



Salvation

for the coast and beyond

WEEK 1

Saved From

DAY 1

When God saves us, he saves us from a dreadful fate. The sad reality of our sin is that it makes God our enemy, and death and judgement are what we deserve. To be saved from such a great danger is something to be rejoiced in! This week we'll spend our time understanding what God has saved us from.

Pray + Read Luke 7:36-50

1. What did each of these people think of themselves, and of each other?

The Woman	Simon	Jesus

2. Jesus suggests there is a connection between the way we feel about ourselves, and how we feel about him. What is this?

3. Do you feel that you have been forgiven much or little?

4. Our society really values the idea of people having a 'high self-esteem' and 'knowing their worth'. But what could be the problem of thinking of ourselves higher than we should? How might it affect our ability to love Jesus?

Prayer: Ask that God would help your heart to feel the reality of how much you have been forgiven, and to love Jesus in that same measure. Pray that “the gospel of forgiveness of sins” would be received in our region as the truly good news that it is.

DAY 2

Pray + Read Romans 1:16-32

1. What does the gospel do and what does it reveal? (verses 16-17)
2. How and why is God's wrath being revealed in verses 18-32?
3. The word "wickedness" (NIV) is actually the opposite of the word "righteousness". Translations like the ESV show this by simply translating it as "unrighteousness". How does the gospel of verses 16-17 solve the problem of verses 18-32?
4. When you read Genesis 6:5 alongside Romans 1, you see that God mercifully restrains us from sinning as much as our hearts want to. The world is not as bad as it should be. We aren't as bad as we should be. What are some things about the gospel in Romans 1:16-17 that could be helpful for you to remember when you're surprised by the sinful things your heart wants?

Prayer: Thank God that we are not as bad as we could be. Thank him that the gospel is his power for salvation. Ask him to reveal his gift of righteousness to more and more people on the coast.

DAY 3

It can be emotionally hard for us to hear what we deserve from God for our sin. It's even more difficult for us as we love people who don't trust Jesus and who are still facing God's future judgement. To help us love Jesus more as we realise how much we've been forgiven, but also to help us in our urgency of prayer for our neighbours, we're going to spend just today looking at what the Bible says about hell.

Pray

Read: Matthew 25:31-46

1. What does this passage tell us about what the enemies of the king will face?

Read: Mark 9:42-50

2. What does this passage tell us about the future consequences for leading people away from Jesus?

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10

3. Why do you think Paul points out at the start of verse 6 that "God is just"?

Read: Jude 3-7

4. What does this say about the duration of God's judgement?

Read: Revelation 14:6-13

5. Why does the voice from heaven say that those who die in the Lord are blessed?

Prayer: Confess to God what your sin deserves. Praise him and give thanks for not giving you what you deserve, but for rescuing you. Pray he'd also show that same mercy to many more.

DAY 4

Pray + Read Psalm 5

1. Is it good to hate evil?
2. What do verses 4-6 teach us about God?
3. How does this psalm give sinners confidence to come to God? See especially verses 7 and 11.

It can feel like God is bad when he judges sin, or perhaps that he's mean, or loves to inflict suffering. But the reality is that God is against evil because he's purely good. As we're better able to grasp that truth, we'll be better able to "sing for joy" as we take refuge in him.

4. What descriptions does this psalm give of the kinds of people and things that God is against?

Prayer: Thank God that he is good and punishes the wicked, the evil, the arrogant, wrongdoers, liars, the bloodthirsty, the deceitful, the malicious, death-speakers, the guilty, sinners and rebels. Sing for joy to him that his great love means that evil people like us can come to him for refuge. Grieve that so few of our neighbours on the Central Coast have run to God for that protection and ask him to pour out his mercy through our community.

DAY 5

Pray + Read Romans 5:1-11

1. How does Paul describe what our relationship with God is now?
2. What does Paul say about the timing of Christ's death and God's love for us? (verses 6-8)
3. What are the connections in this passage between our past, present and future?
4. How does this passage encourage you in evangelism?

Prayer: Praise God for the peace that we ungodly sinners now have with him simply through faith. Pray for the Central Coast, that God would be just as generous to them as he has been to us. Pray for particular people you know; pray for groups of people in schools, sporting teams, clubs, workplaces, other religious groups – there are so many who don't know what God has done for them while they are still his enemies!

WEEK 2

The Gift of Salvation

DAY 1

It's great to know the danger we're saved from. But it's even better to know what we've been saved for. There are two aspects we're going to look at this week. First, God saved us out of his own generosity. Second, what we've been given cost us nothing. The idea of a gift brings both of these ideas together.

Pray + Read Ephesians 2:1-10

1. If God simply did what was right in verses 1-3, what should he have done to us?
2. What do verses 4-7 tell us about God's motivation for saving us?
3. Some people think of God as 'harsh but fair'. How does this passage push us to feel about God?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his great love for us, the incomparable riches of his grace, and his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Ask that he'd help you feel loved by him, and to love him in return.

DAY 2

Our motives are complex. Some things we just like to do because of how we're built. Other things we commit to because there's a goal we want to achieve. You could think of us being pushed by our inward desires, and at the same time being pulled by external goals. In John 3:16 we learn about the inward "push" that drove God to give his Son for us, and also the goal that he wanted to achieve. Our motives are mixed and unclear, but God's motives are pure and perfect.

Pray + Read John 3:16

1. Perhaps God loved the world because the world was beautiful and good (e.g. Genesis 1 and 2). Yet, John 3:19 points out that the world is now evil. What could it mean that "God so loved the world"?
2. What does 'eternal life' mean?
3. If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, how would you spend your last day?
4. What if you knew you were going to live to 120 years old, guaranteed?
5. What if you knew you would never die?
6. What do we have to do to receive eternal life?

Prayer: Praise God for what we've been given through the death of God's one and only Son.

DAY 3

For some reason, we tend to think of life after death as being some weird existence as spirits or angels floating around in the clouds. Think of the classic 'pearly gates' imagery. When the Bible talks about life after death for Christians, it keeps using 'earthy' imagery – a new earth!

Pray + Read Isaiah 65:17-25

1. What won't be in the new heavens and the new earth?
2. What will be in the new heavens and the new earth?
3. Imagine you have a holiday planned for two weeks away. How does it help/motivate you to get through those last few hard weeks of work?
4. How should these promise of a new earth change the way we think about these last few years we have before our eternal rest?

Prayer: Ask God to keep the reality of heaven in your mind for the rest of the day, that you'd constantly realise what things won't be in the new creation, and what things will be there but in perfection. Ask for help knowing how to 'work' now, with true 'retirement' just a few years away.

DAY 4

Pray + Read Revelation 21:1-8

1. According to this passage, what won't be in the new heaven and new earth?
2. What's the key thing that makes the new heaven and new earth so good (vs 3)?
3. How does the reality of heaven and hell help you prioritise what to do with your time/effort/skills/money?

Prayer: Thank God for what we have guaranteed for us in the new earth. Ask for wisdom and generosity in figuring out what to do while you wait.

DAY 5

Pray + Read Revelation 22:1-5

1. Turn back to Genesis 3:16-19. What will it mean for the nations to be healed and the curse to be gone in Revelation 22?
2. What similarities do you see between Revelation 22:1-5 and the account of the Garden of Eden from Genesis 2?
3. Is the new earth just a reset back to Eden? Or is anything different?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his plan of salvation, to graciously, mercifully, bring us into the new earth as a saved people. Pray that you'd look forward to being with Christ, face-to-face!

WEEK 3

How God Saves Today

DAY 1

Who's most likely to become a Christian? Is it the nice person? The clever person? The good person? What if it's not about a type of person at all?! What if it's about an experience that anyone can have?

Pray + Read Romans 10:14-15

1. What's the point of these four questions in a row in verses 14-15?
2. What is it that needs to be preached to people so they can believe? Have a look back at verses 5-13 as well.
3. What does verse 17 add to our understanding of what people need in order to believe?
4. Since it's impossible to believe without hearing the gospel, what is the number one experience all our neighbours need in their lives?

Prayer: Pray that our neighbours would hear the gospel! Pick a bunch of your closest relationships with people Christians. Pray for each of them, one at a time, that they'd hear the gospel.

DAY 2

Christians have often used the word 'regeneration' to describe God's work of taking spiritually dead people and bringing them to life. A spiritual resurrection!

Pray + Read Ezekiel 36:24-32 and 37:1-14

1. What do these passages say about God's word and God's spirit?
2. What is the state of Israel before God acts?
3. What's the difference that God's word and spirit make in these people?
4. As you reflect on your own conversion or growth as a Christian, how has God been involved in that by his word and spirit?

Prayer: Pray that God would give life to the spiritually dead Central Coast. Pray for those you know who are yet to come to life with a knowledge of the gospel. Thank God for his regenerative work in you.

DAY 3

After Jesus in the temple had promised that he would rise from the dead (John 2:19-22), Nicodemus came secretly in the night to talk to Jesus. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to see that God's work of regeneration, or new birth, was necessary even for a member of the Jewish ruling council, if he wanted to be saved.

Pray + Read John 3:1-8

1. Does Jesus' comment in verse 3 fit with Nicodemus' question in verse 2? How?
2. What does Nicodemus first think Jesus means?
3. How does Jesus explain this to him?
4. Why can't someone enter the kingdom of God without a free work of the Spirit?
5. Since people can't be saved without God's regeneration, how should that affect our evangelism?

Prayer: Pray that God would be sending his spirit all throughout the Central Coast, that thousands more people would be born again and “see the Kingdom of God”.

DAY 4

Ezekiel wasn't the only prophet God spoke through to promise his re-creative work. Jeremiah's promise of the new covenant is full of the language of spiritual transformation.

Pray + Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

1. What are the two covenants Jeremiah speaks about here?
2. What does Jeremiah say “broke” the old covenant?
3. How does Jeremiah say the new covenant differs from the old covenant?
4. What is the big result of God giving people his spirit in the new covenant?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his commitment to forgiving his people. Give thanks that the new covenant doesn't require us to live up to God's perfect standards, but to be forgiven and transformed by him. Ask that God would keep forgiving people on the Central Coast and bringing them to know him.

DAY 5

You can't just do a word-search in the Bible for 'regeneration' to find all of the relevant passages. We've looked at being born again, or having God's laws written on our hearts, or being given a heart of flesh. Titus uses the language of 'renewal' to again help us see that we need God to renew us; we can't renew ourselves.

Pray + Read Titus 3:3-8

1. According to this passage, what didn't cause God to save us? Why did God save us?
2. How does this passage say God saved us?
3. What are the benefits here of the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit?
4. This week we have seen again and again that renewal is a miraculous work of God. Knowing this, who do you know that God couldn't save?
5. How could this idea of renewal by the Holy Spirit motivate someone to be more engaged in evangelism?

Prayer: Pray that God would motivate you to do more evangelism, and to do it aware of God's involvement in the salvation of sinners. Pray that as a church we would keep confidently preaching the word, and seeing God save people year after year. Pray we'd be able to financially enable that preaching for many years to come.

WEEK 4

Everything in Christ

DAY 1

There have been debates between Christians about the order in which we receive the various benefits of salvation. Is it predestination first, then faith, then justification, then sanctification? Or could justification and sanctification be given simultaneously? There are lots of opinions. The Bible does push us though to see that once you have Jesus, you actually have everything. Yes, there's still some order there, and some of it matters critically. But every blessing of salvation we receive from God is through Jesus, from Jesus, and in Jesus. It's called 'Union with Christ'. He's the source of our blessing, the location of our blessing, and the substance of our blessing.

Pray + Read Ephesians 1:3-14

1. Find all the times in these verses that Paul says we have something 'in Christ', or 'through Christ', or any other phrase that means something like 'in Christ'.

2. What does Paul say about the timing of these blessings in these verses? See especially:
 - a. Verse 4
 - b. Verse 10
 - c. Verse 13
 - d. Verse 14

3. In summary, what has God given us 'in Christ'?

Prayer: Paul goes on in the rest of the chapter to pray that the Ephesians would know about all the blessings they already have from 1:3-14. Pray using verses 17-23 for your own understanding of what you have in Christ.

DAY 2

The idea of union with Christ through the Bible helps us to keep remembering that Jesus is the centre of everything. By faith, we're united to him. Like in a marriage union, everything that is his becomes ours, and everything that is ours becomes his.

Pray + Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1. Verse 29 says we can't boast before God. Why can't we?
2. Some religious leaders have said (and still say) that God makes us good enough to deserve to be saved. Verse 30 here says that Christ has become our wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption. What is verse 30 saying about how we're saved?
3. Does Jesus make us righteous? Or, does he give us righteousness? Or, does he pretend we're righteous? Or, is it something else?

Prayer: Thank God for Jesus! Confess how far short we fall of God's standards. Praise God for his generosity in giving us Christ himself as our greatest treasure – our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

DAY 3

Since Jesus is God, when you have Christ, you therefore have God – Father, Son and Spirit. Shortly before Jesus was betrayed and arrested, he prayed to his Father on our behalf. We see a glimpse in that prayer of the deep union between the Father and the Son, and the blessing that it is to know Christ.

Pray + Read John 17

1. What does Jesus reveal here about his relationship with the Father?
2. What does Jesus reveal about his relationship with us?
3. What does Jesus reveal about our relationship with the Father?
4. What benefits for us does Jesus ask his Father for?

Prayer: Go through John 17 again to work out which parts of Jesus' prayer are appropriate for us to pray, and pray for them!

DAY 4

Before we were 'in Christ' we were 'in Adam'. Understanding what it meant to be in Adam helps us to realise the immense gift that it is to be in Christ.

Pray + Read Romans 5:12-21

1. What does this passage say about what it means to be in Adam?
2. What are the similarities between Adam as the one man, and Jesus as the one man?
3. What are the differences?
4. There's some expressive language here – God's grace and the gift overflow in verse 15, God abundantly provides grace and the gift in verse 17. What does the expressive language add to the meaning of those verses?

Prayer: Confess to God your guilt in Adam, and praise God for your justification in Christ. Thank God that it was not through your obedience that you were made righteous, but through Christ's obedience. What a gift!

DAY 5

Romans 8 starts and ends with union with Christ. There is no condemnation for those "in Christ". Nothing can separate us from God's love, "in Christ". It's the best chapter in the Bible, about the best blessing of salvation – Christ Jesus.

Pray + Read Romans 8

1. How do the blessings of the Spirit come through Christ (verses 1-11)?
2. What does the Spirit teach us about our relationship with Christ (verses 12-17)?
3. What does the Spirit use to make us like Christ (verses 18-30)?
4. The phrase 'No one' in verse 34 isn't actually there in the original Greek text. Have a look at an ESV translation, which does a better job of this verse. Why would it be comforting for us to know that Christ Jesus is the judge? (Work it out from all of verses 31-39, and perhaps also a glance back at 8:1)

Prayer: Pray that your Father would help you to remember this chapter of the Bible – the centrality of Christ in every blessing we have, and in every work of the Spirit. Pray that you'd understand and treasure your adoption as God's children, adopted by being united to his true Son by his Spirit, through faith. Cry out to him that he'd give his Son many more brothers and sisters on the coast.

WEEK 5

Atonement

DAY 1

Underneath the truth that we have everything 'in Christ' is the atonement. How can God unite sinners to his Son? Is he just ignoring our guilt like a corrupt judge? Where is the justice? It's in substitutionary atonement, the cross of Christ. The idea of a substitutionary atonement is set up for us in the Old Testament, so we can understand the meaning of the cross when it was finally achieved.

Pray + Read Genesis 22:1-14 and Leviticus 1:1-5 (if you have time also read Leviticus 16)

1. God never intend to have Abraham kill Isaac. What are the clues in the details of the Genesis passage?
2. What do you learn about substitution from these passages?
3. Why was it needed?

4. Is there any explanation in these passages of how the blood of bulls and goats could atone for human sin?

Prayer: Praise God that Jesus came to die as our substitute, to die in our place, to atone for our sin.

DAY 2

Hebrews 10:4 states very clearly, “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”. This seems to be obvious now that it’s mentioned! But it’s not like the Old Testament believers genuinely thought that their sin was taken away by animal death. There was a realisation that God was doing something gracious in substitutionary atonement, the sacrifices didn’t force his hand. It was still true from Genesis 22 that, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided”.

Pray + Read Psalm 103:1-12 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12

1. What do these passages help us to understand about how God forgives sin?
2. What do we learn about the substitute in Isaiah?
3. Who would kill the substitute? Who killed Jesus? (Isaiah 53:5, 10. See also Acts 2:23.)
4. What benefits do the people receive from this act of substitutionary atonement?

Prayer: Psalm 103 gives a great model for prayer. You could fill this out more: “God, you are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. You will not always accuse, nor will you harbour your anger forever. You don’t treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is your love for those who fear you. As far as the east is from the west, so far you have removed our transgressions from us”.

DAY 3

Jesus was very aware of why he had come. He came to die. There was no other purpose that he came for. Everything he came to achieve, he achieved by dying. Yes, he ate, he healed, he walked, he taught. But even those things, he did so that he would die.

Pray + Read John 1:29-36, Mark 10:35-45 and Luke 22:7-30

1. What do the analogies of lambs, slaves, ransoms, cups, wine and bread have in common?
2. Which Old Testament passages have we read this week that have connections with these passages?
3. What does Jesus think his death will achieve?

Prayer: Thank Jesus for his willing death for you. Thank him for taking away your sin, for serving you, for becoming a ransom for you, for being poured out for you, for being broken (not his bones! John 19:36, but his life, his body) for you.

DAY 4

Paul outlines in the first three chapters of Romans that our big problem as humans is 'unrighteousness' also known as 'wickedness'. God's wrath is being revealed against unrighteousness (1:18-32). Even those with the law are unrighteous (chapter 2). "There is no one righteous, not even one" (3:10). It's clear that if we want to avoid a righteous judgement for our sin, we need to solve our unrighteousness. We need to obtain righteousness.

Pray + Read Romans 3:21-26

1. Who can get righteousness, and how do they get it?
2. The words 'justified' and 'justify' here simply mean 'to be declared righteous', or 'to declare righteous'. Who does the justifying?
3. What do the words 'this' and 'it' mean from verses 25 and 26? "He did this..." and "he did it..."

4. Verse 25 seems to explain “the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” from the end of verse 24. It continues into verse 26. Why was Jesus’ ‘sacrifice of atonement’ necessary for God to be able to justify sinners?

Prayer: Praise God for presenting Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, so he could be both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus. Pray that you’d keep trusting God, receiving Christ’s atonement through faith. Pray that many more would be justified “freely” on the Central Coast.

DAY 5

In Christ’s substitutionary atonement, how does the idea of substitution work? Jesus was innocent, we’re still guilty. No good judge would be satisfied with a willing innocent person taking another’s punishment; the guilty would still have to pay. How is it possible that a good God punished his righteous Son, and let guilty sinners go free? The answer is imputation, which is explained below.

Pray + Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Galatians 3:10-14 and 1 Peter 2:23-25

1. What does it mean that “God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us”? Or, that Christ became a curse for us? Or, that he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross?
2. What does it mean that “in him we might become the righteousness of God”?
3. Now that the cross has happened, why doesn’t God punish us? Have we stopped being guilty? Does God not care anymore? Why doesn’t he punish us?

What is imputation? 2 Corinthians 5 describes an act of 'double imputation'. Our sin was imputed to Christ, meaning that Christ was counted as if he were a guilty sinner. Christ's righteousness was imputed to us, meaning we're counted as if we had lived perfectly righteous lives. Imputation is different from impartation. In impartation, you actually change someone. In imputation, you treat them as if they've changed (even if they haven't). It's because of double imputation that God can treat us better than we deserve, without being unjust, what a gift of grace!

Prayer: Praise God for what he has done for us in Christ. Praise God that "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them."

WEEK 6

Vindication

DAY 1

The cross changed everything. Jesus, as our substitute, lived the perfect human life, had our sin imputed to him, and died in our place for the forgiveness of sins. It sounds like that's everything needed for our salvation! So, what's the deal with the resurrection? What does the resurrection achieve for our salvation?

Pray + Read Psalm 22

1. We see in Mark 15:33 that Jesus uttered the first words of this psalm during his execution. It was a time of deep shame and disgrace for God's Son, and a time of apparent victory for God's enemies. But what does the rest of Psalm 22 show us (see vs 24, 28 and 31)?
2. What does Jesus' resurrection say about his relationship with God? What could someone think if Jesus had stayed dead?

3. Why does Jesus' relationship with God matter for our salvation?

Prayer: Work through Psalm 22 again, figuring out how to change it into an appropriate prayer of thanksgiving and request.

DAY 2

Pray + Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17 and Psalm 110

1. What does God promise to do for David's son? And what does he promise to be for him? (2 Samuel 7)
2. What does God promise to do for David's Lord, sitting at God's right hand? (Psalm 110)
3. Why couldn't Jesus have stayed dead?

Prayer: Praise God for installing Jesus as King over all, for establishing his kingdom forever his victory against his enemies, and his eternal priestly role.

DAY 3

Pray + Read Philippians 2:1-11

1. When Jesus “made himself nothing” (vs7), was it by subtraction (taking off his divine nature) or by addition (taking on human nature)? Why does it matter?
2. Looking at the humble Jesus of Nazareth, what could people wrongly think about him? How would the resurrection prove them wrong?

3. How can Jesus have the “name above every name”? Shouldn’t he have the name above every name “except for God who has a higher name than Jesus”?

Prayer: Praise Jesus as the Lord Almighty! Thank him for his willing self-humiliation in taking on our lowly nature, even to die for us. Praise him as the risen Lord of all

DAY 4

Pray + Read Acts 2

1. Peter’s whole sermon seems to be motivated by the accusation from verse 13. But, after he quotes the Old Testament in verses 17-21, what is Peter’s big point in verses 22-24?
2. What does Peter think David’s non-resurrection proves about David? (verses 25-29)
3. What does Peter think Jesus’ resurrection proves about Jesus? (verses 30-36)

4. How could Peter's sermon comfort someone who's being thought of as a fool for worshipping Christ?

Prayer: Have a go at using the prayer from Acts 4:23-30 as your own prayer.

DAY 5

Paul tends to start his letters with a fairly common formula (you'll be able to pick it up easily if you just look at the first 2-3 verses of each letter). Romans starts in a very familiar way but with an expansion on God's Son. His resurrection is viewed here as an "appointment" or "installation".

Pray + Read Romans 1:1-7

1. Go through each of these verses and describe what Paul is doing in each one. Verse one and seven are given below as examples.

1:1 Paul identifies who he is.

1:2

1:3

1:4

1:5

1:6

1:7 Paul identifies and greets the letter's recipients.

2. Why does Paul mention Jesus' resurrection in verse 4?

The resurrection of Christ doesn't simply prove that the gospel is true. It points us to the centre of the gospel itself – that this one who died was raised to life because he is none other than 'our Lord'. Jesus' resurrection was his vindication as God's only begotten Son. No wonder those present for Peter's sermon in Acts 2 responded with "Uh oh, we're dead, what do we do?". For those who are in Christ, his resurrection – clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures – is the reason we know we can worship him, without committing blasphemy.

Prayer: Praise Jesus as the Lord, the Son of God, who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead.

WEEK 7

Justification

DAY 1

What is justification and how are we justified? During the 16th century Reformation, Protestants proclaimed together that we are "justified by faith alone". Then, the Roman Catholic church replied, "If anyone says that by faith alone the ungodly are justified, let him be eternally condemned." There are huge differences in those two statements.

We've already had a look at Romans 3, but it's so helpful in understanding justification that we'll do it again.

Pray + Read Romans 3:9-26

1. What does verse 20 say that the law can and can't do?
2. The phrase 'declared righteous' (*dikaiōthēsetai*) in verse 20 is actually translating the same idea as in verse 24 – 'justified' (*dikaïoumenoi*). What does the word 'justified' or 'declared righteous' seem to mean in Romans 3?
3. What does someone need to do to be justified according to Romans 3?

4. After reading Romans 3, what do you think of the Roman Catholic church's teaching that "If anyone says that by faith alone the ungodly are justified, let him be eternally condemned"?

Prayer: Praise God that we don't have to earn our justification, but that we can receive it by faith alone. Pray that many people who believe what the Roman Catholic church teaches about justification would hear the gospel, be given new life by the Spirit, and put their faith in Jesus alone for their salvation. Pray that God would save many Roman Catholics from eternal condemnation.

DAY 2

Sometimes people who don't like the idea of "justification by faith alone" say that Paul made it up, and Jesus taught that we have to earn our justification. If that's the case, it'd be good to know so we can get to work meriting our salvation, or at least chipping in a little bit. Let's go check what Jesus said!

Pray + Read Luke 18:9-14

1. What do you learn in verse 9 about who Jesus was telling this parable to? What did they believe before the parable?
2. Are Jesus and Paul in agreement about how people are justified? What do they both believe?
3. Are there ways that you sometimes think of yourself similarly to how this tax collector thought of himself?

4. How could the Bible's teaching about justification help to humble you?

Prayer: Ask God for the humility to keep believing every day that justification is a gift he grants to us, not something we earn by regular prayers, fasting or giving. Ask God for his mercy to remain on you, a sinner.

DAY 3

Paul and Peter had a disagreement about how Peter was living, because Peter was just sitting with his fellow Jews to eat, and wasn't eating with the non-Jewish Christians. What was at stake? Galatians is a great letter to read if you want to figure out how important 'justification by faith alone' is! Was it worth separating from the Roman Catholic church over?

Pray + Read Galatians 2:15-17, 3:7-14, 3:23-25 and 5:2-6

1. Which bits of Galatians here help you see how important Paul thinks 'justification by faith alone' is?
2. What was Peter doing wrong?
3. How big a problem was what Peter was doing?

4. How could you live your life so that people around you would see a lived-out declaration that God saves sinners?

Prayer: Pray that God would help you love that you're justified by faith alone like Paul did, like God the author of Scripture does!

DAY 4

After finishing Romans 3, Paul was clearly concerned that the Christians in Rome might be worried that he was making up something new – justification by faith. Was it the case that Old Testament believers earned their justification by obeying the law? So, Paul addressed that issue straight away in Romans 4.

Pray + Read Romans 4

1. How did Abraham receive righteousness? (verses 1-3 and 16-17)
2. What does Paul think the difference is between a wage and a gift? (verses 4-5)
3. How does David prove as an example that Old Testament believers were justified by faith alone? (verses 6-8)
4. How do each of the remaining paragraphs teach that believers have always and only been justified by faith?
 - a) Verses 9-12

b) Verses 13-15

c) Verses 16-17

d) Verses 18-23

Prayer: Praise God for our connection into the promises to Abraham by faith in Jesus.

DAY 5

Romans 4 has a weird ending. But most of the pieces should now be in place for us to figure it out.

Pray + Read Romans 4:25

1. In week 4, we saw how every blessing of salvation is given to us in Christ. How do our sins get dealt with in Christ according to Romans 4:25?
2. We also saw in week 6 that Jesus' resurrection vindicated him as God's Messiah. What does Jesus' resurrection achieve according to Romans 4:25?
3. What is another way of translating 'justified' from Romans 3:20? (See day 1 of this week).

When Christ was resurrected, he was 'justified' – he was declared to be the righteous Son of God. He was no sinner, he is the Son! Faith unites us to him, so that whatever is his is ours. His vindication, his justification, is ours. When Christ was raised from the dead, God declared those who are in Christ to be righteous. He was raised for our justification.

Prayer: Thank God for justifying you by Christ's resurrection!

WEEK 8

Adoption

DAY 1

Pray + Read Romans 8:14-17

Today will just be reading and reflecting! Read this excerpt as an introduction for looking at adoption this week. Chase up some of the Bible references.

Paul teaches that the gift of justification (i.e., present acceptance by God as the world's Judge) brings with it the status of sonship by adoption (i.e., permanent intimacy with God as one's heavenly Father, Galatians 3:26; 4:4-7). In Paul's world, adoption was ordinarily of young adult males of good character to become heirs and maintain the family name of the childless rich. Paul, however, proclaims God's gracious adoption of persons of bad character to become "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

Justification is the basic blessing, on which adoption is founded; adoption is the crowning blessing, to which justification clears the way. Adopted status belongs to all who receive Christ (John 1:12). The adopted status of believers means that in and through Christ God loves them as he loves his only-begotten Son and will share with them all the glory that is Christ's now (Romans 8:17, 38-39). Here and now, believers are under God's fatherly care and discipline (Matthew 6:26; Hebrews 12:5-11) and are directed, especially by Jesus, to live their whole lives in light of the knowledge that God is their Father in heaven. They are to pray to him as such (Matthew 6:5-13), imitate him as such (Matthew 5:44-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32-5:2), and trust him as such (Matthew 6:25-34), thus expressing the filial instinct that the Holy Spirit has implanted in them (Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6).

Adoption and regeneration accompany each other as two aspects of the salvation that Christ brings (John 1:12-13), but they are to be distinguished. Adoption is the bestowal of a relationship, while regeneration is the transformation of our moral nature. Yet the link is

evident; God wants his children, whom he loves, to bear his character, and takes action accordingly.

— J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), pages 167-168.

Prayer: Pray the prayer Jesus' taught us to pray to our Father in Matthew 6:7-13

DAY 2

Pray + Read Galatians 4:1-7

1. What's the difference between a slave and a son?
2. What would our inheritance seem to be from this passage?
3. And what do we receive now?
4. Reflect on your relationship with your earthly father. Use that reflection to consider what it could look like through the day, week, and year to have a perfect relationship with your perfect heavenly Father.

Prayer: Share your ups and downs, your fears and your desires with your heavenly 'Abba'. Ask that he'd continue to work in you by his Spirit to live as his child this day, week and year.

DAY 3

Pray + Read Ephesians 1:3-5, 11-12

1. Sometimes Christians struggle with the idea of predestination. But what does the Bible say is the massive blessing of predestination? What are we predestined for?
2. What similarities and differences are there between verses 4 and 5?
3. God sovereignly chooses us according to his own pleasure. How secure are we in our heavenly Father's care according to Ephesians 1?

Prayer: What are the things in your life that really matter to you but you can't control? Your heavenly Father controls them! Ask him for what you want. Ask him to help you trust that if circumstances don't go the way you wanted, it's because he knows a better plan.

DAY 4

Pray + Read John 1:9-13

1. Although the word 'adoption' doesn't appear here, what does this passage reveal about our adoption?
2. What does it mean to be "children born not of natural descent"?
3. Why is it called a 'right'?

Prayer: Praise your heavenly Father for sending his Son, that we too could become his children. Pray that we'd be able to grasp more and more the immensity of the blessing to know God as your Father.

DAY 5

Pray + Read 1 John 3:1-10

1. Why don't God's children go on sinning?
2. How could verse 6 be misunderstood?
3. What clues are there in these verses that God's children won't be perfect yet?
4. How do 1 John 1:8-2:2 help give clarity?

Prayer: Ask that God would purify you like Christ is pure. Give thanks that we will be like him, when he appears. Ask for your Father's help in resisting the devil.

WEEK 9

Sanctification

DAY 1

There are two ways the Bible talks about 'sanctification'. One is a gradual process, and the other is an instant change in our status. You can think about it from the perspective of human adoption. On the day someone is adopted, their adopted-parents come to collect them, finalise the paperwork, and are legally made their parents – an instant change in status. The gradual process of change has also started, but it will continue once they get home, start to live together, change their habits and grow up. Both types of change are true, but one is instant and the other is gradual.

Pray + Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

1. Where is the word 'sanctified' used in this passage?
2. What does Paul mean by it in these verses?
3. Why is it important to Paul?
4. Are there particular things you'd like to gradually grow in? "It is God's will that you should be sanctified" so you should ask for his help!

Prayer: Pray that God's will would be done in your life, that he'd help you keep gradually growing in sanctification.

DAY 2

Pray + Read Romans 6:15-23

1. What does this passage have to say about sanctification?
2. Where does it talk about an instant change in status, and where does it talk about gradual progress?
3. Why is it possible for us to grow?

Prayer: Thank God for freeing you from slavery to sin. Thank God for the safe place we have in relationship with him, where we can make progress without fear of condemnation.

DAY 3

Pray + Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

1. What kinds of ways does Paul describe how the Corinthians used to be?
2. Why aren't they like that anymore?
3. Does this passage seem to say that they're perfectly holy now?
4. What motivations does Paul give in this passage to help the Corinthians want to change how they're living?

Prayer: Thank God that “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”. Pray that you’d be motivated in the right ways to keep pushing forward in holiness.

DAY 4

Pray + Read Acts 26:12-18

1. How does Jesus describe Christians in this passage?
2. What could 'sanctified by faith' mean?
3. To 'sanctify' is to make or consider something holy. Let's now flip over to 1 Corinthians 1:30 and see how it talks about sanctification?

Some religious leaders have taught that we're only justified since we're living a righteous life. So that our status before God goes up and down over time. Two steps forward, one step back.

Another group of leaders have taught that justification causes sanctification. Our sanctification is generated by our justification.

The Bible teaches though, that when we receive Jesus, we get all of the blessings of salvation. So, rather than sanctification being part of our justification, or justification causing our sanctification, **when we're united to Jesus through faith, we get his righteous status (Justification) and his holy status (instant Sanctification) and we're changed to be more and more like him (progressive Sanctification)**. Faith is massive, because it connects us to Jesus, and he's everything.

Prayer: Thank God for your righteous status, your holy status, and the trajectory of your life. All because of Jesus!

DAY 5

Pray + Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26

1. Is this passage talking about an instant change, or a gradual change, or both?
2. Why does this change make sense? What's the goodness of the change, and the danger of not changing?
3. How could you cleanse yourself like Paul says in verse 21?
4. How would you like to be more useful to God, the master of the household of believers – the body of Christ?

Prayer: Ask for God's help in growing in you a holy usefulness to his purposes.

WEEK 10

Resurrection

DAY 1

Because union with Christ is the centre of all of salvation, when we want to think about our own resurrection we should look first to Christ's resurrection. "We eagerly await a saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21).

Pray + Read Luke 24:33-44 and John 20:11-29

1. How is Jesus' resurrection body similar and different to his pre-resurrection body?
2. God is Spirit/πνεῦμα/pneuma (John 4:24). "Spirit" means "not-physical". The NIV sometimes translates the Greek word pneuma as "ghost", which means something a bit different than spirit. In Luke 24:37 the disciples think that Jesus is a πνεῦμα/pneuma. Jesus replies, "a πνεῦμα/pneuma doesn't have flesh and bones" (24:39). God, who is Spirit, doesn't have flesh and bones; he doesn't have a body. What does it mean for our resurrection that Jesus' flesh-and-bones body was resurrected?
3. We don't know everything about what our new bodies will be like.
 - a) What things can we firmly say "they will be like this"?
 - b) What things can we say "they won't be like this"?

Prayer: Thank God for the real resurrection of Jesus. He didn't just appear to have risen from the dead. He didn't just make a new body and leave the old one in the tomb. His new body is amazing! Give thanks to God for the fulfilment of the scriptures, and the hope we have to eagerly await the coming transformation of our own bodies, by Jesus.

DAY 2

It can seem like life on earth will just keep going forever and ever. We are born, grow old and die. But Jesus' flesh and blood resurrection shows us that death won't be forever, and there are some amazing things to know about our future, which will change our present life just by knowing them!

Pray + Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

1. What are the differences between our bodies now and our resurrection bodies? What are the similarities?
2. Will our resurrection bodies be physical?
3. Paul seems to think that these truths about our resurrection should ground us, making us immovable (verse 58). Why, according to Paul, should knowing these truths about the future change us now?
4. The 'work of the Lord' (verse 58) doesn't mean anything and everything a Christian does (that's work for the Lord – Colossians 3:23). The work of the Lord is the work that 'is not in vain' (verse 58) – the work of sharing the gospel with non-Christians and Christians so that more and more people would be blessed in eternity, by receiving the resurrection bodies this whole section is about. Are you giving yourself to this work fully?

Prayer: Thank God for the body you have now – even though they are just perishable seeds, our bodies are still a good gift from God! Give God thanks that as your natural body is being ‘sown in dishonour’, you have the confident hope that your body will be raised in glory.

DAY 3

Pray + Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

1. There's so much imagery in these verses. What does Paul mean by each of these words here?
 - earthly tent (verses 1,4)
 - building from God, house in heaven (verse 1)
 - be clothed (verses 2,4)
 - naked (verses 3,4)
 - unclothed (verse 4)
 - home in the body (verses 6,9)
 - away from the Lord (verse 6)
 - away from the body (verses 8,9)
 - home with the lord (verse 8)
2. What is Paul saying about our bodies now, our resurrection bodies, and the time in-between?

Prayer: Praise God for the promise of a 'heavenly dwelling' where we will be 'at home with the Lord'.

DAY 4

Pray + Read Romans 8:18-25

1. What 'present sufferings' is Paul talking about here?
2. What is 'the glory that will be revealed in us' here?
3. How does God help us to wait actively now?
4. The dynamic of living 'by faith and not by sight' (2 Corinthians 5:7) seems to be a fundamental description of the Christian life. How do you need to let Romans 8 preach to your faith, so that you can live according to these invisible realities today, rather than by sight?

Prayer: Pray that God would help you wait eagerly for the freedom and glory of the children of God.

DAY 5

These are great verses to memorise! To do this, read them (possibly out loud) 10 times today and then say from memory 10 times. Correct every mistake – practice makes permanent! A friend can help with this if they're reading along as you say them. Do 10 today and 10 again tomorrow. Over time, start just doing it from memory without reading the verses. But the first step to fitting it in your head (and heart) is to understand it.

Pray + Read 1 Peter 1:3-5

1. Why has God given us new birth?

2. Why is it a 'living' hope?

3. Why is it through the resurrection of Jesus?

4. Why is it into an inheritance?

5. How is God keeping it and keeping us?

6. What does God deserve for the salvation he's given us?

Prayer: Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Thank him for giving us, in his great mercy, new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Thank God for keeping this inheritance in heaven for you. Thank him for powerfully shielding us until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.