

5-2017

A Five-Week Bible Study for Sorority Women

Haley McClelland

Director of Thesis: Jennifer Frey

Second Reader: Mari Humphreys

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McClelland, Haley, "A Five-Week Bible Study for Sorority Women" (2017). *Senior Theses*. 210.
https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses/210

This Thesis is brought to you by the Honors College at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

Table of Contents

I.	Thesis Summary.....	3
II.	Introduction.....	5
III.	Selection of Study Topics.....	12
IV.	Composition of the Study.....	14
V.	Conducting a Study.....	16
VI.	Conclusion.....	19
VII.	References.....	24
VIII.	Appendices	
	a. Appendix A (Survey Questionnaire).....	26
	b. Appendix B (Survey Results: Open-Ended Section).....	27
	c. Appendix C (Survey Results: Selection Section).....	29
	d. Appendix D (Five Week Study).....	30
	e. Appendix E (Leader's Guide).....	35
	f. Appendix F (Verses Guide).....	44

I. Thesis Summary

The goal of this senior thesis project was to create a five-week long Bible study specifically intended for an audience of sorority women. My on campus involvement at the University of South Carolina has been primarily dedicated to my Panhellenic sorority membership with the Beta Delta chapter of Delta Zeta and my leadership role in Greek Impact with Campus Crusade for Christ. These two defining components of my college experience inspired my project idea, providing a way to intertwine the two and offering me with an opportunity to leave behind a product of value.

My original plan for this project was primarily focused on creating a study to be used in the future and to have an impact on sorority women after my time at USC came to a close. However, once I began drafting the study I soon realized that a significant portion of my project involved self-reflection on my experience being both a sorority woman and Christian in college.

I began my project by determining which topics I believed that I struggled with the most being a Christian, Greek woman in college and then polling my fellow Panhellenic sorority members to find what they struggled with as well. The final five topics I chose were stress/anxiety, fear of the future, relationships, acceptance/approval, and friendship. Upon determining the most common struggles across the Greek Village, I had to figure out the best way to address the five chosen topics by providing comfort, answers and reassurance given in the Bible. I approached this task by compiling numerous verses and drafting potential questions for each subject. After doing this, I managed my progress by tackling one topic at a time and filling in a study format recommended to me by my second reader, and staff member for Campus Crusade for

Christ, Mari Humphreys. Each study would start with a 'launch' question to start of a conversation on the topic. Next would be the 'explore' section that would focus on four Bible passages, and finally followed by three 'apply' questions to relate the verses to everyday life. Upon completion of the five studies, I held the acceptance and approval topic Bible study in my sorority house to test its fluidity and learn how others would receive it.

I am incredibly pleased with the outcome of my project and am thrilled to leave it behind for the sororities in the Greek Community here at the University of South Carolina to be able to use for years to come. My greatest desire is that it will help our sorority members become stronger Christians, stronger leaders and stronger women.

I. Introduction

What is a sorority woman? The National Panhellenic Conference is comprised of twenty-six women's organizations termed sororities. Each organization is represented by Greek-letters and consists of a collection of college student women and alumnae. These Panhellenic sororities take residence on over six hundred and fifty college campuses across America and provide an expansive network in cities and communities for alumnae post college graduation. The women involved in each organization are deemed sisters within their individual sorority chapter, but also considered sisters with those who share the same Greek letters across the nation. The sisterhood established by these organizations stretches across state lines and across generations. These 'sisters' share a unique bond that is created by rituals and traditions that have been practiced and passed down for decades.

Sorority women are more than simply a group of women who share a special bond. This sisterhood bond is unlike an ordinary bond of friendship, because at the foundation there are rituals, traditions, and values that have been passed down for generations. Each sister is a thread in a much larger cloth that has been woven by previous woman for decades and is constantly expanding and growing. The opportunity to leave behind a legacy and be a part of an organization such as this generates a more meaningful bond and connection between members.

Individually, they are each being cultivated as leaders, and the National Panhellenic Conference created the National Panhellenic Conference Foundation in order to focus on the growth of each sorority woman personally. The mission statement of the NPC Foundation is "to advance the 26 women's organizations of the National

Panhellenic Conference and their commitment to personal growth by raising funds and underwriting initiatives that launch and sustain women leaders” (NPC Foundation, 2017).

Their vision is for every woman to be bettered by her lifelong sorority experience, and they strive to improve the intellectual, personal and social growth of each member, as well as advocate for the overall empowerment of women (NPC Foundation, 2017).

People may assume that sorority membership terminates at the end of a women’s college career, but instead it is a lifelong commitment and a membership experience that continues on.

What is a Christian? The definition of a Christian is not quite as straightforward as defining what a sorority woman is. The definition of who a Christian is may vary depending on the perception of whom you ask. Possible definition responses could include: those who are born into a Christian family, those who attend a Christian church, those who believe in God, those who do good deeds, or those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. So which one is the right answer?

The Bible is the holy doctrine and authority for the Christian faith, and its purpose is to share the Word of God and to express how to live a Christian life. The term ‘Christian’ is surprisingly only used three times in the New Testament, in Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16 (“What is a Christian”, 2017). In each of these instances, the term Christian is used to describe people who did their best to imitate Christ Jesus in the way that they behaved and spoke, and the term came to stand for those who are followers of Christ (“What is a Christian”, 2017).

The Bible also explicitly says that doing good deeds does not make a person a Christian, but the mercy and grace of God is what grants salvation to Christian believers. The apostle Paul wrote, “When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7 New International Version). Paul also restated this fact in his letter to the Ephesians by writing, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9 New International Version). Throughout the Bible it can be seen clearly that good works alone do not grant anyone salvation, but salvation and eternal life in heaven can only be granted by the grace of God. His grace is received as a gift when a person believes that Jesus walked on Earth as man, was crucified as a sacrifice for the sin of the world and rose three days later, conquering hell and ascending into heaven. Once a person grasps how amazing God’s love is for them and they enter into a relationship with God the Father, they are considered to be a follower of Christ, otherwise known as a Christian.

I myself identify as both a sorority woman and a Christian. I was born into a Christian household and have been attending church my entire life. I was baptized at four months old as a promise that my parents and my church would raise me to know Jesus. In the second grade I received my first Holy Bible and on that day I asked Jesus to come

live in my heart, and accepted Him as my Savior. In the eighth grade I became a member of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland. I was an active member of my church's youth group in middle school and high school, and attended many church camps and retreats. Over the years, my faith continued to grow as I learned more about the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

I joined a Panhellenic sorority at the beginning of my freshman year of college. Before classes started up, I moved into my freshman dorm and began the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process. It was an emotionally challenging process, but at the end of the two weeks, I received a bid from the Beta Delta chapter of Delta Zeta and my journey as a sorority woman began. I quickly became fast friends with other new members as we learned what Delta Zeta represents and the values that Delta Zeta upholds. Delta Zeta's core values are friendship, service, leadership and truth. My biological siblings consist of two younger brothers, and now suddenly I had three hundred sisters around me, not to mention the Delta Zetas at other campuses or the Delta Zeta alumnae. The friendships that I formed with several of my fellow Delta Zetas truly are more than friendships, they are bonds of sisterhood and women that I am confident will be in my life for many years to come.

The summer after my freshman year of college, I attended Greek Summit, a two and a half week long trip planned by Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) for students who attend colleges in the southeast and are involved in Greek life. It was during these weeks that these two parts of my life truly began to collide. I made the impulsive decision to attend Greek Summit after attending a monthly Greek Impact meeting on campus in my Greek Village and viewing a promotional video for the trip. It reminded me of the camps

and retreats I attended in middle school and high school, and I was overcome with a feeling that being a member of a Christian community was severely lacking in my college experience. The Greek Summit trip connected me with fellow believers on my own campus as well as numerous other SEC campuses, and it trained us on how to be active Christians in our Greek communities. Upon returning to campus for my sophomore year, I became a Greek Impact Leader for Campus Crusade for Christ. My faith became revitalized and a desire to make an impact in the Greek Village rushed over me. I have remained a Greek Impact leader ever since, and am inspired by the power of God present on our campus and infiltrating our Greek Community.

On college campuses across the nation, sorority women are confronted with numerous challenges and expectations that threaten how they view themselves and how they choose to behave. Society attempts to stereotypically define a sorority woman and design a mold she is supposed to fill. The media is constantly drawing attention to Greek life across the country and illuminating its flaws and scandals. This media coverage portrays sorority women as shallow, unintelligent, skinny, blonde, and judgmental. A specific incident of the media portraying this image of sorority women occurred the summer of 2015 when the Alpha Phi chapter at the University of Alabama released their recruitment video. This video received tremendous backlash from the public who claimed that the sole purpose of the video was vain and focused on only the physicality of its members (Rein, 2015). The purpose of a recruitment video is to showcase the genuine sisterhood of a sorority, highlight philanthropic efforts and encourage prospective women to join the organization. This Alpha Phi video, which has been removed from YouTube after receiving 500,000 views, solely consisted of skinny white girls “do nothing but

dance, jump around, and blow kisses and glitter” (Rein, 2015). The University of Alabama released a statement claiming that the university did not condone or support this video and both the local and national level of Alpha Phi declined to comment on the situation (Rein, 2015). The filmmaker who recorded the video footage even reported that the Alpha Phi chapter was much more diverse than the video depicted (Rein, 2015). With representations such as this frequently in the media, it becomes the role of active sorority women to break free of this mold and inform society what being a sorority woman in reality truly means.

On a college campus, a sorority woman is four times more likely to experience rape, or an attempt at rape, than other women on campus, with a total of 29% of sorority women reporting being sexually assaulted, compared with a total of 7% of non-sorority women (Minow & Einolf, 2009). Studies also show that fraternity men are three times more likely to commit rape because they are “within an environment that promotes stereotypical notions of masculinity” and are affiliates of organizations that foster “a greater degree of adherence to traditional ideas about gender roles” (Loh et al., 2005). This puts sorority women at a higher risk because fraternity men and sorority women often engaged in the same social settings and sorority women may “believe they are at lower risk by virtue of identification with the Greek system (e.g., traditions of family-like referents such as ‘my brothers and sisters’) and a sense of freedom and security within it” (Nruis, Norris, Dimeff & Graham, 1996).

Sorority women also have been proven to struggle with self-image more so than non-sorority women. In a study done at Northwestern University, it was proven that rushing sororities have profound effects on body image and self-esteem due to the nature

of the recruitment process and the pressure it entails (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010). The goal of the study was to measure whether or not participating in sorority rush would lead women to increase self-objectification, resulting in a rise in eating disorders and body shame. According to the results, women who rushed revealed higher levels of self-objectification than those who did not, and after one month they experienced an increase in body shame that women who did not join sororities did not experience (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010). This goes to show the pressure that sorority women find themselves under to fit not only a social mold, but a physical mold as well, and this unnecessary pressure leads sorority women to encounter self-doubt and insecurity.

My goal with this study is to help sorority women break free of this pressure and stereotypical role they may feel inclined to fill, and to make them stronger women and leaders in the community. Studies have proven that religion is linked with lower drug and alcohol use, lower rates of suicide or suicide ideation, lower levels of depression and hopelessness, and a positive correlation with physical health (Smith, 2003). By creating a means through which to introduce God or expand on knowledge of God, this study has the potential to impact the overall quality of life for its participants. This is why I decided to bring my passion for Christ and my love for the Greek Community together by creating a five week Bible Study that is specifically intended for sorority women. My goal is to address topics that sorority women struggle with and provide them with comfort and support through the Word of God and proclamation of His immense love for us in order to improve their lives.

II. Selection of Study Topics

Since my goal was to address topics that specifically affect sorority women, I decided to ask my fellow Panhellenic members about their greatest struggles. The demographic that I turned to were women who attend the monthly Greek Impact meetings. These women represented each of the thirteen sororities present on the University of South Carolina campus. The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) asked the participants to state what they personally struggle with the most as a sorority women and also to select, from a given list, topics they would be interested with discussing and learning more about. I presented them with both an open ended question and a selection question because I feared that some people may not be able to as easily, or willingly, answer the open ended question. I was correct in my assumption, and some women only completed the selection section while leaving the open-ended response section blank.

After obtaining my responses, I took note of all the written responses and tallied the selected responses. I provided twelve hot topics for the selection section which included: relationships, stress/anxiety, fear of the future, depression, friendships, marriage, pride, body image, alcohol, sex, acceptance/approval, and forgiveness. I asked the participants to select a maximum of five topics out of the given list that they were the most interested in discussing. Overall, I had 45 participants complete the survey. Among these responses I received a myriad of open-ended responses and collected a tally of the most popular hot topics selected. Many of the open-ended responses could be categorized into one of my twelve given topics, which I took into account when making my final topic selection, but did not include in the numerical tally since the results were not always explicit and often left up to my interpretation. Participants were asked to list

three things that they struggle with as a sorority woman, and people listed between zero and three items. I made note of each written response, and categorized as many as I thought undoubtedly fit into one of my given categories (Appendix B).

The open-ended question left room for individuality in responses and resulted in a range of answers. There were many answers that showed consistency across participants and others that were arguably unique to the individual. There were several responses which indicated the friendship topic, including: “social issues,” “supporting others who have no faith,” “finding accountability,” “finding friends who really care,” “roommates,” and “finding fellowship/community within my sorority.” There were also a variety of responses that correlated with stress or anxiety, including: “grades,” “prioritizing,” “school stress and competition,” “planning too much,” “trying to be perfect,” and “time management.” Acceptance and approval were also mentioned often under terms or phrases such as “comparison,” “feeling disconnected/excluded,” and “avoiding stereotypes.” Other reoccurring topics mentioned included alcohol, body image, depression, sex and relationships. There were also some responses that did not accurately fit completely into one of the categories I created. A few examples are “getting plugged in with Bible study,” “staying and feeling safe,” “being respected,” “getting past people’s preconceived notion that I’m unintelligent and party all the time,” “gossip,” “dues,” and “bringing up God in conversation and spreading the word.” Overall, the three most common topics found in the open-ended responses were approval/acceptance, friendship and anxiety/stress.

The multiple selection section provided similar results (Appendix C). The top scoring selection was stress/anxiety with a total of twenty-eight votes. Fear of the future

came in second with twenty-five votes, followed closely by relationships and acceptance/approval at a close twenty-four votes each. The next most frequent response was friendship at seventeen votes. The topic of marriage had a total of sixteen votes, but I believed I could tie the topic of marriage into the relationship topic. These statistics overlapped with the results from the open-ended section, which made selection of the final five topics fairly self-explanatory. The final topics I selected were stress/anxiety, fear of the future, relationships, acceptance/approval, and friendship.

IV. Composition of the Study

After selecting my five topics for my five-week long study, the very next thing I did was open up my Bible. My Bible has a glossary of terms in the back that lists verses where each terms appear. I turn to this section frequently when I find myself struggling, and needing some words of encouragement. For some of my topics I already had particular verses in mind that I knew with certainty that I wanted to include, but I had to gather more verses to construct my studies, and my Bible's glossary aided me immensely. I referenced keywords related to my topics in the glossary and perused them in order to compile a collection of about six to ten passages for each topic.

My desire for my study was for it to be different from existing studies. A majority of Bible studies I have participated in or found online focused on one set of verses per study. The study would consist typically of a chapter in one book of the Bible, ask several analyzing questions and then ask thought provoking questions for conversation. I wanted my study to be applicable to all sorority women, regardless of whether or not they consider themselves to be a Christian. My goal was for each week to

be an open forum for discussion of these hot topics and to provide comfort and guidance to the women through God's Word and His promises to us.

In order to achieve this I decided to stray away from the 'typical' format of a Bible study and focus primarily on the issues and how God provides the ultimate answers and comfort to the struggles we face. To do this, I selected four verses/passages for each topic to provide evidence as to how the Bible is a wonderful source of comfort to turn to and way to live by. My hope in showing the power of the Bible to provide answers is to ultimately show these sorority women the immense power and love of Jesus Christ and teach them how to turn to Him in their times of need.

I had developed this ambition and purpose, however when I sat down to construct the study itself and write it down, I wrestled with how to format the layout and structure successfully. I consulted with my second reader, Mari Humphreys, a staff member on Campus Crusade for Christ at USC. She recommended a layout that began with a 'launch question' to initiate conversation about the topic. The second section of the layout would focus on the Bible passages and have the participants 'explore' the verses and dig deeper into the Word of God. The final section would have the participants 'apply' the verses to their personal lives. She advised that I format all five of the studies identically so that leaders who used the study after me could follow the format easily and from week to week the women who participated would become familiar with what to expect. Consistency would be a key to the future success of the study. Finally, she highly recommended that I create a Leaders Guide where I could put the answers to questions I was asking to aid the future leaders in the direction I was attempting to take the study. It would also offer a place for me to put my input into the study and express

my thoughts, which I was having a difficult time figuring out how to incorporate in the study itself. I heeded all of this advice, and found piecing together all sections of my study to come more naturally and with ease.

V. Conducting a Study

I conducted one of my studies, “Be Who You Are,” in my sorority house on Wednesday, February 15, 2017. There were a total of thirteen women in attendance, which is an ideal size for a Bible study and was uplifting considering the typical attendance in the Delta Zeta Bible study tends to hover around a total of three-six attendees. I was incredibly enthused and satisfied with the turnout, and excited to see how well my study would flow in action.

I chose the study focused on acceptance and approval since it is a feat that many sorority women are striving to attain, especially within our Greek Village and our sorority recruitment process. My reasoning for choosing this particular topic for my study implementation was that I believed it was the topic was most uniquely specific to sorority women within my five-week study. I held my study during the typical weekly Bible study meeting time in my sorority house, but advertised it with reference to it being a special Bible study for specifically for my senior thesis. I planned to measure the success of my study by the fluidity of the conversation, the enthusiasm of the attendees to respond, the overall engagement of the group members and a post-study survey. I have been an attendee of numerous Bible studies over the course of my life, and I have been witness to those that were successful and those that fell short or felt uncomfortable. My desire was for my study to be a place for open communication about the selected issues and for the participants to respond and share openly.

Out of the thirteen women in attendance, twelve spoke up and shared their thoughts which revealed they were comfortable with opening up to the group. I discovered that some of my questions in the study were more direct than others, and some were answered more quickly and with more ease than others. I realized that as a leader I sometimes had to improvise and interject new questions that were not included verbatim in the study in order to encourage the women to delve deeper into the Bible passages and uncover more truth. In order to maintain the fluidity of the conversation, my mind had to be one question ahead ready to advance the discussion.

A majority of the women were actively engaged, making direct eye contact with whomever was speaking, mentally processing their thoughts, and eager to share their opinion with the group. They fed off each other's ideas and often times did not need me to facilitate the naturally flowing conversation. I was thrilled with this outcome and the natural ease of the discussion. Upon conclusion of the study, I felt confident that it had been positively received. The mood and energy in the room was positive throughout the duration of the study, and the study lasted for just under an hour. The layout of the study provided a natural progression with a solid conversation starter, analysis of the Bible passages and then thought provoking questions that provided leeway for meaningful discussion.

After the study, I requested that my participants complete a short reflection survey on their experience. On an overall ranking score on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being a negative experience and 5 being a positive experience, responses were 100% unanimous in ranking the study at a 5. 100% of the participants also reported finding the Bible verses relevant and useful in their lives. I asked them to share their favorite part of the

study, and I received various responses such as, “It was relatable and uplifting and well thought out,” “being able to hear other people’s interpretation of the verses,” “I liked the order of the verses, they allowed for a good flow of conversation,” “the ability to genuinely discuss things without fear of judgment,” and “the verses all came back to the central theme of how God’s opinion of us is ultimately the only one that matters.” I also asked for feedback on what they would have changed about the study, and the most common response was to include a few longer verses or more discussion on each passage instead of flipping frequently from verse to verse. I predicted I would have this feedback since the format of most typical Bible studies is to focus more closely on one longer passage. However, I had intended for my study to be different and to offer more exposure to the Bible by examining several shorter passages for each topic to enhance the amount and strength of the support God’s Word has to offer. I also received feedback that the study was overly scripted and scheduled, however the same participant who shared this comment also stated that she would keep all of the questions in the study the same. These comments seemed to contradict each other, however I think that the solution to this recommendation would be to allow more time for response to each question and to propose more follow up questions for each verses depending on the direction of the discussion. Another participant’s advice for improvement that I received regarding changes for the study was simply to have the study more often. It was encouraging to learn that there was interest for more of my studies.

I already know that the Delta Zeta chaplain will be using my study next fall for the New Member Bible study. This will be a great way to introduce new sorority members to the sorority woman life and have them begin their membership focusing on

the values Delta Zeta represents as well as creating an open forum for discussion on topics of struggle. My recommendations for future use of my study would be for each leader to wrestle with each topic on her own so that she can best understand how to lead others to overcoming the challenge. While wrestling with each topic, they may discover an untouched component or side to the issue and I would encourage them to address it during the study, imprinting their own personal experience upon the study to broaden its reach. Finally, I would also recommend looking into expanding the verse selections for some sections of passages in order to provide more background or context and to allow for more discussion on each passage and more time for participants to process their thoughts and then verbalize them. I recognize that each time the study is used the outcome will vary because the results and effectiveness will depend upon the leader, the number of attendees, the level of participation and the receptiveness of the participants. Regardless, the study will provide a safe space for sorority women to address their struggles, it will preach the Word of God and offers the tremendous opportunity for personal growth and spiritual rejuvenation.

VI. Conclusion

Completing my thesis project not only allowed me to leave behind a legacy in Greek Impact on the USC campus, but also helped to keep me grounded and focused this final year of college. I am a sorority woman. This means that I too struggle with the issues covered in my five-week Bible study. Composing each study allowed me to personally confront each issue head on, and determine the most effective way to overcome it so that I could help others do the same. It was no easy task to do so, and required an immense amount of self-reflection and time spent dwelling with God. I am a

Christian. Creating this study strengthened my relationship with the Lord as I was constantly in His Word, learning more about Him and spending time with Him. I believe completing my thesis project helped me become a better sorority woman and a stronger Christian.

I am leaving my five-week study as a resource for sorority women for Campus Crusade for Christ to use in the Greek Village here at the University of South Carolina. It will be available for all of our sororities to access and use in their own chapter's Bible study. My hope is that it allows these women to face their struggles and overcome them with the help of the Lord God Almighty. My intention for choosing to focus each week on a different topic as opposed to a different passage of verses is to attract women who may not know God to an environment where they will be introduced to Him. My goal is for this project to help spread the gospel truth and make stronger sorority women at the same time.

Whether or not all sorority women realize it or not, almost all of the twenty-six Panhellenic sororities have Christianity tied into their rituals and traditions. Christianity is at the core of the foundations of these organizations and at the center of their core values. Values across the twenty-six Panhellenic sororities include leadership, service, loyalty, sisterhood, personal integrity, academic excellence, intellectual pursuits, personal development, truth, self-sacrifice, love, labor, learning, growth, responsibility, altruism, honor, and respect. The values, or virtues, of Christianity are explicitly identified as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23 English Standard Version). There are irrefutable similarities between the sets of values, as well as some inexplicit overlapping constructs. These values

represent guidelines for how to embody life and ideals to consistently strive for. A majority of chapters have a designated chaplain who's role is to pray at the start of chapter meetings, lead a Bible study, participate in rituals, and be available to the chapter members. They aim to exemplify these values and aid others in doing so as well by providing them with fellowship opportunities and spiritual support. It is often said that you will become more like those who you surround yourself with, and if that is the case then spending time with role models who uphold these Christian values and sorority values will encourage the positive behaviors and attitudes to spread. By becoming involved in Bible study or connected with Greek Impact, these role models could provide "examples of life practices shaped by religious moral orders that constructively influence the lives of youth, and offering positive relationships that youth may be invested in preserving through their own normatively approved living" (Smith, 2003). Here at the University of South Carolina, the chaplains and Greek Impact leaders often gather together to pray for revival in the Greek Village and healing for the broken or forgotten values that members pledged themselves to during initiation. If each sorority member did their part to uphold the values of her chapter, then the Greek Village would flourish as opposed to crumble, as it has especially this year.

This past year, from the months of August to September, USC witnessed a 200% increase in the hospitalizations of female students from the same time the previous year. Out of all of the hospitalizations that occurred during this time, 74% of them were sorority women. Out of the 45 emergency calls made, only five were placed by individuals who personally knew the hospitalized sorority woman (USC Sorority Panhellenic Council, personal communication, September 12, 2016).

There is evidently something broken in our Greek Village, and USC's Sorority Panhellenic Council took immediate action by implementing numerous rules and regulations for sorority women to follow in order to keep them safe. Safety is a key concern in this situation, however the fundamental flaw in sorority women abiding by and behaving in accordance with their sorority's core values is at the root of this issue. If sisters cannot protect and support each other, and make difficult or unpopular decisions when it is the right thing to do, then they must refer back to the values based organization that they joined and readjust. Strong leaders stand up for what is right, they tend to the needs of others, and they set an example to be followed. I believe this study can not only help sorority women confront issues that they face, but can also strengthen their core values to make them better and stronger leaders in the Greek Community.

The sororities on the University of South Carolina campus are lacking institutionalized infrastructure within each chapter to provide this direct support and accountability. The role to promote core values and abide by them falls into the hands of the active chapter members. The staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ are available to members, however chapter members may be completely unaware of this resource or how to obtain it. There are a limited number of staff members, and an excessive and constantly growing number of sorority women, which reveals the imperative need for an organized support and accountability system within each chapter.

The Christian based core values are at the foundation of each Greek organization because those are the values that the members believe each sister must stand by in order to be the best they can be. Revitalizing these values through the sharing of the Gospel and strengthening sorority women by alleviating the pressure created by the issues they

face will result in stronger women, and therefore stronger leaders. This project presented me with the wonderful opportunity for reflection on my past four years as a sorority woman on the University of South Carolina campus and the ability to leave behind a product for the future generations of sorority women to follow.

References

- Loh, C., Gidycz, C. A., Lobo, T. R. & Luthra, R. (2005). A Prospective Analysis of Sexual Assault Perpetration: Risk Factors Related to Perpetrator Characteristics. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 20 No. 10.
doi: 10.1177/088626050578528
- Minow, J. C. & Einolf, C. J. (2009). Sorority Participation and Sexual Assault Risk. *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 15, Issue 7, pp. 835-851.
doi: 10.1177/1077801209334472
- Mohler-Kuo, M., Dowdall, G. W., Koss, M. P. & Wechsler, H. (2003). Correlates of Rate while Intoxicated in a National Sample of College Women. *Journals of Studies on Alcohol*.
- NPC Foundation (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.npcwomen.org/foundation.aspx>.
- What is a Christian? (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.allaboutgod.com/what-is-a-christian.html>.
- Nurius, P. S., Norris, J., Dimeff, L. A. & Graham, T. L. (1996). Expectations Regarding Acquaintance Sexual Aggression Among Sorority and Fraternity Members. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 35(7-8), pp. 427-444). doi: 10.1007/BF01544130
- Rein, K. (2015, Aug. 18). U. of Alabama sorority criticized for recruitment video. *USA Today*. Retrieved from : <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2015/08/18/university-alabama-criticized-racially-homogeneous-recruitment-video/31900097/>

- Rolnik, A. M., Engeln-Maddox, R. & Miller, S. A. (2010). Here's Looking at You: Self-Objectification, Body Image Disturbance, and Sorority Rush. *Sex Roles*, 63(1), pp. 6-17. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9745-y
- Smith, C. (2003). Theorizing Religious Effects Among American Adolescents. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 42:1 pp. 17-30.

APPENDIX A: Survey Questionnaire

Sorority Women Bible Study Topic Questionnaire

(Please fill this form out only once and only if you are a sorority woman)

What are three things you find that you struggle with the most being a sorority woman (or a woman in college)?

1.

2.

3.

Which of these topics would you be the most interested in discussing and learning more about? (Select max of 5)

- ☐ Relationships
- ☐ Stress/anxiety
- ☐ Fear of the future
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Friendships
- ☐ Marriage
- ☐ Pride
- ☐ Body image
- ☐ Alcohol
- ☐ Sex
- ☐ Acceptance/approval
- ☐ Forgiveness

Greek Organization (optional): _____

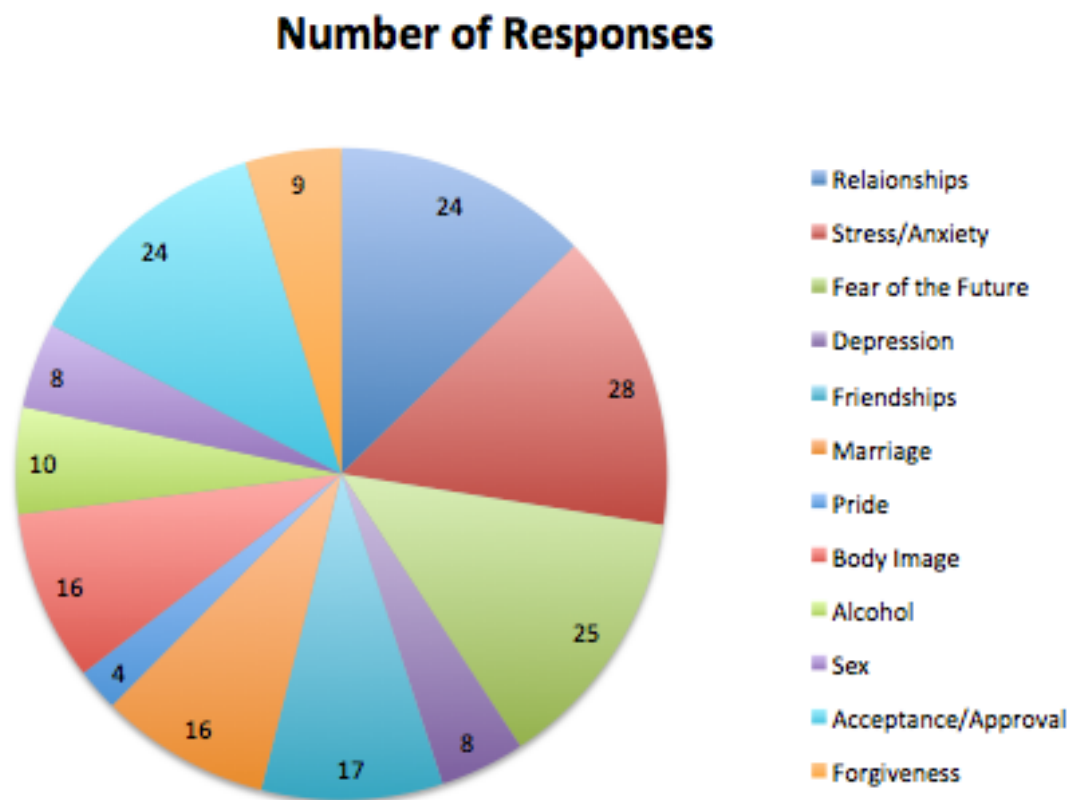
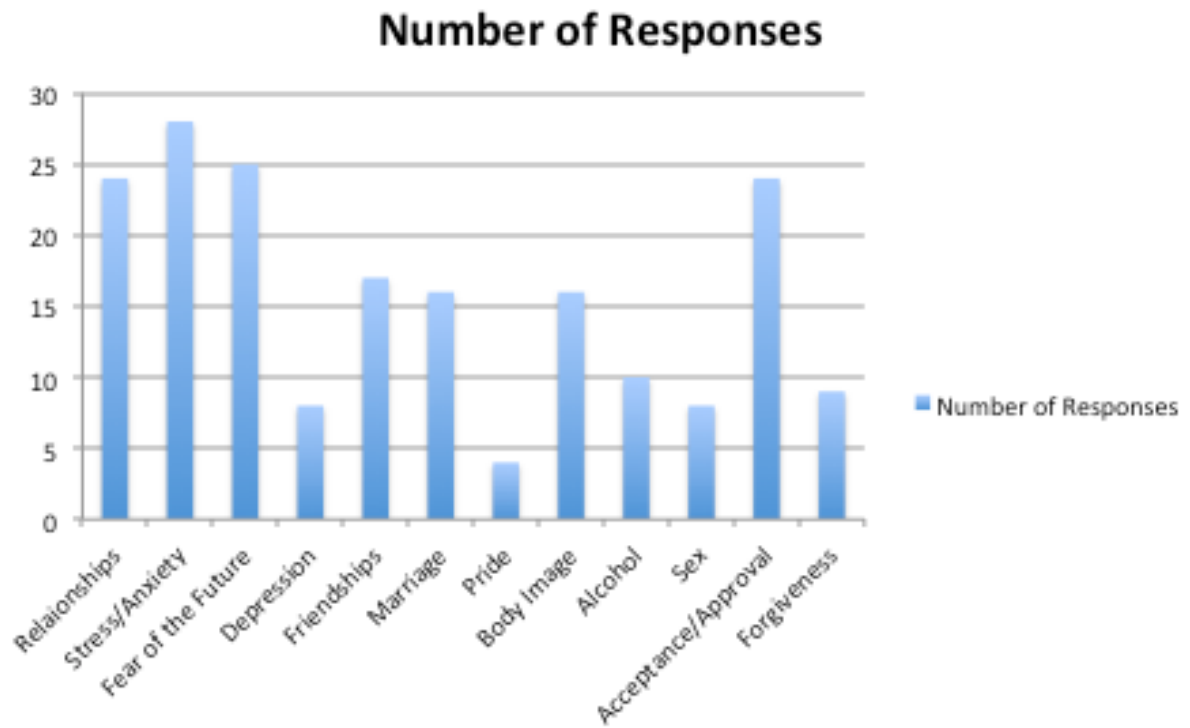
APPENDIX B: Survey Results: Open-Ended Section

Question presented: What are three things you find that you struggle with the most being a sorority woman (or a woman in college)?

- Contentment with where God has me
- Ministry and where that fits in with the business of college
- APPROVAL- Comparison
- ALCOHOL/SEX-Not being interested in the party scene
- Bringing up God in conversation, spreading the word, discipling others
- FRIENDSHIP- Supporting others who have no faith
- APPROVAL- Seeking approval
- BODY IMAGE- Body image
- FRIENDSHIPS- Social issues
- Pressure, being pressured into things I don't want to do, pressure to sin, peer pressure
- STRESS- Grades
- Staying true to Jesus
- ACCEPTANCE- Feeling disconnected (excluded)
- Wondering what the purpose of Greek life is
- ALCOHOL- Drinking, pressure to drink, drinking rules
- SEX- Sexual temptation
- BODY IMAGE- Appearance
- Temptation
- FRIENDSHIPS- Finding accountability
- FRIENDSHIPS- Finding friends who really care, finding the right friends
- ANXIETY- Prioritizing
- ALCOHOL- Drinking
- ACCEPTANCE/FRIENDSHIP- Finding community, community within sorority
- FRIENDSHIPS- Interacting with people of different values
- ANXIETY- Anxiety
- RELATIONSHIPS- Finding function dates
- ANXIETY- School stress/competition
- ANXIETY- Planning to much, lots of things going on at once
- Dues
- APPROVAL- Stereotypes
- Gossip
- FRIENDSHIPS- Roommates
- RELATIONSHIPS/SEX- Hookup culture/lack of morals among peers in general
- BODY IMAGE- Being ok with who I am, perception of one's self
- FOMO
- ANXIETY/STRESS- Stress/ trying to be perfect
- FRIENDSHIPS- Lack of opportunities in my sorority for Christian fellowship
- APPROVAL- Comparisons
- DEPRESSION- Loneliness

- **STRESS/ANXIETY** - Time management
- **RELATINONSHIPS** - Relationships with boys
- **FRIENDSHIPS** - Having very liberal friends and standing up for my beliefs
- Getting plugged in with bible study
- Staying safe, feeling safe
- Ignoring peoples comments about sororities that are negative, stereotypes that aren't fair
- Being religious in a sorority
- Being taken seriously
- Being respected in formal settings
- Getting past people's preconceived notion that I'm unintelligent and party all the time
- Finding a career
- Money management
- Being a science major
- **Love**

APPENDIX C: Survey Results: Selection Section



APPENDIX D: Five-Week Study

No Need to Stress About Stress!

Launch!

On a daily basis, what gives you the most anxiety or stress? What are some ways that you deal with your stress?

Explore!

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

What do you think it means to seek God's kingdom and righteousness?

What is this scripture telling you not to worry about?

Read Philippians 4:4-9.

What is this scripture telling us to do instead of spending time being anxious?

What is Paul encouraging us to do when we face anxiety?

Read 1 Peter 5:6-7.

What do these verses say about God?

What are these verses asking us to do in our relationship with God?

Read Isaiah 41:11-13.

What is God saying He will do for His people?

What is God's reasoning for you to not be afraid?

Apply!

Is there someone or something that you tend to turn towards during times of stress?

How often does what (or who) you turn to leave you feeling stress-free and satisfied?

What does God tell us is truly satisfying and comforting in the midst of our anxieties?

Fear of the Future

Launch!

What scares you about the future? If you could know exactly what your future held, would you choose to find out?

Explore!

Read Jeremiah 29:11-14.

What is God asking us to do in this passage?

What is God saying He will do for us?

Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

What does it mean that God will “make your paths straight”?

How can you acknowledge God in all ways?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.

How can we be comforted that the Lord guides us moment by moment?

What are some differences between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world?

Read Philippians 3:12-15.

What is Paul striving to take hold of?

What is the prize made possible to us through Christ?

Apply!

Can you think of a time where your life took an unexpected turn that ended up benefitting you or changing your life in a way you had not predicted? *Think when one door closes another door opens*

How can trusting in God relieve your anxiety and fears of what the future holds?

What are some ways you can turn towards God when you feel uncertain about your future?

Protect Your Heart

Launch!

What are the qualities that your ideal boyfriend/husband has? Of those, which are the 3 most important to you?

Explore!

Read Romans 12:9-21.

How do you define love? How does this passage define love?

How are we supposed to treat our enemies?

Read Psalm 37:3-4.

What is God asking you to do in this passage?

What do you think it means to delight yourself in the Lord?

Read Matthew 7:6.

Who do the dogs and pigs represent?

Translate this metaphor in your own words.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

What contrasts/oppositions are made in this passage and what purpose do they serve?

What is promised to believers and denied from nonbelievers?

Apply!

What men do you choose to surround yourself with? Are they lifting you up or holding you back? Do they push you to be the best version of yourself and do you do the same for them?

What kinds of relationships do you invest your time and heart in? Do they bring you true satisfaction?

God will care for your heart in ways no man on earth can. How can you foster and grow in your relationship with God?

Be Who You Are

Launch!

What does it mean to be accepted? Who do you seek approval from?

Explore!

Read 1 Peter 5:8-10.

Who is the enemy Peter is talking about?

What does Peter say God is asking us to do and what is God's response to us?

Read Psalm 118:6-9.

Why should we not be afraid if the Lord is with us?

Who is this passage telling you to place your trust in?

Read Galatians 1:6-10.

Who is Paul addressing and what is he accusing them of?

What is this scripture saying about seeking approval from man?

Read Mark 14:66-72.

Who does Peter lie to about knowing Jesus?

How does Peter lie about knowing Jesus?

Apply!

Overall, what benefits have you found from seeking approval from other people?

What benefits will you receive from seeking approval from God instead of man?

What are some ways we can change our hearts to seek approval from God instead of people around us?

You've Got a Friend in God

Launch!

What values do you think are the most important for a successful and healthy friendship?

Explore!

Read John 15:9-17.

How is Jesus defining friendship in these verses?

What is the significance of being a friend of God as opposed to being a servant? Is there any overlap?

Read Colossians 3:12-17.

According to this scripture, what attitudes are we supposed to have towards others?

What advice does this passage give us about daily person-to-person interactions?

Read Proverbs 13:20 and 27:17.

According to Proverbs 13:20, who would be considered as a fool?

Rewrite the metaphor in Proverbs 27:17 in your own words.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

What is this verse saying about living in community?

What is this passage saying about relationships and how can we live this out in our own lives?

Apply!

Where do you see ways we can imitate Jesus in these scriptures?

In what ways can we look to Jesus in being a better friend? What steps can we take to build relationships that reflect Jesus?

There are often times when we feel completely alone, but God is always with us and he wants to be our very best friend. He wants you to come to him in times of sadness and despair, but also in times of joy and happiness. Those who you spend time with you will become more like, so how can you strive to become more like God?

No Need to Stress About Stress!

Launch!

On a daily basis, what gives you the most anxiety or stress? What are some ways that you deal with your stress?

Explore!

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

The author of Matthew is anonymous.

What do you think it means to seek God's kingdom and righteousness?

This means that we need to honor God in everything that we do and make Him our priority. Worry is inconsistent with seeking God first and foremost, because it doubts the sovereignty of God and distracts us from the purpose of life (to honor God). God will meet the needs of those who risk all for Him. Is this something you must remember to do every day or should it become second nature?

What is this scripture telling you not to worry about?

Things that God knows you need.

Definition of sovereignty: supreme power or authority; a self-governing state

Read Philippians 4:4-9.

Written by Paul to the Philippians to thank them and encourage them to unite with each other for Christ.

What is this scripture telling us to do instead of spending time being anxious?

Come to God in prayer and petition, thanksgiving, talk to Him about requests that we have. It is not easy to wake up one day and decide not be anxious about anything, it takes time and prayer.

****Notice the God of peace juxtaposed with the alternative of a life without God filled with anxiety.***

Read 1 Peter 5:6-7.

What do these verses say about God?

That He is mighty. That He has the ability and the desire to lift you up. That He cares an indefinite amount about you.

What is Paul encouraging us to do when we face anxiety?

Turn to the Lord and rejoice in Him. Lean on Him and unload your burdens. He is always there to support you.

What are these verses asking us to do in our relationship with God?

Humble ourselves and cast our anxieties on Him, which involves us trusting Him.

Read Isaiah 41:11-13.

What is God saying He will do for His people?

Defend them against enemies. Be on our team.

What is God's reasoning for you to not be afraid?

Because He is omnipotent and all-powerful and He is extending His help to us.

****Notice the physical contact God extends towards those who believe in Him. He says He will take hold of your hand and help you.***

Apply!

Is there someone or something that you tend to turn towards during times of stress?

How often does what (or who) you turn to leave you feeling stress-free and satisfied?

What does God tell us is truly satisfying and comforting in the midst of our anxieties?

Anxiety comes from earthly flaws and expectations that society declares are of the utmost importance. If we seek satisfaction through these routes (such as getting an A on a test, getting the best paying job, having the most friends, getting attention from boys) we will constantly be disappointed and anxious over what we did wrong. We constantly try to improve and say "I just need to do better" or "I just need to be better" but this is not the answer. The answer is to turn to God and seek out His righteousness. God knows that this world is full of pressures, but He wants you to know you can find relief and success in Him. He promises to always provide for His children.

Fear of the Future

Launch!

What scares you about the future? If you could know exactly what your future held, would you choose to find out?

Explore!

Read Jeremiah 29:11-14.

Jeremiah was written by Jeremiah, a Judean prophet.

What is God asking us to do in this passage?

Pray and look to Him for guidance and answers.

What is God saying He will do for us?

Listen to us, be found/available to us, know His plans for us, not to harm us, to prosper us, to give us hope, to give us a future.

Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

What does it mean to lean on your own understanding?

To think that you know what is best for you. Oftentimes this means that we ask for God to make life turn out exactly the way you want. We must trust in God's plan for us and remember that He is all knowing, gracious and immensely loving.

How can you acknowledge God in all ways?

This means to know God. Knowing God means you obey his teachings and foster a relationship with Him. You trust in Him and look towards Him always.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.

A letter written to the Corinthian Church by Paul.

How can we be comforted that the Lord guides us moment by moment?

Because God has a plan for us and has our best interests at heart. He loves us beyond our wildest imagination and He will never leave our side. (Footprints in the Sand by Mary Fishback Powers poem)

What are some differences between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world?

The spirit of the world comes from man's mind and perception of oneself. The Spirit of God is one with God and is all knowing of God's divine plans for man.

****Note that these wonderful preparations are made for those who LOVE GOD and KNOW GOD.***

Read Philippians 3:12-15.

Written by Paul and Timothy to Philippi.

What is Paul striving to take hold of?

Paul is talking about the benefits of salvation. He knows that he is not perfect, but strives to be like Jesus daily in order to achieve the goal of salvation's heavenly reward.

What is the prize made possible to us through Christ?

Christ paid the ultimate price of death for our sins so that we may dwell with Him in heaven for eternity and can escape the wrath of hell.

Apply!

Can you think of a time where your life took an unexpected turn that ended up benefitting you or changing your life in a way you had not predicted? *Think when one door closes another door opens*

Everything happens for a reason.

How can trusting in God relieve your anxiety and fears of what the future holds?

God knows you better than anyone. Better than your parents or your best friend. He knows how many hairs are on your head, every thought that passes through your mind, your hopes, dreams, ambitions, and best of all He knows your future and He has a plan for you! Plans to prosper and not to harm you.

What are some ways you can turn towards God when you feel uncertain about your future?

You can pray, read the Bible, have faith in God the Father Almighty.

Protect Your Heart

Launch!

What are the qualities that your ideal boyfriend/husband has? Of those, which are the 3 most important to you?

Explore!

Read Romans 12:9-21.

How do you define love? How does this passage define love?

As sincere, can be shown by serving the Lord, living peacefully with others, being hospitable, relate to/support others emotionally.

How are we supposed to treat our enemies?
With kindness and love. It is not our job to judge anyone or put ourselves above anyone. Love should be at the core of everything we do and who we are.

Read Psalm 37:3-4.

What is God asking you to do in this passage?

Trust in the Lord and abide by His laws. If you abide by His laws you will be safe, protected by the Lord.

What do you think it means to delight yourself in the Lord?
It means to find true fulfillment and satisfaction in the Lord. It involves fostering a real personal relationship with Him, and finding joy and pleasure in that relationship.

Read Matthew 7:6.

Who do the dogs and pigs represent?

They symbolize dirtiness or uncleanness. Those who have not accepted God's mercy and are covered in their sin. We are made pure and clean through accepting Christ, but those who do not accept Him are not covered by His perfection.

Translate this metaphor in your own words.
Do not give yourself to those who are unworthy for they will tear you apart and soil the goodness bestowed upon you by the Lord.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

What contrasts/oppositions are made in this passage and what purpose do they serve?

Righteousness/wickedness, light/dark, believers/unbelievers, Christ/Belial, temple of God/idols. They show that believers and unbelievers do not belong together.

What is promised to believers and denied from nonbelievers?
That the Lord will be a father to believers and He will receive us as His children.

****Belial means wicked and lawless and was a term used to describe Satan in the Old Testament.***

Apply!

What men do you choose to surround yourself with? Are they lifting you up or holding you back? Do they push you to be the best version of yourself and do you do the same for them?

Even if a nonbeliever is not dragging you down or pulling you away from what you believe, not pushing you to be better and holding you back is essentially pulling you down.

What kinds of relationships do you invest your time and heart in? Do they bring you true satisfaction?

God will care for your heart in ways no man on earth can. How can you foster and grow in your relationship with God?

Prayer, reading His Word, fellowship, worship.

Be Who You Are

Launch!

What does it mean to be accepted? Who do you seek approval from?

Explore!

Read 1 Peter 5:8-10.

Who is the enemy Peter is talking about?

Satan

What does Peter say God is asking us to do and what is God's response to us?

Stand firm in our faith, resist Satan, know that we are not alone in our suffering. He will make us strong, firm and steadfast.

Read Psalm 118:6-9.

Why should we not be afraid if the Lord is with us?

Because there is nothing that man can do greater than the Lord can.

Who is this passage telling you to place your trust in?

Not in humans or princes because they have no authority or power over God.

Read Galatians 1:6-10.

Who is Paul addressing and what is he accusing them of?

Galatians, he is accusing them of disregarding Jesus and the gospel truth.

What is this scripture saying about seeking approval from man?

That seeking approval from man has no value, there is no reward and that it does not make you a servant of Christ.

Read Mark 14:66-72.

Who does Peter lie to about knowing Jesus?

Twice to a servant girl and then to people around him.

How does Peter lie about knowing Jesus?

He denies Jesus' name, he curses, swears and shows anger towards people who are asking him if he knows Jesus.

Apply!

Overall, what benefits have you found from seeking approval from other people?

What benefits will you receive from seeking approval from God instead of man?

What are some ways we can change our hearts to seek approval from God instead of people around us?

Learn to be more confident in ourselves because God made us perfectly in His image. We are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

You've Got a Friend in God

Launch!

What values do you think are the most important for a successful and healthy friendship?

Explore!

Read John 15:9-17.

How is Jesus defining friendship in these verses?

He is defining our relationship with Him as a friendship, and says that a friendship with Him is achieved by following His commandments and sharing His gospel (what He has learned from His Father and has taught us). He also says that we are chosen specifically by Him. Notice the repeated use of the word "love" which is the key element in His definition of friendship.

Read Colossians 3:12-17.

According to this scripture, what attitudes are we supposed to have towards others?

"Clothe yourself with..." means to take on the character of the Lord himself. In other words, strive to be like God.

Forgive others, love others, be thankful, do everything in the name of God and for His glory.

Read Proverbs 13:20 and 27:17.

According to Proverbs 13:20, who would be considered as a fool?

Someone who is not knowledgeable, and in this metaphor who is not knowledgeable about God and Jesus' sacrifice for us.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

What is this verse saying about living in community?

That we are supposed to live in fellowship with one another. God does not want us to be alone but to support each other in Christ. We just must remember to not run towards one another and earthly things, but

What is the significance of being a friend of God as opposed to being a servant? Is there any overlap?

The change from servant to friends occurred when God shared His plans and promises to us. He confides in us and makes promises to us. In our relationships with God we should be serving Him and His purpose.

What advice does this passage give us about daily person-to-person interactions?

Forgive others, teach other and encourage others. Forgiveness happens inside you, teaching happens outside of yourself, and encouragement occurs between you and others. All parts of your life should be centered on striving to be like Jesus.

Rewrite the metaphor in Proverbs 27:17 in your own words.

The people who you surround yourself with will influence you and who you are, so surround yourself with people who will better you and push you forward.

run together towards God. Fellowship places God, the everlasting God, at the center of relationships.

What is this passage saying about relationships and how can we live this out in our own lives?

Apply!

Where do you see ways we can imitate Jesus in these scriptures?

In what ways can we look to Jesus in being a better friend? What steps can we take to build relationships that reflect Jesus?

There are often times when we feel completely alone, but God is always with us and he wants to be our very best friend. He wants you to come to him in times of sadness and despair, but also in times of joy and happiness. Those who you spend time with you will become more like, so how can you strive to become more like God?

Verses Guide

(New International Version)

No Need to Stress About Stress!

Matthew 6:25-34

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27** Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? **28** “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30** If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Philippians 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. **7** Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Isaiah 41:11-13

11

“All who rage against you
will surely be ashamed and disgraced;
those who oppose you
will be as nothing and perish.

12

Though you search for your enemies,
you will not find them.
Those who wage war against you
will be as nothing at all.

13

For I am the Lord your God
who takes hold of your right hand

and says to you, Do not fear;
I will help you.

Fear of the Future

Jeremiah 29:11-14

11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. **12** Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. **13** You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

5

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

6

in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

1 Corinthians 2:9-13

9 However, as it is written:

“What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived”—

the things God has prepared for those who love him—

10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. **11** For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. **12** What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. **13** This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

Philippians 3:12-15

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. **13** Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

Protect Your Heart

Romans 12:9-21

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep

your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. **20** On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Psalm 37:3-4

3

Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

4

Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Matthew 7:6

6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **15** What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? **16** What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will live with them
and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they will be my people."

17 Therefore,

"Come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."

18 And,

“I will be a Father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty.”

Be Who You Are

1 Peter 5:8-10

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **9** Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Psalm 118:6-9

6

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?

7

The Lord is with me; he is my helper.

I look in triumph on my enemies.

8

It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in humans.

9

It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes.

Galatians 1:6-10

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— **7** which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! **9** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Mark 14:66-72

66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. **67** When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

“You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said.

68 But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway.^[a]

69 When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” **70** Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”

71 He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.”

72 Immediately the rooster crowed the second time.^[b] Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice^[c] you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

You’ve Got a Friend in God

John 15:9-17

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. **17** This is my command: Love each other.

Colossians 3:12-17

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Proverbs 13:20 and 27:17

20

Walk with the wise and become wise,
for a companion of fools suffers harm.

17

As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

9

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:

10

If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.