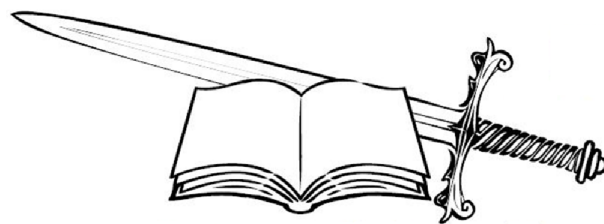




LAUREL RIDGE  
Community Church



# Men's Newsletter

Winter 2020

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. —Rom 8:26*



## Men's Community Groups

The groups below are open to all men looking for devotion, prayer, and fellowship. To register, visit [laurelridgechurch.org/community-groups](http://laurelridgechurch.org/community-groups), click the **Sign Up** button, and fill in the form, or contact the group leaders directly.

### Tuesday Evenings

Time: 6:00 PM

Place: Zoom videoconference

Host: Jeff Alford  
(925) 550-4344  
jeffro7172@gmail.com



### Thursday Mornings

Time: 6:30 AM

Place: YouTube audio meeting

Host: Matt Onstott  
Contact Elisa Onstott at  
925-628-1841

## Act of Will

Why does God allow anyone who dies without Jesus to spend eternity in hell?

If God wants people to believe in Him, why doesn't He just show Himself?

Why didn't God make people and angels incapable of sinning and avoid all those problems? The answer to all the above questions is free will. Let's take each question in reverse order.



When God decided to create intelligent living beings, He wanted us to be able to converse with Him, fellowship with Him, take delight in Him, and to bring delight to Him. He wanted us to make a conscious decision to love, follow and obey Him. If He had made us incapable of rejecting Him, we would have simply been robot slaves programmed to behave. Free will is the attribute in which we are most like God, in whose image we are made. It is what gives meaning to all our other attributes. It also makes us responsible for our decisions.

Every person and angel God created has free will. God takes free will seriously, so much so that

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## Join the Zoom Prayer Team!

Prayer is the most powerful and effective tool God has given us for accomplishing His purposes in our lives and in the lives of everyone on earth. The Apostle Paul urged the Thessalonians—and by inference all of us—to “pray without ceasing.” Jesus, God’s own Son, prayed often each day.

Prayer is where we learn to talk to God, understand him, connect with him, and learn to become more like him. Prayer refocuses us on God instead of ourselves. Praying for others can give them courage, influence their decisions, and change their outcomes.

Join us online in prayer each Thursday evening from 6-7 PM. Pray for our nation, our political leaders, first responders, parents, teachers, students, and others during these troubling times.



Check your email each Wednesday for a link into the Zoom meeting. If you are not already receiving the weekly email reminder, you can sign up on the Laurel Ridge Church website at <http://www.laurelridgechurch.org/zoomprayer>.

## Base Camp starts January 10



The Base Camp course is designed for new believers who have just started their faith journey, for seekers who want to know more about God, faith, or the Bible, and for returners who are looking to reset their spiritual compass. Experienced guides lead you through discussions on faith, life, and growing in Christ. No question is off limits.

The Base Camp team is conducting Base Camp classes online via the Zoom videoconferencing application. Zoom is easy and fun to

use. If you are not familiar with Zoom, the Base Camp team will be glad to provide you with simple-to-follow directions or personally walk you through the process of using Zoom to attend meetings online.

Classes will resume at Laurel Ridge Church once the Coronavirus shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted.

The Base Camp course has been condensed from nine weeks to four. Additional classes can be added for members who want them.

The next session begins January 10. For more information or to sign up, visit the Base Camp page at the Laurel Ridge Church website, at [laurelridgechurch.org/base-camp](http://laurelridgechurch.org/base-camp). A Base Camp leader will contact you to start the onboarding process.

## Website Roundup

Never in history has so much information about God, Jesus, and the Bible been available to so many people. With all this good stuff, we should all know the Bible like J. Vernon McGee. Here's just a few of the most popular Christian websites:

[Biblia.com](http://Biblia.com) Scrollable online study Bible. Includes versions in numerous languages, including Arabic, Greek, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Spanish and Latin, along with popular English-language versions like the NIV.



[BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com) Online study Bible.

[BlueLetterBible.org](http://BlueLetterBible.org) Online study Bible.

[Christian Broadcasting Network](http://ChristianBroadcastingNetwork.com) Online Christian magazine with sections on news, Christian living, spiritual life, devotions, ministries, healthy living, music, videos, and more.

[Got Questions?](http://GotQuestions.com) A "Q & A" website with answers to over 600,000 questions about God, Jesus, the Bible, and theology.

[Thru the Bible](http://ThruTheBible.com) The devotions, global outreach, and five-year radio program Bible studies of J. Vernon McGee. ✝

## Serve at the River



Sunday, December 27, from 1:30 to 3:30 PM at the corner of A and 6th Streets in Antioch. Also on January 24, February 28, and March 28 (the fourth Sunday of each month).

Join with other believers in providing a meal and sharing God's love with the homeless and other people in need.

Donations of food, soft drinks and other items, and volunteers to help set up, serve and share are welcome. Contact Bob Andrade at [randradeteam@gmail.com](mailto:randradeteam@gmail.com) for more information or to sign up.

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# Act of Will

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He gave it to angels knowing that Satan would convince one-third of them to follow him in rebellion against God. He gave it to men knowing that we would disobey Him in the Garden of Eden. Knowing that it would cost Him the death of His one and only Son, Jesus, to redeem us from sin and death.

If Jesus has paid the penalty we owe for our sins, and all we have to do to be saved is to believe in Him as our Lord and Savior, why then does God not reveal Himself to all men in His power and glory so that everyone will believe? The answer, again, is free will. Adam and Eve knew God face to face and walked and talked with Him in the Garden (Gen 3). When they chose to sin, they exercised their free will to turn away from God and life into sin and death.

Consequently, we who are their descendants must exercise our free will to turn from sin and death back to God and life. God making a supernatural appearance that left no doubt who He is would invalidate our free will. He would in effect be commanding our obedience. Christ's death and resurrection means we instead approach Him by recognizing that He is worthy of our love because He was willing to die to redeem us. We are free to reject Him, but Jesus gives us every reason to love Him.

But if God is love, then how can He allow anyone to spend eternity separated from Him? First, God does not want anyone to die in their sins. The prophet Ezekiel wrote: "As I live! declares the LORD GOD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Eze 32:11) But for God to provide eternal life to those who have rejected Him

would be to invalidate the gift of free will that He gave us. All who reject God will know that He gave them every chance to say yes to Jesus but that they chose to say no—and God will honor that decision.

If you have not yet exercised your free will to give your heart and life to Christ, now is the time. Today is the day of salvation. Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Ask Him to be your Lord and Savior. Choose God, and live. ✝



**Where in the New Testament were disciples of Christ first called Christians, and in what town?**

Answer below.

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In Pisidian Antioch (Acts 11:26).