



# Start Here!

SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

NASHVILLE  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

2026



# 10 Strategic Initiatives

- HUB OF PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL
- CULTIVATING VIBRANT CREATIVE COMMUNITY
- ACTIVATING OUR DEACONS  
FOR CONNECTION AND SUPPORT
- DEEP DISCIPLESHIP AND BIBLICALLY  
FOCUSED GROWTH
- ENHANCING OUR TEAM TO CARRY  
THE VISION FOR NASHVILLE
- COLLEGE AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY
- FAITH AND WORK MINISTRY
- CITY ENGAGEMENT
- GLOBAL MISSIONS
- RADICAL GENEROSITY



## **OUR VISION:**

We exist to help connect Jesus to people,  
people to community, and community to mission.

# Two-Year (2024-2026) Strategic Initiatives for “Revive”

Our two-year strategic ministry plan is built around a vision for spiritual renewal, deep discipleship, and community transformation. A deeply revived city requires a deeply revived church, simply a collection of deeply revived people. It starts with each of us turning and returning our entire selves to God and asking him to make us whole.

*In 2026, we are continuing to emphasize:*

- **Developing a Culture of Prayer:** *Prayer is the foundation of spiritual awakening.*
- **Building a College and Young Adult Ministry:** *We are passionate about reaching the next generation.*
- **Engaging the City:** *Our vision is to see Nashville transformed by the gospel.*
- **Equipping Our Deacons for Future Development:** *To better serve our church and city.*
- **Staffing for the Future:** *We want to ensure our staff is equipped and aligned with the church's vision and strategy.*



# Start Here!

# 2026



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## Introduction, Timeline Summary

So many people want to know God. They want to grow in their faith. They want to pray, read the Bible with understanding, grasp the gospel, discover purpose, join a church family, and live on mission. But for many, the question stays the same. Where do I start?

As we begin a new year and prepare to step into a new Sunday morning rhythm on February 1, we are returning to the basics of discipleship. We're looking for a refresher course on the core aspects of what it means to follow Jesus. Here's an introduction to the steady, life-giving practices that every Christian needs, not once in a lifetime, but every single day.

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being formed by Jesus, and joins Jesus on mission. Another way to say it is personal and straightforward. A disciple is someone who is learning to hear, trust, and obey the voice of God in every area of life. That journey does not belong only to new believers. It is the lifelong path of the church. We all begin again here.

For the next six weeks, we will walk through the foundations of the Christian life. We will talk about hearing God speak, praying with expectation, opening His Word, belonging to His people, putting Jesus first, and helping others follow Him. These weeks are meant to strengthen long-time believers, steady weary hearts, and give clarity to anyone who is curious or starting over.

If you want to grow, begin here. If you want to know God, *Start Here*. If you want a fresh beginning, this is it.

## Leader and Member Note

This guide is not meant to replace the sermon. It is meant to open God's Word and open our lives so that Scripture can shape who we are becoming. *Open Bible. Open Life.*

For this season, we are asking all Connect Groups to use our Sermon Series guide in their teaching and discussions. It is a critical time for our church as we move to add service, open volunteer opportunities, and reinvigorate our church.

# 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

## Summary

As we step into a new year, we continue our emphasis on Revive. We are asking God to make us a deeply revived people, so that we might be a deeply revived church that catalyzes revival in Nashville and the ends of the Earth.

*21 Days of Prayer* is an invitation for the church to come together with intentionality, seeking God's presence and direction as we begin a new season. It's not just about checking a box or completing a spiritual task—it's about aligning our hearts with His, surrendering our plans, and trusting Him to work in and through us. Over these 21 days, we focus on praying for renewal in our lives, our church, and our city, believing that prayer isn't just preparation for the work—it is the work. Together, we enter this time expectant, knowing that when we seek God earnestly, He moves powerfully.

## A Model of How You Can Pray

There is no formula for your participation, but here is one suggestion for how to operate during this time. Consider prioritizing the first 5-15 minutes of your day for the corresponding daily prayer emphasis below.

For structuring the time, you can consider walking through the following posture:

- **Adoring** God for who He is and how He loves to hear us and give good gifts to us (Matthew 7:7-11)
- **Remembering** tangible moments in the past where God has demonstrated faithfulness and kindness to us (Psalm 9:1)
- **Thanking** God for what He has done, growing our confidence that He can do it again (Psalm 136:1).
- **Asking** God boldly to give us what we want and need in accordance with His will (Mark 11:24).





*Here you find a 21 Day Prayer Emphasis that aligns with our church's 10 Year Vision and 10 Strategic Emphases:*

## **DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF PRAYER**

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### **DAY 1: DEPENDENCE OVER SELF-RELIANCE**

**Scripture:** John 15:5

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to put to death our self-reliance and make us a people who depend entirely on His power and provision.

### **DAY 2: A PRAYING CHURCH**

**Scripture:** Psalm 5:12

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to continue to raise up a Boiler Room prayer team who will intercede for our church and city.

### **DAY 3: A PRAYER ROOM FOR NASHVILLE**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 56:7

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to make Nashville First a joyful house of prayer where people in our city can meet with Him.

## **BUILDING A COLLEGE AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY**

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### **DAY 4: LOVE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**

**Scripture:** Psalm 145:4

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to cultivate deep affection in our church for students and young adults.

### **DAY 5: WISDOM FOR CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT**

**Scripture:** James 1:5

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to give us wisdom as we build a strategic vision to reach students on Nashville's campuses.

## **ENGAGING THE CITY**

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### **DAY 6: JOY IN THE CITY**

**Scripture:** Acts 8:8

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to make our presence in Nashville redemptive so that the joy

of the Lord increases throughout our neighborhoods.

### **DAY 7: REFUGE FOR THE VULNERABLE**

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:40

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to make our church a refuge for the hurting, the overlooked, and the least of these.

### **EQUIPPING OUR DEACONS FOR FUTURE MINISTRY**

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#### **DAY 8: RAISE UP SERVANT LEADERS**

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:4–8

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to raise up leaders who embody humility, service, and gospel courage.

#### **DAY 9: STRENGTHEN DEACON MINISTRY**

**Scripture:** Acts 6:6

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to empower our deacons for transformative ministry in our church and city.

### **STAFFING FOR THE FUTURE**

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#### **DAY 10: A UNIFIED, SPIRIT-EMPOWERED STAFF**

**Scripture:** Philippians 1:27

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to

strengthen our staff as one team, striving side by side for the gospel.

#### **DAY 11: A HEALTHY STAFF COMMUNITY**

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:1

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to help our staff model Christlike community for the whole church.

### **CULTIVATING A CREATIVE AND WORSHIPING COMMUNITY**

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#### **DAY 12: AWE AND WONDER**

**Scripture:** Psalm 104:24

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to renew awe and wonder at His beauty, creativity, and holiness.

#### **DAY 13: CREATIVITY FOR GOOD WORKS**

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:10

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to help us reflect His creativity through our daily lives and acts of obedience.

### **DEEP DISCIPLESHIP AND BIBLICAL GROWTH**

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#### **DAY 14: A CHURCH OF DISCIPLE MAKERS**

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:18–20

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to help us shape our lives around making disciples of Jesus.



# 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

## **DAY 15: GOSPEL OPPORTUNITIES**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:20

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to open doors for gospel conversations with friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family.

## **FAITH AND WORK MINISTRY**

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### **DAY 16: FAITHFULNESS IN DAILY WORK**

**Scripture:** Colossians 3:23–24

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to help us work for His glory and the good of Nashville.

### **DAY 17: A CHURCH THAT EQUIPS WORKERS**

**Scripture:** Psalm 128:1–2

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to equip and empower His people to integrate faith with work for the flourishing of our city.

## **RADICAL GENEROSITY**

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### **DAY 18: A GENEROUS PEOPLE**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 8:9

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to make us a people whose generosity reflects the generosity of Jesus.

### **DAY 19: AN OUTPOURING OF GOD'S FAVOR**

**Scripture:** Malachi 3:10

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to pour out His blessing as we obey Him with open hands and open hearts.

## **GLOBAL MISSIONS**

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### **DAY 20: EYES FOR THE NATIONS IN NASHVILLE**

**Scripture:** Psalm 67:3–4

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to open our eyes to the nations He has brought to our city and give us a heart to reach them.

### **DAY 21: BLESS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS**

**Scripture:** Acts 1:8

**Prayer Focus:** Ask God to strengthen and expand our global mission partnerships.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*— Philippians 4:6–7*

# HEAR, TRUST, OBEY

1 Samuel 3

## OPENING THE WORD TOGETHER

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Our lives are full of voices. Think about sitting in a crowded coffee shop or a loud concert. There is noise everywhere, yet somehow you are able to hear the person sitting across from you. Parents know this instinct well. In a park full of people, a mother or father can hear their child call out immediately. Somehow, that voice cuts through all the others.

We learn to hear certain voices because we give them our attention. We know how to focus on what matters most. Hearing God can sometimes feel difficult, even frustrating, as though we are searching for something hidden. But Scripture teaches us that hearing God is not like searching for something lost. God wants to be heard. He speaks clearly and truthfully to His people.

As we begin a new year together, we open God's Word and listen.

**Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10 aloud together.**

## BIG IDEA & WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

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*Discipleship begins with a listening heart. We cannot follow a God we cannot hear.*

The story of Samuel begins with a striking sentence. “The word of the Lord was rare in those days.” God had not stopped existing. God had not stopped caring. But His voice was no longer shaping the life of His people.

Samuel was serving in the house of the Lord, yet he did not yet recognize the Lord's voice. That detail should encourage us. Hearing God does not come naturally. It is learned. It is cultivated. It grows through humility, attentiveness, and practice.

Samuel's simple prayer becomes the foundation of discipleship for every generation. "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." God speaks first. We respond. He initiates. We obey.

As we begin a new year and a new season as a church, we are not starting with activity or ambition. We are starting here. We are remembering, and some of us perhaps learning for the first time, how to hear, trust, and obey the voice of God.

## OPEN BIBLE: WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS TEXT?

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*Keep your Bible open as you consider these questions together.*

**1. Verse 1 tells us that "the word of the Lord was rare."**

What does that suggest about the spiritual condition of God's people at this time?

**2. Samuel hears a voice but does not recognize it at first.**

What stands out to you about the fact that Samuel mistakes God's voice for Eli's?

**3. Notice Eli's role in the story.**

How does God use community, even a flawed leader, to help Samuel learn how to listen?

What do you notice about Samuel's posture in verse 10 when he finally recognizes the Lord's voice?

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## WHY MIGHT GOD WANT US TO HEAR THIS?

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Why do you think God begins Samuel's calling not with action, but with listening? What might this say about how God desires to work in the lives of His people?

## OPEN LIFE: WHERE IS THIS TOUCHING OUR LIVES?

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*Hearing God did not come easily to Samuel. It often does not come easily to us either.*

1. **How would you describe your experience of hearing God right now?**  
Does it feel familiar, confusing, distant, or intimidating?
2. **What voices tend to be the loudest in your life?**  
What makes it difficult to slow down and listen?
3. **Samuel's posture before God is one of humility and availability.**  
What might that posture look like for you in this season of life?
4. **Are there areas where you are quick to act but slow to listen?**  
What do you notice about that pattern?

## HEAR. TRUST. OBEY. CARRYING THE WORD INTO THE WEEK

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*Take a moment to write down your responses. These are meant to be carried with you and shared when appropriate.*

**Hear:** What is one thing you sense God saying to you through this passage or conversation?

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**Trust:** What truth about God are you choosing to believe or hold onto more clearly this week?

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**Obey:** What is one simple, concrete step of obedience you will carry into the week ahead?

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Hearing God leads us to trust Him. Trusting God leads us to obey Him.

## CLOSING

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The story of Samuel does not end with this moment. His life becomes a testimony to a God who speaks and a servant who listens. Scripture tells us that none of God's words fell to the ground.

The same God still speaks today. He speaks most clearly through His Word. He has spoken finally and fully through His Son, Jesus Christ. One of the reasons Jesus went to the cross was to restore our hearing, so that we might know the voice of the Father again.

As we begin this journey together, may we grow into people who hear God's voice, trust His character, and obey His Word.

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JANUARY 11

# PRAY LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Matthew 6:5–13

## OPENING THE WORD TOGETHER

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Most of us want prayer to feel natural. We want it to be meaningful. We want to be the kind of people who pray instinctively, the way a child runs to a parent, or the way a friend calls a friend. But if we are honest, prayer can feel awkward. Sometimes it feels shallow. Sometimes it feels like silence. Sometimes our minds wander so quickly that we are not sure whether we prayed at all.

This week is not meant to shame anyone. It is meant to wake us up. Jesus is inviting us into something real.

This Sunday, we launch our *21 Days of Prayer*, and soon we'll have *Break the Soil*. We are stepping into a focused, church wide season of asking God to do what only God can do. When a church starts praying, it is not simply becoming more religious. It is becoming more alive.

**Read Matthew 6:5–10 aloud together.**

## BIG IDEA & WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

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*Prayer is not a performance, and it is not a last resort. Prayer is the daily, personal, powerful way God draws His children near and releases His kingdom into our lives.*

Jesus teaches us to pray by giving us two foundations. He teaches us (1) who we are praying to, and (2) what we are praying for.

First, He says, “Our Father in heaven.” Prayer begins with a relationship. We are not negotiating with a reluctant God. We are coming to a Father who knows us, sees us, and loves us. Through Jesus, God has adopted us as sons and daughters. We come based on grace, not on the basis of our spiritual performance. This is why prayer can be honest. This is why prayer can be frequent and simple.



Second, Jesus teaches us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Prayer is not only asking for help. Prayer is joining God in His purposes. God is sovereign, and His will is perfect. Yet in His wisdom, He has chosen prayer as a primary means by which His will is carried out on earth. Prayer is not convincing God to care. Prayer is stepping into what God already cares about and asking Him to do it here.

A praying church becomes a powerful church. Not because we become impressive, but because we become dependent. Not because we manipulate outcomes, but because we draw near to the Father and learn to want what heaven wants.

## OPEN BIBLE: WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS TEXT?

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*Keep your Bible open as you consider these questions together.*

### 1. In verses 5 and 6, what does Jesus warn us about when it comes to prayer?

Jesus describes prayer that is shaped by being seen. What does Jesus assume is wrong with praying for visibility, approval, or reputation?

What do you notice about the phrase “your Father who sees in secret”?

### 2. In verses 7 and 8, what does Jesus correct about prayer?

Jesus warns against empty phrases and many words. He says the Father knows what we need before we ask.

How does that change the emotional tone of prayer? What does it suggest about God’s posture toward us?

### 3. In verse 9, why does Jesus begin with “Our Father”?

Talk about what it means to pray as a child, not as a performer.

For a deeper dive... This is where adoption language is helpful. See

Romans 8:15-16 and Galatians 4:4-7. Through Christ we receive the Spirit of adoption and can cry out to God as Father.

**4. In verse 10, what is the focus of Jesus’ prayer?**

Notice that Jesus teaches us to start with God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will.

Why might that order matter? How does it shape the kind of people we become?

For a deeper dive... A useful definition of prayer emerges here.

Prayer is aligning our hearts with God’s will and asking for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. See 1 John 5:14-15.

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**WHY MIGHT GOD WANT US TO HEAR THIS?**

Many people avoid prayer because they feel like they are doing it wrong. Others avoid prayer because they are not sure it makes a difference. Jesus addresses both problems. He shows us that prayer is not a performance, and prayer is not pointless.

What do you think Jesus is trying to rescue us from, and what do you think He is trying to give us?

**OPEN LIFE: WHERE IS THIS TOUCHING OUR LIVES?**

*Keep your Bible open as you discuss.*

**1. When you think about your current prayer life, what word best describes it?**

You might say steady, sporadic, distracted, dry, anxious, guilty, honest, or growing.

## 2. Which of Jesus' warnings is most relevant for you right now?

Do you drift toward performative prayer, where you feel spiritual pressure? Or do you drift toward powerless prayer, where you feel like words do not matter?

## 3. Do you tend to relate to God as primarily useful or primarily beautiful?

This question is uncomfortable, but it is clarifying. If God is mainly useful, prayer becomes a transaction. If God is beautiful, prayer becomes communion.

What would it look like for your prayer life to be less agenda-driven and more relationship-driven?

## 4. Where do you need to ask for God's kingdom to come right now?

Think in categories.

- In your own heart, where do you need God's will to be done?
- In your home, what needs God's grace and peace?
- In our church, what needs renewal and courage?
- In our city, where do we long to see God's goodness and salvation?

This is part of why we are launching *Break the Soil*. We are not trying to fill a calendar. We are trying to cultivate a posture. We are putting ourselves in a place where God can do what we cannot do.

## HEAR. TRUST. OBEY.

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*Write your responses as clearly as you can. These are meant to be remembered and shared.*

**Hear:** What is one thing you sense God saying to you through Matthew 6:5–10?

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**Trust:** What truth about God are you choosing to believe this week?

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You may want to use Jesus' language, naming phrases such as: God is Father. God sees in secret. God knows what we need. God is worthy of worship. God's kingdom is real. God's will is good.

**Obey:** What is one specific step of obedience you will take in prayer this week?

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Make it concrete. Choose a time, a place, and a plan you can actually follow.

## **PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: PRAY SIMPLY AND PERSISTENTLY**

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Set aside a short daily window for prayer. Ten minutes is enough to begin. Prayer grows through practice.

Start each day by praying the first part of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) slowly. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name ... Your kingdom come ... Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Choose one area of your life and ask for God's will to be done there.

As a church, we are stepping into *21 Days of Prayer* together. That means you are praying alone. We are aligning our hearts. We are

learning to pray in secret and in unity with one another. We are asking God to break the soil, awaken hunger, and bring fresh spiritual life among us.

Prayer is not the work we do to prepare for the real work.  
Prayer is the real work.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# BREAK THE SOIL

## PREVIEW & REGISTRATION INFORMATION

### JANUARY 23-24

**Break The Soil - Break The Soil is a 24-hour prayer meeting.** This intensive season of prayer is built on Hosea 10:12, "Sow for yourselves righteousness and reap steadfast love; break up the unplowed ground of your hearts. It is time to seek the Lord until he comes and sends righteousness on you like the rain." Practically, this will be a 24-hour prayer meeting with moments of fellowship and worship.

We'll gather for a series of 50-minute prayer meetings. Each meeting will have a host who will bring a Scripture, encouragement, and lead the house in prayer. The final 10 minutes of each hour will allow for a natural break and for people to come and go from the meeting. Refreshments will be available throughout the event.



*Here's a preview of what the event will look like...*

### FRIDAY JANUARY 23

Noon -12:50 p.m./Guided prayer meeting

1-1:50 p.m./Guided prayer meeting

2-2:50 p.m./Guided prayer meeting

3-3:50 p.m./Guided prayer meeting

4-4:40p.m./Guided prayer meeting

5-5:50 p.m./ Praise + Worship; Word and Ministry (open to Broadway)

6-6:50 p.m./Refreshments and fellowship (open to Broadway)

7-7:50 p.m. /Praise + Worship; Word and Ministry (open to Broadway)

8-8:50 p.m./Prayer walking and evangelism on Broadway

9-9:50 p.m./Encouraging praise reports, refreshment and fellowship

10-10:50 p.m./Guided prayer meeting

11-11:50 p.m. /Light meal served, doors locked for the night

### SATURDAY JANUARY 24

Midnight-12:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting, doors remain locked

1-1:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting, doors remain locked

2-2:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting, doors remain locked

3-3:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting, doors remain locked

4-4:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting, doors remain locked

5-5:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting

6-6:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting

7-7:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting

8-8:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting

9-9:50 a.m./Prayer walking in the city

10-10:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting

11-11:50 a.m./Guided prayer meeting

You're welcome to come to as many sessions as you'd like but you must register. Register via form by scanning QR Code.

**Hospitality:** you're welcome to bring refreshments to share for the hospitality table.

**PLEASE REGISTER**



# READ THE BIBLE

*Deuteronomy 30:11-21*

## OPENING THE WORD TOGETHER

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Most of us live with a contradiction.

We say the Bible is important. We believe it is God's Word. We want God to guide our lives. And yet many of us live on a spiritual diet that is thin, occasional, and inconsistent. We are surrounded by information, but we are starving for wisdom. We have endless voices competing for our attention, and very little that truly steadies the soul. This week is not about guilt. It is about life.

Moses was speaking to the people of Israel at the end of his life. Deuteronomy is his farewell sermon. He has poured out his heart for them, and now he brings everything to a point. He does not treat God's Word as decoration. He treats it as a lifeline. Two ways to live and two destinations in the end. Life or death. Getting into the Word and getting the Word into us is vitally important.

**Read Deuteronomy 30:11–21 aloud together.**

## BIG IDEA & WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

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*We read the Bible because God has spoken, because His Word is near, and because it leads us to life in Him.*

Moses begins by saying something that surprises many people. God has not hidden what we need to know. His Word is not too hard, not too far, not out of reach. It is not locked away in the sky, as if only the spiritual elite can reach it. It is not buried beyond the sea, as if ordinary people cannot understand it. God has made His Word near. He has given it to be heard, believed, and lived.

Then Moses speaks with urgency. He presents two paths to the people. One is life and blessing. The other is death and destruction. This is not melodrama. This is spiritual reality. The way we relate to God's Word shapes the direction of our lives.

As we begin a new year together, this week becomes a fresh starting place. A new beginning we choose to make. Not because we are trying to earn God's love, but because we want to know the God who has already loved us. Not because reading is a religious assignment, but because God has given us a voice to hear. He has given us a story to live in. He has given us a Savior to know.

The Bible is not mainly a book of inspirational sayings. It is God's revelation of Himself, and it is meant to lead us to love Him, hold fast to Him, and walk with Him.

## OPEN BIBLE: WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS TEXT?

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*Keep your Bible open as you consider these questions together.*

**1. In verses 11 to 14, what does Moses want us to believe about the accessibility of God's Word?**

Notice the repeated phrases. It is not too hard. It is not far off. It is not in heaven. It is not beyond the sea. The Word is near.

What do those phrases suggest about God's heart toward His people?

**2. In verses 15 to 18, Moses describes two directions a life can go.**

What are the two paths he sets before the people, and what is the difference between them?

Pay attention to the language of the heart in verse 17. What happens when the heart turns away?

**3. In verses 19 to 20, Moses calls the people to "choose life."**

What does choosing life look like according to this passage?

Notice how Moses describes it in several layers. He speaks of loving the Lord, obeying His voice, and holding fast to Him.

For a deeper dive... In verse 20, Moses says something stunning.

He says, "He is your life." What do you think Moses means when he says that the Lord Himself is our life?

## WHY MIGHT GOD WANT US TO HEAR THIS?

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Why would God go out of His way to tell His people that His Word is near, clear, and within reach? What do you think God is trying to protect us from, and what is He trying to give us?

## OPEN LIFE: WHERE IS THIS TOUCHING OUR LIVES?

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Many Christians do not reject the Bible. They neglect it. That is often more subtle and more dangerous.

### 1. When you think about your current relationship with the Bible, what best describes it?

Is it steady and life-giving, occasional and rushed, intimidating and confusing, or distant and neglected?

### 2. What are the most common reasons the Bible gets pushed to the margins for you?

Is it busyness, distraction, discouragement, not knowing where to start, or the sense that you will not understand it?

### 3. Moses says the Word is near so that we can do it.

What is one area of life right now that feels unstable, pressured, or vulnerable?

How might God be inviting you to anchor that area of life in His Word?

### 4. Moses moves from God's Word to God Himself.

He calls the people to love the Lord, obey His voice, and hold fast to Him.

What might it look like for you this week to read the Bible less as a duty and more as a way of drawing near to the Lord Himself?

## HEAR. TRUST. OBEY.

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*Take a moment to write down your responses. These are meant to be carried with you and shared when appropriate.*

**Hear:** What is one thing you sense God saying to you through Deuteronomy 30:11–21?

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**Trust:** What truth about God are you choosing to believe more clearly this week?

You may want to use the language of the text. God has not hidden His Word. God brings His Word near. God sets life before His people. God Himself is our life.

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**Obey:** What is one simple step of obedience you will take this week? Make it small enough to do, and specific enough to measure.

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## CLOSING

God gives His Word so that we might live. But Moses also shows us that the goal is not merely information and not mere rule-keeping. The goal is communion. Loving the Lord. Obeying His voice. Holding fast to Him. Discovering that He Himself is our life.

This is why we read the Bible. Not to earn God's love, but because God has spoken His love. Not to climb our way up to Him, but because He has come near. Not to master a book, but to be shaped by the voice of our Shepherd.

As we continue this *Start Here* journey, we want to become a church with open Bibles and open lives. We want the Word of God to be near us, in our mouths and in our hearts, so that we might follow Jesus with faith, clarity, and joy.

For this week, begin simply. Choose a time. Open your Bible. Ask God for help. Read slowly. And come back to this prayer. "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

JANUARY 25

# ALL IN

*Acts 2:42-47*

## OPENING THE WORD TOGETHER

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Next Sunday is February 1, and we launch our new rhythms as a church. That means this week is a threshold moment. It is a discipleship moment.

Acts 2 shows us what happens when the Holy Spirit fills a people and forms a church. It is not hype. It is not chaos. It is not a religious club with better music. It is a whole new way of life centered on Jesus.

And here is the key: Jesus loves His church. Jesus builds His church. Jesus serves His church. If we want to follow Jesus, we cannot remain spectators of what He loves. We go all in.

**Read Acts 2:42-47 aloud together.**

## BIG IDEA & WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

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*A Spirit-filled church is a devoted church, and devoted Christians become active members, not occasional attenders.*

In Acts 2, the early believers did not treat church like an event. They devoted themselves. That word carries the idea of steady, ongoing, habitual commitment. Like breathing. Like a way of life.

As we prepare to step into new rhythms on February 1, this week is an invitation to resolve something simple and strong: *I will not date the church. I will belong to the church. I will serve in the church. I will join the mission of the church.*

We get there by seeing what Jesus believed about the church. Jesus did not treat the church as optional. He called it His body, His bride, His household, His people. He gave His life to purchase it, and He gives His Spirit to empower it. That means serving the church is not volunteerism. It is love.



## OPEN BIBLE: WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS TEXT?

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*Keep your Bible open as you consider these questions together.*

### 1. What are the four devotions in verse 42?

“Apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers.”  
Why do you think these four are listed together? What do they produce in a church?

### 2. What words in this passage communicate intensity and consistency?

“Devoted. Day by day. Together. Glad and generous hearts.” What does that say about the “normal” Christian life in Acts?

### 3. What fruit shows up in verses 43–47?

“Awe. Generosity. Shared life. Worship. Favor with outsiders. Growth in salvation.” Which of those results feels most needed in our church right now, as we prepare for February 1?

### 4. What do you notice about the rhythm of “in the temple” and “in their homes” (verse 46)?

“Gathered worship” and “shared life” can be very different things. There is public devotion and there is personal community. What does it mean to be “all in” and how do we respond to God in public and at home?

## WHY MIGHT GOD WANT US TO HEAR THIS?

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Many Christians have been discipled into a consumer posture. We attend when it fits. We receive when it helps. We disengage when it costs. We treat church like content instead of a covenant.

Acts 2 shows something different. It shows a people who had been served by Jesus, so they began to serve one another. It shows a people who had been forgiven, so they became generous. It shows a people who had been adopted, so they became a family.

Jesus did not die to create religious spectators. He died to create a people.

## OPEN LIFE: WHERE IS THIS TOUCHING OUR LIVES?

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*Keep your Bible open as you consider these questions together.*

**1. Where are you tempted to be a spectator rather than a participant?**

In worship. In relationships. In giving. In serving. In prayer. In mission. Name one area where your discipleship would deepen if you moved from attendance to devotion.

**2. What does “devoted” look like in your actual week?**

Not in theory. In practice. Time, habits, priorities. What would you need to change to be present enough for real church life?

**3. Do you have a clear place where you are known and needed?**

Acts 2 is full of “together” language. A Spirit-filled church produces fellowship, real partnership. If you are not known, you are vulnerable. If you are not needed, you will drift.

**4. Where could you serve in a way that looks like Jesus?**

Jesus came not to be served but to serve. Serving is how love becomes visible. Serving is also how the church becomes strong for mission. The goal is to form disciples who look like Jesus.

## HEAR. TRUST. OBEY.

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*Every week, we’re engaging in a conversational relationship with God by getting practical about what we’ve encountered in the text.*

**Hear:** What is one sentence from Acts 2:42–47 you feel the Spirit pressing on you right now?

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**Trust:** What is one truth you need to believe about Jesus and His church? Examples: Jesus loves His church. Jesus serves His people. Jesus meets us in community. Jesus grows His church.

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**Obey:** What is one clear “all in” step you will take before February 1?

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## PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

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*Before February 1, let's commit to these three steps:*

**1. Show Up**

Be present for worship and for community. Devotion requires proximity.

**2. Join In**

Choose one place where you are known, cared for, and accountable.

**3. Serve Out**

Choose one concrete way to carry the service of Jesus into the life of the body.

As we launch new rhythms, the win is not that we schedule better. The win is that we become a united and committed people. A Spirit-filled church is not built on hype. It is built on devotion. Devotion grows when we remember this: Jesus has gone “all in” for us.

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# NEW WEEKLY RHYTHMS FEBRUARY 1:

Strengthening Our Sundays & Wednesdays

## SUNDAYS

- **8:30 a.m. – Worship Gathering**  
Worship with choir, orchestra, and organ.
- **9:30 a.m. – Connect Groups**  
Current Groups strengthened, new groups added + New Member Course A dedicated hour for formation, belonging, and biblical growth. Connect Groups will meet across the campus for “Open Bible & Open Life” discipleship.
- **10:30 a.m. – Coffee & Connections (Broadway Corner)**  
A warm space for conversation, hospitality, and welcoming guests.
- **11 a.m. – Worship Gathering**  
Worship with a band and a team of vocalists (with in-house simulcast available in the Broadway Chapel)

**Sunday morning is more simple and effective:**

**Worship (or serve) → Connect Groups → Worship (or serve)**

**Both services share the:**

- Same preacher, same sermon
- Same ministry team
- Same vision
- Same unity and mission

**This builds continuity and connection as one church family.**

### Find Out More:

As more details are announced and information for how to sign up for Wednesday Night groups, New Connect Groups, etc. becomes available it will be posted online at: [NashvilleFirst.org/New-Rhythms](https://NashvilleFirst.org/New-Rhythms).

## WEDNESDAYS

- **First Wednesday**  
Prayer Gathering.
- **Other Wednesdays**  
Discipleship seminars, leadership development, and committee meetings.
- **Kids and Students:** Weekly discipleship.
- **Rehearsals:** Choir, Band, and Orchestra gather for fellowship and practice.

**One night. One mission. One direction.**

**Everyone can worship. Everyone can serve. Everyone can belong.**

We need every member engaged as we take this next step.

- Choir, Orchestra, Band & Worship Team
- Tech Team (audio, video, lighting)
- Children's Ministry (Sundays or Wednesdays)
- Youth Ministry
- Hospitality / Welcome Team
- Join a Connect Group
- Lead a Connect Group (we need 4 new leaders/groups!)

If you are interested in serving, please scan the QR code for our online form. You can select one of the items on the list or write in under the "other" tab. A minister or staff member will contact you for follow up.



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

*Colossians 1:15–20*

### OPENING THE WORD TOGETHER

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Every new season needs a clear beginning.

As we step into new rhythms as a church, we are not ultimately focused on schedules, structures, or strategies. We are starting with a Person. Paul writes Colossians to a church under pressure. They are faithful, but distracted. Jesus is being subtly repositioned. Not denied. Just supplemented. One voice among many. One option among others.

So Paul begins where discipleship always begins: with a vision of Jesus that reorders everything. Before Paul tells them what to do, he tells them who Jesus is.

**Read Colossians 1:15–20 aloud together, slowly.**

### BIG IDEA & WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

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*Discipleship begins when Jesus is restored to His rightful place.*

Jesus is not first on a list. Not part of life. Jesus is before all things. Paul's concern is not that the Colossians stopped believing in Jesus. It's that they stopped seeing Him clearly. When Jesus is diminished, everything else gets distorted:

- Faith becomes fragmented
- Obedience becomes selective
- Community becomes optional
- Mission becomes exhausting

But when Jesus is *preeminent*, clarity returns. This is why we begin here. New rhythms only work if they orbit the right center.



## OPEN BIBLE: WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS TEXT?

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*Keep your Bibles open as you discuss.*

### 1. What claims does Paul make about Jesus in verses 15–17?

List them plainly.

Which of these stretches or steadies your understanding of Jesus the most?

### 2. What does “firstborn” mean in this passage?

How does this correct the idea that Jesus is simply one spiritual option among many?

### 3. What changes in verses 18–20?

Notice the shift from creation to new creation.

Why is it important that Jesus is Lord not only of the universe, but of the church?

### 4. What words repeat that emphasize totality?

All things. Everything. Fullness. All. What areas of life are we most tempted to exclude from Jesus’ “all things” claim?

## WHY MIGHT GOD WANT US TO HEAR THIS?

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The Colossians were tempted to:

- Add spiritual supplements
- Fear unseen powers
- Lean on rules from God instead of a relationship with God
- Treat Jesus as necessary, but not sufficient

We face similar pressures:

- A faith that fits neatly into busy lives
- A Jesus who comforts but does not command
- A Christianity that inspires but does not reorder

The issue is not sincerity. It’s supremacy. If Jesus is not before all things, something else will be.

## OPEN LIFE: WHERE DOES THIS MEET OUR LIVES?

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*Keep your Bible open as you open up your life and discuss the following.*

### 1. Where are you most tempted to treat Jesus as important but not central?

Think honestly about time, decisions, money, ambition, anxiety, and identity. What does that reveal about what currently carries the most weight in your life?

### 2. When life feels out of order, where do you usually look first for solutions?

More control? Better habits? Less stress? Spiritual inspiration? How might Colossians 1 reframe where real stability comes from?

### 3. What would change if Jesus were not just part of your life, but the center of it?

Not theoretically. Practically. What might shift in how you:

- Approach your week
- Relate to the church
- Engage Scripture and prayer
- Think about obedience

## HEAR. TRUST. OBEY.

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*This is how we put our faith to work. Let's name the unique things we're hearing, what we want to trust God for, and what obedience looks like.*

**Hear:** What is one phrase or truth from Colossians 1 that you sense God pressing into your heart? Write it in your own words.

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**Trust:** What truth about Jesus are you choosing to believe or re-believe this week?

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Examples: Jesus is sufficient. Jesus holds my life together. Jesus is before all things, even this.

**Obey:** What is one simple act of obedience that aligns your life with Jesus' preeminence?

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Keep it concrete and doable:

- Reordering time
  - Saying no to something
  - Showing up consistently
  - Beginning a habit of Scripture or prayer
  - Choosing faith over fear in one situation
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FEBRUARY 8

# DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

*Matthew 4:18-22*

## OPENING THE WORD TOGETHER

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We have spent the past five weeks returning to the foundations of discipleship. We have talked about listening to God, praying with expectation, opening the Scriptures, belonging to the church, and reordering our lives around Jesus. Now we come to the clarifying question that brings everything into focus: *What does it actually mean to be a Christian?*

If you asked ten people, you would likely get nine different answers. Some would point to beliefs. Others would focus on church attendance. Some would reference a prayer they prayed, a class they took, or a moment in their past. Others would describe Christianity in cultural or even political terms. Still others carry misunderstandings shaped by painful experiences or public stereotypes.

What is striking is this: The earliest followers of Jesus did not call themselves *Christians*.

The word *Christian* appears only three times in the New Testament, and each time it is used by outsiders, not by the church itself (Acts 11:26). It was a label given to them, not one they chose.

What they called themselves was far clearer and far more demanding. They called themselves *disciples*. The New Testament uses the word *disciple* over 280 times. And that matters, because the word *disciple* does not allow for vagueness. It names a way of life.

So this week, we return to the beginning, to the moment when Jesus first defined what a disciple is.

**Read Matthew 4:18-22 aloud together.**

## BIG IDEA & WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

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*A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being formed by Jesus, and joins Jesus on mission.*

In Matthew 4, Jesus does not invite people to agree with Him or admire Him. He calls people to follow Him. He does not offer a label or a spiritual upgrade. He offers a new life shaped by His voice, His presence, and His purpose.

That means discipleship is not an accessory to the Christian life. It is the Christian life. And disciple-making is not an advanced option for especially mature believers. It is built into Jesus' very first words to His first disciples.

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

As we close this six-week journey and prepare to step into the Seven Signs of Jesus, this week matters because it sends us forward. Nashville First exists not to create spectators, but to form disciples who help others follow Jesus.

## OPEN BIBLE: WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS TEXT?

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*Keep your Bibles open as you discuss.*

### 1. What does Jesus say in verse 19, and what are the three movements in His call?

Notice that Jesus gives identity, formation, and mission all at once. He calls them to follow. He promises to make. He names what they will become.

### 2. What stands out about the response of the disciples in verses 20 and 22?

Matthew uses the word immediately twice. What does that tell us about the nature of discipleship? What does it confront in us?

### 3. Why does Matthew specifically name the nets and the father?

These represent livelihood and relationships, the two strongest competing loyalties in most lives. Where do you feel that tension today?

### 4. What does it mean that Jesus calls fishermen rather than religious elites?

These were ordinary men who had already been passed over. What does that teach us about who Jesus calls and how He builds His mission?

## WHY MIGHT GOD WANT US TO HEAR THIS?

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Many people have been discipled into a version of Christianity that asks very little of them. The word *Christian* can be vague. It can describe a background, a belief system, a political category, or a past decision. It can leave our present lives largely untouched.

The word *disciple* is clearer. A disciple follows. A disciple learns. A disciple obeys. A disciple is being shaped into the likeness of Jesus. And a disciple moves outward, because Jesus' promise includes mission.

Matthew 4 presses us to ask whether we are casually associated with Jesus or truly apprenticed to Him. At the same time, it gives us hope. Jesus does not say, "Follow me and prove yourself." He says, "Follow me, and I will make you."

## OPEN LIFE: WHERE IS THIS TOUCHING OUR LIVES?

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*Let's continue to develop that rhythm of connecting the Word to our lives.*

### 1. When you hear the word *disciple*, what emotions surface first?

Excitement, resistance, fear, fatigue, or hope? Why is that?

### 2. Who helped you follow Jesus, and what did they actually do that shaped your faith?

Most disciple-making happens through simple, faithful presence over time.

### 3. Where has God already placed you to help someone follow Jesus?

Family, work, friendships, neighborhood, church. Who is already near you?

**4. What is one “net” you are tempted to cling to?**

Comfort, control, habits, reputation, or schedule. What would it look like to submit that area to Jesus’ lordship?

**HEAR. TRUST. OBEY.**

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A disciple is someone who is constantly growing in his or her ability to hear, trust, and obey what God is saying. Let’s be specific about that this week.

**Hear:** What is one sentence or phrase from Matthew 4:18–22 you sense Jesus pressing on you right now?

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**Trust:** What is one truth about Jesus that gives you confidence to take a next step?

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For example, Jesus chooses the willing. Jesus forms what He calls. Jesus finishes what He starts.

**Obey:** Who is one person you will intentionally pray for and walk with this season?

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Name them. Pray for them. Take one step toward them this week.

## PREVIEW: OUR NEXT SERMON SERIES “SEVEN SIGNS OF JESUS”

Following “Start Here,” Nashville First will begin “The Seven Signs of Jesus.” As we watch Jesus reveal His glory, we will not only ask what these signs mean. We will ask how they shape the way we follow Him and how they help us invite others to see Him.

**We move forward not as spectators,  
but as disciples who make disciples.**

*“Start Here” Study Guide* was written by  
Nashville First’s Senior Pastor Dr. Thomas West.  
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Unless otherwise noted, printed Scripture passages  
are from the English Standard Version (ESV).



**NASHVILLE**  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH