



## The Joy of the Lord – Fall 2025 Small Group Series

### Introduction: The Joy of the Lord

The Bible reminds us in **Nehemiah 8:10**: *“Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”* Joy is more than a fleeting emotion—it’s the deep gladness that comes from knowing God, trusting His promises, and walking in His presence. Unlike happiness, which depends on circumstances, joy is rooted in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

This five-week series invites us to rediscover the joy of the Lord together. We’ll celebrate the joy of godly friendships that remind us we’re #BetterTogether. We’ll remember God’s faithfulness and the miracles that have shaped our lives and our church. We’ll experience the joy of Spirit-led worship that lifts our hearts into God’s presence. We’ll embrace the joy of cheerful giving, offering our time, talent, and treasure with gladness. Finally, we’ll anchor ourselves in everlasting joy—the unshakable reality of the gospel that sustains us through every season.

As we walk through this journey, we will not only talk about joy but experiencing it in community, in worship, in generosity, and in the gospel itself. The joy of the Lord is not just our strength—it’s the testimony of God’s goodness in our lives.





## Week 1 – Better Together: The Joy of Godly Friendship

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### Devotional

The Bible reminds us that we were never designed to do life alone. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 says, *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”* From the beginning, God said it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). We were created for relationship—with Him and with each other.

Jesus deepened this truth when He said, *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:12–13). That kind of love goes beyond casual friendship—it’s sacrificial, loyal, and rooted in Christ’s love for us. Friendship done God’s way multiplies joy, strengthens faith, and reflects His heart to the world.

When we commit to being “better together” in Christ, our friendships become more than social connections—they become spiritual partnerships that sharpen us, encourage us, and hold us up in both victories and trials.

### Getting Started:

1. Can you think of any friendships that fit the #bettertogether description?
2. How have other believers impacted your walk with God?

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## Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13–15)

Paul and Barnabas were unstoppable partners in the early church, empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news. They traveled, planted churches, performed miracles, and strengthened new believers—proof of how God blesses teamwork in His mission.

But even these spiritual giants clashed. Their sharp disagreement over John Mark could have fractured their friendship and the ministry. Instead, God wove their separate paths into an even greater impact—two missionary teams instead of one. Later, Paul restored his relationship with Mark, showing that reconciliation was possible.

This story reminds us that unity in Christ is not the absence of conflict but the presence of grace. When we keep Jesus at the center, even our messy moments can lead to multiplied kingdom fruit.

### Pause & Discuss:

1. When have you experienced joy in a friendship despite differences?
2. When have you worked through conflict and became closer after?

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### “Better Together” Verses:

- **Ecclesiastes 4:9–12** – *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*
- **John 15:12–13** – *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*
- **Hebrews 10:24–25** – *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*
- **Proverbs 27:17** – *As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*
- **Romans 12:10** – *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11** – *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*
- **Philippians 2:1–2** – *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*
- **Galatians 6:2** – *Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

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## Discussion Questions

1. Who first made you feel “at home” in church?
2. What makes a friendship “godly”? What quality do you value most in a friend?
3. How do you deepen spiritual relationships?
4. Who has been a spiritual encourager in your life that has helped you grow spiritually?
5. What role does accountability play in Christian friendships?
6. What’s the danger of isolation in the church? Have you experienced feeling isolated while at church?
7. How can forgiveness protect and sustain friendships?
8. How do differences enrich rather than hinder friendships?
9. How do friendships bring joy during trials?
10. How can our group be intentional about building deeper friendships?

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**Takeaways** - Encourage one friend in Christ this week with a call, note, or prayer.

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## Prayer Thought

“Lord, thank You for friends who strengthen our faith and bring joy. Help us love one another as You have loved us.”

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## Week 2 – Built on Miracles: The Joy in Celebrating God’s Work in Our Lives

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### Devotional

Psalm 126:3 says, *“The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”* Celebration is a theme throughout the Bible. After God delivered Israel from Egypt, He commanded them to celebrate the Passover so future generations would remember His work. After crossing the Jordan River, Joshua set up memorial stones as a reminder of God’s power.

When we take time to remember God’s faithfulness, it fills our hearts with gratitude and joy. Nehemiah 8:10 declares, *“Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”* Rejoicing strengthens us, because it shifts our focus from what’s wrong to what God has already done.

Celebration is more than an event—it’s a discipline. When we pause to reflect and rejoice in His miracles, both big and small, our faith grows and our joy overflows.

At Living Word, we’ve seen God move in miraculous ways—lives transformed, prayers answered, and unexpected provision along the journey. As we remember these moments together, we celebrate His goodness and strengthen our faith for the future.

## Getting Started:

1. Living Word is built on many miracles in the history of the church, which miracle from LW do you find inspiring in your walk?
2. What's one miracle God has done in your life? Do you have any spiritual milestones that you celebrate?

## The Great Chicago Fire & D.L. Moody's Ministry

In October 1871, the Great Chicago Fire raged for two days, destroying much of the city. Among the thousands left in ruins was evangelist D.L. Moody, who lost his church, his home, and the publishing house that supported his ministry. Everything he had worked for was gone in a matter of hours. Many might have walked away in despair, but Moody believed God was not finished with him.

Out of the ashes, a new chapter of ministry was born. Moody rebuilt not just his church but expanded into new ventures, including schools and a training center for evangelists. What seemed like a devastating loss became the spark for greater vision. In 1886, he founded what is now the Moody Bible Institute, which has trained generations of Christian leaders and missionaries around the world. Today, the ripple effects of that ministry are still being felt across nations.

Moody's story is a reminder that sometimes what looks like destruction is actually preparation for God's greater miracles. When we pause to celebrate what God has brought out of seasons of loss, we can see how He redeems brokenness and uses it to bring lasting fruit.

**Takeaway:** Sometimes what looks like loss becomes the platform for God's greater miracles.

## Pause & Discuss:

1. When have you celebrated God's work with others, and how did it impact you?
2. How does public celebration encourage faith?

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## "Built on Miracles" Verses

- **Psalm 126:3** – *The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.*
- **Nehemiah 8:10** – *Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*
- **Deuteronomy 4:9** – *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*
- **Joshua 4:4-7** – *So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan.*

*Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder... to serve as a sign among you... These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”*

- **Psalm 103:2** – Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.
  - **1 Chronicles 16:8–9** – Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.
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## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God commanded His people to celebrate?
  2. What’s your favorite way to mark a special occasion?
  3. What personal story of God’s work do you love to share?
  4. How does celebration strengthen faith?
  5. How does remembering help us face future challenges?
  6. Why is it easy to forget God’s blessings?
  7. How can testimonies inspire faith in others?
  8. When has remembering restored your hope?
  9. What memory of God’s work in your life brings you joy to remember?
  10. What is one way you can celebrate God this week?
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## Takeaways

Think about a time when God came through for you to celebrate—how can remembering it fuel your trust today?

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## Prayer Thought

“Lord, thank You for all You’ve done. Help us remember and rejoice in Your miracles, both big and small, so our joy may be full.”





### **Week 3 – Spirit-Led Worship: The Joy of Experiencing the Presence of God**

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#### **Devotional**

Psalm 100:1–2 calls us, “*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*” Worship is not just music—it’s an invitation to enter into the presence of God with joy and thanksgiving. True worship shifts our eyes off ourselves and onto the One who is worthy.

In John 4:23–24, Jesus explained that the Father seeks those who worship “in spirit and truth.” Worship is Spirit-led when it flows from a sincere heart responding to God’s truth. When the Holy Spirit fills our worship, it becomes more than a song—it becomes an encounter. In God’s presence, we find peace, renewal, and the fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

Spirit-led worship transforms lives and unites the church. It brings heaven’s reality into our present moment, strengthening faith and testifying to the world that our God is alive. At Living Word, worship has always been a place where God shows up powerfully—whether in a Sunday service, a retreat, or special event. Reflect on those moments when God’s presence was especially tangible, and consider how worship continues to draw us closer to Him as a church family.

#### **Getting Started:**

1. What’s one worship moment at Living Word that stands out to you as especially powerful?
2. How does worship help you shift focus from problems to God?

## Jehoshaphat's Battle (2 Chronicles 20)

When Judah was threatened by a vast army, King Jehoshaphat called the people to seek God. As they prayed, the Spirit led them not to fight with weapons but to worship.

The choir went ahead of the army singing, *"Give thanks to the Lord; His love endures forever."* As they worshiped, God threw their enemies into confusion, and victory was won without a sword lifted.

This story reminds us that Spirit-led worship shifts the battle. It's more than music—it's a weapon of faith that unleashes God's power in impossible situations.

### Pause & Discuss:

1. How can we make more room for Spirit-led worship in our lives and church?
  2. How can we practice worship in daily life, not just Sundays?
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### "Spirit-led Worship" Verses

- **Psalm 100:1–5** – *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*
- **John 4:23–24** – *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*
- **Acts 2:46–47** – *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*
- **Psalm 16:11** – *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*
- **2 Chronicles 5:13–14** – *The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD... Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.*
- **Hebrews 13:15** – *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.*
- **Colossians 3:16** – *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

## Discussion Questions

1. What's your favorite worship song and why?
  2. Which worship style or setting helps you connect with God?
  3. How does the Holy Spirit guide our worship?
  4. Is there a lyric or scripture in a song that has impacted you most?
  5. What distracts you from worship?
  6. How does worship unify the church?
  7. How can music help us remember God's truth?
  8. How can worship give us strength in hardship?
  9. What's your favorite way to worship outside of music?
  10. What is one way you can engage more deeply in worship this week?
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## Takeaways

- **Reflection:** Ask God to reveal any areas where your worship has become routine rather than Spirit-led or new ways to incorporate worship in your life to deepen your worship experience.
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## Prayer Thought

“Lord, let our worship be Spirit-led, filled with truth, and overflowing with joy. Draw us into Your presence and transform us by Your Spirit.”





## Week 4 – Cheerfully Giving: Offering God Your Time, Talent, and Treasure with Gladness

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### Devotional

2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Giving is a reflection of our hearts and commitment to God. God doesn’t want grudging offerings; He desires joyful generosity that flows from gratitude and earnest following of Jesus.

When we give our time, talents, and treasure to the Lord, we imitate His generosity. John 3:16 reminds us that God gave His very best—His Son. Our giving becomes worship when it is done with gladness, not duty. Whether it’s serving in church, using our skills to bless others, or financially supporting God’s work, generosity multiplies joy.

Cheerful giving blesses the receiver, honors God, and fills the giver with joy. When we open our hands, we acknowledge that everything we have belongs to Him, and we trust Him to supply what we need.

### Getting Started::

1. What has been your most joyful experience of giving?
  2. Which is harder for you to give: time, talent, or treasure?
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## R.G. LeTourneau

R.G. LeTourneau was a businessman and inventor in the 20th century. Yet what made him remarkable wasn't just his success—it was his radical generosity. Instead of tithing the traditional 10%, LeTourneau reversed it. He lived on 10% of his income and gave away 90%.

He poured resources into missions, built Christian colleges, and funded ministries across the globe. When people asked how he could afford such giving, he simply said, *“I shovel it out, and God shovels it back—but God has a bigger shovel.”*

LeTourneau's joy was not in wealth itself, but in seeing what God could do through it. His cheerful giving advanced the gospel, inspired countless others, and proved that when we put God first, our resources become tools for eternal impact. His story reminds us that generosity is contagious. When we open our hands freely, we not only bless others—we find joy in joining God's work of changing lives.

### Pause & Discuss:

1. How have you seen God provide when you stepped out in generosity?
  2. How can your giving inspire others to trust God more?
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### “Cheerfully Giving” Verses

- **2 Corinthians 9:6–8** – *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*
- **Acts 20:35** – *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’*
- **1 Peter 4:10–11** – *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*
- **Proverbs 11:25** – *A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*
- **Luke 6:38** – *Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*
- **Matthew 25:40** – *“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”*
- **Hebrews 13:16** – *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

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## Discussion Questions

1. Why does God care about the attitude behind our giving?
2. Why do you think God loves a “cheerful” giver specifically?
3. Share a time someone’s generosity surprised you or a meaningful gift you’ve received?
4. What skill or talent do you feel God has given you to bless others?
5. How have you experienced joy in giving?
6. How can you give beyond finances?
7. How does generosity strengthen your faith? How is giving an act of worship?
8. Who has been an example of cheerful giving in your life?
9. Where do you feel God is inviting you to grow in generosity?
10. How does cheerful giving reflect God’s character?

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## Takeaways

- Pray for one area of your life where you can give with greater gladness and choose a next step of generosity to do in that area.

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## Prayer Thought

“Lord, open my hands to give freely and my heart to give cheerfully. May my generosity reflect Your love and bring joy to others.”





## Week 5 – Everlasting Joy: Standing Firm in the Transformative Power of the Gospel

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### Devotional

Philippians 4:4 says, *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”* These words were written by Paul while he was imprisoned. His circumstances were grim, yet his joy was unshaken because it was anchored in Christ. This shows us that everlasting joy isn’t based on comfort or ease—it’s rooted in the gospel.

Romans 1:16 reminds us, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”* The gospel transforms us by reconciling us to God, securing our future, and sustaining us with hope. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we can face life with peace and courage, knowing nothing can separate us from His love.

Everlasting joy is not shallow happiness; it’s a deep, unshakable reality that flows from knowing Christ. It’s the kind of joy that sings in prison cells, that strengthens in suffering, and that anchors us through every storm.

### Getting Started::

1. How does the gospel give you joy even in hard times?
2. What’s the difference between happiness and everlasting joy?

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## Horatio Spafford

In 1873, Horatio Spafford, a successful lawyer in Chicago, suffered a series of heartbreaking losses. First, the Great Chicago Fire ruined him financially. Soon after, his four daughters died in a shipwreck while crossing the Atlantic. His wife survived and sent him a telegram that read: “Saved alone.”

On his voyage to meet her, Spafford asked the captain to tell him when they reached the spot where his daughters drowned. There, looking over the waters of grief, he wrote the hymn “*It Is Well with My Soul*.” The words, “*Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul,*” became one of the most powerful testimonies of gospel-rooted joy in Christian history.

Spafford’s story reminds us that everlasting joy isn’t the absence of sorrow—it’s the presence of Christ in the middle of it. Because of the gospel, we can say “it is well” even in the deepest pain.

### Pause & Discuss:

1. How does Spafford’s response challenge you in your own trials?
  2. Have you had experiences where joy stayed despite the circumstances?
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### “Everlasting Joy” Verses

- **Philippians 4:4–7** – *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
  - **1 Peter 1:8–9** – *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*
  - **Habakkuk 3:17–18** – *Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.*
  - **Psalms 16:11** – *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*
  - **2 Corinthians 4:16–18** – *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*
  - **Hebrews 12:2** – *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
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## Discussion Questions

1. How can joy and grief exist together?
  2. What makes the gospel the foundation of everlasting joy?
  3. How can you rejoice when life feels overwhelming?
  4. Who is someone whose joy inspires you most?
  5. How do you remind yourself daily of gospel truth? What's your favorite promise of the gospel?
  6. What scripture or song helps you hold on to joy?
  7. Share a time you experienced joy despite hardship.
  8. How does hope for eternity fuel joy in the present?
  9. How can we as a group support one another in keeping our joy anchored in Christ?
  10. What's one area where you want to stand firmer in gospel-rooted joy?
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## Takeaways

Identify one area of life where you've let circumstances steal your joy and surrender it to Christ.

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## Prayer Thought

“Lord, thank You for the everlasting joy we have in Christ through the gospel. Anchor our hearts in You so that our joy cannot be shaken.”

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## Final Thought: The Joy of the Lord

As this series draws to a close, we are reminded that joy is more than a passing feeling—it is the deep and lasting strength that comes from walking with God. Together, we've explored joy in friendship (#BetterTogether), joy in remembering the miracles God has done in our church family, joy in Spirit-led worship, joy in giving with gladness, and the everlasting joy of the gospel. These truths remind us that joy is not only our strength but also our shared testimony. May His joy bind us together as a church family, sustain us through every season, and radiate outward as a light to the world.