

November 2/3, 2024  
"Gospel Shaped Life"  
Pastor Jeff Manion



## **SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.**

### **2024 Challenge:** Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

**November:** Read Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## Day 1 Esther 4:14 | Jesus in Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah

**"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"** Esther 4:14

*This year, we explore how God's plan in the Old Testament always included Jesus saving us from our sins. This month, we look at Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah to see how these books point to Jesus as our deliverer, restorer and rebuild.*

Esther, set in Persia, shows God's providential care for his people, even when he seems hidden. Esther's willingness to risk her life for her people foreshadows Christ's sacrifice for us as our ultimate deliverer who came at the perfect time. Ezra, chronicling the return from exile, focuses on spiritual restoration and the importance of God's Word. Ezra's dedication to teaching God's law anticipates Jesus, who perfectly fulfilled the law, taught with authority and is the living Word. Nehemiah emphasizes the physical rebuilding of Jerusalem, pointing to Jesus, who builds his church and will one day establish the new Jerusalem. Nehemiah's grief for Jerusalem's ruined condition reflects Jesus's broken heart for his people and what sin does to us. Jesus is the ultimate restorer and rebuild.

These books remind us that God is always at work, even when he seems silent or distant. They point to Jesus, who came at the right time to save us, restore our relationship with God, and build his church. Through Christ, we find our true identity, are restored to a right relationship with God, and are part of the church he is building ([1 Peter 2:4-5](#)).

**TODAY:** As you read this month, ask God to reveal how these books point to Jesus. Thank him for Jesus, our deliverer who came at the perfect time, the living Word of God, our restorer who reconciles us to God.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Esther 1-2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note God's providential work behind the scenes. Consider how Jesus works in our lives, even when we don't see it ([Colossians 1:15-17](#)).

## Day 2 1 Thessalonians 2:4-12 | The Gospel Shaped Life

**On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts.** 1 Thessalonians 2:4

Paul brings the gospel to Thessalonica, saying that Jesus lived, died on the cross, and rose again so people could be forgiven and restored to God. Paul knows this message changes lives because it powerfully changed his own. Before his conversion, Paul persecuted Christians and opposed the gospel. He would later call himself the "worst of sinners" ([1 Timothy 1:15-16](#)). But the risen Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus and offered radical

love and forgiveness. Paul never gets over the grace of God through Jesus. Paul never moves on from what Jesus did for him but goes deeper into it. The gospel is the center of Paul's life and ministry.

We tend to receive the gospel message and then move on from it. We get busy with the activities of faith. Bible studies, serving commitments and small groups consume our time. These are good things, but keeping the gospel message at the center is important. Gratitude for what Jesus did for us on the cross should drive our thoughts, motives and actions. This week, we will look at three ways a gospel shaped life allows us to live the freedom extended to us through the cross.

**TODAY:** Living a gospel shaped life starts with responding to Jesus and accepting his gift of salvation. If you haven't done so, you can respond to Jesus today and ask for his forgiveness. If you have already received the gospel, take a moment to journal about how you can keep it central to your life and ask God to help you go deeper into it.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Esther 3-4](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to Esther's willingness to risk her life. Reflect on how Jesus gave his life to save his people ([John 15:13](#)).

## Day 3 1 Thessalonians 2:6-7 | Free from Making an Impression

**We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you.** 1 Thessalonians 2:6-7

Paul comes to Thessalonica like an innocent child, free of the need to prove himself or impress others. He does not desire fame, recognition or approval. He only wants to share the gospel and be in community with them. This was significant, considering Paul's background. As a former religious leader, he was preoccupied with making an impression. Now, he is free from the exhausting task of maintaining an appearance. He knows he is infinitely loved by Jesus. There is no one greater to impress. The gospel has freed him to be who God created him to be. He wants the Thessalonians to experience this freedom as well.

Our world fixates on making a good impression. We may seek recognition through curated social media posts, our fashion or achievements. But we gain nothing by centering our lives around the approval of others. Paul knew that God's love through Jesus releases people from the chains of others' expectations. A gospel shaped life is secure in the infinite love of Christ and only needs approval from him. When we receive that love and forgiveness from God, we live a gospel shaped life that reflects his love to the world around us.

**TODAY:** Write the gospel's message on your heart by memorizing [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Think about what Jesus took on to set us free and make us right with God. Return to this truth throughout your day and ask God to deepen your understanding.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezra 5-6](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to the opposition faced in rebuilding. Reflect on how Jesus faced opposition in his ministry ([John 15:18](#)).

## Day 4 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 | Free to Love

**Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.** 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

Christ's love completely captivates Paul. God's love through Jesus unleashes Paul to love the Thessalonians without reservation. Paul compares his love for them to the love of a mother. It is tender and self-sacrificing. He loves out of the fullness of God's love for him. Elsewhere, Paul encourages believers to "...walk in the way of love,

just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God ([Ephesians 5:1-2](#)).  
For Paul, the gospel is the ultimate message of love. He knows when believers grasp this love, they are free to give it to others because it was freely given to them.

Sometimes, we struggle to love others well because we do not feel loved. We feel like a well that has run dry. There is nothing left to give. The gospel empowers us to love others, even the challenging people. Jesus promises to fill us to overflowing ([John 10:10](#)). His well of love is deep and never-ending. When we receive God's love through the gospel, we become more capable of loving others. The more we fall in love with Christ and his work on the cross, the deeper our well of love for others becomes.

**TODAY:** Keep God's love at the forefront of your mind. On a sticky note or mobile device, write: "I am \_\_\_\_\_, God's beloved child." Then, join Ada Bible Worship as they sing "[Blessed Assurance](#)." Stand in the assurance that your heavenly Father loves you.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezra 7-8](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Observe Ezra's devotion to God's Word. Think about how Jesus is the living Word of God ([John 1:1,14](#)).

## Day 5 Thessalonians 2:11-12 | Free for a Purpose

**For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. 1**

Thessalonians 2:11-12

Paul describes his relationship with the Thessalonians as a father and child. Paul came to encourage, comfort and urge the Thessalonians to live worthy of God. Paul understands that accepting the gospel is the first step. God's love and sacrifice invite people to a greater purpose and story. Finding purpose in God frees Paul from a self-absorbed life. His purpose is to labor alongside God and share the gospel story. He invites the Thessalonians to step into their greater purpose, too. It's about living for God's kingdom and his glory, not their own.

We may have invited God into our lives, but the greater wonder is he invites us into his life. He calls us to a higher purpose and into a greater story. We often make our stories too small. We get preoccupied with buying things, making money or earning degrees. Paul says our desires are far too small of a mission to orient our lives around. The gospel isn't just about getting into heaven. God desires to get heaven into us. When we go deeper into the gospel, we experience the freedom to live a worthy and meaningful life. Heaven begins to emerge in our everyday lives and transforms those around us.

**TODAY:** God called you to a higher purpose. Take a moment to express your gratitude and pray, "God, thank you for being the author of my story. Thank you for the freedom to become the person you created me to be. Help me to orient my purpose around you. Amen."

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezra 9-10](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Focus on the call to holiness and separation from sin. Consider how Jesus calls us to holiness while offering forgiveness ([1 Peter 1:15-16](#)).