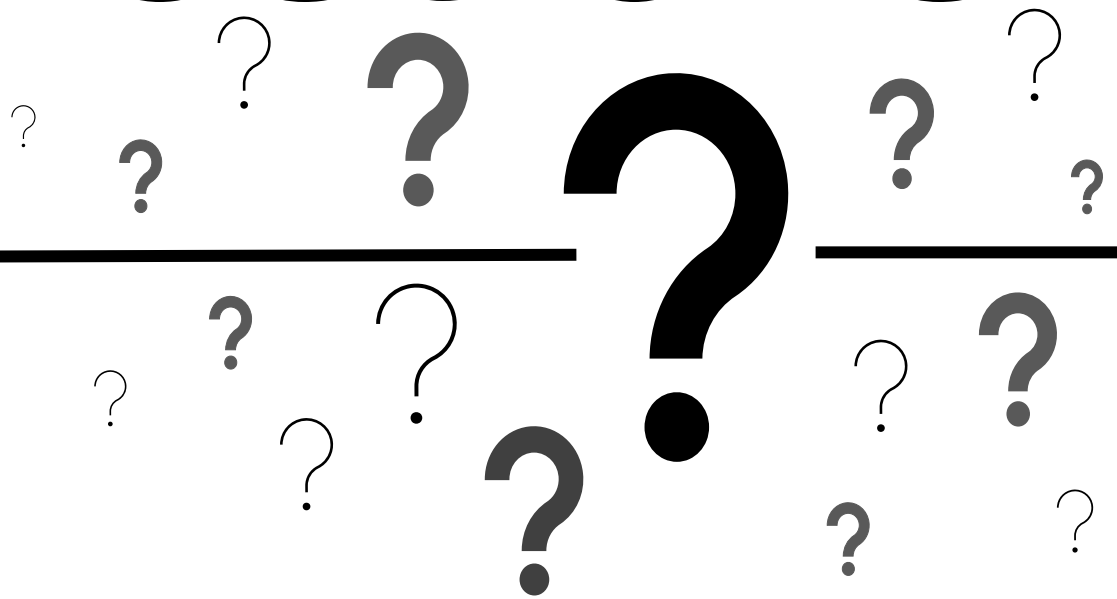


PRESSING Questions



FAITH ACTS
PASTOR CAMERON SHAFFER
FALL 2026

Recommendations for Table Discussion

Our hope is that this class will provide you with a better knowledge of the Bible and result in a deeper love for Christ and his people.

There will be some who are more eager to share around the table than others. Please be respectful and kind as the discussion unfolds, recognizing there are varying levels of biblical proficiency and levels of comfort in sharing. Your table hosts are wonderful brothers and sisters who are there to love and support you and will do their best to foster a safe, welcoming environment that is profitable and edifying for everyone present.

Thank you for spending the time to take this class and for contributing to the fellowship and mutual learning around your table. Our hope is that the effort you put into this class will be rewarded many times over in your daily Christian walk and in the years to come.

Blessings to each of you,
Cameron

Schedule

Pressing Questions—Fall 2026

Week	Date	Content
1	9/10	How Do I Figure Out God's Will?
2	9/17	Prayer
3	9/24	What's the Relationship Between Science and God?
4	10/1	Where Did Everything Come From?
5	10/8	How am I Made Right with God?
6	10/15	Prayer
7	10/22	Can I Be Forgiven and How Can I Forgive Others?
8	10/29	How Can I Live a Holy Life?
9	11/5	How Can I Get Along with Difficult People?
10	11/12	What Does God Say about My Mental Health?
11	11/19	Prayer
12	11/26	Thanksgiving – No Meeting
13	12/3	How Should I Understand Gender Identity?
14	12/10	What Should I Think About Heaven & Hell?
15	12/17	Prayer
16	12/24	Christmas Eve Worship

Lesson 1:
How Do I Figure Out God's Will?

September 10, 2026
Deuteronomy 30:11-20

1. What stands out to you most about Moses' description of God's commands? (look especially at verses 11-14). What surprises you about that?
 - Does this match how people today often think about finding God's will?

2. According to this passage, what does it look like to choose life? (look especially at verses 19-20). What actions does Moses connect with choosing life?
 - How are these different from simply making "the right decision"?

3. Read Ephesians 5:15-17. When people say, "I'm waiting for God to show me his will," what kinds of things do they usually mean? How does this passage challenge or reshape that way of thinking?
 - Where might Scripture give clearer guidance than we sometimes admit?

4. Moses in Deuteronomy 30:14 says "The word is very near you." How can God's word become something that shapes our everyday decisions—not just something we read occasionally?
 - What habits actually help?

5. What do you think is the relationship between loving God and obeying him? Why do you think Moses places love before obedience?
 - How does that differ from either legalism ("earn God's favor") or indifference ("obedience doesn't matter")?

6. Why do you think we often want God to reveal the future more than he wants to reveal it? What might happen if God answered every question about our future?
 - How is uncertainty one of God's ways of teaching trust?

7. Paul tells believers to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).
 - In the surrounding verses, what does he actually mean by God's will?
 - Does that surprise you?
 - How does it compare with the way Christians often talk about "finding God's will"?

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1. David begins by saying, "The heavens declare the glory of God." What do verses 1–6 suggest creation can actually tell us about God? What can someone learn about God simply by observing the world?
 - What doesn't this part of the psalm claim creation can tell us?

2. After describing the heavens, David suddenly begins talking about God's law (v. 7). Why do you think the psalm changes direction here? What does God's word provide that creation alone cannot?
 - Look especially at the words David uses (revives, makes wise, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes) What kind of needs are these addressing?

3. David ends the psalm talking about "hidden faults" and "presumptuous sins." Why doesn't simply observing nature reveal these things about ourselves?
 - Why is God's word able to expose what we often cannot see on our own?

4. Theologian John Calvin said, "There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice." How does this quote help us appreciate creation as a gift from God? How is that different from treating nature itself as either meaningless or giver of its own meaning?

5. Imagine someone who believes science can explain everything worth knowing. How might Psalm 19 affirm that person's love of studying the natural world while also challenging their conclusion?
 - Where does David suggest science (or observation generally) reaches its limits?

6. The psalm ends with a prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight" Why do you think David ends with prayer instead of simply saying, "I'll try harder"?
 - What does that teach us about the relationship between God's truth and God's grace?
 - Why is God's sight, rather than nature, the standard of an acceptable heart?

7. Psalm 19 moves from creation to Scripture to repentance. Why do you think repentance is the destination of the psalm? What would be missing if the psalm ended after verse 6?

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1. Read Job 38:1–7. God asks Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Why do you think God begins there? What is he trying to teach Job—and us—about our place in the world?

2. Read Job 38:12–18. God asks about the dawn, the sea, and "the expanse of the earth." Which image stands out to you most?
 - What do these questions suggest about the difference between what humans can discover and what only God fully knows?
 - How does this encourage both humility and curiosity rather than forcing us to choose between them?

3. Read Job 38:31–38. God asks whether Job can bind the constellations or direct the clouds. Scientists today understand far more about stars and weather than Job did. Does that change the force of God's questions? Why or why not?
 - How is understanding *how* something works different from explaining *why* it exists?

4. Read Job 39:26–30. God points to birds that live and flourish without human control. What do these examples teach us about God's relationship to creation?
 - What do they suggest about the value of studying the natural world?

5. Read Job 40:1–2. God asks: "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it." Is God simply putting Job "in his place," or is something deeper happening?
 - How has seeing more of God's creation throughout these chapters prepared both us and Job to hear this question?

6. Throughout these chapters, God never says, "Stop asking questions." Instead, he asks many questions himself. What kinds of questions do you think God welcomes? What kinds of questions does this passage challenge?
 - How might this shape the way Christians approach both science and faith?

7. "You cannot go on 'seeing through' things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to 'see through' first principles. If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see."
 - C. S. Lewis (*The Abolition of Man*).Lewis meant that if we reduce everything to its mechanisms, eventually nothing retains any deeper meaning; windows are meant to be looked through and if everything is a window, there is nothing left to see.
 - After reading God's speech in Job, what might we miss if we looked at creation only as a collection of physical processes?

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3. Paul says, "All have sinned... and are justified by his grace as a gift." Why do you think Paul puts those two ideas together?
- How does recognizing our sin make God's grace appear even greater?

4. Paul concludes that God is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." John Stott wrote: "The concept of substitution may be said to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation." (*The Cross of Christ*) How does Christ's work allow God to remain completely just while also declaring guilty people righteous?
 - Why is it important that Paul insists on both truths?

5. Read Romans 3:27–31. Paul asks, "Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded." Why would justification by faith leave no room for boasting?
 - Where are people today tempted to "boast" before God—even if they would never say it out loud?

6. Read Romans 4:1–5. Paul contrasts wages with gifts; what is the difference between earning something and receiving something? Why is that comparison so important for understanding justification?
 - How would this change the way someone thinks about their relationship with God?

7. "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*). How do Romans 3:23 and Romans 3:24–26 hold those two truths together? Why is it important not to lose either part?

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1. Read Matthew 18:21–22. Why do you think Peter wanted a number? Why doesn't Jesus give him one?
 - How does Jesus shift the conversation from calculating forgiveness to cultivating a forgiving heart?

2. Read Matthew 18:23–27. Why do you think Jesus chose such an absurdly large debt? What does it teach us about our need for God's forgiveness?
 - What does this teach us about what God is capable of?
 - Tim Keller writes that Christian forgiveness begins with the "vertical"—God's forgiveness of us. Why do you think Jesus begins the parable focusing on the king forgiving the servant rather than with the relationship between the two servants?

3. Read Matthew 18:26–27. The servant asks for more time, but the king gives him complete forgiveness. What is the difference? Why is it important that the servant receives mercy rather than an opportunity to earn his way out of debt?
 - What does that teach us about how we receive God's forgiveness?

4. Read Matthew 18:28–30. C. S. Lewis wrote, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive." (*Mere Christianity*) Why do you think forgiveness becomes so difficult once we've actually been hurt?
 - How does this servant's behavior reveal that he never truly grasped the mercy he had received?

5. Read Matthew 18:31–35. Why does Jesus connect receiving God's forgiveness with extending forgiveness to others? Does forgiving someone mean pretending the wrong never happened? Why or why not? How does the king's concern for justice help answer that question?

6. Corrie ten Boom was a woman who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp with her sister, who died there. After World War 2 Corrie met one of her concentration camp guards and forgave him. Reflecting on this, she wrote: "Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart." After reading Matthew 18, how does that insight help distinguish forgiveness from simply feeling better?
 - What practical difference might that make when someone has suffered a deep wound?

7. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns against "cheap grace"—grace that is received without changing us. After reading this parable, why do you think Jesus treats an unforgiving heart so seriously? How does this story distinguish between earning God's forgiveness and being transformed by God's forgiveness?

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Lesson 6:
How Can I Live a Holy Life?

October 29, 2026
Colossians 3:1-17

1. Read Colossians 3:1–4. Paul begins with what God has already done: "You have been raised with Christ... you have died... your life is hidden with Christ in God." Before Paul tells believers to do anything, why do you think he reminds them who they already are? How might that change the way someone thinks about following Jesus?

2. Read Colossians 3:5-10 "Put to death..." (v. 5) Why do you think Paul uses such strong language? How is "putting sin to death" different from simply trying to become a better person?
 - What clues do verses 1–4 give for *how* Christians are able to fight sin differently from someone who doesn't know Christ?
 - Paul begins with sexual immorality, impurity, evil desire, and greed, then later mentions anger, slander, obscene talk, and lying. What do these lists have in common?
 - How might these sins all grow out of putting ourselves at the center instead of Christ?

3. "Covetousness, which is idolatry" (v. 5) Why would greed be called idolatry? Can someone worship something without ever bowing to a statue?
 - What kinds of things today can quietly become "ultimate" in our lives?
 - How does remembering that our life is "hidden with Christ" (v. 3) challenge those rival loyalties?

4. Read Colossians 3:12–14. Paul says, "Put on... compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." C. S. Lewis wrote: "How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing... it is irresistible." (*Letters to an American Lady*) Looking at Paul's list, what makes this kind of life attractive rather than merely demanding?
 - Which quality would make the biggest difference in a family, school, workplace, or church?

5. Read Colossians 3:15–17. Paul repeatedly mentions peace, thankfulness, God's word, singing, and doing everything in Jesus' name. Why do you think Paul ends with habits of worship and community instead of simply saying, "Try harder"?
 - How do these practices help Christians continue growing?

6. Throughout this passage, Paul never says, "Become someone completely different." Instead, he says, in effect, "Become who you already are in Christ." Where do you see both God's work and our effort in this passage? How does Paul keep those two from competing with each other?

7. J. C. Ryle wrote: "True holiness does not make a Christian gloomy... It makes him more cheerful." (*Holiness*) Many people—including some Christians—assume holiness means becoming less joyful, interesting, or free. After reading Colossians 3, do you think Paul would agree? Why or why not?
 - What picture of a truly holy person emerges from this passage, and why might someone actually want to become that kind of person?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 sets of three horizontal dashed lines.

1. Read Romans 12:9–10. Paul begins, "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." Why do you think Paul connects genuine love with hating evil? Can someone truly love another person while also recognizing and resisting what is wrong?
 - How does this keep Christian love from becoming either harshness on one hand or mere niceness on the other?
 - "Outdo one another in showing honor" (v. 10). What might honoring someone look like when you don't particularly like them?
 - Does honoring someone mean pretending they're always right?

2. Read verses 11–13. Most of these commands seem ordinary: serving, praying, giving, showing hospitality; how might these everyday practices prepare us for the much harder commands that come later in the passage?
 - Have you found that faithfulness in small things helps you respond better in big moments of conflict?

3. Read verses 14–16. Paul writes, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them." How does Paul's command challenge what feels natural when someone mistreats us?
 - What do you think it actually looks like to "bless" someone who is making your life difficult at school, at work, or even at home?
 - How does rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep fit into this?

4. Read verse 16. Paul says, "Do not be wise in your own sight." Why is humility so important when dealing with difficult people? How can pride make conflict worse—even when we're convinced we're right?
 - Think about a recent disagreement. What evidence would convince you that *you* might be the one who needs to change? Why is that such a difficult question to ask?

5. Read verses 17–19. Paul tells believers: repay no one evil for evil; live peaceably "so far as it depends on you"; never avenge yourselves. Notice that Paul says, "If possible..." What does that tell us about Paul's expectations? When is peace not entirely in our control?
 - How does knowing that God will judge justly free us from having to "settle the score"? What responsibilities belong to us?
 - What responsibilities belong to the other person?
 - How might remembering that distinction protect us from guilt when reconciliation isn't possible?

6. Read verses 20–21. Paul concludes, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." What do you think it means to be "overcome by evil"? Can someone become shaped by another person's bitterness, even while opposing it?
- What would overcoming evil with good look like in an actual classroom, workplace, or family conflict?
 - Imagine two Christians working in the same difficult office or attending the same challenging school. Both face gossip, unfair treatment, and antagonism. What would it look like for one merely to survive that environment, and for the other to actually overcome evil with good? What habits from verses 9–21 would make the difference?
7. Paul never tells believers simply to avoid difficult people. Instead, he teaches them how to live faithfully among them. C. S. Lewis wrote: "Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did." (*Mere Christianity*) How does that insight fit with Paul's commands in Romans 12?
- How can faithful actions sometimes lead our hearts to grow, even when our feelings lag behind?

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What Does God Say about My Mental Health?**1 Kings 19:1-18**

1. Read 1 Kings 19:1–5. Just one chapter earlier, Elijah had experienced one of the greatest victories of his life. Now he says, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life." What do you think changed? What clues does the passage give about Elijah's physical, emotional, and spiritual condition?
 - Why do you think Scripture includes stories like this about one of God's greatest prophets?

2. Read verses 5–8. Before God speaks to Elijah about his thinking or his mission, he gives him sleep, food, water, and rest. Why do you think God begins there? What does this teach us about the relationship between our bodies and our spiritual lives?
 - How might this challenge the idea that every emotional struggle has only one cause?
 - C. S. Lewis, reflecting on grief, wrote: "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." (*A Grief Observed*) Elijah's fear, exhaustion, and despair all seem intertwined. How does this passage help us avoid reducing emotional struggles to just one category—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual?

3. Read verses 9–14. Twice God asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Why do you think God asks a question when he already knows the answer?
 - What do you notice about the way God listens before he responds?
 - How can asking honest questions sometimes be more helpful than offering quick answers?

4. Read verses 11–13. God is not found in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a low whisper. Without making too much of the imagery, what do you think this scene teaches us about God's character? Have there been times when God seemed absent simply because you expected him to work differently?

5. Read verses 15–18. Elijah says repeatedly, "I, even I only, am left." God gently corrects him: "Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel." Why is this correction important?
 - How can emotional pain make our perspective narrower without making our pain unreal?
 - Have you ever discovered later that a situation wasn't exactly as hopeless as it first appeared?

6. Looking at 1 Kings 19, where do you see God drawing near to Elijah before solving Elijah's problems? Why might God's presence sometimes be more important than immediate answers?

7. Reviewing Elijah's story, where do you see weakness becoming a place where God meets him rather than abandons him?
 - How might that encourage someone who feels like their mental or emotional struggles make them a "second-class Christian"?

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Lesson 9:
How Should I Understand Gender Identity?

December 3, 2026
Genesis 1:26-31, 2:18-25
and Galatians 3:26-29

1. Read Genesis 1:26–31. The passage says that humanity is created "in the image of God," and immediately afterward says, "male and female he created them." What do these two truths tell us about human dignity? Why do you think both truths appear together?
 - How might remembering that every person bears God's image shape the way Christians speak about difficult or controversial issues?

2. Read Genesis 2:18–25. Before Eve is introduced, God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone." What problem is God solving?
 - What similarities and differences between the man and the woman stand out to you?
 - How do equality and distinction both appear in this passage?

3. Genesis 1-2 repeatedly emphasizes that our bodies are created by God, not accidental. Many people today describe identity primarily as something we discover within ourselves. After reading Genesis 1–2, where does Scripture suggest our identity begins? How might those two starting points lead to different conclusions about what it means to flourish?

4. Read Galatians 3:26–29. Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." What do you think Paul is—and is not—saying? How does this passage deepen our identity without erasing the created distinctions we saw in Genesis?

5. Carl Trueman writes: "The modern self assumes the authority of inner feelings and sees authenticity as defined by the ability to give social expression to the same." (*The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*). After reading Genesis and Galatians, where does Scripture locate our identity? How might those two visions of the self lead to different understandings of freedom and happiness?
6. Why do Christians need both creation and redemption to understand human identity? Many people experience deep struggles with different aspects of their identity—including loneliness, disability, infertility, unwanted desires, broken relationships, or questions about gender. How does the gospel invite us to respond when our experiences and our desires do not always align with God's design?
- What difference does it make that our deepest identity is not "our struggle," but belonging to Christ?
 - All of us have parts of our lives that don't feel the way we wish they did. Whether those struggles involve our bodies, our relationships, our desires, our past, or something else, what does it mean that the gospel invites us first to find our identity in Christ?
 - How might that give both hope and direction without pretending that every struggle disappears overnight?
7. Tim Keller wrote: "To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is... very much like being loved by God." (*The Meaning of Marriage*) If God both created us and knows us completely, how does that change the way Christians should respond to people who are wrestling with identity?
- What would it look like for a church to be both deeply truthful and deeply loving?

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Lesson 10:
What Should I Think About Heaven & Hell?

December 10, 2026
Matthew 25:31-46

1. Read Matthew 25:31–33. Jesus begins by describing his own return before describing either heaven or hell. What do these opening verses teach us about Jesus? Why do you think the passage begins with the King rather than with the judgment itself?
 - How does that shape the way Christians should think about eternity?

2. Read verses 34–40. The king welcomes his people by saying, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." What words or phrases stand out to you?
 - Why is *inherit* such a rich word? What is the difference between receiving an inheritance and earning a paycheck?
 - How does that illuminate the relationship between grace, faith, and good works?
 - Why do you think Jesus points to their works as evidence?

3. The righteous are surprised: "When did we see you?" Why do you think they're surprised? What does that suggest about the relationship between genuine faith and everyday acts of mercy?
 - John Calvin wrote that "It is faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone." (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*) How does this passage help explain that idea?

4. Read verses 41–46. Jesus speaks with equal seriousness about eternal punishment and eternal life. What reasons does Jesus himself give for judgment? What does the passage not say? How does keeping close to the text help us avoid caricatures of God's justice?
5. Throughout the passage, people's treatment of "the least of these my brothers" is deeply significant. What does this teach us about how Jesus identifies with his people? How does it challenge the idea that our relationship with Christ is only private or inward? How might this shape the way Christians treat people who are vulnerable, overlooked, or in need?
 - Jesus repeatedly says, "You did it to me." What does this teach us about Christ's ongoing relationship with his people?
 - How might believing that Christ identifies so closely with his church change the way we treat ordinary people this week?
6. Near the end of *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis writes: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.'" How does that observation help you think about this passage?
 - Where do you see both God's justice and human responsibility in Jesus' teaching?
7. Jesus describes eternal life and eternal punishment in the same verse (v. 46). Looking only at the language of verse 46, what do you notice? How should we approach difficult doctrines when the text challenges our instincts?

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