

Session 1: Faith Alone & Scripture Alone

New City Church Retreat

September 23, 2017

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

1. Formula of Salvation: We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

Good morning. Welcome to the New City Church Retreat. During our three planned sessions we are going to focus on what we call the five *Solas* (or, more properly in Latin *Solae*) of the Reformation. This year is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and so we have considered it an appropriate time to consider who we want to be as a church in light of the main principles of the reformation. The *Solas*, although not written down by the Reformers together in one place as a list, summarize the mindset and the conclusions of the Reformation. The *Solas* are: *Sola Scriptura* – Scripture Alone –, *Sola Fidei* – Faith Alone –, *Sola Gratia* – Grace Alone –, *Solus Christus* – Christ Alone –, and *Soli Deo Gloria* – Glory to God Alone.

In this first session we will build up a foundation for the following two sessions. We will discuss Faith Alone and Scripture Alone. After a brief sketch of the history leading up to the Reformation we are going to soak in Scripture. We are going to go see what the Bible says about faith and about Scripture. There is a corresponding personal devotion prepared for you from Hebrews 11 for you to consider prayerfully on your own time. The idea with is that it is good for all of us to diagnose our faith from time to time and to ask the Holy Spirit to show us our blind spots.

Now, take a look at the ‘formula of salvation’ which I have provided for you. It states that we are saved:

- 1) **by grace alone**, meaning that there is nothing we do to earn salvation, but rather God gives it to us as gift.
- 2) **through faith alone**, meaning that salvation is not given to just anyone, but rather only those who believe
- 3) **in Christ alone**, meaning that
 - a) our faith cannot be just any faith, but it must be faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the chosen one, the only begotten Son of God, and that
 - b) Jesus Christ is the only one able to save anyone.

So now we know how we get saved: we don’t have to ace any difficult test or perform 12 challenging labours; we only have to believe in Jesus because salvation is free. But what is salvation and why do we want it? At minimum we want salvation because the alternative is terrifying. The Bible promises that at the end of the present age all people will be

raised from the dead, both the wicked and the righteous, and that every single person will stand trial in front of the divine judge. Those who have done wickedly will be cast into the lake of fire and those that have lived righteously will be given a place in paradise, the new creation.

But there is a huge problem with that scenario. No one, not you, not I – no one – is going to be declared innocent by our holy and perfect judge on our own merit. This is what Romans 3 has to say on the matter: “There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:22-23).

So then, is it hopeless? No! It is not hopeless. Just keep reading: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith” (Rom 3:23-25). Some of us then, will be declared innocent – that is the meaning of ‘justified’ – innocent, not on the basis of our own record which contains every single shortcoming and dark thought we’ve ever had, but innocent on the basis that Jesus – one who is perfectly innocent by nature of His perfect obedience to God the Father – has given his own life and blood to satisfy the just and right wrath of God toward us, which is the meaning of ‘propitiation.’

Finally, there is the word ‘redemption.’ We have Christianized the word redemption to the point that most people don’t really know what it means. Redemption is a word that makes sense only in a world of slavery. Redemption is what a person does when he or she pays the necessary price to a slave’s owner to set the slave free. In John 8:34 Jesus says to the crowd, “Truly, Truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.” That is, every person is a slave to sin by their very nature as sinners, which we already saw in Romans 3.

So, we are slaves, bought and paid for. That is why Paul and Peter and Jude begin their letters by signing their names “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle” (Rom 1:1), “Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1), “Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James” (Jude 1). Notice how each one lists their title or link to authority as either apostle or the brother of James, but each one, before any of that, begins “I, slave of Jesus.”

So we are slaves paid for in blood. But I tell you, the grace of God does not end there. We are not bought for service only, but for love, and that is why salvation is beautiful. Listen to 1 John 3:1: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God.” Children! Our redemption makes possible our adoption into God’s holy family.

Read it in Paul’s own words in Romans 8: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:14-17).

See then how precious salvation is. Yes, we escape the eternal fire, but – so much better than that – we will finally know God as He is, and we will be given an inheritance worthy

of the children of God, and we will be given glory befitting only the children of God – grace on top of grace on top of grace.

2. The Road to Reformation: Love of Scripture

So, that was by way of introduction to the weekend’s subject matter. Are you energized yet? Just talking about salvation puts joy and excitement in my heart. You see, in some ways the Reformation boils down to an argument about salvation and how we get it. The guardians of the medieval church said you could buy merit from the treasury of the saints. As we have seen in the film, Martin Luther stood up and said no to all that. He said salvation is free. He said salvation comes through the merit of Jesus Christ alone. He said salvation comes to us if only we will believe in Jesus.

But how did Luther know that. Why was he willing to face trials and excommunication? It was because Luther did not put his trust in what comes out of the human mind, but rather in the text of holy Scripture. Luther took his stand on the conviction that the Bible alone is to be our authority for matters of Christian doctrine. This year we celebrate 500 years since Martin Luther stood up boldly for the truth of Scripture, but Luther was not the first. Before Luther there were others. For many, many years people were hungry for truth and were not allowed to have it. This morning’s history portion will therefore sketch the road to reformation built on the love of Scripture.

(a) What is Scripture?

Let us first of all be clear about what I mean by ‘Scripture.’ When I say Scripture, feel free to think Bible. I will use the term Scripture here for two reasons: 1) because we are on the Reformation theme Scripture Alone, or as it is in Latin, *Sola Scriptura*; and 2) because this word, meaning ‘written text,’ is the one you’ll find in the Bible when referring to older biblical texts.

(b) John Wycliffe (c. 1320-84)

Before Martin Luther there were others interested in reforming the medieval church. For centuries there were many who saw the corruption and depravity that was crippling the church and wanted to change the church for the better. But there were disagreements on what needed to be changed. For example there was a strong movement of people who wanted to change the church from within, addressing the moral issues, but leaving official teaching and hierarchical structures intact. Eventually others came along who thought that change must occur at the level of doctrine and church government as well. John Wycliffe was one such person and an inspiration to many.

Wycliffe was an English scholar at Oxford for much of his life. He argued that the true Church is not the visible hierarchy headed by the pope, but rather the invisible fellowship of true, predestined believers. For Wycliffe the Scriptures were “the only reliable guide to

the truth about God.”¹ According to him, the Scripture is the possession of the true Church and should therefore be made available to the people to interpret in their own language. At that time and up to the time of Martin Luther the Bible was only allowed to be printed and read in Latin, and it was only allowed to be interpreted officially by the authorities of the church hierarchy.

When Wycliffe died in 1384 he was buried in consecrated ground, but later on, after the Council of Constance declared Wycliffe a heretic, his body was disinterred and burned. Wycliffe and those that followed him, known as the Lollards, anticipated many of the beliefs of the Reformation and this is no great surprise since they had in common the fact that they searched the Bible for answers. These teachers set out to translate the Bible into English and to teach it. They were the source of the Wycliffe English Bible and are the source of inspiration for today’s Wycliffe Bible translators. Unfortunately their influence waned over time and those that remained within the movement became more and more radical, unable to effect any lasting positive change.

(c) Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415)

Jan Hus is perhaps the most important teacher influenced by John Wycliffe. Huss was a preacher and scholar who became rector of the University of Prague in 1402 in what was called Bohemia at the time. He started out as one of those who wanted to reform the moral situation of the church, but saw no reason to reform doctrine. However, thanks to a marriage between King Richard II and a Bohemian princess there was an avenue of communication between England and Bohemia and the writings of John Wycliffe were brought to Bohemia where they caused a stir at the university, not least over the question of whether Wycliffe and those that accepted some of his ideas were heretics or not.

Eventually the archbishop of Prague, with papal support, made a move to effectively silence Hus by limiting the places where it was legal to preach, excluding, of course, Bethlehem chapel where Hus was the preacher. But Hus searched his conscience and determined that he could not obey and so he continued preaching. For this disobedience and others he was excommunicated in 1411.

The result of this clash was that Hus thought deeply about who has final authority. Without necessarily questioning the office of pope, Hus concluded that “a pope who does not obey the Bible is not to be obeyed” because “the Bible is the final authority by which the pope as well as any Christian is to be judged.”² Among other things, Hus condemned the sale of indulgences, as Martin Luther would do later, on the basis of the Bible’s teaching that only God can grant forgiveness.

1. Richard Cavendish, “John Wycliffe Condemned as a Heretic” *History Today* 65, no. 5 (May 2015); accessed August 19, 2017 <http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/john-wycliffe-condemned-heretic>

2. Justo L. González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol 1 of *The Story of Christianity* (Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 2009), 349.

When the Council of Constance was being gathered the German Emperor Sigismund invited Hus to defend himself and promised him safe passage. However, pope John XXIII intended to try Hus for heresy and had Hus imprisoned because Hus would not recant unless someone would demonstrate to him in what way his views were heretical. Sigismund was outraged at first that his safe passage was violated, but, like that coward Pontius Pilate, he let the matter go its own way when he realized Hus's cause was unpopular.

Jan Hus was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. The historian Justo González writes this: "When he was tied to the stake, they gave him one last chance to recant, and once again he refused. He then prayed aloud: 'Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies.' He was heard reciting the Psalms as he died."³

The legacy of Jan Hus in and outside Bohemia is long and complex, but suffice to say that they too anticipated the Reformation in several ways because the Scripture was their authority.

(d) Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Many years after Jan Hus, Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483. I will be brief on Luther because we have the film which is reasonably accurate historically. What I want you to see is how Luther is not the first zealous Christian teacher of the medieval church, but rather the instrument of God at the chosen time. Like Hus before him, Luther began as a scholar interested in reforming the church from within. Neither he nor anyone else had any idea that his invitation to scholarly discussion on the theology of indulgences would spark a fire that could not be stopped.

On the basis of the Bible, Luther challenged the sale of indulgences, arguing that forgiveness is free and is the gift of God, so how then can the church pretend to sell forgiveness? If the pope really has that kind of authority, then why does he need money? Why doesn't he release people free of charge?

On October the 31st 1517 Dr. Martin Luther of the Wittenberg university posted his '95 Theses' in Latin, by mail to the local bishop and physically by nailing them to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The pushback from the church authorities was heated and, as we've seen, they tried to get Luther to recant his teachings.

However, the more unjustly they pressed on him, the more Luther was determined to interpret Scripture and to rely on Scripture alone for Christian teaching. Thanks to the printing press, invented by Guttenberg around 1440, the teachings of Martin Luther were quickly disseminated around Europe and began to unleash waves of zealous Bible teachers. Luther was passionate and courageous in his determination to put the Bible and Bible truth into the hands of the people. Not only did he begin to translate the New Testament into German, but he also preached, composed hymns, wrote letters, and supported the use of illustrated comics for the sake of the illiterate. Luther was convinced that people should not have to take anyone's word on the matter of doctrine, whether that be the pope or himself. He supported universal education because that was the only way that people

3. Ibid., 351.

would be able to learn to read the Bible for themselves.

3. What are you going to believe and where are you going to find it?

I believe this sketch is sufficient to show you how genuine Christians of the medieval period were different from the outwardly religious, but inwardly corrupt church leaders. Their faith was different and so their actions were different. In a little while we will talk about what real faith looks like and what kind of faith you need to have. But before that, we will talk about what real faith consists of. Or rather, we will talk about where we are going to go to find out what our faith should be. Of all the things out there in the world and of all the competing opinions, ideologies, and religions, what are YOU going to believe.

I think it is abundantly clear as to where I am about to go. The reformers were willing to risk their very lives to teach only what Scripture says and through their faith they changed the world. I challenge you to have the same zeal. Today, in the year two thousand seventeen, how will we change the world except by the power and grace of God. If we want to know what God wants for us and for the world, then let us first of all read, study, and internalize the Word of God which He has been so kind as to leave for us by the hands of chosen prophets and apostles. Where else will you find such authority? Where else will you find inspired teaching?

At this point we are going to let the Bible speak for itself. I have 3 points to make. Some of you have agreed to read Scripture for us. When I call your number, please introduce the passage on your little card by its Bible reference and then read it out loud. I'll say a few words and then we'll go on to the next point and text.

(a) Sola Scriptura: Your faith must be based on Scripture alone

Text 1: 2 Peter 1:19-2:3

Text 1: “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (2 Peter 1:19–2:3 ESV)

Peter warns us that there will be competing voices. Which are you going to trust to be your anchor in the storm of culture? How will you weigh the truth claims being made? Are you going to trust yourself? I don't recommend it. As Jeremiah 17:9 says: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desparately sick; who can understand it?” In other

words, there are desires deep inside you right now that will twist your reason and make it folly, and you won't even realize it.

There are false teachers out there right now ready to teach you falsehood if you will listen. For the love of God, don't listen. That way lies death and destruction. Everything you hear should be judged on the basis of what the Bible says. You should only listen to me if I teach Scripture faithfully. You will only know if I teach Scripture faithfully if you've read it and studied it and internalized it and made it yours.

Scripture is the only source of truth that we can trust completely. As Peter says, "no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Only Scripture is inspired by God's Holy Spirit. As the early Church leaders said, Scripture is our measuring stick for faith and life. As Peter says, Scripture is our "lamp shining in a dark place."

(b) You must know Scripture and understand Scripture

Text 2: 2 Peter 3:13-18

Text 2: "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:13-18 ESV)

As we discussed a moment ago, it is so important to both know and understand Scripture because there are liars waiting to lie to you. The most destructive lies are those that sound true, those that are twistings of the truth. But, says Peter, such "ignorant and unstable" persons twist the truth to their own destruction.

You come to Scripture wanting to know what is true. Approach it with humility and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the truth. Even if we don't and can't understand truth in our fallen nature, the Spirit of God knows what God meant when God inspired the Scripture. That is why God gives His Spirit to believers, the Spirit of sonship as we heard already from Romans 8.

Our ability to understand is also a gracious gift. Listen to 1 Corinthians 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." But God knew that ahead of time. That is why Jesus, before his crucifixion, promised his disciples, saying this in John 14:26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." The last part is for the apostles. The Holy Spirit was given to them so that they

would remember clearly what Jesus said and so that they could teach it and write it down for us to be our trustworthy Scripture.

But the first part is for us as well. The Spirit is our teacher too. In 1 John 2, calling the Holy Spirit an anointing, John says this to regular Christians: “But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him” (1 John 2:27 ESV).

The Holy Spirit inside the believer enables the believer to understand the holy Scriptures which the Spirit Himself has inspired. We have been given everything we need to know the truth. All that is left is to put in some effort and to revel in the truth of Scripture.

Reading Scripture can be exciting and life-giving. But sometimes it makes you scratch your head. Not all passages are equally clear. As Peter says, Paul (and we could name others) has written some things “that are hard to understand.” Reading Scripture takes some training and it takes practice. The more you practice, the sweeter it is.

On that note, I want to mention that we will be running two CityBuild sessions in November and December on the subject ‘How to Read the Bible.’ If you can’t wait until then, then we can point you to some useful books and we will be glad to answer any questions.

(c) You must apply Scripture to your own life

Text 3: 2 Timothy 3:12-17

Text 3: “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:12–17 ESV)

I want you to know Scripture, I want you to understand Scripture, and I want you to be formed by Scripture.

On your own, with your friends, and in discipleship groups you must be reading, studying, and internalizing Scripture. The Bible doesn’t just contain interesting facts to know, but it also provides models that we can follow. The Bible lists rules by which, if we are obedient to them, we will live as free and as joyfully as is possible. If we don’t follow them, then it provides the basis for our brothers and sisters to nudge us back into line. The Bible shows us the very heart of God and also exactly the sorts of things God wants us to be doing. We don’t do them because we earn merit by doing them, but we do them because when we do them God receives honour and glory. If God is our Father, then how can we do anything else except to love His words and obey them.

4. “What must I do to be saved?”

There you have it. Scripture, Scripture, Scripture. Our faith must depend on Scripture alone. But what is faith?

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas are in prison in Philippi, but by a miracle God delivers them. When the jailer realizes what has happened he is ready to kill himself. The shame and punishment that he will bear for failing to do his job is too much for him to handle because the foundation of his identity is on loose sand. He believes in a world in which you get what you deserve. But then, in that fateful moment, Paul cries out to the jailer and says, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” Immediately, as we read in Acts 16, “the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:29-31).

In general we think that saving faith begins and ends with belief. But the Bible makes clear that there is more to it than that. Yes, as Paul and Silas say to the jailer, you must believe to be saved. But there is a quality to belief that involves the deepest disposition of heart, not just agreement with the facts. So let’s turn to the aspects of saving faith. I’ve listed 11 here for you, if you can believe it. The overlap between these is considerable, but my prayer is that this outline will help you strengthen any weak parts of your faith.

5. What is Saving Faith?

Again, some of you have agreed to read our Scripture texts. I’ll summarize the heading and call the text number. When it is your turn, announce your passage and read it out loud. I won’t elaborate this time. Just let Scripture feed you.

(a) Know

Text 4: “For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:13–17 ESV)

Text 5: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” (Ephesians 4:11–14 ESV)

(b) Believe

Text 6: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30–31 ESV)

(c) Repent

Text 7: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’” John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins... Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” (Mark 1:1–5, 14 ESV)

(d) Die and Be Born Again

Text 8: “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:34–36 ESV)

Text 9: “Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”” (John 3:3 ESV)

Text 10: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3–4 ESV)

Text 11: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20 ESV)

(e) Fear

Text 12: “Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”” (Revelation 14:6–7 ESV)

Text 13: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” (Proverbs 9:10 ESV)

(f) Humble Yourself

Text 14: “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:1–11 ESV)

(g) Trust

Text 15: “The righteous shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, “See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction!” But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. I will thank you forever, because you have done it. I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.” (Psalm 52:6–9 ESV)

(h) Hope

Text 16: “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2–3 ESV)

Text 17: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:1–5 ESV)

Text 18: “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8:22–25 ESV)

(i) Be Holy

Text 19: “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”” (Isaiah 6:1–3 ESV)

Text 20: “You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” (Leviticus 20:26 ESV)

Text 21: “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14 ESV)

(j) Obey

Text 22: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36 ESV)

(k) Love

Text 23: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15–17 ESV)

Text 24: “And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”” (Mark 12:28–31 ESV)

Text 25: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:1–5 ESV)

6. Conclusion: Pray in Groups