

**ALL IN**  
**IN • FOR • FROM**

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# ALL IN

IN • FOR • FROM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

***For whoever would save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for my sake and  
the gospel's will save it. – MARK 8:35***



# IN • FOR • FROM

## MESSAGE FROM OUR LEAD PASTOR

Amy and I recently celebrated our fourth anniversary here in Simpsonville. While we have experienced a lot of change during this time, God has graciously blessed our church with rapid growth even during this time of transition. Today, more than 4,600 believers call this place their home, with about 2,100 attending one of our three campuses every Sunday morning.

I am convinced that we are now entering a 2-year time of unprecedented opportunity for our church. With tens of thousands of new people expected to move into the Upstate over the next ten years, First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church is poised to make an uncommon kingdom impact. We are entering an important season in the life of our church when we must go ALL IN. You're going to hear these two words a lot these next 24-months, as we challenge one another to go ALL IN - IN, FOR, and FROM the Upstate. We are believing for a movement of God, that will require us to invest our lives in the lives of others.

The opportunities to advance God's kingdom through our vision are continuing to expand. The time for apathy and indifference has passed. **We must go "ALL IN."** Imagine this: What could God do with our church if everyone willingly surrendered their will to His for two years?

### CAN YOU IMAGINE:

...if every member of our church was 100% **committed** to our mission and vision?

...**350** new believers baptized in our church in the next two years?

...helping to revitalize three churches in the Upstate through partnerships?

...**more mission work** in Honduras, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, Thailand, and beyond?

...constructing **new homes** for three Upstate families in need?

...launching a **fourth Upstate Church campus** and forming a core group for a fifth?

...investing in the community in practical ways,  
-improving our parks?  
-meeting needs of civil servants (Police & Fire Fighters)?  
-helping our teachers and school administrators?

...partnering to plant 12 new churches in strategic US cities across the United States, like Boston, Denver, Pittsburgh, and Las Vegas?

...sending our **largest missions gift** ever to the International Mission Board (Lottie Moon) and the North American Mission Board (Annie Armstrong)?

### I AM INVITING YOU

to join this journey. Yes, you! I will admit these ideas are only dreams for now, visions of grandeur. These dreams, however, can become a divine reality. I'm convinced that we were made for this! Our church family is uniquely positioned to seize this once in a lifetime missional opportunity. I'm asking you to dream with me, and believe with your church leadership that God can do this work through us. Let's go ALL IN - IN, FOR, & FROM the Upstate.

PASTOR WAYNE







**WHAT IS  
ALL IN ?**

# WHAT IS ALL IN?

ALL IN is a 2-year initiative that will challenge us all to take our next step of commitment in our faith journey. We believe we are at a crossroads, a defining moment in the life of our church.

Since 2016 First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church has seen over 400 new believers baptized. We've received over 1,000 new members. Our average attendance across all campuses has increased by 20% from 1,690 - 2,113. And our multi-site campuses have grown 260% from 121 to 440! What does the future hold? Can we be ALL IN?

## WHAT IS IT GOING TO TAKE FOR US TO BE ALL IN?

We must ALL believe in, serve, and give our lives to this mission like never before.

**OUR #1 GOAL IS 100% PARTICIPATION**

Can you imagine what God could do through 4,600 people who were completely surrendered to Him? What could happen if a fire was lit in our church today, leading every man and woman here to go ALL IN? This is what God is calling us to: an uncommon missional movement that will require a commitment from us all.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

WE BELIEVE

WE SERVE

WE GIVE



# HOW CAN WE GO ALL IN?

## BY BELIEVING

We're asking you to go ALL IN with the vision. Believe with us that God can and will do an uncommon work through us. Make it personal. This is your mission, and this is your opportunity to join God in a work that will change lives for generations to come.

## BY SERVING

We're asking you to go ALL IN with your time and energy. Everyone needs to make a move from observation to participation, from interest to investment. God is calling us to make this mission our top priority in life.

## BY GIVING

We're asking you to go ALL IN with your giving. We invest the *most* in the things that we care about *most*. The question is not, "Can He?" or "Can we?" The question is "WILL WE" go ALL IN?

**We are going to start seeing double, as we think in terms of a 2-year initiative.** Our goals for believing, serving, and giving, will all be 2-year goals.

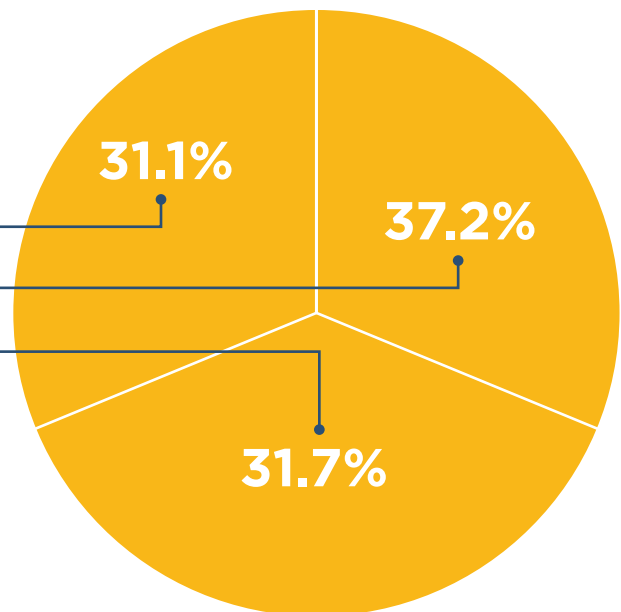
You will hear the term, "One Fund" to describe the total funding system for our ALL IN initiative. This one fund will include all the things we've all grown to love about our church, but it will also move us into a new season of unprecedented missional purpose and future impact.

## 2 YEAR ALL IN GOAL - \$18.3 MILLION

\$5.7 million = Our Current Annual Ministry Needs

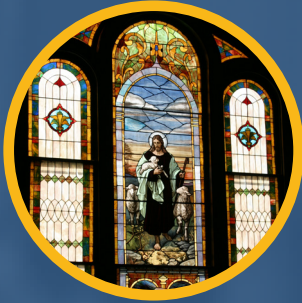
\$6.8 million = Debt Retirement

\$5.8 million = Missions & Mobilization



For the next two years, the mission and ministry of First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church will require a financial investment of \$18.3 million, which will allow us to spread the Gospel IN, FOR, and FROM the Upstate like never before.

# OUR JOURNEY



**1887**

A Sunday School was launched with Brother B.M. Moore as superintendent.

**1889**

Rev. F.H. Martin was called as part-time pastor to Simpsonville Baptist Church.



**1913**

Building began on a new brick building, the Chapel, with the first regular service taking place May 15, 1914.

**1955-1964**

Rev. Howard Wheeler served as pastor.

**1888**

Simpsonville Baptist Church was organized by members of this Sunday School.

**1890**

The wooden framed church house was constructed.

**1922**

The name was changed to First Baptist Church of Simpsonville.

**1964-1978**

Rev. D.B. Webber served as pastor.





**1978-1989**

Rev. Robert Freeland served as pastor.

**1990-1997**

Dr. Ron Grizzle served as pastor.



**1993**

The Child Enrichment Center was established.

**1997**

Constructed the Warren-Hendricks Family Life Center.

**1984**

A new sanctuary was built that would seat 650 people.



**1992**

The Chapel was entered into the National Historic Registry.

**1997-2014**

Randy Harling served as pastor.



# OUR JOURNEY



**2003**

Rebranded to First Baptist Simpsonville.



**2008**

First service held in new Worship Center, seating 1,300 people.

**2016**

West Campus relaunched as Upstate Church Harrison Bridge.

**2018**

Called Dallas Wilson and Dustin Dozier as Campus Pastors of Upstate Church, and renovated the MPAC to serve as our new Upstate Kids Building.

**2006**

United with Trinity Baptist Church as First Baptist Church West Campus.

**2015**

Wayne Bray accepts position as lead pastor.

**2017**

Completed construction of North Building.

**2019**

Launched another Upstate Church campus in the heart of the Five Forks community.





# NOW

We believe God has revealed to the leadership of First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church an intended destination for our church, and we are charting the course He wants us to take in order to arrive at the center of His will - IN the Upstate, FOR the Upstate, and FROM the Upstate.



We truly believe that God is going to use us to radically change the Upstate of South Carolina for His glory. We want to see the hurting healed, brokenness restored, addictions overcome, and marriages and families strengthened.

In a church our size, it's impossible to make everyone happy about every decision. But when a group of people put a shared mission and vision as the top priority, GOD WILL WORK. We want to see the hands and feet of Jesus at work in our community and around the world. We want to connect people with Jesus to change their world. That starts with us.



IN

FOR

FROM



# WE WILL BE...

- Resourcing all the things you already love about your church. This 2-year initiative includes 100% of our regular annual ministry needs, which include missions, family ministry, and much more.
- Seeing 350 new believers baptized in the next 2 years by making evangelism more intentional.
- Investing in the next generation by providing more resources and volunteers than ever before.
- Funding our multi-generational and multi-campus facilities expansion.

- Planning for future Upstate Church campuses.
- Caring for hurting people in our neighborhood.
- Saving lives of unborn babies by providing ultrasound equipment for local pregnancy resource centers.
- Wrapping around the fatherless and vulnerable, by offering adoption scholarships and practical support.
- Establishing missional partnerships with other Upstate churches located in low income areas to help empower and assist them in blessing their communities in Jesus' name.
- Investing in the community by caring for hurting families, improving parks, and supporting our civil servants in creative ways.

- Meeting our 2-year "ALL IN" goal would mean that FBS/UC would give more to the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board than any other time in our church's history.
- Sending 1,000 FBS/UC members on a short-term mission trip by the end of 2021, providing scholarships to those who've never gone before.
- Training future pastors and church leaders by offering scholarships for Bible College and Seminary.
- Developing mission partnerships in the 10/40 window to prevent human trafficking and reach unreached people groups.



# NEXT STEPS

## **PRAY FERVENTLY**

Pray that God would prepare hearts to hear from Him and that our community would approach life ready to go ALL IN.

## **COMMIT FULLY**

Help reach our goal of **100% participation** by doing your part.

## **SHARE BOLDLY**

Share your story and God's faithful work in your life and point others toward living ALL IN for Him.

## **GIVE GENEROUSLY**

Live in a way that stretches you and increases your faith in all areas of your life: spiritually, relationally, and financially.

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Is God really able to accomplish a mission greater than I can imagine (Ephesians 3:20)?

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Am I willing to open my heart and mind to how God is leading me to go ALL IN?

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Do I see my giving as a vital part of my worship? Can I order my financial priorities to better reflect what I really love?

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Does my current involvement as a volunteer and investment as a giver represent the true value I place on my church family?

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Am I willing to make a financial commitment to the ALL IN initiative that requires me to depend completely on God to see it fulfilled?

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Might God be leading me to use my vacation time next year in order to join a mission team on a short-term trip to one of our church planters or international mission partners?

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What assets and resources could I use as a gift beyond my income? Am I willing to take a step of faith by going ALL IN by believing, serving, and giving?

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What areas of ministry do I already feel led to serve in, and will I be willing to take the next step of commitment when given the chance?

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What things can I afford, but am intentionally choosing to live without in order to make the sacrifice God is leading me to make?

# ONE FUND

## ALL IN - ONE FUND

A One Fund really is as simple as it sounds. While continuing to fulfill the financial requirements of our current ministries and aggressively paying down our debt connected to recent facilities improvements, we will also expand our missional impact like never before. This will be accomplished in a unified financial plan that organizes it ALL IN... ONE FUND.

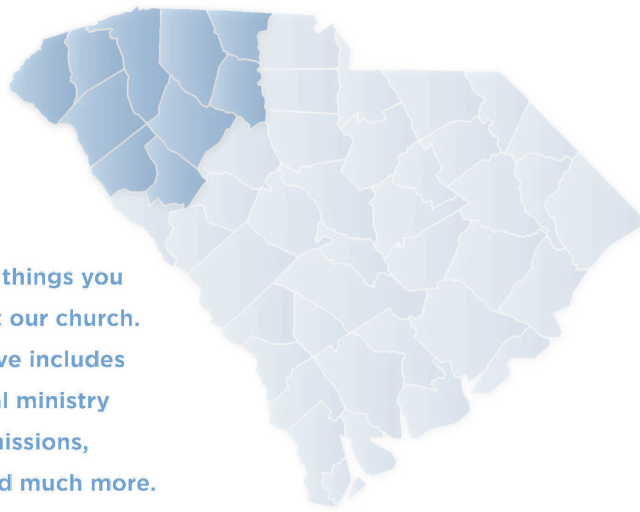
## COMMITMENT CARD

### FIRST BAPTIST SIMPSONVILLE / UPSTATE CHURCH \$18,300,000

(24-MONTH COMMITMENT - ABOVE & BEYOND CURRENT GIVING)

NUMBER OF GIFTS	AMOUNT OF EACH GIFT	TOTALS
1	500,000.00	500,000.00
1	350,000.00	350,000.00
1	250,000.00	250,000.00
15	150,000.00	2,250,000.00
15	100,000.00	1,500,000.00
15	80,000.00	1,200,000.00
15	65,000.00	975,000.00
20	50,000.00	1,000,000.00
95	25,000.00	2,375,000.00
80	20,000.00	1,600,000.00
80	15,000.00	1,200,000.00
200	10,000.00	2,000,000.00
200	7,000.00	1,400,000.00
200	5,000.00	1,000,000.00
200	2,000.00	400,000.00
300	1,000.00	300,000.00
1438		18,300,000.00

# COMMITMENT CARD



Resourcing all the things you  
already love about our church.  
This 2-year initiative includes  
100% of our annual ministry  
needs, including missions,  
family ministry, and much more.

## TWO-YEAR ALL IN COMMITMENT

\$ **\$7,000** My/Our Current Annual Giving  
+ \$ **\$6,000** My/Our Additional Annual Giving For ALL IN  
= \$ **\$13,000** My/Our New Annual Giving  
x 2 Years   
\$ **\$26,000**  
Gift From Stored Resources + \$ **\$5,000**  
My/Our Two-Year ALL IN Commitment  
\$ **\$31,000**

NAME(S) *James Doe*  
ADDRESS *123 Simple Lane*  
*Simpsonville, SC 29681*  
PHONE *864-555-5555*  
EMAIL *James.Doe@email.com*

This financial amount is your commitment to give and can change at any time.  
Your financial gifts and commitments are always kept in complete confidence.

# WHY WE GO ALL IN

## WHY WE BELIEVE

While my wife Jessica has always been strong in her faith, my skepticism has held me back most of my life and kept me at arm's length from Christ. I have recently learned how much not having Christ in my life and a part of me has impacted my relationship with my wife and my family.

I grew up in a broken home and had created an image of what I thought life was supposed to look like. I devoted a lot of my time and effort on work and providing what I thought would be a better life than I had. I now realize that at the same time I had my priorities and purpose in life all wrong.

I had not been the husband that Jessica needed and deserved, and it impacted my family. I began to look for answers on how to find direction and guidance and it was then that I know that God began to reach out to me. The messages I was hearing Pastor Wayne preach in service and then an instance when my 14-year son told me that I needed to ask God for help is when I knew there was something bigger than me and it was calling to me.

As I was leaving church one Sunday and getting into my car, I felt a strong pull to go back into the church and talk to Pastor Wayne. I went back in and introduced myself and asked the pastor to help me find this guidance and help me understand how I can get closer to the Lord to make me the man I need to be for myself and my family.

**Two days later in a coffee shop around the corner from the church I gave my life to Jesus!**

God is working on me so much today. I am learning and growing in my faith and I can't get enough of Him and His word. He is healing my marriage and family and I am really a **NEW MAN!** God has changed my heart and life.

I say all that to say this... You need to understand that your work, your investment of time and resources in this church's ministry are making a HUGE impact on the lives of others.

If you ever stop and doubt if this is a worthy investment, let me put your mind at ease. **God has used the ministry of this church to change my life.**

I want to encourage you to keep doing what you are doing and be willing to do more.

This mission is worth us all GOING ALL IN!



**TIM & JESSICA MCQUEEN**  
**DOWNTOWN CAMPUS**





**ART AND DANIELLE NICHOLS  
HARRISON BRIDGE CAMPUS**

## WHY WE SERVE

We've been members at First Baptist Simpsonville for a little over 10 years now. Our search for a church home ended abruptly the first time we walked into the lobby. We were greeted so warmly and we felt such a strong presence of God in the worship. A lot has changed in that time like new buildings, new services, and new small groups. Still, some things have remained constant. We are connected to an amazing group of people who come together to do life with complete humility and an overt passion for serving others as the hands and feet of Christ in the community. We love the missional focus of our church, and we love how multi-generational the membership is. We've formed some of our strongest friendships and grown so much through this church. We've been challenged to serve in ways that have pushed us out of our comfort zone. Whether it be mission trips, teaching classes, VBS, tithing, or fostering, **we've learned that invariably the servant is blessed far beyond their sacrifice.** For all these things and much more, our family is ALL IN and for that to God be the glory!



**KIPP AND JENNIFER HARVEY  
FIVE FORKS CAMPUS**

## WHY WE GIVE

Jennifer and I were both raised in Christian homes but had been taught differently about tithing. She had been taught to tithe Biblically, which is 10%, while I had been taught to give what I could when I could. When discussing our finances before getting married, it was important to her that we were on the same page in this area. The thought of tithing 10% was scary for me when I looked at the numbers on paper, but Jennifer assured me God would bless our faithfulness and would work it out. **So, I decided to step out on faith and do it, and I'm glad I did.** God has blessed us tremendously. We have always had what we needed when we needed it which is remarkable because we've put two kids through college - and a third one is there now. We believe our financial needs have been met because we tithed even when the budget seemed impossible. We would encourage everyone who doesn't already tithe to step out on faith and watch God do amazing things!

# FAQ

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## ***What are you asking me to do?***

First, make attending worship services a priority for you and your family in order to fully understand what God wants to do in your life. Over the next 5 weeks, we are asking everyone to engage in a Connect Group to provide an opportunity for you to build community and discover how we can be ALL IN together. Our desire is for 100% participation, in other words, everyone being ALL IN . . .

## ***WE ARE CALLED TO BELIEVE***

Believe with us that God can and will do an uncommon work through us. Make it personal by praying and seeking God's leading as you go ALL IN with the vision.

## ***WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE***

Make a commitment to go ALL IN with your time and energy. Believe with us that God can and will do an uncommon work through us. Move from observation to participation.

## ***WE ARE CALLED TO GIVE***

As a church, one of our core values is generosity. We are asking each person to take a step in obedience by giving through faith sacrificially.

Finally, mark your calendar for Commitment Sunday on November 3rd, making plans to be part of this exciting service to celebrate how God is working in and through us, and worship with our ALL IN commitment. We trust that the Lord will direct in how He is calling you, personally, to make a sacrificial commitment.

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## ***What if I am new to First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church?***

If you are new to our church, WELCOME. ALL IN is about moving God's mission forward through our church. We see this as a mission opportunity not an obligation. We would love to help you get to know our church and learn more about that vision and how you and your family can go ALL IN with the mission.

We encourage you to attend one of our Getting to Know You Dinners on select Sunday evenings at our Downtown Campus to learn more about who we are, what we do, and how to connect. This is a great opportunity to get to know members and leaders from all our campuses, ask questions, and let us know about where you are in your journey. Our ministers are always ready and willing to answer questions and/or help you discover ways to get better plugged into our faith family.

We believe if God is calling you to FBS/UC, you will find this mission a worthy investment of your lives. You will desire to go ALL IN.

## ***What will ALL IN accomplish when we meet our goal?***

We truly believe that God will radically change many lives IN the Upstate, FOR the Upstate, and FROM the Upstate. We want to see the hurting healed, brokenness restored, addictions overcome, and marriages and families strengthened through the gospel. Through ALL IN we will be able to see more people serving as volunteers, more than ever before, send more members on short-term mission trips, and invest more money in church planting and international missions than any time in the history of our church. We will also be able to reduce our current debts by more than 65%. Can you imagine the stories that will come, not just now but for the years to come? Let's be ALL IN!

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## ***What is the 'right amount' for me to give, or for us to give as a family?***

Everyone's situation is unique, but we are all called to give. Our challenge, no matter what you currently give, is to take a step forward. Your commitment is a response of worship. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 the Apostle Paul challenges us in that "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." God calls us all to give our best.

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## ***What if I can't afford to give right now?***

ALL IN is about your total, radical, sacrificial generosity to God's mission in and through First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church. We believe that God calls us to give in times of hardship just as much as He does in times of abundance, and what that looks like will be different for every person and family. We trust that God will direct all of us, calling us to surrender our lives completely in the area of giving. We will see that it is not something that He wants FROM us, but something that He wants FOR us.

Sacrificial giving may mean being challenged to sell things, cut back in certain areas of spending, or even to trust God in faith by making a commitment that you don't quite know how to fulfill right now, but that you believe God will provide for. Our goal is 100% participation, as we trust God you will be amazed at His faithfulness.

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For answers to any questions not answered here, email us at [ALLIN@fbsimpsonville.org](mailto:ALLIN@fbsimpsonville.org)

# ALL IN

## MESSAGE GUIDE INTRO

## ACTS 1:8 ESV

*BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU, AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE END OF THE EARTH.*

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During this 5-week journey, how will God speak to you? How do we respond to ALL IN? What can we do together above and beyond our human expectations?

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We invite you to follow along with our Sermon Guide, to take notes, and reflect on each week's teaching. If you miss a week, catch up by watching the campus messages on our website, [fbsimpsonville.org/watch-listen](https://fbsimpsonville.org/watch-listen)

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**CONSIDER** the scripture and the notes.

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Then, **APPLY** what you've read; ask "How does this apply to me and my family in this season of our church?"

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And most importantly, **PRAY** and listen. Be still for a few minutes. It's OK to turn everything off.

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To go deeper each week, we encourage you to plug into a group and participate in the Group Guide section. You can also complete the group guide section as a family or by yourself, if desired. If you have any questions about finding a group, please contact Kathy Robinson, [grouplife@fbsimpsonville.org](mailto:grouplife@fbsimpsonville.org), or stop by the Information Kiosk at any of our campuses to find a group.

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Above all, we encourage you to seek God's face through this process. Enjoy the journey!

# ALL IN WEEK 1 MESSAGE

United in a Movement

**Acts 4:32-35**

In a world that seems to be divided about anything and everything, followers of Christ are called to something different. Unfortunately, that division creeps into the walls of the church and creates unnecessary obstacles to the mission Christ called us to. What if, even amongst our differences, we were all united in a movement to see lives radically changed by the gospel of Jesus?

All the first disciples had were one another. In the face of uncertainty and persecution they were unified on Jesus' final command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). In order to fulfill the words of Jesus they knew they needed to be unified in the mission. They understood that through their fears, doubts, and challenges they were ALL IN for the mission of making disciples.

**Only the gospel produces this kind of \_\_\_\_\_. (32)**

Can you imagine if 4,600 believers were ALL IN?

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**Only the gospel provides a \_\_\_\_\_ worthy of our lives. (33)**

"It's better to lose your life than to waste it." - John Piper

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**Only the gospel produces this kind of \_\_\_\_\_. (34-35)**

**YOU CAN'T BE A PART OF A MOVEMENT WITHOUT A DESIRE TO MOVE.**

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# ALL IN WEEK 2 MESSAGE

Confident in the Mission

**Acts 4:1-22**

Could you imagine being a disciple of Jesus and following Him for nearly three years, then all of a sudden He is arrested, crucified, and ascends into Heaven? As we see in Scripture, the disciples were overwhelmed by fear in what lay ahead. What were their next steps in the mission Jesus commanded them to live out? How would they make disciples in a culture that just killed their Leader?

As the early church ventured into unknown territory, followers were tested in their faith and commitment to Christ. They could have been silent and done nothing. They could have retreated back into their comfortable lives and blended in. Instead, they prayed for great boldness and confidence, the ground shook and the power of the Holy Spirit filled their lives. The effects of that moment have yet to cease. The disciples' willingness to be ALL IN, as they were even after Christ's death, should challenge us to be confident in the mission.

What is holding you back from going ALL IN?

What made Peter and John confident in the mission?

**They knew \_\_\_\_\_. (12)**

Any mission without Jesus at its center is no mission at all.

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**They had \_\_\_\_\_ with Jesus. (13)**

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**They could not be \_\_\_\_\_. (20)**

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**They were \_\_\_\_\_ with the Spirit. (8 & 31)**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES IN US, WHAT WE DON'T ALREADY HAVE,  
IN ORDER TO GO ALL IN.**

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# ALL IN WEEK 3 MESSAGE

Invested in the Mission

**Acts 6:1-7 & 7:51-60**

The book of Acts begins with Jesus' words: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Throughout Acts, we have seen the remarkable movement of the Holy Spirit empowering the early church to fulfill this commission. However, as we look to Acts 6 and 7, we see the investment and ALL IN commitment from one individual. Stephen, the disciple, was a man completely sold out to the vision and mission of God. Even as stones crashed into him, he saw into heaven and was compelled to choose Christ as more desirable than even life itself. Are we willing to lay our life down for the mission of Christ?

Are we more a fan of Jesus, or are we truly a follower?

## ARE YOU A FAN OR A FOLLOWER?

A Fan is "an enthusiastic admirer. It's the guy who goes to the football game with no shirt and a painted chest. He sits in the stands and cheers for his team, but he's never in the game. He never breaks a sweat or takes a hard hit in the open field. He yells and cheers, but nothing is really required of him." (Kyle Idleman)

Read Luke 9:23. What does Jesus say it means to be a true follower?

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"When Christ calls a man, He bids Him come and die." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### 3 Questions Every Follower Should Ask:

**Am I willing to \_\_\_\_\_? (6:1-7)**

**Am I willing to do the \_\_\_\_\_? (7:51-53)**

**Am I willing to \_\_\_\_\_? (7:54-60)**

After hearing the story of Stephen and reading the three examples Jesus gives in Luke 9:57-62, which most represents your investment in the mission?

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# ALL IN WEEK 4 MESSAGE

Transformed by the Gospel

**Acts 9:1-19**

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.” (Romans 1:16) These are some of the most familiar words in all of the Bible. By them we are reminded that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most powerful message ever spoken. With the force of a category five hurricane or a massive explosion, the gospel has the power to change everything it comes into contact with. We see this in real time as we read the account of Saul’s conversion in Acts 9. A man who zealously killed and persecuted Christians comes into contact with Christ and everything is changed. Now that’s power. That’s the power we need as Christians and as a church. That’s the power we find when we go ALL IN.

Reading Philippians 3:1-11, what do we learn about Saul before he encountered Jesus?

**The gospel is the \_\_\_\_\_.**

We never keep good news to ourselves. So, if we’re not sharing the gospel it’s a good sign we don’t consider it good news at all.

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**The gospel can \_\_\_\_\_ anyone.**

Unlikely does not mean unreachable.

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**The gospel is the \_\_\_\_\_ for every believer.**

The good news is more than yesterday’s spiritual headline. It’s today’s lifeline.

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**THE GOSPEL IS MORE ABOUT LIFE TRANSFORMATION  
THAN BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION.**

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# ALL IN WEEK 5 MESSAGE

Transformed for the Mission

**Acts 9 & 13**

Imagine the tension in the air when Saul, the man who used to kill Christians, is now the man standing in the pulpit preaching Christ. That's almost unbelievable. However, Christians know that with God what was unbelievable yesterday becomes reality tomorrow. After Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, he spent the rest of his life telling people about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through Paul's example we begin to realize that the gospel is not just the message that saves us but the mission we live for! In other words, whenever someone is *called* out by Christ they are also *sent* out for Christ. Pouring yourself out for Jesus is the definition of what it means to be ALL IN!

**WE'RE NOT JUST SAVED FROM A MESS;  
WE'RE SAVED FOR A MISSION.**

## **Called Out (Acts 9)**

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1 Peter 2:9b - He has "called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

## **Sent Out (Acts 13)**

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Reading Luke 10:1-2 makes it clear: God is raising up a people for His mission. That includes you!  
How are you being sent out?

## **Poured Out (2 Timothy 4:6-8)**

"Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." - C.T. Studd

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**ARE YOU POURING IT ALL OUT, OR ARE YOU LEAVING IT IN THE CUP?**

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Lined area for writing or notes, consisting of 20 horizontal blue lines.



# CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

# ACTS BACKGROUND



With a flick of the fingers, friction occurs and a spark leaps from match to tinder. A small flame burns the edges and grows, fueled by wood and air. Heat builds, and soon the kindling is licked by orange-red tongues. Higher and wider it spreads, consuming the wood. The flame has become a fire.

Over 2,000 years ago, a match was struck in Palestine. At first, just a few in that corner of the world were touched and warmed; but the fire spread beyond Jerusalem and Judea out to the world and to all people. Acts provides an eyewitness account of the flame and fire - the birth and spread of the church. Beginning in Jerusalem with a small group of disciples, the message traveled across the Roman Empire. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, this courageous band preached, taught, healed, and demonstrated love in synagogues, schools, homes, marketplaces, and courtrooms, and on streets, hills, ships and desert roads - wherever God sent them, lives and history were changed.

Written by Luke as a sequel to his Gospel, Acts is an accurate historical record of the early church. But Acts is also a theological book, with lessons and living examples of the work of the Holy Spirit, church relationships and organization, the implications of grace, and the law of love. And Acts is an apologetic work, building a strong case for the validity of Christ's claims and promises.

The book of Acts begins with the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit and the commencement of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Spirit-inspired evangelism began in Jerusalem and eventually spread to Rome, covering most of the Roman Empire. The gospel first went to the Jews; but they, as a nation, rejected it. A remnant of Jews, of course gladly received the Good News. But the continual rejection of the gospel by the vast majority of the Jews led to the ever-increasing proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. This was according to Jesus' plan: the gospel was to go from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (1:8). This, in fact, is the pattern that the Acts narrative follows. The glorious proclamation began in Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), went to Judea and Samaria (chapter 8 and following), and to the countries beyond Judea (11:19;13:4 and on to the end of Acts). The second half of Acts is focused primarily on Paul's missionary journeys to many countries north of the Mediterranean Sea. He, with his companions, took the gospel first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Some of the Jews believed, and many of the Gentiles received the Good News with joy. New churches were started, and new believers began to grow in the Christian life.

As you read Acts, put yourself in the place of the disciples - feel with them as they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and thrill with them as they see thousands respond to the gospel message. Sense their commitment as they give every ounce of talent and treasure to Christ. And as you read, watch the Spirit-led boldness of these first-century believers, who through suffering and in the face of death take every opportunity to tell of their crucified and risen Lord. Then decide to be a 21st century version of those men and women of God and be ALL IN.

-Taken from Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. and Zondervan.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Imagine what God would do if over 4,600 people across 3 campuses were ALL IN to our mission to help people in the Upstate connect with Jesus to change their world???*

For the next 5 weeks we will dive into the book of Acts and see what it looked like for ordinary people, from all walks of life, to be ALL IN to spreading and living out the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sunday morning messages on all campuses – Downtown, Five Forks, and Harrison Bridge - will be hearing the same message, delivered by their campus pastor. Additionally, Connect Groups on all campuses will be going through the same curriculum from the book of Acts. Please contact Kathy Robinson, [grouplife@fbsimpsonville.org](mailto:grouplife@fbsimpsonville.org), if you have any questions about finding a group or stop by the Information Kiosk at any of our campuses to find a group.

We are all at different places in our walk with God and our engagement in our church mission. No matter where you are now, let this time in Acts be used by God to guide you to taking your next step. There's no doubt the Holy Spirit did, and will still do, amazing things through believers who obediently put His mission above themselves.

To be 'ALL IN' is first and foremost an attitude that says:

- **I am part of a mission that is bigger than I am and therefore I put my own preferences aside and consider how I can be a more integral part of the mission God has given our church.**
- **How can I use my time, talent, and treasure to further reach the Upstate with the message of Christ's love?**

## OUR CORE VALUES

- Dependency
- Authenticity
- Multiplication
- Multi-Generational
- Generosity
- Humility
- Community

### PRACTICALLY, BEING 'ALL IN' LOOKS LIKE THIS:

- Attending worship on a weekly basis
- Connecting in a small group
- Giving as God has given to me
- Actively engaging in at least one ministry of the church or our community
- Sharing my faith by developing relationships with my 'neighbors'
- Allowing our Core Values to influence my thinking and guide my behavior

During the ALL IN series, in your Connect Groups we will explore the lives of six individuals from the book of Acts in order to demonstrate how their faith in God motivated them to take the next step in their spiritual walk. When they took that step.... Family and friends noticed and were greatly influenced to become Christ-followers as well and the gospel began to spread "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Each lesson has a distinctive format and similar questions for reflection. Each lesson will contain the **Main Point, Introduction, Understanding the Text, Personal Application, and a Prayer.**

The individuals we will be studying include: Lydia, Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquila, Cornelius, and Philip. Once they connected with Jesus through hearing the gospel, they responded to it and influenced the lives of others to do the same. The messages delivered each week during morning worship will correspond with the group curriculum, but will focus on a different character. The chart below outlines the schedule of topics for Sunday messages and Connect Group studies.

Date	Topic	Connect Group Study	Study Verses
Oct 6	United in a Movement	Lydia	Acts. 16:11-15 and vs. 40
Oct 13	Confident in the Mission	Barnabas	Acts 4:36-37, 9:26-31, 11:19-25
Oct 20	Invested in the Mission	Priscilla / Aquila	Acts 18:1-28
Oct 27	Transformed by the Gospel	Cornelius	Acts 10:1-48
Nov 3	Transformed for the Mission	Philip	Acts 8:1-40

# ARE YOU READY TO GO ALL IN?

# ALL IN WEEK 1 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## WEEK 1: UNITED IN A MOVEMENT

**TODAY'S CHARACTER: LYDIA • SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: ACTS 16: 11-15, 40**

### MAIN POINT

As Christ followers we're called to be unified around His mission.

### INTRODUCTION

**Were you raised in a Christian family or did you come to faith by some other influence?**

**When did the Lord first open your heart to saving faith?**

**Do you believe the faith you have influences other people?**

**Do you believe the faith you have affects your life purpose?**

Each of us has our own individual story in the journey of faith, but every believer in Christ shares the same testimony. Jesus is Lord! Regardless of how you come to faith, when the Lord opens your heart it should spill over into the lives of everyone who knows you. It should also change what drives you. Lydia was a woman who exemplified this truth.

### UNDERSTANDING

Let's unpack this biblical text in the Book of Acts to discover what the Scripture says (and means) about responding to the gospel message. Paul received a vision which prompted him to go to Macedonia to evangelize there. (Acts 16:9-10).

*READ ACTS 16: 11-15, 40*

**What qualities and characteristics do you notice about Lydia from these verses?**

Lydia came from Thyatira in the Roman province of Asia. Thyatira was located in a region of Asia called Lydia. Quite possibly, Lydia was not the woman's given name but the name by which she was known in Philippi. Thyatira was noted for cloth dyed purple with a dye manufactured from the root of the madder plant, which was native to the Lydian region. This 'royal' purple dye was reserved for finery, and Lydia was probably a businesswoman of some means. Luke identifies Lydia as one "who worshiped God." This term was used of Gentiles who attended the Jewish synagogue and believed in the one true God. Many of them, like Lydia (and Cornelius in Acts 10), became Christ-followers. (Converts were first called Christians in the city of Antioch).



**How did Lydia express her desire to know the one true God?**

**What do verses 14-15 reveal about our role in sharing the gospel with our families?**

**How does this truth influence the way you think about your role as a spiritual influence in your family or home? What is your responsibility? What role does God play?**

As Paul preached to the women about Jesus, Lydia responded to his message. The wording of verse 14 is important for our understanding of Christian witnessing. We are not responsible for the faith of our children or others in our families (or friends, for that matter). We are responsible only for giving a faithful witness to the gospel. No doubt Lydia also shared the gospel with her family by telling them of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as she heard from Paul.

**According to verse 15, what was the first thing Lydia did after her family was saved and baptized? What moved Lydia from being a 'worshiper of God' to joining Paul and Silas in the mission? What united Lydia, Paul, and Silas?**

Paul and Silas were thrown in jail and then miraculously released. Afterward, the city officials told the two men to leave the city. Before leaving, Paul and Silas stopped by Lydia's house, where the church had gathered.

**From verse 40, what can you also infer about Lydia's newfound faith, how it impacted her life, and her relationship to the church?**

**How did Lydia's actions impact the spreading of the gospel?**

**What demonstrated that Lydia was 'ALL IN'?**

**What could it have looked like if Lydia wasn't fully committed to the mission once she was saved?**

**What could be the impact if 'the full number' of our church members were 'ALL IN' with the mission of our church?**

**APPLICATION**

What truths from this story in Acts apply directly to your life?

**Would you say that people in your life know that you follow Jesus Christ? Why or Why not?**

**How does the gospel message change what is most important to you?**

**What evidence is there in the past year that you are growing in your relationship with Christ?**

**Are you 'ALL IN' with our church's mission? What's the difference between church activity and being part of a mission that's bigger than you are?**

**What next step is God prompting you to take toward being more engaged in our church's mission? Check any or all that may apply.**

- ☐ Membership
- ☐ Baptism
- ☐ Regular Giving
- ☐ Sacrificial Giving
- ☐ Bible Study Group
- ☐ Serving with Children/Students
- ☐ Mentoring Someone/Being Mentored
- ☐ Host Team
- ☐ Prayer Ministry
- ☐ Seasonal Projects/Local Missions
- ☐ Women's/Men's Ministry
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER**

Thank God for opening your heart to the truth of His Word and drawing you to Him. Thank God for allowing you to be a part of a mission that is bigger than you are. Ask Him to show you each day how you can live out that mission in order to impact the lives of those you encounter for His glory. Pray that our group would also be united to each other in such a way that we would rejoice and grieve with one another and encourage each other in the journey of faith.

# ALL IN WEEK 2 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## WEEK 2: CONFIDENT IN THE MISSION

**TODAY'S CHARACTER: BARNABAS • SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: ACTS 4:36-37, 9:26-31, 11:19-25**

### MAIN POINT

The Holy Spirit empowers our desire and ability to boldly pursue God's mission for our church.

### INTRODUCTION

**Describe the boldest thing someone you know has done. Why was it a bold move? What did it accomplish? How did your opinion of that person change after he/she exhibited boldness? Do you consider yourself a bold person? What's the boldest thing you've ever done for God? How would you describe your relationship with Him at that time?**

### UNDERSTANDING

Let's unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about the life of Barnabas.

*READ ACTS 4:36-37*

**What prompted Barnabas to donate the proceeds of his land sale to the apostles? (See also Acts 2:44-45).**

**How does this 'speak boldly' for Christ and His mission?**

It's important to note that Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:1-4, was the filling of the Holy Spirit which prompted the actions of the believers that we read about in the following passage.

*READ ACTS 9:26-27*

**Why did the Jerusalem Christians fear Paul? How do you think you would have reacted to Paul if you had been there?**

The Jerusalem believers' fear of Paul was understandable. He had been present at Stephen's death and had sought to arrest Christians. In fact, when he later gave his testimony, he described how he had imprisoned many Jesus followers and voted for the death sentence for others (Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-10). If Paul was only pretending to act like a disciple, he could've destroyed the church.

**Why was Barnabas willing to stand up for Paul? What was Barnabas risking by doing so?**

# ALL IN WEEK 2 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

**Who has taken a risk on you? Who gave you your first opportunity to serve Jesus? What was the result?**

Apparently Barnabas saw evidence of God's work in Paul's life and recognized Paul as a true disciple and brother in the Lord. Consequently, Barnabas demonstrated his bold faith when he took Paul to the apostles. By endorsing Paul, Barnabas risked his reputation and his life.

**How would things have been different if Barnabas hadn't been there to stand up for Paul?**

**How do you think Barnabas' commitment to the Great Commission drove his willingness to take a risk on Paul?**

**When do we need to take risks either to include others in community or to lead them to greater devotion or service in Christ? What impact would more Barnabas-like boldness have on our community and on the mission God calls us to?**

*READ ACTS 9:28-31*

As a result of Barnabas' defense, the apostles accepted Paul into their fellowship, and they opened doors of opportunity for him to minister and spread the gospel in Jerusalem.

**How were Paul's and Barnabas' acts of boldness similar? How were they different?**

**Barnabas means 'son of encouragement.' How did he encourage Paul and the disciples?**

**Read Acts 9:31 again. What was happening in the church during this time? What or Who was the church growth attributed to? What would it take for this to occur in our community?**

Acts 9:31 ends the account of Paul's conversion. With that watershed event, the early persecution of Christians also ended. The church experienced peace, the Spirit's encouragement, and numerical growth.

*READ ACTS 11:19-23*

Prior to Paul's conversion believers in Jesus scattered to other parts of the empire, as far away as Cyprus and Antioch for fear of persecution. They spoke to the Jews only and many of them believed and turned to the Lord. When the news of these events reached the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

# ALL IN WEEK 2 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

**What does Barnabas' willingness to go to Antioch tell us about his commitment to the mission? How did Barnabas use his gift of encouragement for these new believers?**

**What were the effects of his sharing the gospel message?**

**Not only was Barnabas a "good man," but how else is he described? What do you think that had to do with the impact of his efforts?**

## **APPLICATION**

Let's identify how the truths from these Scripture passages apply directly to our lives.

**Why do you think God values risk? What do we communicate to God when we take risks, like both Barnabas and Paul, to make His name known?**

**If we are not demonstrating boldness in our faith, what should we ask ourselves?**

**What barriers keep us from being "ALL IN" with the mission?**

**How can we be more filled with (or yielded to) the Holy Spirit and bolder in our involvement in the mission?**

**What could it look like for you?**

**How can we encourage each other 'with purpose of heart' to take advantage of opportunities in our church to boldly pursue the mission?**

## **PRAYER**

Ask God for the courage to take risks and a greater awareness of the need to be dependent on the Holy Spirit as we carry out His mission. Ask Him for opportunities to encourage one another in the gifts, talents and time God has given them.

# ALL IN WEEK 3 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## WEEK 3: INVESTED IN THE MISSION

**TODAY'S CHARACTER: PRISCILLA & AQUILA • SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: ACTS 18:1-4, 18:18-20, 24-28**

### MAIN POINT

God gives us opportunities, skills, and resources to serve and invest in others to fulfill the mission He calls us to as a church. We're called to be 'followers' of Christ, not 'fans.'

### INTRODUCTION

**Why do you think God designed the work of gospel ministry to be a shared responsibility among Christians?**

**What benefit comes from working with others to advance the gospel?**

**What was the most difficult thing God has called you to do? Did you do it? Why or why not? What made it difficult?**

We recognize the big name folks in the New Testament, but there are so many others whose names we may or may not remember. These men and women are no less significant and represent to us a picture of gospel partnership and friendship among the early church. Paul met many of these people in his daily life and they became much needed partners in his ministry. God designed us as interdependent parts of one body, functioning together for one goal.

**UNDERSTANDING**

Let's unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about this particular topic.

*READ ACTS 18:1-4*

**Why do you think Luke included this reference to Paul's staying with Aquila and Priscilla and working with them as a tentmaker? What do we learn about Paul's ministry approach from these details?**

**What do we know about Priscilla and Aquila from these verses? Why had they left Italy?**

Paul's tentmaker job was a means to an end for him to travel and spread the gospel message. During this time in Corinth, Paul's primary means of earning a living was not vocational ministry. Rather, he shared the gospel in the midst of his day-to-day life and work.

*READ ACTS 18:18-20, 24-25; 1 COR 16:19*

**What does the fact that Aquila and Priscilla left Corinth and traveled to Ephesus with Paul suggest about the relationship he had built with this couple?**

**What do we learn about Apollos from verses 24-25? What lessons can we learn from Priscilla and Aquila's investment in Apollos' life? What key truths about Jesus would have been included in their teaching?**

**How did Priscilla and Aquila serve in Ephesus?**

Apollos was an eloquent speaker and a cultured, learned man. As a Jew, he was well-versed in the Old Testament. By word of mouth, Apollos learned about Jesus' life and work. Apollos knew only of John the Baptist's baptism and didn't know that Jesus was the Messiah. This is where Priscilla and Aquila, married believers who spent time with Paul, intervened (v. 26). This husband and wife team listened to Apollos' teaching. They understood the complete message of Christianity, and they recognized Apollos' limited knowledge. Apollos knew the importance of repenting of sin, but he didn't yet know about the second step of believing in Jesus Christ. Priscilla and Aquila filled in the gaps—including Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection—and perhaps what had transpired since His resurrection.

# ALL IN WEEK 3 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

*READ ROMANS 16:3-5 AND 2 TIMOTHY 4:19*

**What else do we learn about the willingness of Priscilla and Aquila to invest in the mission? Would you say they were willing to lay it all down? (Romans 16:3)**

*(These believers must have meant a lot to Paul to include them in his most important missionary letter and the last piece he ever wrote.)*

## APPLICATION

How do these truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives?

**Who has invested in your faith like Priscilla and Aquila invested in Paul, Apollos, and others?**

**If you are married, how can you invest in someone or disciple another couple together as a family?**

**If you are single, who can you partner with to share the gospel message?**

**What other ways can you be more of a 'follower' rather than a 'fan' when it comes to investing in the mission of our church?**

## PRAYER

Praise God for the ability to invest in others with our time and resources. Ask God to plant in us a desire to be an effective gospel witness and a godly example for others in the faith, and to be willing to do the 'hard things' in service to one another and the mission He has called us to.



# ALL IN WEEK 4 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## WEEK 4: TRANSFORMED BY THE MISSION

**TODAY'S CHARACTER: CORNELIUS (AND PETER) • SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: ACTS 10:1-48**

### MAIN POINT

The gospel changes us and motivates us to take the gospel message into cross-cultural settings, especially in our community.

### INTRODUCTION

**What tempts people to be prejudiced (e.g. race, economic status, gender, age, etc.)?**

**How do you relate to people from different religions and races? Is this something Christians are known for doing well or poorly?**

**Have you been on the receiving end of prejudicial judgments? How did it make you feel? Did it motivate or demotivate you to treat people differently than you were treated?**

Throughout history, God has been building a people for Himself from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people. The gospel is a message that crosses all of these boundaries and brings people together under Jesus. Our love for God and for others should motivate us to take the gospel into cross-cultural settings.

### UNDERSTANDING

Let's unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about this particular topic.

*READ ACTS 10:1-8*

**Who was Cornelius? What do we learn about him from the opening 2 verses? How is he different from Peter? How are they alike?**

*Read Hebrews 11:6*

**How did Cornelius model this verse? What happened as a result?**

**How does Cornelius respond to the angel? How do you imagine he must have felt?**

# ALL IN WEEK 4 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

Cornelius was a devout, respectful, giving, and praying man. Though not a Jew, he was a worshiper of God. A centurion would have commanded around 600 soldiers, and would have been paid very well. Cornelius was a prominent man socially and financially. The angel appears to him at the ninth hour or about 3 p.m., which was the traditional Jewish hour for prayer. Although Cornelius was a God-fearer and extremely devout, he was not saved—delivered from his sins through faith in Christ. Cornelius' prayers and acts of charity prompted God's further revelation to him through Peter (5-6), which would lead to his and his family's salvation.

*READ ACTS 10:9-16*

**Describe Peter's vision in your own words. What did the vision mean? Why was Peter so concerned about what he ate?**

**Can you think of a modern-day parallel in our Christian faith to the Jewish food restrictions? What would it be like if God suddenly reversed that practice?**

**What does it tell us about God that He gave both Cornelius and Peter visions?**

Peter had observed the dietary law and restrictions of Leviticus 11 for his entire life. Though Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:17-23), some habits are harder to shake than others. The vision from the Lord dramatically altered Peter's perspective. Although Peter had walked with Christ and was instrumental in the early spread of Christianity, he was still operating under a list of rules he'd carried over from Judaism. We all have patterns and practices we have carried over from our life before Christ, Peter was no different. God used the vision to teach Peter and prepare him for the opportunity to share God's love with Cornelius.

*READ ACTS 10:17-33*

**How did Peter respond to the vision that he received? How does God use the vision and Peter's confusion for His glory?**

**What motivated Peter to cross the racial and religious divide between himself and Cornelius?**

**Why is it significant that Cornelius had gathered his whole family to hear what Peter had to say? How do these verses show God's divine prerogatives and Peter's obedience working together?**

A change in mind-set leads to a change in actions. That is exactly what we see in Peter's life. In order to meet with Cornelius, Peter had to cross lines that were previously set in religious stone. To first-century Jews, Gentiles were considered "unclean," and many Jews considered it against their religion to eat with Gentiles. When he entered Cornelius' house, Peter said God had sent him and stressed the truth he had learned: He was not to consider anyone common or unclean (24-28).

# ALL IN WEEK 4 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

*READ ACTS 10:34-48*

**When Peter said, “God doesn’t show favoritism” (34), how do you think Cornelius and his household responded? What might they have been thinking or feeling?**

**What do we learn about Jesus through this passage? What do we learn about how God’s message spreads through nations?**

With the words, “God doesn’t show favoritism,” Peter shared a radical truth: Salvation is available to all people from all nations through Jesus Christ. This was an uncomfortable truth in Peter’s day. We can’t even begin to fathom the worldview shift first-century Jews faced when they realized God’s grace was available to all. Faith in Jesus transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries and identities. The truth of the gospel changes people.

## **APPLICATION**

How do these truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives.

**Do you identify more with Cornelius or Peter in this story?**

**Are there any habits or patterns from your life before Christ that you need to let go of for the sake of the Kingdom?**

**Have any assumptions or misconceptions ever kept you from sharing the gospel with someone? How does this story challenge the judgments we make about those outside the kingdom?**

**If we really believe that the gospel can change anyone, what are some practical ways you can reach out to people who are different from you? What is keeping you from taking these steps? Why are these important in achieving our mission?**

## **PRAYER**

Thank God that He has made the gospel available to people from every tribe, language, and people. Pray that the gospel would continue to change us and we wouldn’t be stuck in old beliefs that hinder us from spreading the gospel and loving others.

# ALL IN WEEK 5 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## WEEK 5: TRANSFORMED FOR THE MISSION

**TODAY'S CHARACTER: PHILIP THE EVANGELIST • SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: ACTS 8:1-40**

### MAIN POINT

It is the job of every believer to faithfully do the work of the Great Commission and sow seeds wherever God allows, whatever the cost.

### INTRODUCTION

**What has been your favorite experience sharing the gospel? What has been your least favorite?**

**If we're commanded to tell the story of Jesus to others, why do we often avoid the task?**

**What do we learn about God from His desire to be known and to use us to make His name known?**

Like a farmer who scatters seeds on a plot of land, we sow the seeds of the gospel into the field of the world. Sometimes the seeds we plant take root and bear fruit, but it is the job of every believer to faithfully do the work of the Great Commission and sow seeds wherever God allows, even when it requires us to give up something we see as 'good.'

# ALL IN WEEK 5 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## UNDERSTANDING

Let's unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about today's story of Philip.

*READ ACTS 8:1-4*

**What happened to the church in the event of Stephen's execution? What effect do you think this had on the early believers? Where did they go to escape the persecution?**

*READ ACTS 1:8*

**What is the connection between Jesus' command and the events of Acts 8:1-4?**

**According to verse 4, what effect did the persecution and scattering of the early church have on the believers' faith? What can we learn from their example?**

Events surrounding Stephen's testimony and murder led to severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem. The disciples were likely scared and feared for their lives, but God used their distress for the cause of the gospel. All believers, except the apostles, were scattered to nearby regions. Stephen's death became a catalyst for the spread of the gospel to places it had never gone before.

*READ ACTS 8:5-8*

**Why were the Samaritans attentive to Philip? What actions did he perform? How did these acts validate his ministry?**

**What was the result of Philip's faithfulness? How could the Lord use you, if you went outside your comfort zone to share the gospel?**

Popular opinion held that Samaritans were second-class citizens, a mixed race of Jews and foreigners who inhabited the land after the Assyrian conquest (2 Kings 17:24), and who were unclean and unfit for worship in the temple. Their "uncleanness" was thought to be passed through physical contact, so most Jews avoided them entirely. Philip's faithfulness resulted in gospel fruit and indicated that old biases had no place in Christianity, which is something Jesus Himself modeled. Philip's performing these acts gave evidence that early believers were continuing their Lord's ministry and validated believers' work as Christ's work.

# ALL IN WEEK 5 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

## *READ ACTS 8:9-25*

Refer to verses 9-13

**What do you learn about Simon the Magician? How does he respond to Philip's message?**

**How does the church in Jerusalem respond to the news of the gospel spreading to Samaria? Why is it important that the established church sent people to evaluate God's work in a new place?**

**How did Simon respond to the apostles? What does this teach you about the genuineness of his belief?**

The real benefit of the gospel is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Simon the Magician did not see it that way. Rather, he was impressed by the power and signs done by Philip and the apostles and sought to acquire this blessing by financial means. We should not be dissuaded from continuing to share as the apostles themselves continued to do on their way out of Samaria (25).

## *READ ACTS 8:26-35*

**How would you describe Philip's response to the Spirit's directive? What does this tell us about him?**

**What do we learn about the Ethiopian man in verses 27-28? How did Philip take advantage of this special situation?**

**What might have happened if Philip was unprepared to talk about Scripture or unfamiliar with the Isaiah prophecy? What does this tell us about the connection between personal discipleship and missions?**

Philip was a faithful man. When God called him to serve the church in Acts 6:5, he obeyed. He responded with the same quick obedience in 8:26 as he left his successful ministry in Samaria at the angel's instruction. As a result, the Lord used Philip powerfully in the life of the Ethiopian man. Providentially, Philip found the man reading a passage of Scripture that very clearly referred to Jesus. Philip was able to use this passage of Scripture to explain the gospel to the Ethiopian man. Philip's faithfulness and attention to discipleship gave the Lord an avenue to work through Him to reach someone who was far from Christ. Notice how Philip was an unlikely preacher/evangelist, as he was initially chosen as one of the 7 organizers of food distribution in the early church. Through Philip's obedience, he was used to spread the gospel in another part of the world.

# ALL IN WEEK 5 CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

*READ ACTS 8:36-40*

**What did the man's question in verse 36 convey? How does this reflect a changed heart? How does verse 40 teach us about Philip's continued faithfulness?**

## **APPLICATION**

How do the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives?

**What places in Scripture might you turn to teach another person about the gospel? Have you considered memorizing these passages?**

**Consider the example of Philip. How might the Lord be calling you to leave something comfortable or 'good' to be used by Him in a new and powerful way?**

**What is standing in your way? What next step of obedience can you take?**

**What would it look like for you to be 'ALL IN' with the mission God has given our church?**

## **PRAYER**

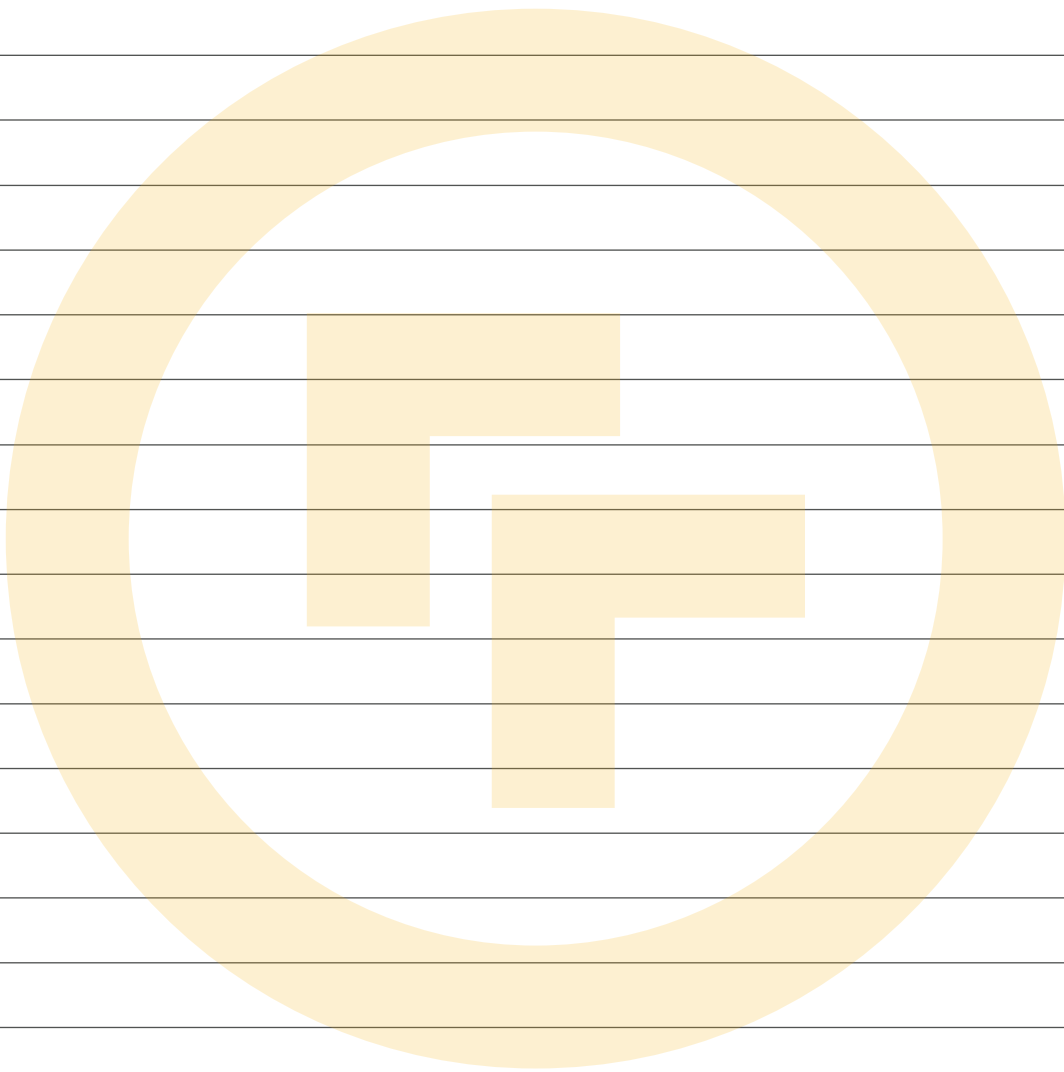
Pray that God would use all the circumstances in your life to share His gospel and be about His mission, for His glory. Ask Him to show you where to take the next step in obedience, even if it may be uncomfortable or cost you something, like Philip did.





# NOTES

ALL IN







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