

## WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT | FAITH ALONE

### Prayer

Discerning God,  
help me consider this day  
how I live my life  
and how I choose the direction I  
take.

Perceptive God,  
help me understand  
how crucial are the words I speak to  
others  
as I seek relationships in my life.

Disrupting God,  
help me find clarity in my  
relationship with You,  
with others, and maybe especially  
with myself.

Amen.

### Prayer Concerns:

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## WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT | DAY ONE

**READ:** James 1-2

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** Our active and generous faith is to be lived out with consistent love for all people. All means all to James. The author of James is clear to his audience and us that God shows no favoritism via wealth or status. It is obvious throughout the Bible that God does not follow our social norms or expectations. There is not a church in the world that would say James is wrong but how are we doing living it out—Faith and Action? James is laying it all out on the table. Are we at the table?

**RESPOND:** “Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves (James 1:22).” Ouch! Those words cut to the core of the word becoming alive.

- How has reading scripture made you a doer of the word?
- In what ways can our church community be doers of the word? What areas need to change to not show favoritism and give care to the poor, marginalized, and hurting in our world?

## WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT | DAY TWO

**READ:** James 3-4

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** All too often, we think a faith conversion is a single "once and for all" moment. Our reading today reminds us that our conversion to live a life with Christ is a continual process. James sees that conversion is never fully complete. Our faith just begins when we say "yes" to Jesus Christ in our hearts and lives. We learn over and over through our sins, failures, and disasters that our faith needs to grow and change. All the ups and downs of life become an opportunity to go deeper and lean into the gift of grace through our Savior.

**RESPOND:**

- Words matter. James makes clear in our reading that what we say has an impact. What is your impact? How do your words need to change at home, work, and on social media?
- How does James call us to use or distribute our resources, status, and blessings? How does that match with the way we use them today? Why?

## WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT | DAY THREE

**READ:** James 5

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** James challenges us to create a community of solidarity. The author is realistic and practical about what it will take to bring the community together. James empowers the sick (5:14) to call up the leaders of the community. We are to honor the sick and poor (2:5) and incorporate them into our community as the full body of Christ. It challenges us to get uncomfortable and face the tensions and conflicts in our church and denomination. James knows that ignoring or denying issues will not bring together the community.

**RESPOND:**

- How would you describe a community of solidarity? What would it look, feel, act, or sound like?
- How does our church community seek to embrace and care for people who are poor, sick, mentally ill, widows, vulnerable children, and refugees? How do our explicit or implicit actions and words avoid or exclude care? How do we build a better community response of love, empathy and grace? What are you willing to do?

## WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT | DAY FOUR

**READ:** 1 Peter 1-5

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** Similar to James, 1 and 2 Peter are general epistles written to a large group of early church communities. First Peter is a letter of encouragement and pastoral care to church communities that are in conflict or alienated from society for living the radical way of Christ. Starting at our baptism, the author reminds followers that our faith is lived out in the thoughts and behavior of daily life. Our reading connects with John Wesley's core belief of "inward and outward social holiness." 1 Peter 1:15 connected the heart holiness to holy living in all aspects of life.

**RESPOND:** Wesley is famously quoted as writing "The gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness." What does this quote say to you and how does it connect with 1 Peter?

- 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us of the hope that is within us through the Holy Spirit. Wesley connected hope to sanctifying grace. How is hope an act and practice? How do you incorporate hope into your daily life?

## WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT | DAY FIVE

**READ:** 2 Peter 1-3

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** The authors of 1 and 2 Peter focus on assuring early church communities of the certainty of the end and of final judgement. The authors both focus on how the actions of today impact and give meaning to our future reality. The reading today focuses specifically on the emergence of false teaching from within the communities of faith. Throughout history, there have been many leaders and communities who have manipulated the gospel message to win wealth or status. Chapter Two of 2 Peter is a wake up call that we need to all evaluate our actions and reflect on our motivations.

**RESPOND:** Am I seeking a Jesus of my own making who serves me; or the true Jesus, who serves the world through me?

- We are slaves to whatever overpowers us (2 Peter 2:19). Reflect on your own daily life. Who or what overpowers your time, talent, and treasure?

## Word ALIVE | Revelation

The Book of Revelation (just one – not revelationS) has been the subject of incredible speculation over the past 150 years. We have all likely heard some theory worked out from the mysteries of this biblical letter to determine the end of the world or the day of judgement. But it was never the goal of the author – John of Patmos – to hide some secret message about how to decipher the end times. Revelation does address the end of the world, but not in the way most people assume.

This letter was not written in sequential order, which means the events that John describes in chapters 6 & 7 don't necessarily happen before the events of chapters 8-10. In fact, many scholars agree that John seems to be describing the same series of spiritual events over and over throughout his letter, using different perspectives and themes.

Revelation is considered apocalyptic writing, which means that it seeks to understand the current spiritual realities of life in light of the end of the world. Apocalyptic writing also uses lots of vivid imagery and metaphor, which cause it to sound mysterious and cryptic. However, it is my hope that, here at the end of our Word ALIVE journey, you will recognize some of the imagery that John uses, because it is entirely rooted in stories from the Old Testament. John wants his readers to look back to the story of God's people, because this is where we find origins of God's unending covenantal love. John looks back to the roots of our faith as he is shown amazing visions of the future in order to find encouragement and strength for his present circumstances.

Revelation is also a highly contextual letter, which means that John was interpreting the reality that most of his first-century readers were experiencing. Namely: the oppression of Roman rule and the temptation to abandon their faith in Christ. And yet, even though this letter was written to a specific group of churches in first-century Asia minor, believers throughout history have found hope in its pages as they read about the second coming of Christ and His ultimate victory over sin and death. Because this is the truth of Revelation and the truth of our faith: JESUS WINS! We often get caught up in the details of the day-to-day. But John of Patmos tells us that if we can anchor our lives in the truth of Jesus' victory, then we will prevail and inherit God's eternal blessings.

## WEEK THIRTY-NINE | GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU

### Prayer

Dear Lord, I pray that Your Word would come alive in me in new ways each day.

Move in my heart so that my actions would reflect my beliefs and my relationship with You. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.

### Prayer Concerns:

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## WEEK THIRTY-NINE | DAY ONE

**READ:** 1 John

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** In the New Testament, there are four books with the name John, and most scholars agree that they were likely written by the same disciple of Jesus. Whether this John is the same as the brother of James, one of the original 12 disciples, we cannot say for certain. But this writer clearly knew Jesus personally and intimately. 1 John was written to address the social divisions present in the early church. John's goal was to remind his audience that God is both light and love. As followers of Jesus, John reminds us that we should also seek to be light and love for those around us.

**RESPOND:** John's great concern in all three of his letters is to combat the false teachings about Jesus that were spreading around the early church and distracting believers from the truth about Jesus.

- Have you ever been confronted by a false teaching about Jesus? How did you respond to this? Did you shrug it off, or did you feel compelled to correct it?

## WEEK THIRTY-NINE | DAY TWO

**READ:** 2 John; 3 John

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** As a continuation from yesterday's reading, 2 and 3 John are practical examples of how John encouraged the early churches to support the gospel of Jesus Christ and reject the false gospels that were spreading. 2 John is a letter to a house church cautioning them to not entertain a group of people who were spreading this false message. 3 John is another letter to a different house church. However, in this instance, John is encouraging the church to lend their support to a group of honest disciples. In both cases, John is providing wisdom to his followers for the sake of spreading God's kingdom.

**RESPOND:**

- Why do you think John, Paul, Peter, and the other leaders in the early church were so concerned with false teachings about Jesus?
- When it comes to your relationship with Jesus, how do you discern what is true and what is false?

## WEEK THIRTY-NINE | DAY THREE

**READ:** Philemon

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** In this short letter, Paul is writing to Philemon, who is a wealthy convert to Christianity and an old friend of Paul's from his earlier missionary travels. After coming to know Jesus, Philemon became a leader in his church, but he still owned slaves, which is wrong, but it was common for the time. Paul is writing about Onesimus, who is one of Philemon's former slaves. Onesimus wronged Philemon and ran away from him, but on his journeys, Onesimus met Paul and converted to Christianity as well. So, Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon in an act of Christian restoration.

**RESPOND:** In his letter, Paul reminds Philemon of the great grace that Jesus shared with him, and he encourages Philemon to share that same grace with Onesimus. Paul calls him to free Onesimus from his slavery and to welcome him as a brother in the faith. This would have been a radical social change, but this is what the gospel of Jesus is all about. God's grace runs counter to all forms of inequality and oppression, because God shares His love equally with all people. Pray for the boldness to stand up to acts of oppression in Jesus' name wherever you encounter them.

## WEEK THIRTY-NINE | DAY FOUR

**READ:** Jude

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** Jude was another of Jesus' brothers (in addition to James) who became a leader in the early church and an author of a Biblical book. This letter was written to a culturally Jewish community of new believers, which is why it is so full of Old Testament references. Like John, Jude was writing to address the bad theology that was permeating through the early church. Jude is concerned about the way certain churches are living with questionable morals. These morals did not line up with Jesus' teachings, which was a big issue for Jude, because God's grace is much more than just a 'get-out-of-jail-free' card.

**RESPOND:** Jude provides 6 examples from the Old Testament and the Apocrypha about people who rejected God's call for holy living. Do you recognize any of his examples? Do you remember how it turned out for any of these individuals who rejected God's commands and lived for their own desires?

- Why do you think it is important for Christians (including you!) to practice what you preach?

## WEEK THIRTY-NINE | DAY FIVE

**READ:** Revelation 1-3

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** In the opening chapters of Revelation, the stage is set for the rest of the letter. We are introduced to John of Patmos. John was a leader in the early church, but it is not certain whether he is the same John who penned the other four letters by that name in the New Testament. What we do know about John is that he was exiled to the island of Patmos, and while he was there, he was shown tremendous visions. After these visions, John wrote this letter, which he intended to circulate among seven churches in first-century Asia minor. Before getting to the meat of his letter, John starts with specific introductions to each of the seven churches where this letter was headed. In light of what he has seen in his visions, John encourages these churches to resist the temptations of sin, apathy, and convenience.

**RESPOND:** As we begin our journey through Revelation, what preconceived notions do you have about this book?

- What are you expecting to read over the next week?
- Are you excited to read Revelation, or are you dreading the experience?

## WEEK FORTY | VICTORY IN JESUS

### Prayer

Dear Jesus,

I believe that You are my Lord and Savior. As I have walked through Your Word this year, I have been transformed by drawing nearer to You.

Thank You for this journey, for the people I have traveled with this past year, and for all the ways that You have blessed me along the way.

When I am tempted to despair, draw close to me, and help me remember that You are victorious!

Amen.

### Prayer Concerns:

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## WEEK FORTY | DAY ONE

**READ:** Revelation 4-7

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** John uses a great deal of Old Testament imagery to describe the exalted throne room of God. Through these vivid descriptions, John is declaring that God truly is holy and worthy of our praise. This might seem obvious, but one of John's main points in this letter is just that: God is king of Heaven, and He deserves our worship. And because of His sacrifice, Jesus, the lamb of God, is worthy to open the scrolls handed over by God, which is a nod to the Trinity – God and Jesus are both worthy of our praise as king of Heaven. And in chapter 7, we find John's first description of Jesus' final victory over sin and death. John addresses those who have been saved by the lamb as the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. This Old Testament reference is crossed with the New Testament reference of the 12 disciples to declare that Jesus' victory offers salvation to the Jews and the Gentiles.

**RESPOND:** In today's reading, John describes Jesus as both the proud lion of Judah and the lamb who was slain. Which of these images do you tend to associate with Jesus more? What can you learn about Jesus from the one you don't think about as often?

## WEEK FORTY | DAY TWO

**READ:** Revelation 8-12

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** The seven trumpets in today's reading are intimately connected to the seven seals from yesterday and the seven bowls that we will read about tomorrow. Each of these three series represent the same set of spiritual realities, but John depicts them from different perspectives using different Old Testament metaphors. Each of these series is supposed to connect John's reader to God's larger story to show how God has been working out our salvation throughout history and how His plan has come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. John is also very honest with his readers about the hardships they were facing. Following Jesus is not always peaches and daisies, and there are times when we all experience struggles that draw us away from God. But we are encouraged to persevere in the face of difficulty, because this is how we will be victorious with Christ on the last day.

**RESPOND:** The dragon from chapter 12 represents another perspective on the spiritual battle that John addresses in chapters 10 and 11. This monster represents the forces of evil that seek to distract us from God and His great love for us.

- If every bad thing in our lives looked like a dragon, it might be easier to keep away from these distractions to our faith. Take a few moments to list some of the things that commonly distract you from your faith. How can you rework these distractions to honor God through them?



## WEEK FORTY | DAY THREE

**READ:** Revelation 13-16

**JOURNAL:**

Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** The mark of the beast in today's reading is a reference to the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In the same way that God's followers should bind His law on their hands and their foreheads, the beast wants the world to mark themselves against God. This mark represents allegiance to political and economic powers, which John declares to be the ultimate threat to God's reign on earth. But John is encouraging his readers to reject these earthly powers and instead put their trust in God alone, just as the followers of the slain lamb (Jesus) do in the face of these great beasts.

As we learned yesterday, the seven bowls are a reiteration of the spiritual realities that John has already addressed through the seals and the trumpets. The seventh bowl is poured out on Armageddon, which was a real battlefield north of ancient Israel. This is an allusion to the many battles that were fought over Israel's freedom throughout her history, and a declaration that God will be victorious in His battle over sin and death.

**RESPOND:**

- By contrasting the faithfulness of the slain lamb with the aggression and perversion of the beasts from the earth, John is posing the following questions to his initial readers and to all believers today:
- Will you continue to follow Jesus and resist the evil forces in this world?
- Or will you follow the beast of the earth and be swallowed by greed?

## WEEK FORTY | DAY FOUR

**READ:** Revelation 17-20

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** Babylon the prostitute is another personification of the same evil political and economic powers that John addressed earlier in his letter. He references several Old Testament kingdoms that opposed Israel and links them to their current oppressor: Rome. John is saying that no matter what the flag looks like or who is declared the leader, the powers of this world will always exist in some form, and it is the duty of all who follow Jesus to resist them. But hear this good news: Jesus wins! Jesus destroys every Babylon, every Rome, and every other expression of evil or oppression. He does this through His sacrificial death and resurrection from the grave, which is why the lamb comes to the battle already bloodied. And as followers of Jesus, He offers us this assurance so that even when there seems to be so much wrong in the world, we can still find hope in His promise.

**RESPOND:** So far in our journey through Revelation, we have read about chanting saints, plagues, spiritually significant spans of time, spiritual battles, and evil forces. What has been your impression reading this book? Is it what you expected when you first began? What has been different? How have you encountered God through this mysterious book?

## WEEK FORTY | DAY FIVE

**READ:** Revelation 21-22

**JOURNAL:** Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

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**LEARN:** The last two chapters of Revelation contain the vision that John has of what life will be like after God's final victory over sin and death. God brings His Kingdom to earth, because all evil has been expelled from it. God's desire from the very beginning has been to live in perfect, intimate relationship with His creation, and now that reality is fulfilled. The power of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection is enough to make all things new and good – a restoration of all creation into a new Garden of Eden. And John writes this letter to assure us of this reality. Our great Christian hope is to live eternally with God, and He will make this happen.

**RESPOND:** In response to this, our last reading on this Word ALIVE journey, I want you to give praise to God. Praise Him for all you have learned along the way, and I want you to praise Him for His final victory over all evil, which will restore creation to its perfected state, just as God intended. Amen!

## **“For the Word of God is Alive and Active”**

Hebrews 4:12

Word Alive has come to a close and you need to take a moment to celebrate your accomplishment. For forty weeks, you have faithfully poured over books of the Bible, chapter after chapter, verse by verse. This is not easy to do, and yet you did it! As you close out this book, take a moment to remember. Remember some of your aha's, whether from reading about creation found in Genesis, or the order and laws found in Leviticus. Maybe it was the poetic songs of the Psalms that touched you or reading Jesus' words. No matter the book, each week was a new opportunity for God to come active and alive within you. The hope and prayer in all this was that the Word would come alive and active in you! May it be so!

Let's close with a prayer.

*God,*

*Today we say thank You! Thank You for the gift of time spent in Your Word. None of it was wasted. Thank You for each moment of frustration or confusion by Your Word, a gentle reminder that You are God and we are not. Thank You for each verse that brought me comfort or brought me to tears, a reinforcement that never will You leave us nor forsake us. Your Word is the source of all that is needed for the source of our faith and salvation. May this not be the end of our study and exploration of Your Word. Stir our desire to lay hold of the active life You have for us. Give us strength, courage, and grace to lay hold of all You have for us. It is in the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

## LAW

Old Testament  
GENESIS  
EXODUS  
LEVITICUS  
NUMBERS  
DEUTERONOMY

## HISTORY

JOSHUA  
JUDGES  
RUTH  
1 SAMUEL  
2 SAMUEL  
1 KINGS  
2 KINGS  
1 CHRONICLES  
2 CHRONICLES  
EZRA  
NEHEMIAH  
ESTHER

## POETRY

JOB  
PSALMS  
PROVERBS  
ECCLESIASTES  
SONG of SOLOMON

## MAJOR PROPHETS

ISAIAH  
JEREMIAH  
LAMENTATIONS  
EZEKIEL  
DANIEL

## MINOR PROPHETS

HOSEA  
JOEL  
AMOS  
OBADIAH  
JONAH  
MICAH  
NAHUM  
HABAKKUK  
ZEPHANIAH  
HAGGAI  
ZECHARIAH  
MALACHI

## GOSPELS

New Testament  
MATTHEW  
MARK  
LUKE  
JOHN

## CHURCH HISTORY

ACTS

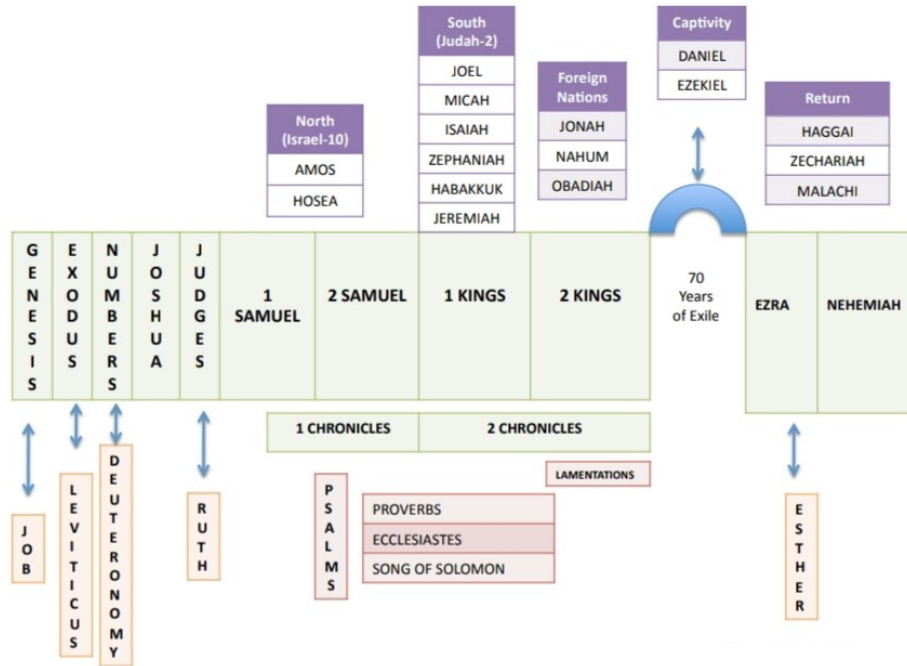
## PAUL'S LETTERS

ROMANS  
1 CORINTHIANS  
2 CORINTHIANS  
GALATIANS  
EPHESIANS  
PHILIPPIANS  
COLOSSIANS  
1 THESSALONIANS  
2 THESSALONIANS  
1 TIMOTHY  
2 TIMOTHY  
TITUS  
PHILEMON

## GENERAL LETTERS

HEBREWS  
JAMES  
1 PETER  
2 PETER  
1 JOHN  
2 JOHN  
3 JOHN  
JUDE  
REVELATION  
PROPHECY

## Word ALIVE | Old Testament Books in Chronological Order



## Word ALIVE | New Testament Books in Chronological Order

