



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V28 N3 January 18, 2026

## THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

### Prayer

I pray to God to know him, to lay my request before him and to find direction for my daily life.

*"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!"*

**Psalm 66:16-20**



## Q?

What did Jesus' disciples do to prepare for the coming of the Spirit?

## POWER AND PURPOSE

"Powerful Leaders"

Acts 1:12-26

I believe in prayer; I pray. But I can't *prove* that God answers prayer or *prove* that I'm better off when I pray than when I don't. After all, good things happen to people who don't pray. People who don't pray routinely recover from severe illness and injury—some from near-death experiences. Others see their financial misfortunes reversed, still others their broken relationships mended—all without praying. But some, of course, don't. Can the same not be said about those who pray? I pray because Jesus prayed. In one of the best books on the subject, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*, Philip Yancey writes:

"I have said that the simplest answer to the question 'Why pray?' is 'Because Jesus did.'

"The Gospels record just over a dozen specific prayers by Jesus, along with several parables and teaching on the subject. He followed the normal Jewish practice of visiting the synagogue, the 'house of prayer,' and of praying as least three times a day. We can safely assume that Jesus often prayed in private too, for when his disciples asked for instruction on prayer Jesus said they should seclude themselves. Such prayers made an impression on his followers: five times the Gospels mention Jesus' practice of praying alone.

"Like most of us, Jesus turned to prayer in times of trouble. No doubt he prayed intensely as he fasted and meditated on the Bible during his time of wilderness tempting. He prayed aloud as the rendezvous with death approached, the words expressing his inner turmoil: 'Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.' His prayers in the garden of Gethsemane pushed him to the edge of endurance, and three times he fell to the ground, overcome. Jesus' prayers held back nothing.

"Two of the prayers in troubled times (the *Abba* in Gethsemane and the *Eloi* from the cross) were so moving that words from the original Semitic language stuck in the minds of hearers. Of the seven cries from the cross, at least three were

prayers. Hebrews reports that 'he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death'—but of course he was not saved from death. Like all of us at times, Jesus knew the sensation of getting no answer to his pleas.

"If he made few requests on his own behalf, Jesus often lifted up prayers for others. He prayed for children brought to him by their mothers, and for 'the people standing here' at Lazarus's grave side, and for Simon Peter who faced a time of testing. In his final intercessory prayer, one last gasp of grace, he asked on behalf of his persecutors, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'

"When alone, Jesus relied on prayer as a kind of spiritual recharging. After an exhausting day of ministry—recruiting disciples, preaching to crowds, healing the sick—he would withdraw to an isolated place to pray. The tempter had used the lure of popularity and acclaim to test him in the wilderness, and perhaps Jesus needed to escape the clamor in order to firm up his resistance and renew his sense of mission. 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about,' he reassured his disciples, who worried about his lack of nourishment at such times.

"Jesus' prayers intensified around key events—his baptism, an all night session before choosing his twelve disciples, on the Mount of Transfiguration—and especially as he prepared for his departure.

"After surveying Jesus' practice of prayer, I realize that his example does answer one important question about prayer: Does it matter? When doubts creep in and I wonder whether prayer is a sanctified form of talking to myself, I remind myself that the Son of God, who had spoken worlds into being and sustains all that exists, felt a compelling need to pray. He prayed as if it made a difference, as if the time he devoted to prayer mattered every bit as much as the time he devoted to caring for people" (78, 79).

**Read Acts 1:12-26**

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akel-dama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

"May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it;"

and

"Let another take his office.'

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.  
(ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "they" in vv. 12-13.
- Underline "a Sabbath day's journey" in v. 12.
- Circle "upper room" in v. 13.
- Highlight the names of the apostles in v. 13.
- Circle "prayer" in v. 14.
- Bracket "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" in v. 14.
- Underline "In those days" in v. 15.
- Bracket "had to be fulfilled" in v. 16.
- Circle "acquired a field" in v. 18.
- Circle "falling headlong" in v. 18.
- In the margin next to v. 20 write, "cf. Ps 69:25; 109:8."
- Circle "witness" in v. 22.
- Highlight vv. 24-25.
- Circle "cast lots" in v. 26.
- Circle "Matthias" in v. 26.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. *Who* returned from the mount called Olivet to Jerusalem and *where* did they go when they returned?

2. *Who* was gathered there and *what* were they doing?

3. *Why* were they doing *what* they were doing?

4. *When* did Peter address those who were gathered?

5. About 120 people were gathered. Were there only 120 Christians at the time (cf. 1Co 15:6)?

6. David doesn't mention Judas by name. In what sense did Judas fulfill Ps 69:25?

7. In what sense did Judas fulfill Ps 109:8?

8. Identify the requirements for eligibility to replace Judas as one of the apostles.

9. *Why* did the believers cast lots to determine God's choice of the man to replace Judas? Believers don't cast lots today.

10. **Discussion:** Talk about the role prayer played in events occurring between the ascension and Pentecost.

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### Commentary On The Text

Acts 1:12-26 is divided into various numbers of paragraphs by the various English versions. For example, the NET treats it as one long paragraph; the ESV divides it into two paragraphs (vv. 12-14; 15-26), the NIV into five (vv. 12-14; 15-17; 18-19; 20-22; 23-26) – all of which are acceptable. Viewing verses 12-14 as a single paragraph makes sense, because together these verses describe what the apostles did in obedience to Jesus' command to wait in Jerusalem for the "promise of the Father," namely, the Holy Spirit (v. 4). Viewing verses 15-26 as one paragraph also makes sense, because together these verses describe the selection of Matthias to replace Judas, thus restoring the original number of apostles to twelve.

That said, a further analysis of verses 15-26 is helpful. One commentator writes: "This entire section, devoted to the replacement of Judas Iscariot, is carefully constructed in two main parts. After an introductory verse (v. 15), the first part (vv. 16-19) deals with the vacancy created by the demise of Judas. The second treats Judas's replacement (vv. 21-26). Joining the two sections is v. 20, which contains two scriptural proofs from the Psalms, the first relating to the prior section (Judas's death); the second, to the following (his replacement)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 90).

According to the first paragraph, the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, the site of the ascension, about one kilometer outside the city to a large upper room where they joined other Christians to wait for the coming of the Spirit. The others included "the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (v. 14). This room apparently served as the believers' "headquarters" during the ten days leading up to Pentecost. Throughout this time, the 120 persons (v. 15) were constantly praying, but for *what*? The text doesn't specify *what*, but it's possible to make an educated guess. Before Jesus returned to the Father, he told them, "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (v. 7), which suggests that they were praying for the Spirit to come as Jesus had said. Later, they would pray for the Lord to reveal his choice of one to replace Judas (vv. 24-25). In both instances, their prayers were informed by God's word. "The time before Pentecost was a time for waiting, a time spent in prayer undoubtedly for the promised Spirit and for the power to witness. There is no effective witness without the Spirit, and the way to spiritual empowerment is to wait in prayer" (Polhill, 90).

According to the first part of the second paragraph (vv. 15-19), Peter, taking the lead, stood up and ex-

plained that what Judas did and what happened to him as a consequence fulfilled Scripture, specifically, what "the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David" (v. 16) and thus required further action. He explained that although Judas was one of the Twelve and shared in their ministry, he betrayed Jesus, and with the money he received for his wicked act bought a field (v. 18) – he bought it *indirectly* with the thirty pieces of silver he returned to the priests who *actually* bought it. And afterward he died an ignominious gory death (Mt 27:3-5). All this was in fulfillment of Psalm 69:25. Peter then explained Psalm 109:8 made it necessary to choose another to take his place. Verse 21 reads: "Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection" (vv. 21-22 NIV).

On the fulfillment of these texts, one writer explains: "The psalms Peter cites (69:25; 109:8) are about the unrighteous or the enemies of God, who ultimately are judged. Judas belongs in this category, so Peter applies the text to him . . . The first text is Ps. 69:25: since the defection has occurred, there is a reference to the enemy's house being left desolate. The second text, Ps. 109:8, refers to what needs to be done to replace Judas. Someone must take his place of responsibility" (Bock, 82; see also Polhill, 91).

According to the second part of the second paragraph (vv. 21-26), two men were identified as candidates meeting the requirements to replace Judas (vv. 21-22) – Joseph called Barsabbas who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And since the believers wanted to appoint the one the Lord had chosen, they prayed: "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place" (v. 24-25). And then they cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias who was subsequently numbered with the eleven apostles (cf. Pr 16:33). On the importance of his selection, one commentator writes: "The choice of Matthias provides a figure for the twelfth throne discussed by Jesus in Luke 22:30b. With that slot now refilled, the program moves ahead as Jesus's eschatological promise in this regard still stands" (Bock, 75). Of course, believers no longer cast lots to determine God's will. Lots ceased to be used after the Spirit came; the selections made in Acts 6 and 13 involve prayer only.

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## Word Studies/Notes

### v. 12 *they*

I.e., the eleven apostles (v. 2) who witnessed the ascension; follow the pronouns: "them" in vv. 3, 4, 7, 10; "they" in vv. 6, 9, 10; "you" vv. 8, 11; "their" v. 9. "The apostles returned to Jerusalem in compliance with the Lord's command to wait there for the Spirit (cf. v. 4). There they joined the other Christians in an upper room where they devoted themselves to fervent prayer (vv. 13-14). It is, of course, possible that some of the larger groups of disciples witnessed the ascension, but Luke seems to have implied that his narrative to this point had primarily involved only the eleven (v. 2)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 88).

v. 12 *Sabbath day's journey* I.e., "the maximum distance one could travel on the Sabbath without it constituting work. This was not an explicit OT law but a later Jewish tradition. The rabbis set the limit at 2,000 cubits (about 0.6 miles or 1 km). Jews at Qumran had a lower travel limit" (*The ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 1:12).

v. 13 *upper room* "It is tempting to see this as the room where the last supper was held, but this is far from certain. Luke used different words for the two rooms (*katalyma*, Luke 22:11; *hyperōon*, Acts 1:13) . . . The upper room of Acts 1:13 seems to refer to the top floor of a large Palestinian house" — perhaps that of Mary, the mother of Mark (see *The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ac 1:13).

v. 13 *women and . . .* "The women in the upper room likely included those who ministered to Jesus' followers (Luke 8:2-3), accompanied him from Galilee (Luke 23:55), and witnessed the crucifixion and empty tomb (Luke 23:49, 55-56; 24:2-11)" (*The ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 1:14) — and possibly the wives of the apostles (see *The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ac 1:14).

v. 13 *Mary, the mother of Jesus* Last mentioned here in Scripture.

v. 13 *his brothers* "According to Mark 6:3, Jesus had four brothers — James, Judas, Joseph, and Simon. There is no reason to take Mark's words in any other sense than that they were Jesus' half-brothers, the natural offspring of Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus" (Polhill, 89). "They did not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah before His death (cf. John 7:5), but after His resurrection they are found among His followers" (F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, NICNT, 45).

v. 14 *prayer* "Jesus had told them 'to wait for the promise of the Father' (Acts 1:4), but 'waiting' on God and prayer are closely related in several places in the OT, and therefore it is likely that they were praying constantly that the promised Spirit would descend" (*The ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 1:14).

### v. 15 *in those days*

I.e., the ten days following the ascension prior to the day of Pentecost. The primary characteristic that marked their life together in this period was prayer, as they anticipated together the promised gift of the Spirit" (Polhill, 90).

### v. 16 *had to be fulfilled*

I.e., Ps 69:25 and Ps 109:8 (v. 20); Gk. *edei* by divine necessity. "Notice the high regard with which Peter viewed the Old Testament. He believed that David's words came from 'the Holy Spirit' (2 Tim. 3:16), and he viewed them as 'Scripture' (holy writings). Peter interpreted David's words about false companions and wicked men who opposed God's servants as applying to 'Judas.' What God had said through David about David's enemy was also true of Jesus' enemy, since Jesus was the LORD's (Yahweh's) Anointed whom David anticipated" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2025 ed., 36, [soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf](http://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)).

### v. 18 *acquired a field*

"Though Judas himself did not personally buy a field, he did so indirectly. The priests used the betrayal money Judas flung into the temple to make the purchase in Judas' name (Matt. 27:3-10)" (Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 356).

### v. 18 *falling headlong*

Cf. Mt 27:5. While the two accounts of Judas' death differ, they are neither contradictory nor inconsistent. The fundamental facts are the same (see Polhill, 92). "Mt 27:5 reports that Judas hanged himself. It appears that when the body finally fell, either because of decay or because someone cut it down, it was in a decomposed condition and so broke open in the middle" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ac 1:18; cf. *The ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 18; Bock, 83-85; Constable, 38).

### v. 22 *witness*

"Here we have the basic understanding of the apostles' role in Acts. They were primarily 'witnesses' to Jesus, eyewitnesses who could share his teaching and confirm his resurrection and ascension. As such, the role of apostle was limited to the Twelve. It was a unique, irreplaceable office (Eph 2:20)" (Polhill, 93). "Every Christian should function as an apostle [a sent one], since Christ has given us the Great Commission. Nevertheless, the Twelve were apostles in a special sense" (Constable, 40).

### v. 26 *cast lots*

"They 'drew lots,' probably by drawing one of two designated stones out of a container, or by throwing down specially marked objects (cf. Lev. 16:8; Josh. 14:2; 1 Sam. 14:41-42; Neh. 10:34; 11:1; Prov. 16:33)" (Constable, 42).

### v. 26 *Matthias*

"Matthias received no further mention in the New Testament. Legend has it that he died as a martyr in Ethiopia" (Constable, 42).

**CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE**

Our prayers should be informed by Scripture just as were the early disciples' prayers regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit and the selection of Matthias to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle.

**CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE**

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)

**3 LIVING QUESTIONS**

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## PARENT CONNECTION

When my son's friend, Marco, would visit, he had to learn to pause and wait to pray before diving into dinner. He was surprised when my husband or I would pray over the kids, including him, before bed. And though it took a while, he finally got used to me asking if he prayed about whatever situation he was struggling with. One time Marco asked, "How'd you learn to do all that praying?" Ha! I remember the first time I prayed out loud in a group. Boy, did it feel uncomfortable, awkward, and let's face it, downright weird. Prayer can feel like stepping into foreign territory. You're not sure what to say, how to say it, or if you're "doing it right." It's worse when the person to your left delivers the most eloquent prayer, overflowing with Scripture and all extra-holy sounding. Where prayer is concerned, practice won't actually make perfect, but practice definitely helps makes it more comfortable. Though I had been encouraging Marco for months to pray before meals, he wouldn't budge. One night, I dragged an empty chair next to him and told him to pretend Jesus was sitting there and to tell Him thanks for the meal. I remember when he raised his head, his face was glowing with pride and confidence. The switch flipped and he couldn't wait to pray with us. Parents, we're models of prayer not only for our own kids, but all their friends. So, don't be shy. If you don't know where to start, drag a chair next to you, pretend Jesus is sitting there, and thank Him for His many blessings. We're praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 1:12-26.

1. List the names of the apostles and other people gathered in the upper room.
2. What were they doing?
3. How did they replace the apostle Judas who turned Jesus in?

### What Do You Think?

Think about the things the apostles had recently witnessed—Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. What do you think they were praying about?

### What Do You Do?

Think about the same things the apostles had witnessed, and pray.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Prayer

I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

### MEMORY VERSE: Romans 11:36

*"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."*

### KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week. Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

I completed my Bible Study  
 I memorized this week's verse  
 I brought my Bible to church  
 I brought a friend

CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_



# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)  
*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)  
*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)  
*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)  
*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)  
*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)  
*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)  
*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)  
*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)  
*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)  
*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)  
*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)  
*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)  
*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)  
*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

### Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

### Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

### Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

### Grace (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

### Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

### Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

### Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

### Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

### Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

### Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

### Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

### Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

### Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

### Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

### Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

### Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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## CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH

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### OUR MISSION

Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.