

# Gospel Priorities

First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield  
2025 January Sermon Series Study Guide

SERMON SERIES DATES	PASSAGE	GOSPEL PRIORITIES
Week One 1/5/2025	Acts 7:59-8:8	Transformation
Week Two 1/12/2025	Exodus 18:1-27	Effective Biblical Leadership
Week Three 1/19/2025	1 Corinthians 3:1-9	Multiplication
Week Four 1/26/2025	Revelation 7:9-17	Global Movement

## Week One: Transformation

### OPENING

- Choose one question: A.) When you hear the word "transformation", what pictures or responses pop into your thoughts? No angle is off the table! B.) Have you ever seen a transformation take place in another person? What was your reaction to this transformation?
- Read the passage aloud, taking turns, one verse each.

### STUDY

- Acts 7:59 lands us smack into a challenging situation! Who is doing what to whom and why? (Check back to 7:56-9)
- Who is observing this take place? What do we know about this young person from this passage (7:58-8:8) only.
- What do you think this young observer saw? (7:59-60)
- NOTE: We would like to think that scenes of this sort no longer take place. In truth, there are several countries where such scenes take place today in mass public settings. What is your reaction to this information? If you wish to learn more about public punishment of Christians, go to [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) (Voice of the Martyrs), or [www.opendoors.org](http://www.opendoors.org) (Open Doors International).
- From 8:1-4, what impact does persecution have on this new faith movement of Jesus-followers?
- When Phillip goes to preach in Samaria, how do the crowds respond and why?
- In reviewing the whole passage from 7:59 - 8:8, where do you see transformation taking place? Who is transformed? From what to what? What initiates or triggers the transformations?

### APPLICATION

- How have you experienced transformation yourself? How has your experience reflected what is described in this passage? How has it been different?
- What would you say about being transformed to someone who has not had that experience?
- Go around the group and share verses you know and treasure which speak of Christian transformation, turning them into prayers as you read them.

### Acts 7:59-8:8 (NIV)

*7:59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

*8:1 And Saul approved of their killing him.*

*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.*

*4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.*

## Week Two: Effective Biblical Leadership

### OPENING

- Have you ever been in a leadership role in any setting? What was the most important lesson you learned from it?
- Read the passage aloud, taking turns around the group. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but if some prefer not to for any reason, don't insist.

### STUDY

- What is Jethro's family relationship to Moses and what do we learn about it from v 1-7? Why do you think Moses tells Jethro about all the Lord had done through him (Moses)? How does Moses' account affect Jethro? (v 9-11).
- What is the importance of Jethro bringing a burnt offering and sacrifices? How are these foreigners (Moses and his people) receiving Jethro and his people?
- Describe the scene in v 13-16. What is Moses doing and why? How is Jethro's advice to Moses different to what Moses was already doing? How is he trying to help Moses?
- Why do you think Moses responds as he does in v24? How might another leader have reacted differently?
- How does Jethro's advice put Bible principles into practice? In what other settings (Biblical and/or non-biblical) do we see Jethro's advice in action?
- As you consider this account, how do you see God at work, a) through Jethro? b) through Moses? Have you ever had counsel from a Jethro? How were you helped? Have you ever tried to give someone else advice as Jethro does? What worked? What didn't work?

### Exodus 18:1-27 (NIV)

*18 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.*

*2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her 3 and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have become a foreigner in a foreign land"; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."*

*5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God. 6 Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."*

*7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them.*

*9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.*

*13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"*

*15 Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."*

*17 Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. 21 But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."*

*24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. 25 He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 26 They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.*

*27 Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.*

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## Week Three: Multiplication

### OPENING

- Tell about a person who either led you to the Lord or helped you grow in your faith.
- Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.

### STUDY

- What are the problems the author (the Apostle Paul) is calling out in the Corinthian congregation in verses 1-4? What are some of the words he uses to describe the people?
- The word “worldly” is mentioned 3xs here. How would you describe a “worldly Christian”?
- Are there ways in which you still struggle with worldly temptations, thoughts, actions, habits? Can a Christian struggle and still be a Spirit-led follower of Christ? Why or why not?
- In verses 5-9, how does Paul describe Apollos and himself— their roles, actions, and attitudes?
- How does he describe the Corinthians in verse 9 and why do you think he uses those images?
- What do you think is the “one purpose” mentioned in verse 8?
- What is God’s role in the whole process of spiritual growth and maturity according to Paul? How could this knowledge help bring humility and unity to these immature Corinthian Christians?
- How can you trust God to grow you in mature faith in this new year, especially in some of your deepest struggles and temptations?
- How can you help others grow and mature in faith this year (planting, watering, etc...). Who is one person you could invest in? How and when will you do it? Pray for them now!

### 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 (NIV)

*1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?*

*5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.*

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## Week Four: Global Movement

### OPENING

- What is the largest crowd in which you've been a part and what was it like for you?
- Read Revelation 7:9-17 aloud. What is the setting of this chapter?

### STUDY

- Looking just at verses 9-12, describe the scene? What do you find most interesting about the scene? What do you think it would feel like to be a part of that crowd of people?
- How are the angels different from the multitude? How are they similar?
- What do we learn about God from what the people and the angels are saying about Him?
- Now focusing on verses 13-17, What more do we learn about the multitude— who are they?
- Contrast what they have been through and what they are doing now.
- What images does the elder use to describe how God will honor the white-robed multitude and take care of them? What more does this reveal about who God is?
- How does this peek into heaven help us see the breadth and depth of God's kingdom on earth today? How should that affect how we live and move through our own spheres of influence?
- Spend some time in worship now, just as the multitude and the angels do in this passage. Standing, kneeling, waving might all be appropriate!!! ;)

### Revelation 7:9-17(NIV)

*9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”*

*11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:*

*“Amen!  
Praise and glory  
and wisdom and thanks and honor  
and power and strength  
be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen!”*

*13 Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”*

*14 I answered, “Sir, you know.”*

*And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore,*

*“they are before the throne of God  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne  
will shelter them with his presence.*

*16 ‘Never again will they hunger;  
never again will they thirst.  
The sun will not beat down on them,  
nor any scorching heat.*

*17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne  
will be their shepherd;  
‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’  
‘And God will wipe away every tear from their  
eyes.’ ”*