, not a feeling. Philippians 4:7 says God's peace exceeds understanding and guards heart and mind. **Colossians 3:15** says that peace is to rule in the heart, which requires strength. **Romans 16:20** calls Him the God of peace who will crush Satan under our feet — peace and crushing in the same sentence. **John 14:27** records Jesus leaving His peace as His parting gift, given differently than the world gives. **John 16:33** promises peace in Him alongside tribulation in the world, because He has overcome it. **Ephesians 6** places the preparation of the gospel of peace on the believer's feet — soldier's footwear, not slippers.

Jesus' two-part response in the storm. Mark 4:35-38 sets the scene: a great windstorm, a boat filling with water, Jesus asleep, and the disciples asking whether He cares that they are perishing. **Mark 4:39-41** records what He did — He rebuked the wind and spoke peace to the sea, the wind ceased, there was great calm, and He asked why they were fearful and without faith. He addressed the unseen influence first, then released peace over what had been stirred up. **Matthew 18:18** supplies the authority behind both actions: whatever is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Matthew 5:14 gives you the same title Jesus claimed in John 8:12. What does that verse ask of you where you spend your week?
2. Romans 12:21 tells you to overcome evil with good. Where have you been fighting evil with more of the same rather than with good?
3. Romans 5:8 shows God acting toward us while we were still sinners. How does that verse challenge the conditions you place on your own kindness?
4. Colossians 3:15 says peace is to rule in your heart. Is peace actually governing you, or merely visiting you occasionally?
5. In Mark 4:39, Jesus addressed the wind before the water. What unseen influence in your situation have you never addressed because you were focused on the visible turmoil?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Ephesians 3:10 says God's wisdom is displayed through the Church to spiritual authorities. What does that suggest our gatherings accomplish beyond what we can see?
2. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 states God's desire that all be saved. How should that verse shape how we pray about people we find difficult?
3. Romans 16:20 pairs the God of peace with crushing Satan. How does that reframe your understanding of peace?
4. Read Mark 4:35-41 together. What does Jesus' question in verse 40 reveal about what He expected of the disciples?
5. Matthew 18:18 grants real authority. How does a group exercise that without drifting into presumption?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, thank You that You seated me with Christ and made me part of His body on the earth. Thank You that Jesus is the light of the world, and that He calls me light as well. I do not want to live as though my earthly identity is the primary thing about me. Wake me up to where I actually sit.

Search my heart, Lord. Show me where I have complained about darkness rather than dispensed light, where I have argued with evil rather than overcome it with good, and where I have kept what You put in me packaged up and unused. Forgive me. You loved me and gave Yourself for me while I was still a sinner — teach me to love that way.

Let Your peace, which exceeds understanding, guard my heart and mind. Let the peace of Christ rule in me — not as something soft that I feel when circumstances allow, but as a governing strength. You are the God of peace who crushes the enemy under our feet. Shod my feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace so I can walk into hard places without harm.

Jesus, in the storm You rebuked the wind before You spoke to the sea. Give me eyes to see what is stirring up the people around me, and give me only Your words to say about it. Then let me release Your peace where there is rage. Wherever You have placed me this week, let me dispense what I have of You — love, joy, peace, truth — out loud and on purpose. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following Romans 12:21 and Mark 4:39, identify one situation of conflict or unrest you are close to. This week, do one concrete good thing into that situation rather than speaking against it — and in prayer, speak peace over the people involved rather than describing the problem back to God.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FOR KINGS AND ALL IN AUTHORITY

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

God's strategy for reaching all people includes praying for those in authority. The Scripture cited here establishes that God desires everyone saved and brought to the knowledge of the truth, that rulers reign by wisdom which must come from above, and that the peaceful life promised flows from prayer and trust in God rather than from the quality of a government.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Proverbs 29:2 (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 2; 1 Timothy 2:1-7 (NLT); 1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:2 (NLT); 1 Timothy 2:4 (NLT); 1 Timothy 2:4-6 (NLT)
- Romans 13
- Proverbs 8:15-16 (NKJV)
- James 3:15-17
- Matthew 22:21

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The instruction itself. **1 Timothy 2:1-7** urges that prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people, and specifically for kings and all in authority, so that believers may live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. It states this is good and pleasing to God, who wants everyone saved and to understand the truth, and names one God and one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who gave His life to purchase freedom for everyone.

Two stated aims in one passage. **1 Timothy 2:4-6** repeats God's desire twice — that everyone be saved and come to understand the truth, and that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all. The passage moves from prayer for all people, to prayer for authorities, to God's universal saving intent, which the chapter reads as one connected strategy rather than three unrelated ideas.

The order matters. **1 Timothy 2:1** begins with all people before it narrows to kings and those in authority. Praying for authorities is a means of reaching the people under their influence, not an end in itself.

Where the quiet life comes from. **1 Timothy 2:2** connects the peaceful and quiet life to the act of praying. The chapter presses the question honestly: believers in persecuted nations pray

this way and still face hostility. The answer offered stays with Scripture — peace is found in Christ, not produced by government, so the outcome of obeying this verse is confidence and rest in God regardless of national conditions.

Where rulers get wisdom. **Proverbs 8:15-16** says that by wisdom kings reign and rulers decree justice — princes, nobles, and all the judges of the earth govern by it. **James 3:15-17** presents the two available sources: wisdom that is earthly, sensual, and demonic, producing envy and confusion; and wisdom from above that is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality or hypocrisy. **Romans 13** establishes that the seats themselves are ordained by God.

Dual obligation. **Matthew 22:21** records Jesus instructing that what belongs to Caesar be rendered to Caesar and what belongs to God be rendered to God. Civic responsibility is real; **Proverbs 29:2** confirms that who holds authority affects whether people rejoice or groan. But the chapter's conclusion is that a moral society is not the final goal — being born again is.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. 1 Timothy 2:1 begins with prayer for all people. How much of your prayer life extends past your own circle?
2. Proverbs 8:15-16 says rulers govern by wisdom. Have you ever asked God to give wisdom to a specific leader, or only asked Him to remove them?
3. 1 Timothy 2:2 links the peaceful life to praying. Where has your peace been rising and falling with the news rather than resting in God?
4. James 3:17 lists the marks of wisdom from above. Which of those marks is most absent from how you engage political matters?
5. 1 Timothy 2:4 states God's desire that everyone be saved. Is there anyone you have quietly excluded from that "everyone"?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Paul wrote 1 Timothy 2:1-7 under a hostile pagan government, from prison. What does the absence of complaint in that passage teach us?
2. Matthew 22:21 and 1 Timothy 2:1-2 together describe two kinds of responsibility. How do we keep the civic from crowding out the spiritual, or the reverse?
3. Proverbs 29:2 says the people groan under wicked rule. How do we hold that verse honestly alongside the command to pray for and honor those in authority?
4. 1 Timothy 2:4-6 states that Christ gave Himself for everyone. How should that shape the way our group prays about nations hostile to the gospel?

5. Where does our group's conversation about leaders resemble wisdom from below rather than from above (James 3:15-17)?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, Your Word tells me to make prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all people — and specifically for kings and all who are in authority. Thank You that You desire everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all.

Search my heart, Lord. I confess how small my prayers have often been — bounded by my own household, my own concerns, my own comfort. Lift up my eyes. Let me see the people You love, and let me pray for them.

Forgive me for the times I have complained about leaders instead of interceding for them, and for the times my peace has depended on election results rather than on You. You are the source of my peace, not any government. Let me pray and then rest, my heart and mind kept in Christ.

By wisdom kings reign and rulers decree justice. So I ask You now: give wisdom from above to those in authority over me — wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and without partiality. Where they have leaned on earthly and self-seeking wisdom, intervene. Let truth reach them, because truth alone sets people free without binding someone else.

And let me be honest before You about myself. When I bring You my grievances, change me first if that is what is needed. I want truth about me more than I want to be proven right. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following 1 Timothy 2:1-2, write a short list of authorities in your life — national, local, workplace, and church. Pray through the list once this week, asking specifically for wisdom from above for each, and add thanksgiving for each one as the passage instructs.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

KINGDOM CITIZENS

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

Every born-again believer holds dual citizenship, and the heavenly one is primary. The Scripture cited here shows that God set the nations so people would seek Him, that believers have been rescued out of darkness and made new creations, and that because principalities were disarmed, no one may impose the legal or cultural expectations of the old identity.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Acts 17:26-27 (NLT)
- Revelation 11:15-18
- Colossians 1:13 (NLT)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- 1 Thessalonians 5:5 (NLT)
- Hebrews 11
- Colossians 2:15-17 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

Nations under God's ordering. Acts 17:26-27 says God made all the nations from one man, decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and determined their boundaries — with the stated purpose that people would seek Him and find Him, since He is not far from any one of us. National identity exists for a redemptive reason. **Revelation 11:15-18** points to the end of that arrangement, when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He reigns.

Rescued, not merely improved. Colossians 1:13 says God rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son. This is stated as a completed transfer, not a gradual migration. **2 Corinthians 5:17** declares that anyone in Christ is a new creation — the chapter presses this to its plain sense, that the believer is a genuinely new kind of person while remaining a citizen of an earthly nation.

Identity established. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 says believers are children of the light and of the day, not belonging to darkness and night. The verse assigns identity rather than merely describing behavior.

A precedent for holding earth loosely. **Hebrews 11** presents Abraham and others who considered themselves strangers and foreigners even in the land God gave them, because they were looking for another. The chapter cites this as the model for living with the tension of two citizenships.

Freedom from the old obligations. **Colossians 2:15-17** ties the two together: having disarmed principalities and powers and made a public spectacle of them, Christ triumphed over them — therefore let no one judge you regarding food, drink, festivals, new moons, or sabbaths, which are a shadow, while the substance belongs to Christ. Because the powers were disarmed, the ritual and cultural claims attached to the old identity have no standing.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Colossians 1:13 says you were rescued and transferred. Do you live as someone who was moved, or as someone still negotiating with the place you left?
2. 2 Corinthians 5:17 calls you a new creation. Where does your self-understanding still run on your first birth rather than your second?
3. Acts 17:26-27 says God set the boundaries of nations so people would seek Him. How does that change how you view your own country's place in God's purposes?
4. Hebrews 11 describes people who lived as strangers even in the land promised to them. What in your life would look different if you held it that loosely?
5. Colossians 2:16 warns against letting others judge you over cultural and ritual expectations. Where have you accepted a standard Scripture does not require of you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Acts 17:26-27 gives national boundaries a redemptive purpose. How should that shape how we pray for our own nation and for others?
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 states our identity plainly. What practical difference does it make to say "I am light" rather than "I am in the light"?
3. The chapter says the kingdoms have no landform — their form is people. Reading Colossians 1:13, what follows for how we think about evangelism?
4. Hebrews 11 shows believers holding earthly belonging loosely while still living in a place. Where is the healthy line between celebrating our culture and over-identifying with it?
5. Revelation 11:15-18 points to a coming transfer of all kingdoms to Christ. How should that certainty affect our present concerns about national affairs?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, thank You that You rescued me from the kingdom of darkness and transferred me into the kingdom of Your dear Son. I did not climb out; You brought me out. I could never have escaped on my own, and I thank You for it.

Thank You that I am a new creation in Christ, and that Your Word calls me a child of the light and of the day. Search my heart, Lord, and show me where I still live out of my first birth instead of my second — where nation, culture, background, or old habits define me more than You do. Forgive me, and teach me to recognize which identity I am operating from.

Thank You that Christ disarmed principalities and powers and triumphed over them openly, so that no ritual, expectation, or cultural obligation has a claim on me. Where I have accepted a burden You never gave me, set me free.

You made the nations and set their boundaries so that people would seek You and find You — and You are not far from any one of them. Give me Your heart for that. Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Increase Your kingdom, Lord, not with buildings but with souls. Use me where You have placed me, as an ambassador and not a tourist. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Acting on 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Colossians 1:13, write out one sentence describing yourself as your first birth would define you, and one describing yourself as Scripture defines you in Christ. Keep the second where you will see it daily this week, and speak it aloud whenever the first begins to govern your thinking.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PREPARING HIM A BODY

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

Just as Jesus' first coming required a physical body prepared for Him, His second coming involves a body being prepared now — the Church. The Scripture cited here shows the body knit together and growing to maturity, Christ as Head and Savior of the body, the corporate nature of the epistle prayers, and the great cloud of witnesses surrounding the race we run.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Ephesians 4:16 (AMPC)
- Galatians 4:4
- Hebrews 10:5 (NLT)
- Ephesians 3:18 (AMPC)
- Genesis 3:15
- Ephesians 5:23 (NLT)
- Luke 9:28-36 (NLT)
- Hebrews 12:22-24 (NLT)
- Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)
- Ephesians 1:23 (NLT)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

A body knit together. **Ephesians 4:16** describes the whole church in all its parts, closely joined and firmly knit by joints and ligaments, with each part working properly according to its need, growing to full maturity and building itself up in love. Growth is corporate and depends on every part functioning.

A body prepared and offered. **Galatians 4:4** says Jesus came in the fullness of time. **Hebrews 10:5** records His words on entering the world — God did not desire sacrifices and offerings, but gave Him a body to offer. The first coming required a prepared body. **Genesis 3:15** contains the first promise of that coming, given at the beginning and fulfilled millennia later.

Christ as Head and Savior of the body. **Ephesians 5:23** states that Christ is head of the church and Savior of His body. The body's health is not self-generated; it comes from the Head.

Ephesians 1:23 says the church is His body, made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself.

Prayers written for the whole. **Ephesians 3:18** asks for power to apprehend and grasp *with all the saints* the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love. The chapter's point rests on that phrase — the comprehension is corporate, even though the prayer can be applied personally.

Glory before consummation. **Luke 9:28-36** records the transfiguration: Jesus' appearance changed, His clothing dazzling, Moses and Elijah appearing with Him, the disciples waking to see His glory, and the Father's voice identifying His Son and commanding that they listen to Him. Jesus received heavenly assistance before the completion of His work.

Surrounded and connected. **Hebrews 12:22-24** lists what believers have come to: Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, countless angels in joyful gathering, the assembly of God's first-born whose names are written in heaven, God the Judge of all, the spirits of the righteous made perfect, Jesus the Mediator, and the sprinkled blood that speaks of forgiveness rather than crying out for vengeance. **Hebrews 12:1-2** follows with the response: strip off every weight and the sin that trips us up, run with endurance, keeping our eyes on Jesus who endured the cross for the joy set before Him and is now seated beside God's throne. The chapter is careful to add a boundary — we speak to the Lord, not to angels or to those in heaven.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Ephesians 4:16 says the body grows when each part works properly. What part are you currently playing, and is it working?
2. Ephesians 3:18 asks for comprehension "with all the saints." Where has your walk with God become so private that this verse cannot operate?
3. Hebrews 10:5 shows Jesus receiving a body in order to offer it. What does that pattern of preparation-for-offering suggest about how God is preparing you?
4. Hebrews 12:1 tells you to strip off weight and besetting sin. Name one specific thing that slows your endurance.
5. Ephesians 5:23 calls Christ the Savior of the body. Where have you been trying to fix something in the body that only the Head can heal?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Ephesians 4:16 makes maturity dependent on joints and connections. What connections in our group are strong, and where are we disjointed?
2. The epistle prayers, like Ephesians 3:18, were written to whole churches. How would our prayer times change if we prayed them corporately rather than individually?

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3. Luke 9:28-36 shows Jesus receiving heavenly help before completing His work. What does that account permit us to expect, and where should we be careful not to overreach?
4. Hebrews 12:22-24 says we have come to an assembly that includes those in heaven. How do we honor that reality while keeping our prayers directed only to God?
5. Ephesians 1:23 says Christ fills all things. What "rooms" — physical or otherwise — is our group not currently filling?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, thank You that You prepared a body for Your Son so He could offer Himself for me. He said He came to do Your will, and He did it completely. Thank You that He is now the Head of His body, and the Savior of it.

Search my heart, Lord. I confess how individualistic my faith has often been — my needs, my family, my calling, my understanding. Your Word says the love of Christ is grasped together with all the saints, and I have tried to grasp it alone. Forgive me. Give me a wider heart and a wider prayer.

Make me a working part of this body. Where I have been disconnected, reconnect me. Where I have criticized other members instead of supplying them, forgive me and change me. Let every joint and connection in Your body nourish rather than injure.

Thank You that I am surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses. So I choose now to strip off every weight that slows me down, and the sin that so easily trips me up. Show me what those are, specifically, and give me grace to lay them down. I fix my eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him and is seated in the place of honor beside Your throne.

Fill everything, Lord — every room, every place You have put me. Prepare Your body. Let us be coordinated, responsive to the Head, and flooded with light. His body was broken so that we could be one. Make us one. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Acting on Ephesians 3:18 and 4:16, pray one of the epistle prayers this week as it was written — in the plural, for the whole body of Christ rather than for yourself. Then take one practical step toward a connection in the body you have let weaken: a call, a visit, or a return to a gathering you have been missing.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

COLLABORATION OF OPERATIONS

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

God's sovereignty extends over everything He created, including what has become corrupt, and He orchestrates it all toward His plan. The Scripture cited here shows God claiming to have created even the smith and the destroyer while promising that no weapon formed will succeed, acknowledges that the righteous face many troubles, and grounds the believer's peace in prayer rather than in circumstances.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Isaiah 54; Isaiah 54:16-17 (NLT)
- Psalm 34:19 (NLT)
- 1 Timothy 2:2 (NLT)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

A famous promise in its full context. **Isaiah 54:16-17** is usually quoted only in part. Read whole, God first states that He created the blacksmith who fans the coals and makes weapons of destruction, and that He created the armies that destroy — and only then declares that no weapon turned against His servants will succeed and that every accusing voice will be silenced, with vindication coming from Him. The promise of protection sits inside a claim of comprehensive sovereignty. The weapon exists and will come; what is guaranteed is that it will not prosper.

Trouble is expected. **Psalm 34:19** states plainly that the righteous person faces many troubles and that the Lord rescues each time. Trouble is not evidence of failure or lack of faith; the verse assumes it and promises deliverance through it rather than exemption from it.

Where peace comes from. **1 Timothy 2:2** ties the peaceful and quiet life marked by godliness and dignity to the practice of praying for those in authority. The chapter's practical conclusion is that this wider view — God working through everything and everyone — is what makes a settled, non-anxious prayer life possible.

The consequence for how we pray. Because God reserves the right to use what He created, the chapter argues against praying simply for one side to be helped and the other judged. The Scripture cited earlier in the book supports the alternative it recommends: extending mercy while the door for mercy remains open.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Isaiah 54:16-17 says God created even the one who forges weapons. How does the full context change the way you have quoted this promise?
2. Psalm 34:19 says the righteous face many troubles. Have you interpreted your troubles as evidence that something is wrong with your faith?
3. Isaiah 54:17 promises that no weapon will prosper — not that none will come. Where have you expected exemption rather than deliverance?
4. 1 Timothy 2:2 connects prayer to a peaceful life. Is your peace currently resting on your circumstances or on your obedience to this verse?
5. Where have your prayers assumed you already know who the good and bad parties are in a situation?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Read Isaiah 54:16-17 aloud in full. What does God's claim in verse 16 establish about His sovereignty, and how does that affect verse 17's comfort?
2. Psalm 34:19 promises rescue "each time." How do we hold that verse honestly with believers who are still in the middle of trouble?
3. If God is able to use anyone for His purposes, how should that change the way our group prays about opposing parties in a conflict?
4. 1 Timothy 2:2 promises a quiet life to those who pray this way. Does that describe our group's inner condition? If not, what is missing?
5. Where might our praying be "skinny" — limited by our own assumptions about how God ought to work?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank You that You are God over everything You have made. Your Word says You created the smith who forges the weapon and the armies that destroy — and that no weapon turned against Your servants will succeed, and every accusing voice will be silenced, because vindication comes from You. I rest in that.

Search my heart, Lord. I confess how narrow my praying has often been. I have decided in advance who deserves Your help and who deserves Your judgment, and I have prayed accordingly. Forgive me. Your thoughts are higher than mine and Your ways beyond my reasoning. Lift

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my eyes off of only what concerns me — my family, my city, my preferences — and show me what You are doing.

Your Word tells me that the righteous face many troubles, and that You rescue every time. So I will not treat difficulty as proof that something has gone wrong. Teach me to overcome on purpose, with the strategies You have given.

Let me pray from rest rather than from anxiety, and let mercy govern my mouth while the door for mercy is still open. You are the Planner; I am glad to be a participant and not the architect. Do what only You can do, and let it be on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Take Isaiah 54:16-17 and read it in full — not just the familiar phrase. Write out verse 16 alongside verse 17, and this week, when a threat or opposition comes to mind, pray the whole passage rather than the fragment, thanking God for His sovereignty before you claim His protection.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FROM REST, NOT ZEAL

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

Kingdom work proceeds from rest, not from human zeal. The Scripture cited here shows that the Shepherd makes us lie down and restores the soul *before* leading us in paths of righteousness, that Christ's yoke brings rest to the soul even as it means work, and that God's purposes advance not by might or power but by His Spirit.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Psalm 23; Psalm 23:1-3 (NKJV)
- Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)
- Matthew 16:23
- Matthew 11:28-29 (NLT); Matthew 11:29 (NLT)
- Zechariah 4:6 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The order in the psalm. Psalm 23:1-3 places specific steps in a specific sequence: the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want — He makes me lie down in green pastures — He leads me beside still waters — He restores my soul — *then* He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The chapter's central observation is structural. The lying down, the still waters, and the restoring of the soul come before the leading into paths. Rest is not a reward for the work; it is the precondition of it.

Works already prepared. Ephesians 2:10 says we are God's masterpiece, created anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago. The works are His, planned in advance — not works we select, however worthy or however passionate we feel about them.

The danger of our own assessment. Matthew 16:23 records Jesus calling Peter a hindrance and identifying the source of his words, because Peter was viewing the situation from a human perspective rather than God's. Sincere natural reasoning is precisely what was used against the plan of God.

Rest and yoke together. Matthew 11:28-29 contains both: Jesus invites the weary and burdened, promises to give them rest, and in the same breath says to take His yoke and learn

from Him — because He is humble and gentle at heart — and there they will find rest for their souls. **Matthew 11:29** makes the reason explicit. He does not say to learn from Him because He is mighty and strong; the qualification He names is humility and gentleness. Work happens, but under a yoke shared with Him.

The governing principle. Zechariah 4:6 states that it is not by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit. The chapter treats this not as a slogan but as the operating rule that rules out frantic, volume-driven, urgency-driven prayer.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Psalm 23:1-3 puts lying down and soul restoration before the paths of righteousness. Where have you tried to move into an assignment while God was still waiting for you at verse 2?
2. Ephesians 2:10 says the good works were planned long ago. Which of your current labors did God actually assign, and which did you choose?
3. Matthew 16:23 shows Peter judging by human perspective. What situation are you currently assessing entirely by what you can see?
4. Matthew 11:29 says to learn from Christ because He is humble and gentle. What would change in your prayer life if humility rather than intensity were the point?
5. Zechariah 4:6 rules out might and power. Where does your praying still depend on volume, urgency, or emotional force?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Read Psalm 23:1-3 slowly as a group. What is lost when we skip from verse 1 to verse 3?
2. Matthew 11:28-29 holds rest and a yoke together. How do you make sense of both being promised in the same sentence?
3. Ephesians 2:10 speaks of works prepared beforehand. How does a group discern God's assignment rather than inventing one?
4. The chapter argues that God gives assignments to those who follow directives, not to those with the most passion. Do you find that encouraging or uncomfortable, and why?
5. Where has our group's praying been driven by aggravation, frustration, or fixed opinion rather than by what we received from God?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, You are my Shepherd and I shall not want. Thank You that You make me lie down in green pastures, that You lead me beside still waters, and that You restore my soul before You lead me anywhere else.

I confess that I have rushed past that. I have run ahead into activity and called it obedience, and then wondered where You were. Forgive me. Search my heart and show me what in my soul still needs restoring — the frustration I carry, the aggravation I have justified, the opinions I have hardened into convictions. I do not want to muddy what flows through me. Cleanse the vessel.

Jesus, You said to come to You when I am weary and carrying heavy burdens, and that You would give me rest. So I come. Ease, relieve, and refresh my soul. I take Your yoke, and I want to learn from You — not because You are mighty and strong, though You are, but because You are humble and gentle at heart. Teach me to work yoked to You rather than driving myself.

I lay down my own assessment of the situations I have been praying about. Like Peter, I have spoken from a human point of view and been sure I was right. I take no opinion. I want only what You show me.

Not by might, not by power, but by Your Spirit. Let that be true of my prayers and my work. Show me the good works You planned for me long ago, and let me do those and not the ones I would have chosen. In Jesus' name, amen.

Activation Step

Following the sequence of Psalm 23:1-3, begin your next three prayer times with stillness rather than requests — no list, no agenda, no talking — for at least five minutes. Ask God to restore your soul first, and only then bring anything to Him.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

PRAYER GROUP PRACTICALITIES

CORE BIBLICAL THEME

United, Spirit-led prayer makes tremendous power available. The Scripture cited here establishes that Christ is present where two or three gather in His name, that heartfelt prayer is dynamic in its working, that God must be approached in spirit and in truth, and that everything done in a gathering must strengthen everyone present.

SCRIPTURE USED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Matthew 18:20 (NKJV)
- James 5:16 (AMPC)
- Ephesians 4:16 (AMPC)
- Romans 8:26
- Habakkuk 2:1
- Jeremiah 1:11-12 (NKJV)
- John 4:24 (AMPC)
- Acts; Acts 1:4 (NLT); Acts 1:14 (NLT)
- 1 Corinthians 16:16 (AMPC)
- 1 Corinthians 14:26 (NLT)
- Malachi 3:16 (AMPC)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The quorum and the promise. **Matthew 18:20** says that where two or three gather in His name, He is there in their midst. Two is enough; His presence is not contingent on numbers or on how the gathering feels.

What prayer accomplishes. **James 5:16** says the earnest, heartfelt, continued prayer of a righteous person makes tremendous power available, dynamic in its working. **Ephesians 4:16** describes where that power goes — the whole body, closely joined and knit together, each part supplied with power adapted to its need, growing to maturity and building itself up in love. The one praying makes power available; the Spirit distributes it.

Where prayer begins. **Romans 8:26** states that we do not know how to pray as we ought,

and that the Spirit comes to our aid. The chapter draws the practical conclusion that lists and personal ideas are not the starting point — God is.

A three-step pattern. **Habakkuk 2:1** provides the first two steps: take your place on the watchtower, and watch to see what He will say. **Jeremiah 1:11-12** provides the third: answer plainly what you see, and God confirms that He watches over His word to perform it. Position, listen, report.

Two required elements. **John 4:24** says God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth. Both are required — Spirit-led prayer, and prayer anchored in the Word.

The New Testament precedent. **Acts 1:4** records Jesus commanding the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift, and **Acts 1:14** describes them meeting together and constantly united in prayer. Waiting and unity preceded Pentecost.

Order and contribution. **1 Corinthians 16:16** urges deference to leaders and cooperation with those who labor earnestly. **1 Corinthians 14:26** describes a gathering where each brings something — a song, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation — with the governing requirement that everything done must strengthen everyone.

Conversation God overhears. **Malachi 3:16** records that those who feared the Lord spoke often to one another, and the Lord listened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him concerning those who revered Him and thought on His name. Talking together about God is not a departure from prayer.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Matthew 18:20 promises His presence to two or three. Have you delayed praying with others because you thought the group was too small?
2. Romans 8:26 says we do not know how to pray as we ought. Does your prayer practice actually reflect that admission, or does it begin with your own agenda?
3. Habakkuk 2:1 shows the prophet taking a position before listening. What would it look like for you to deliberately take your place before you pray?
4. John 4:24 requires both spirit and truth. Which of the two is weaker in your prayer life?
5. 1 Corinthians 14:26 says everything must strengthen everyone. When you contribute in a group, does that standard govern you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. James 5:16 says prayer makes power available. How does that framing change what we expect from our prayer times?

PRAYER GROUP PRACTICALITIES

2. Read Habakkuk 2:1 and Jeremiah 1:11-12 together. How could our group adopt this pattern practically at the start of our next meeting?
3. Acts 1:4, 14 shows the disciples waiting in unity before Pentecost. What are we willing to wait for, and what do we tend to rush?
4. 1 Corinthians 14:26 says each person brings something. Who in our group has not yet been drawn out, and how could we make room for them?
5. Malachi 3:16 records God listening to believers talking with one another. What kinds of conversation would we want written in a book of remembrance?

PRAYER & SPIRITUAL ACTIVATION

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, thank You that where two or three gather in Your name, You are there in the midst. I do not need a feeling to know You are present. Your Word settles it.

Thank You that heartfelt prayer makes tremendous power available, dynamic in its working, and that Your Spirit supplies that power to each part of the body according to its need. I do not have to manage the outcome; I only have to be faithful to pray.

I confess that I have often begun with my own lists, my own urgency, and my own understanding of what You should do. Your Word says I do not know how to pray as I ought. Forgive me for praying as though I did. Holy Spirit, come to my aid.

Teach me the pattern of Your servants — to take my place before You, to be quiet long enough to see and hear, and then to say plainly what You show me, even when it seems small. You watch over Your word to perform it.

Show me how to worship and pray in spirit and in truth — never one without the other. Anchor everything I sense in Your Word. Where I gather with others, let me listen with one ear to You and one ear to them, and let everything I bring strengthen the whole group rather than draw attention to me. Let our conversation about You be the kind You would write in a book of remembrance.

You have a master plan and You know every detail. Use my voice. Even so, come Lord Jesus. In His name, amen.

Activation Step

Using Habakkuk 2:1 and Jeremiah 1:11-12, open your next prayer time — alone or with two or three others — with these three steps in order: acknowledge your seating with Christ and thank Him for it; wait in silence or pray in the Spirit until you sense a prompting; then say back to God what you saw, heard, or read, without analyzing it.

