

"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." Jesus, John 17:4

Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep . . . God testified concerning him, "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do." Acts 13:36, 22

Legacy: endowment, bestowal, provision, gift, by-product, aftermath, result.

God wants you to have a GREAT legacy that will benefit many others after you are gone. Do you want to have a GREAT legacy?

What will you leave behind you when you are gone? What will you pay forward to those who come after you? What will we together (the church known as Living Word) leave for the next generation? Do you know we are all blessed right now because others invested in the future (in us)? What will you (and what will we) do to bless the next generation?



Be specific. Make a list. What will you leave behind for others? What resources? What financial gifts? What example and model? Have you started doing this? Where can you invest your resources so they grow and are available for God's kingdom purposes?

What people will you mentor and train?

And what example will you leave behind about how to live a good and godly life?

This is always a good exercise. Write out your obituary and eulogy. What do you want people to say about how you blessed your corner of the world in the name of Jesus?

How to Get the Most Out of the January Devotionals

Here is how transformation and spiritual growth take place consistently and progressively in your life.

First, each week we launch the learning-growing process with the Sunday message. In that message we provide the stepping-stone Bible texts and ideas, as well as spiritual and practical application of what the Bible teaches.

We encourage you to take notes on the sermon. It is easy to do this with the Living Word church app. Go to your phone app store and look for Living Word Community Church.

When you open the app, there is a hamburger icon on the upper left. Touch it and you will see a Notes option. Touch that and you can take notes during a sermon. The sermon gets us thinking and activating the word God has for us each week.



Next is this devotional guide. We have hard copies at church every Sunday and we provide them on our website and church app. The app version also has short teaching videos on the Bible passages.

Change does not happen when you hear a sermon or even read the Bible. Change happens when you engage, wrestle with, and apply the Bible. Each devotional will help the message go deeper into your life and experience.

Each devotion has insights, reflection questions, and personal application suggestions as well. The more you do, the more you will grow.

Finally, as you gather in Life Groups or with a spiritual friend or two and talk through the sermon and the devotions even more growth happens. Sermon – Devotions – Groups! Together, this is how you will advance into spiritual maturity.

WEEK OF JANUARY 2



Reading Revolution

for I know the plans I have for you...

DAY
1

Your Personal Mission

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” John 4:34

“Lord, grant that I may always desire more than I can accomplish.”
—Michelangelo

Mission, vision, and purpose—three words with slightly different but overlapping meanings. *Purpose* is why you are here and what you are to do. *Vision* is you seeing a better future that will come into existence as you pursue your purpose. *Mission* is the way you frame what you will do about your vision. They are slightly different, but you can also use them as synonyms. If you like one more than the other, use that word.

Jesus had a mighty purpose. He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He came to die for the sins of the world so he could destroy the devil and save us. Jesus ordered his entire life around that mission. And that mission was clearly not self-determined, but it was discerned as the will of God for Jesus. “Father, not my will be done, but your will be done” (Luke 22:42).

You need a mission from God. It is why you exist and it is what you are to do. It will be the motivational energy that gets you out of bed and keeps you going through difficult times. The Bible uses the language of “calling.” After God calls you into relationship with himself (salvation) and into community with others (the church), he calls you to a purpose. You are a missional friend and servant of Jesus (John 20:21).

If someone were to look carefully at your life, your priorities and commitments, your actions and involvements over the last several years, how do you think they would define your purpose and mission? How you live before others tells them what is most important to you. Write down what you think they would say about your mission.

**How you live
before others
tells them
what is most
important to
you.**

Now, what mission is God giving to you? What is a task and purpose worthy of your life? What do you most want to do with your time on earth?

DAY
2

What You Do Matters Greatly

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

“The whole secret of a good life is to find out what one’s destiny is to do and to do it.” —Henry Ford

Self-image and self-esteem are important. How do you see yourself and how do you value and respect who you are? Do you see yourself and do you value yourself the way God does? What does Ephesians 2:10 say about your self-image and self-esteem?

**You are
here to be
a creative
contributor
that makes
life better for
those around
you.**

This is not about being narcissistic or having an out-of-control ego. This is not saying you are the center of your world. But don’t go to the other extreme and put yourself down. Some people don’t know their worth and value. You matter a great deal to God and to others. You are wanted and you are needed! You are here to make a difference. You are here to add value to the world. You are here to be a creative contributor that makes life better for those around you

What are some of the good works God has created for you to do? Reflect, pray, think, and discern your way through this question until you have some good perspective. If you can’t get that perspective, find good friends and talk it over together.

Now, who are the few people that God has placed in your life so you can do these good works? You are here for a purpose and you are here for some people. Purpose and people merge together.

God calls you his friend and his child and his love. God also says you are a servant, a partner, an ambassador, a messenger and an agent of his purposes in the world. That is a great way to live.

DAY
3

You are Responsible and Accountable

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Romans 14:12

This theme is important. Be sure to read Matthew 12:36, Matthew 25:14-30, and Hebrews 4:13 for more of the Bible’s teaching on accountability.

The real question is not: What do I want from life? The real question is: What does life want from me? And the best question is: What does God want of me and my life?

Your life is precious. Life is short. Life is fragile and frail. Life is amazing. Every day is a gift. Every day is an opportunity. Every day goes by and enters the history books. You don’t get to do any day over. You only get the next day. All of Psalm 90 speaks to this, but especially verse 12: “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

The biblical word is *steward*. You are a steward of all God has entrusted to you, and the most valuable thing God has entrusted to you is your life. A life is a terrible thing to waste.

Instead, grow as much as you can, as deep as you can, and as far as you can. Be a lifelong learner. Every month you want to be able to say, “I am more of who God wants me to be.” Grow in knowledge, grow in skills, grow in experience, grow in relationships. . . but GROW.

Every year it is worth discerning your up-to-date growth pathways. What will be most important for learning and growth in the new year? You grow best when you have a plan for growth. How will you grow? What resources do you need to grow? Who will help you grow?

You are responsible, you are powerful, and you are accountable to God for your growth. Living Word is here, partnering with God’s Spirit, to help you go and grow as far as you can.



DAY
4

SERVE so the Church becomes Better

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
Ephesians 4:16

In Ephesians 4:1-16 Paul talks about 1) unity in the Church, 2) positions and roles in the Church, 3) the Church growing into maturity, and 4) every member in the Church SERVING and doing their part so the Church becomes BETTER.

We connect, we grow, and we SERVE one another.

Every person who is a part of the Church needs to find their niche for service. The Church NEEDS every person and that means the Church NEEDS YOU to be a servant who makes a difference at Living Word.

You are needed. Do you realize how valuable you are?

You are gifted. Do you know what your gifts and strengths are?

You are empowered. You already have the ability to serve and make a difference. We will keep empowering you to serve and make a difference.

Have you found your place to serve? Ideally, we serve the people and in the places where our gifts and interests converge. But we also serve in areas where we are simply needed.

The church website and app have a menu called SERVE. We keep this updated with opportunities. From time to time we spend several weeks recruiting new ministry partners to serve at Living Word.

Pray and work for a Better Church. Pray that God will use you. Then get involved, serve, and watch how God uses you to make a difference.

DAY
5

REACH Out for a Better Church

... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9

As you skim read 1 Peter 2:4-10, you learn the very nature of the Church. But perhaps you have missed the most important point of this passage. All that the Church is described as is for a reason. That reason is so that the Church, by its very life and existence, REACHES OUT with the good news and the praise of the God who does wonderful things.

Reread 1 Peter 2:11-12. The Church is to be a witness. A light shining in the darkness. An example and model of what life with God is like. When the entire Church is a community of great love we show to the world the new thing God is doing.

Generally, in the United States, it has been a difficult last few years. The Church has regressed. The Church's reputation is damaged. The Church in the United States, and Living Word Community Church in York, PA, has to be a BETTER Church if we are to fulfill the mission of Jesus. Here are a few areas where we can and must be better:

Racial issues and relationships, unity, trust. We want to be multiracial/ethnic, diverse, and inclusive. We need each other.

Women in roles of leadership and influence. The conservative Church of America has been remiss for too long. Living Word has an enormous pool of women who are deeply spiritual, professionally skilled, and outstanding leaders at work and in the community. We are making room for women to work as equal partners to make us a BETTER Church.

Political polarization. The Kingdom of God (and the Church) are much bigger than any political party or agenda. Holiness, shalom, righteousness, and justice—that is the Kingdom of God. No political party gets it right. God's Kingdom gets it right. The Church is an outpost of God's beautiful kingdom that wants everyone to flourish.

WEEK OF JANUARY 9

BETTER

Reading Resolution

for I know the plans I have for you...

DAY 1

Building a Better Church

Today we will front load the entire week with the main biblical passages. You will read them today, get familiar with them, and have just one assignment. The rest of the week we will unpack and go deeper into the meaning and the implication of these passages.

First, read the amazing statement from Paul about the Church in Galatians 3:26-28. If you have time, read Ephesians 2:11-22. We preached on this in the summer of 2021. It is worth rereading because it expands on the shorter Galatians 3 passage.

Now, read 1 Peter 2:4-12. This is one of the most profound descriptions of the Church in the New Testament.

Here is the assignment. Make a comprehensive list of the qualities or features of “the Church.” Again, you are just getting familiar with the nature of the Church.

SUGGESTION: You can include your thoughts and observations in the NOTES section of the church app. If you took notes during the sermon, just go to that note, click on it, and add your devotional reflections right there. This way, all of your ideas will be in one place.



As you look over your list, you’ll be able to see that the Bible’s description of the Church is impressive. This is us. This is who we are or, perhaps we should say, this is who Living Word is meant to be and who we are becoming.

We the Church, the people of Jesus, are already these things and we are not yet fully these things. A Better Church will be more like this a month from now and MUCH more like this a year from now. We will be a Better Church if we start today. Every day you will pray that we will become a Better Church and learn how you can work to help us become a Better Church.

Note: Church with a capital “C” denotes the universal Christian community; church with a lowercase “c” denotes a specific individual congregation.

DAY 2

CONNECT for a Better Church

If you look over the list you made, notice how many of those descriptions have a sense of connecting with one another.

We are made for friendship and love. We are relational beings. We need community. We need one another. We will be fully alive as we do life together. We just need to know what kind of life we pursue together and how we can create that BETTER kind of life together.

Look at Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35 and notice how the believers did life together. What really grabs hold of you about that quality of life? If you look at the first chapter of Acts, you realize that these people are really different from one another. They have come from everywhere around the Mediterranean region. So, what pulls them together and what keeps them together? There are two things.

A Better Church has deep connections when we keep Jesus at the center.

First, it is simply Jesus. Jesus is the center of their world and all other differences fade to insignificance in the light of Jesus Christ, who is Savior, Lord, and God. Jesus crucified, resurrected, ascended, and Spirit sender. A Better Church has deep connections when we keep Jesus at the center. ALWAYS. When anything else becomes more important than Jesus (politics, race, economics, cultural tensions, anything), then the Church is in trouble.

Second, it is love. Unconditional love. The better way that Paul describes as a “most excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31). After talking about the divisive spiritual gifts that are tearing the Church apart, Paul talks about the better way of unconditional love in 1 Corinthians 13.

How do we build a better Church? It is simple. Love Jesus and love his Church. All of his Church. Every person in the Church. Even, and especially, those who are quite different from you.

Pray and work on behalf of LOVE. Every day, find ways to CONNECT WITH and LOVE others who are a part of Living Word.

DAY 3

GROW for a Better Church

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. There are four phrases in these verses and a repeated use of the theme “God’s people.”

A puppy grows and becomes a dog. A sapling grows and becomes a tree. A flower seed grows and becomes, well, whatever it is. Here is the point. It is the nature of life and growth to become more of what it is.

What is the Church? The Church is a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s special possession.

We are chosen and we are God’s special possession. First and foremost, we belong to God. All other identities and commitments are secondary. We are a part of God’s family. Our allegiance, loyalty, trust, forgiveness, energy, priorities, and values must be centered on God and what matters to God.

First and foremost, we belong to God. All other identities and commitments are secondary.

We are a royal priesthood. Peter combines two different themes that the Old Testament kept apart—rigorously so. Those themes are kingship and the priesthood. Because Jesus is both king of kings and the great high priest, and because we are in Christ, we are royalty and we are priests. It is an amazing new reality. Kings lead so others may flourish and priests mediate forgiveness and blessing so others can connect with God.

Understand that Peter is not only referring to the pastors, church staff, and church board. Peter says EVERYONE who is a Christian is right now, a royal leader and priest.

Maybe you are still a sapling. One day you will be a mighty tree of flourishing for others. As you grow in your Christlike character and your skills, you should constantly ask: How can I lead so others flourish at Living Word? How can I be a source of forgiveness and blessing?

As you do that more and more, our church and our world will become BETTER and BETTER.

DAY
4

REACH Out at Your Place of Work

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24

Most of us spend a good deal of our life working. We have places of employment. We earn a living through our work. Many people have meaningful work. Many even have a sense of calling and vocation. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. One place where we learn to make a life is on the job. When your job becomes a vocation, your place of work becomes a location to do God's work.

What does it mean to do good work? At the least, it is work you do with excellence and work you do ethically. Good work honors God and blesses others. Are you doing ethical work and excellent work?

Martin Luther said, "If you are a street sweeper, then sweep streets to the glory of God." What does it mean to do your work to the glory of God? Are you doing that?

We are living in a cultural season where the Great Resignation and the Great Revolt from work is taking place. Sin impacts all things, including work and the workplace. What has gone wrong with work? What can followers of Jesus do to redeem bad workplaces? What are you doing to redeem your workplace?

If you have a leadership role of any sort in your workplace, that is one of the most critical places you have for reaching our community. How can you be an agent of transformation that impacts not only the workplace, but also those who work there?



DAY
5

REACH Out as a Good Citizen

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Romans 13:1

Followers of Christ always live in the tension between being citizens of heaven (see Philippians 3:20) and citizens in a physical country such as the United States. We are reminded of our citizenship on earth when we get a passport or cast a vote in an election or tune into media. We are rarely reminded that our citizenship is in heaven, as Paul says.

The first step in being a good citizen in our country is to have a growing understanding that our citizenship is ultimately in heaven with Jesus Christ. This eternal citizenship gives us the impetus to be good citizens here and now.

Our witness to the people around us is connected to being good citizens. 1 Peter 2:13-16 offers us a blueprint for citizenship: Submit to governing authorities, for the Lord's sake. Do good in the community (see below). Show respect to everyone. Love people. Fear God. Honor governing authorities.

We who follow Christ are called to model a better way of citizenship.

We live in highly polarized times where partisan division and anger is a daily occurrence. We who follow Christ are called to model a better way of citizenship. How good are you as a citizen of our nation? How are you treating others with whom you might disagree? How is God asking you to change and grow to more reflect his Kingdom in this earthly kingdom?

Good citizens do good in their community. We do good when we get involved in the organizations, groups, and systems that make for a strong and healthy community. Schools, non-profits, a variety of civic clubs and groups, local associations for special interests, the list goes on. Find a place to get involved. Build relationships. Improve the group. Work for good results. A local community flourishes when its people (citizens) work toward that end. Where can you get involved?

WEEK OF JANUARY 16



for I know the plans I have for you...

DAY 1

REACH Out to Build a Better Community

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... 1 Peter 3:15

REACH is among the highest priorities for Living Word. Our world has changed and our community has changed. We live in a secular (non-religious) culture. We live in an increasingly post-Christian culture. The beliefs, values, and the systems of the Christian faith have greatly diminished in North America.

The United States is a mission field and a challenging one. Every church must get much, much BETTER at REACH. The old ways no longer work. They haven't worked for some time. We need creative new ways of connecting with our community.

This week is about REACHING our local community of York. This is where we live, work, play, have friends, have family (hopefully), and have the closest opportunity to make a difference. York is our corner of God's world. While the Internet makes it possible for anyone to connect with the largest churches anywhere in the nation, it is just a long-distance relationship. Incarnational, up close, and embedded is how Jesus came to earth. He moved into the neighborhood (John 1:14, 14:23-24, *The Message*). York is our home. York is Living Word's home. Here we are. Together, let's make a difference.

- 1) You can make a difference as an individual, finding people and places with whom to connect.
- 2) You can make a difference as part of a Life Group. Your entire group can adopt projects in the community.
- 3) As an entire church body, we can mobilize everyone to make a difference in our community.
- 4) We work with many local missional organizations to make a difference together.

Keep these four options in your mind as you do the rest of the devotional. Ask God to help you REACH our community.

DAY 2

REACH Out – Evangelism and Discipleship

I am obligated... I am eager... I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes... Romans 1:14-16

Evangelism is simply telling others about the good news of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Evangelism invites people to turn from their old ways, find forgiveness, and find freedom as they begin a saving relationship with Jesus.

Discipleship is the process of growing in Christlikeness once we have been saved by Jesus. Discipleship is the transformation process of becoming mature in Jesus.

Evangelism and discipleship are the responsibility of every Christian as we connect with the world outside the church. But it is hard. Most Christians have few good friendships with non-Christians. When we encourage everyone to be highly intentional about Just One person who needs Jesus, many of us don't even have Just One! This year, you want to have a Just One.

Who can you get to know as a friend? How will you do that? Who is around you that needs a friend?

Are you learning how to have spiritual conversations with non-Christians? If you want to learn more, get a copy of *Mere Evangelism* by Randy Newman.

Another avenue is to invite people to connect at Living Word. You will have a valuable role as a connector. Share invites to watch Living Word online. Share links on Facebook or Instagram.

Be alert to the many outreach events we are planning for 2022. We will create quality events that non-Christians will enjoy, but we need you to invite them.

DAY 3

REACH Out – Compassion and Justice

And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: "This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'" Zechariah 7:8-10

Also read these verses: Isaiah 30:18, Amos 5:15, Micah 6:8, and Matthew 23:23. By the way, notice that it was the most religiously conservative group in Jesus' time that was most guilty of compassion failures and justice failures.

Why is justice and compassion such a hot potato for the conservative Church? Justice is mandated 130 times in the Bible. Not all social justice is biblical justice, but ALL biblical justice is for the sake of the society.

People are hurting. Life is not fair. The system is often biased against hurting and innocent people. It was true in Israel and Israel was chastised by God for their failures in this. If God judged his people Israel for these failures, then God's people the Church is in for the same.

Evangelicals through much of western history were on the side of justice. Evangelicals created hundreds of missional organizations for works of compassion and mercy and to work for justice for those who did not have it.

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus proclaims his messianic mission as that of compassion and justice for those who need it. His entire ministry concentrated on those with the greatest need for both.

If the Church of Christ is to be a Church like Christ, then we must have his heart, his commitment, and his strategies that are full of compassion and result in justice. It will be hard. We will all be stretched. We have a lot of learning, praying, and activating ahead of us. But faithfulness to Jesus on this is essential. Our missional witness to our post-Christian culture will fail apart from it.



DAY
4

Missional Partners

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8

There are several places in Latin America where Living Word has developed HUBs, making substantial contributions and developing fruitful partnerships.

Pastor Steve Almquist has been instrumental in resourcing a church planting network in Cuba. From leadership training to providing funds for food, we help the Cuban church.

Pastors Brian Rice and John Hilliard have traveled throughout Latin America doing leadership development in eight countries and training leaders who worked in other countries.

In Guatemala, we have worked with Mike and Terri McComb in their widespread mission of reaching the poor tribal peoples of Guatemala and other Central American countries. We help them plant churches, build churches, train pastors (through the ASELSI Bible Institute), do evangelism, provide disaster relief, and more. ASELSI has trained over 4,000 leaders!

Pastor Brian has worked extensively with Omar Gava and his organizations, REG and COMIBAM, to train Latinos for global work. Omar was instrumental in mobilizing Latin America to go and work among unreached people groups.

Many of us worked with Jeff and Kathy Phillips, their sons, and their teams for church planting, leadership training, and again, mobilizing Latinos for work in the world of Islam.

Global missions is all about relationships.

Here is the BIG World Christian idea: Global missions is all about relationships. It's about building friendships and partnerships with people around the world and supporting them as they are doing the work of advancing God's Kingdom in their nations. One of the best things you will ever do is build a relationship with one of our missional partners and keep that relationship active.

Do you currently have a meaningful relationship with a missionary? If you want to develop one, contact one of our pastors and we will facilitate a connection.

DAY
5

Globally Minded Christians

Read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9

This is a remarkable passage of scripture. Paul spends TWO entire chapters instructing the churches in Corinth to give generously to missions by the giving example of the Macedonian churches, who were amazing in their generosity. Read these chapters carefully and note the many lessons on generosity.

What are the qualities of the Christian who is globally minded?

1. They are informed about world events and discerning of what God is doing in the world.
2. They pray for the world.
3. They build relationships with those doing God's work around the world.
4. They serve on mission trips and experience what life is like for those who have much less than we do.
5. They financially support missions work around the world.

Living Word's missions budget was originally called "Faith Promise" because we would encourage people to make faith commitments to support our global work. In recent years, we have called it "Giving to Greater Things" because Jesus promised that by faith we would do greater things than he did (John 14:12). Living Word's growing commitment to global missions is a testimony to that promise! Today we call our missions commitment REACH GLOBAL.

Our Reach Global budget is different than our general church budget, which supports the ministry at Living Word and in York. The Reach Global budget supports 24 people and organizations working around the world. We encourage you to be a part of giving to the Reach Global budget. Pray about what God would have you give, then go to the website or church app and select Reach Global to make your donation.



DAY
1

Becoming a World Christian

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

This is the most famous of Bible verses, and it is all about world missions. It is this verse that inspired David Livingstone, a famous, historic missional leader, to say: “God only had one Son, and he made him a missionary.”

Jesus made it so clear to his followers that they were to love, serve, reach, heal, and bless the world. It is IMPOSSIBLE to be a faithful follower of Jesus and NOT have his heart for the world. If you love Jesus, then you love what Jesus loves, serve what Jesus serves, and do what Jesus did. And that simply means to love this world that is lost, hurting, and broken without God.

We use the language of being a World Christian for this type of Christian. Living Word has been passionate about helping our people become World Christians. In every devotional this week, you will learn more about how to be a World Christian.

Today, the idea is simple. A World Christian is informed and up to date about what is going on in the world God loves. At Living Word, we try to keep you up to date about the specific places in the world where we are working. We call those places HUBs. A HUB is where we have a concentration of people and ministries that we supply with needed resources. Every day this week we will tell you about one of those places and the people who are at work there. Pay attention to the world news about those places. In 2022, we will do much more to provide updates about our HUBs.

A World Christian is informed and up to date about what is going on in the world God loves.

Here are two World Christian questions to think about and pray through:

1. Do you love the world Jesus loves? How much do you love the world?
2. What will you do to make Global Missions a higher priority in your heart in 2022?

DAY
2

Ethiopia

Matthew chapter 9 is a beautiful glimpse into the heart of Jesus. When Jesus sees people, he has compassion on them and says these words: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (vv. 37-38).

Jesus invites us to see like he sees and love like he loves. He calls each of us to pray for workers to be sent into the great harvest all around us. Jesus wants his followers to be World Christians who reach globally with the good news of the gospel (Acts 1:8).

One of the ways we are witnesses to the ends of the earth is through our strategic partnerships in Ethiopia where we have been establishing a thriving missional HUB over many years. The last 2 years have been extra challenging in Ethiopia because of the ongoing pandemic and a civil war. So, please pray with us.



1. Sendafa: Project Adopt A Village (PAAV) shows the love of Christ through a medical clinic, community development, and strengthening local churches. PAAV cares for over 300 people with HIV/AIDS, helps children get nutritional support, and provides medical help to the poor.
2. Living Word Dire Dawa: A flourishing church in a Muslim city. This evangelistic church operates a neighborhood clinic, cares for people with disabilities, and cares for many orphans.
3. Living Word Djibouti: A church doing good work in a difficult context. They minister (mainly) to Ethiopian people who live in Djibouti, but they endeavor to live missionally among everyone *they encounter*.

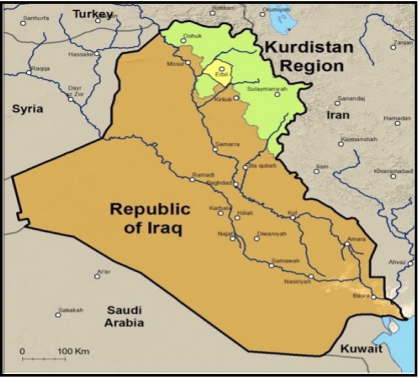
DAY
3

Outreach to Muslims

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.... All peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Genesis 12:1-3

One of every five people on earth today is a Muslim. To fulfill our calling to bless “all peoples on earth” that must include the Muslim world, with its beginning and center in the Middle East.

One of the most overlooked Muslim groups in the region is the Kurdish people. More than 18 million of them are scattered between Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. In all of these countries they live as persecuted minorities, without their own country.



Living Word is establishing a HUB in Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdish region of Iraq along the border with Iran. In partnership with Neighbors to Nations (N2N), two community centers offer classes, training, recreation, counseling, and medical assistance to people in need. In addition, N2N works in a 15,000-person refugee camp that houses Yazidis, Syrians, and other internally displaced people from Iraq.

The other key part of the ministry is planting a local church (Hope Church) as well as a Bible Institute, begun in 2020 and now expanding to the city of Erbil as well. Living Word supports both of these.

As Christians we are part of the “sowing and reaping” of the Gospel (read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). Our work with the Kurdish people is sowing seeds in a part of the world that has been hard ground. Relatively few ministries work in this region, which is all the more reason that Living Word’s ongoing investment is important, and why, as followers of Christ, we give generously to this work.

DAY
4

The Call of Stewardship

Matthew 25:14-30

There are few themes that are as important as stewardship to understand your fundamental vocation in life. You are a steward and you are a steward of God.

A steward is simply one who takes care of what belongs to another. A steward does not own what they take care of. A steward is responsible and accountable for what they take care of.

Everything you have belongs to God. Everything is on loan to you. Everything is on loan to you.

God blesses you so you can be a blessing. God is very clear to stewards. He talks about the tithe as his will for us. We give 10% of what God entrusts to us right back to him. We do that by giving to the Church and its mission. God also tells us to give additional offerings for missional purposes. He tells us to be hospitable to those in need. In all things, our heart is to be a generous giver that blesses others.

In Psalm 90, after talking about how hard life is, how short life is, and how fragile life is, the psalmist (Moses) ends his thoughts with a prayer that God would establish the works of his hands for his descendants. That is legacy thinking. That is how stewards think about all that is entrusted to them. They want to be faithful right here and now, and they long for their faithful stewardship to extend into the future as a blessing for many.

In the parable, Jesus uses the words “well done good and faithful servant” to affirm stewards who are faithful. Then Jesus uses the strong language of “wicked” and “lazy” for those who are not faithful. If you and Jesus were to have a conversation today about your stewardship what would Jesus say about how you are doing? That is a hard question, but one we must keep before us. Jesus is serious about his Kingdom.

DAY
5

Giving to Church and Mission

2 Corinthians 8 & 9

Like the 1 Chronicles 29 passage that launched the week of devotions, these two chapters are loaded with insights and lessons about generous giving. Do a skim read through these two chapters and jot down the most important lessons God impresses upon your heart. On this final day, we close with some thoughts about your financial generosity for Living Word and its mission locally and globally.

All month we have talked about our mission to empower you for maturity so together we can create a better local church, be used by God for the flourishing of York, and make parts of the world a better place. That is our mission, and we pray and trust you will support Living Word and its mission with your financial resources.

On Day 2 we saw that Jesus loves the Church and he wants you to love the Church. On Day 3 we were reminded that love gives and we give to what we love. As we love the Church Jesus loves, then we give to the Church. On Day 4 we considered the reality of stewardship. God blesses us for a reason and the core reason is that we will do his work and will on earth.



If you have been giving to Living Word already, thank you so much. We can be a church because of you. As Jesus leads, you can continue to give and perhaps even increase your giving as God gives you financial increase.

There are many ways to give financially. You can go on our website or church app under “Give” and click on the “Give Now” button. You’ll be taken to a secure location and walked through digital giving. You are also able to contribute to global missions here. If you prefer to contribute checks or cash, we have secure collection boxes at every door in our auditorium for your convenience.

May God bless us all and weave us together as a community of generous givers.



DAY
1

Grace, Gratitude, and Generosity

1 Chronicles 29:1-20

This was the passage we encountered in the Sunday message. It is a powerful story of grace, gratitude, and generosity.

The basic devotional work for today is to read through the passage and make a list of every insight (or lesson or principle) on giving that you find. Don't be surprised if you have a list of 10 or more insights from your reading.

You will find insights on motivation for giving, the heart that gives, the extent of giving, giving as an act of worship, the ways of giving, and more.

You will be inspired by the example leaders set by being the “lead givers.” What an upside-down thought in our culture. Today, people want to lead so they be the “getters” or “receivers.” God says that the greatest leaders are the greatest servants and the greatest givers. Leaders lead by example. The leadership team of Living Word is committed to generosity.

There is also a powerful illustration of legacy. Legacy is what you leave behind and what you pass on. A eulogy celebrates who you were. A legacy extends into the future who you were. Central to 1 Chronicles 29 is legacy giving. David is giving for a better future for the people of God. David is giving so his son Solomon will have a head start on continuing the work of God.

Right now, we all benefit from the legacies of those who have gone before us. Right now, at Living Word, we enjoy the many blessings of the generosity of others in our past. Their giving has made possible the very people, place, and mission called Living Word.

Yes, our giving actually helps today, but remember this, our generosity today will bless others in the years to come.

We should be humble and grateful for what they have done for us. We should be motivated and intentional about our own legacy for those who follow. Yes, our giving actually helps us today, but remember this, our generosity today will bless others in the years to come. What a wonderful way to lay up treasures in heaven.

Pray the prayers in verses 10-13.

DAY
2

God the Giver

One of the greatest truths about God is God Gives. God the Giver. God the Generous Giver. God the Gracious Giver. God the Giver of Generous Grace. You can rearrange those words over and over. This is our God.

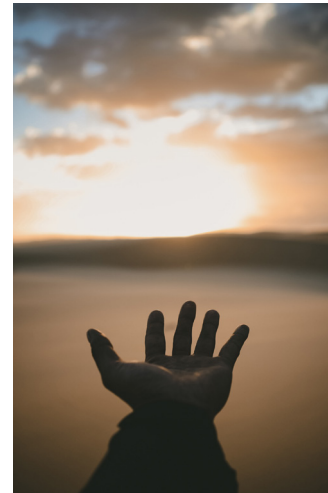
God is the giver of gifts. God is the giver of blessings (Psalm 115:14). God is the giver of life (John 6:33; Romans 4:17; 1 Timothy 6:13). God is the one who gives you your wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalm 112:3; Ecclesiastes 5:19). God is the giver of all good things (Psalm 85:12; Romans 8:32; 1 Timothy 6:17; James 1:17). God gives us his very best. God gave us Jesus, his only Son (John 3:16). God never stops giving (Psalm 84:11).

Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, is a Giver as well. Jesus gave up privilege to come to earth and be born as a human being (Philippians 2:6-7). Thirty-three years later, Jesus would give up his life for us (Philippians 2:8). One of the most vital lessons on giving from Jesus is simple: It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). God the Father and God the Son literally model the way of generous giving.

The big lesson here has two points. First, you are made in the image of God. That means you are made in the image of God the Giver. If you re-read the first paragraph that describes God the Giver, those same things should describe you (Genesis 1:26-27).

Second, it means your life is meant to be spent in the pursuit of God, so you are remade in his image. It is called the imitation of God and the imitation of Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2).

This is the legacy you are meant to pay forward to the world. It is a legacy of generosity, sacrifice, and Christ-likeness. Pray for a generous heart of giving that honors Jesus.



DAY
3

Giving as Love, Love as Giving

Matt. 6:19-22; Luke 12:12-34

Today we want you to understand more fully the meaning of the word GIVE.

The essence, or nature, or heart of giving is LOVE. Love gives. Giving is an act of love. When you give, you participate in the act of love. When you give to God, it is a way of showing love for God. The same is true for giving to people, giving to the church, or whatever or whomever you give to. Love gives. And what you give says a lot about your love. This is why Jesus equates treasure and heart. It is all about love.

You give to what matters to you. We all have commitments and priorities. We give to what we value. And what we value gets more of us. Again, this is the meaning of treasure and heart. The more you value something, the more you will invest in what you value. The more something is precious to you, the more you invest in that precious thing.

What does your giving say about what matters to you, what you prioritize, and what you value? Of course, God wants you to value and prioritize what matters most to God. The Church, the mission, people in need—these matter most to God. When you give to what matters to God, you say to God, “Your will be done in my life on earth, in the way you want. Here I am. Use my resources for your Kingdom purposes.”

There are many quite serious warnings from Jesus about loving the wrong things and investing your resources in those things. Whether it is building bigger barns to hold more possessions (Luke 12:12-21) or just looking out for your own pleasure and comfort (Luke 16:19-31), what you do with your money reveals what you love and how much you love. What does your giving say about your love for God?

In our 21st century culture, it is more important than ever to do some honest, humble, repentant soul searching about money. For money is truly the god of our time (Mammon) and our love of it the source of great evil (1 Timothy 6:10; 2 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 13:5). Meditate and pray on these biblical truths.