



Forum for
Theological
Exploration



Pilgrimage

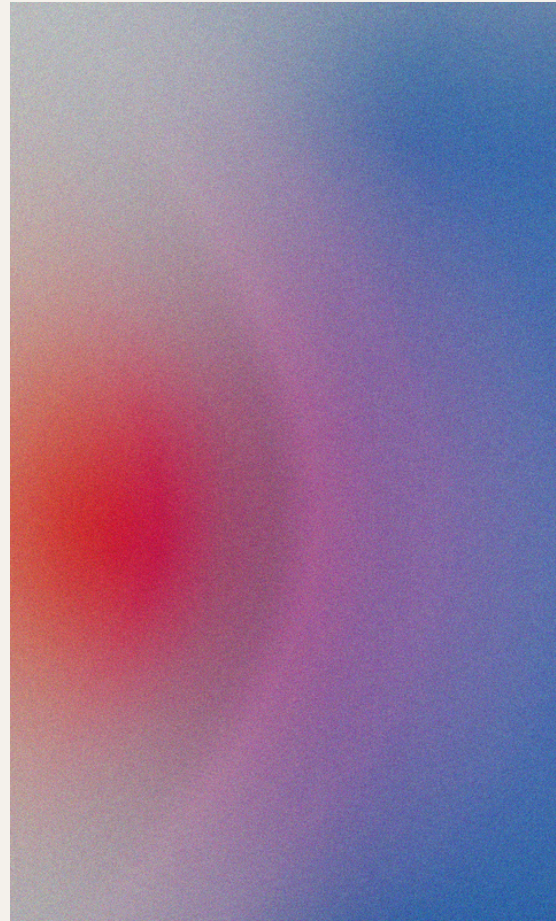
Niner United @ UNC Charlotte
Rev. Stephen Cheyney

Part of the UKIRK Launch Series

INVITING STUDENTS TO DISCOVER WHO THEY ARE,
WHO GOD IS,
THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN THEM,
AND HOW THEY ARE CALLED TO SERVE AND LEAD

Contents

- Program Overview
- 2022 Mediterranean Pilgrimage Packet
- 2023 Pre-Reading
- 2023 Pilgrimage Packet
- 2025 Pilgrimage Packet





Pilgrimage

Niner United, UNC Charlotte

Rev. Stephen Cheyney

Basic summary of the program:

Europe is a spiritual formation journey that invites college students to explore the landscapes where faith first took root and where it was later reshaped by reformers. From the Roman roads walked by Paul to the cathedral doors nailed with protest, this program offers a path of intentional travel through places that still echo with the questions and convictions of Christian history. Rooted in the tradition of pilgrimage, students visit sacred and historical sites across Italy and central Europe. Stops may include Rome, Assisi, and Milan, where the early Church took form and where Paul's legacy still shapes Christian identity. From there, students may travel to Geneva, Wittenberg, or Zurich, retracing the bold steps of reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. Along the way, they engage in theological reflection, communal prayer, storytelling, and silence.

We began this pilgrimage with grant funds and only charged each student \$1,250 for the trip. Now that we do them without grant funds, our lodging is a bit less glamorous, and the students are responsible for lunches, and any individual public transportation in cities (buses or metro). We will pay for group Ubers or charter buses. Our last pilgrimage that we just got back from, 16 nights in Europe was \$2,500 per student (including airfare). Students are also responsible for meals in airports, or train stations (basically when on the move). We do take a lot of trains in Europe but the need to pay for a meal has really only been needed in airports, because we never are in train stations connecting during your typical meal time.

Brief description of why the program is designed or organized the way it is:

This pilgrimage is built around movement and memory. When students walk the roads where Paul preached or stand in the pulpit where Luther challenged the Church, theology becomes tangible. Faith is no longer abstract. It becomes embodied, shaped by place and story. We designed this journey as a way to slow down and pay attention. The train rides, the city streets, the worn stones of medieval chapels all ask something of the traveler. Each place prompts a question: What does it mean to belong to this faith? What needs to be preserved? What must be reformed? By taking students out of their routines and placing them in the tension between tradition and transformation, we open space for deep listening. This is not religious tourism. It is pilgrimage, on purpose, with prayer, and for growth.

What do you hope the students discern, discover, or reflect upon during their participation?

We want students to discover:

- Themselves as pilgrims, not tourists, formed by grace, shaped by struggle, and led by curiosity
- A living connection to the global Church, past and present
- Their calling not just as a career path, but as a witness to the Gospel in a broken world
- The tensions of Church history: beauty and brokenness, courage and compromise
- Their own role as faithful questioners, reformers, and restorers
- The friendships formed across miles and borders as sacred companions for the road ahead

What action(s) do you hope their participation inspires after the program or experience is over in both the short-term and long-term?

Short-Term:

Students return with sharpened vision. They are more grounded in their faith, more fluent in its history, and more engaged with their questions. They reenter campus life with a deeper sense of call and a greater willingness to wrestle.

Long-Term:

We hope this pilgrimage marks a turning point. Whether students pursue seminary, social work, science, or public service, we want them to lead with wisdom and humility. A pilgrim's heart walks with conviction but stays open. It seeks both tradition and truth. Many past participants have gone on to pursue theological education, community organizing, or congregational leadership shaped by what they saw and felt on this journey.

What have you discerned, discovered, seen or reflected upon as you have engaged students in this program/practice?

Pilgrimage makes faith stick. When students climb the steps of St. Peter's or look out over the Wartburg Castle, something shifts. They begin to see their own questions reflected in the ancient struggles of the Church. They stop performing and start searching. Some leave with deeper confidence. Others leave with harder questions. Both responses are holy. We've seen students fall in love with silence. We've seen them laugh in languages they don't speak. We've watched courage form quietly, through small steps taken on unfamiliar streets. Pilgrimage doesn't give students all the answers. It gives them the tools to live the questions well.

NINER UNITED



MEDITERRANEAN PILGRIMAGE 2022

Niner United

Mediterranean Pilgrimage

May 20 - June 2

- ☐ May 20 - CLT to FCO
- ☐ May 21 - Rome Airport to Norwegian Escape
- ☐ May 22 - At Sea
- ☐ May 23 - Santorini, Greece
- ☐ May 24 - Athens, Greece
- ☐ May 25 - Corfu, Greece
- ☐ May 26 - Valletta, Malta
- ☐ May 27 - Messina/Sicily, Italy
- ☐ May 28 - Naples/Capri, Italy
- ☐ May 29 - Florence, Italy
- ☐ May 30 - Cannes, France
- ☐ May 31 - Rome, Italy
- ☐ June 1 - Rome, Italy
- ☐ June 2 - FCO to EWR to CLT

The Mediterranean World in Early Christianity

The Roman Empire cast a long shadow leading up to and following the birth and death of Jesus. When Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus (also known as Octavian and Julius Caesar) was the first emperor. According to Luke's Gospel, Caesar Augustus ordered a census of the entire Empire, probably for tax considerations. Because Palestine was a part of the Empire, Joseph accompanied his pregnant wife, Mary, to Bethlehem to register. Joseph descended from David's home and lineage in Bethlehem. Except for Caesar Augustus' order, Joseph and Mary would not have needed to leave Nazareth for the birth of their child.

Jesus came to Jerusalem as an adult for the Jewish Passover celebration. There were thousands of pilgrims from all over the world, and the temple offered services such as currency exchange and animal sacrifice. Jesus was enraged. He thought that such trading polluted the sacredness of his Jewish faith. So, according to John's Gospel, Jesus tore down the moneylenders' stalls and drove them all out of the temple. This outburst infuriated religious authorities and threatened to destabilize Rome's delicate stability. On an accusation of treason, Jesus was captured and crucified, a usual method of punishment for sentenced criminals. To the Romans, Jesus' followers were small in number; however, by crucifying Jesus, the Romans essentially launched a new religious movement that would eventually spread throughout Rome and the world.

Paul the Apostle (born Saul of Tarsus) is the most prominent writer of the New Testament and one of the leaders of the first generation of Christians. He is frequently considered the most important figure in the history of Christianity after Jesus. Despite his importance in the emerging Christian movement, he had many opponents. His contemporaries did not regard him with the same reverence as Peter and James (the brother of Jesus). As a result, Paul battled to establish his value and authority. In the process, he established (and helped to

establish) several churches around the Roman Empire, making the Christian movement rapidly flourish. His letters (known as Epistles) have had an enormous impact on Christian theology. While Christians were developing notable traditions away from the Mediterranean and outside the Roman Empire (in places like Armenia, Ethiopia, and India), most Christians in the world trace their tradition of the faith that Paul first spread in the Mediterranean.

Mark 4:35-41

"On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?""

Thoughts

The disciples have been described as "fearful" at several important "passages" in their journey with Jesus. The stormy boat crossing here is one example. To follow Jesus, in fact, is quite a demanding task.

- What were the demands of early discipleship vs. discipleship today?

- Does the prevalence and "power" of Christianity today alter Jesus' message as a prophet working against power and the elite?

Santorini, Greece

Santorini is a volcanic caldera. The Minoan Volcano erupted around 1600 BCE, wreaking massive damage across the region. While the plagues of Egypt, recorded in the Exodus, may have a metaphorical twist, geologists think actual volcanic activity caused the majority of the plagues. The Bible's account of darkness, for example, might be attributed to molten ash and pumice.

The 3rd or 4th century saw the arrival of Christianity on Santorini. Marco Sanudo controlled Santorini and the rest of the Aegean Sea islands when the Crusaders of the 4th Crusade captured Constantinople in 1204. The Crusaders gave the island the name of Santorini, after a cathedral dedicated to Saint Irene (Santa Irini). Near Pyrgos village lies a monastery dedicated to the prophet Elijah. The monastery was founded in 1711.

Exodus 9:13-16

"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues upon you yourself, your officials, and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. Indeed, by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power and to make my name resound through all the earth'"

Thoughts

The Exodus transformed the Jewish people entirely whereas Exodus morality meant giving justice to the weak and the poor. Theological themes like salvation, redemption, freedom, and liberation set the stage for the Christian faith. The secret of the impact of the Exodus is that it does not present itself as

history, but rather as experience. In chapters 7-9 the Exodus present 10 plagues that caused great destruction.

- Today so many people think God causes destruction to teach and/or help the faithful. However, what are some different faithful ways to explain the ten plagues?

- The Israelites felt that God favors them. In some cases, we do see God's favoritism. What are some examples?

- Have you felt God's favoritism? Do you think this is good or bad, and why?

Athens, Greece

We'll follow the old Panathenaic approach through Athens to the Acropolis and the Propylaia. On this route, Paul delivered the Areopagus sermon (at Mars Hill), recorded in Acts 17:16–34. Around the year 52, Paul arrived in Athens by boat, arriving in the same port as us. While in Athens, Paul spent most of his time at the agora, which is located northwest of the Acropolis. However, to Paul's displeasure, few believed Paul's teachings, prompting him to flee Athens for Corinth and Thessalonika.

Acts 17:16-34

"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.' (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.' Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is

not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

Thoughts

- How does Paul use Greek culture to relate to the men of Athens?
- Paul doesn't use scripture. How can you tell the gospel without quoting the Bible?

Corfu, Greece

While we relax on the beach, we should be aware that Corfu has over 250 churches and monasteries located around the island and is known worldwide for its Easter celebrations. During Paul's second missionary voyage to Salonika, Jason was one of the people who hosted him. The commotion caused by Paul's message spread to Jason's residence, where Paul finished his sermon. Jason traveled to Corfu and preached effectively. He was imprisoned, though, and died a martyr.

Corfiots revere Saint Spyridon as the island's Keeper. When the plague struck Corfu in 1629, it began in the villages and swiftly spread to the town. The Corfiots gathered at Saint Spyridon's church to pray to him for salvation. Many sick people had visions of the Saint healing them days before Easter, and according to legend, mysterious lights were observed in the church's bell tower for three nights. The plague disappeared by Palm Sunday.

Jonah 2:1-9

"Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying,

*"I called to the LORD out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.*

*You cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.*

*Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
how shall I look again
upon your holy temple?'*

*The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head
at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O LORD my God.
As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.
Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.
But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the LORD!"*

Thoughts

- Should prayer be considered primarily as a means of developing a relationship with God rather than a means of receiving answers? Why is it so difficult to reconcile this?
- Jonah said "I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me"
- What do you do when a prayer is not answered (as you thought it would be)?
- How can you make a trip to the beach at Corfu, a time of prayer?

Valletta, Malta

Acts 28:1 mentions Malta as the location where Paul shipwrecked on his way to Rome. In Paul's mind, God utilized a shipwreck and his status as a Roman prisoner to convey the gospel to those who would have never heard it otherwise. Acts describes the ordeal in considerable detail, saying that the islanders were courteous and sympathetic to the shipwrecked crew and passengers, providing shelter, food, and hospitality. The harbor on Malta's east coast where Paul's ship sank is known as St. Paul's Bay, about 25km north of Valletta.

Paul stayed in Malta for three months (technically as a Roman prisoner) before leaving for Rome. The Maltese people were impressed by Paul's miracles, and the gospel was strengthened. The people of Malta were so cordial with Paul that by the time another ship was ready to convey them to Rome, they had loaded the missionaries down with provisions and wished them well on their voyage.

Acts 27:39-28:10

"In the morning they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned to run the ship ashore, if they could. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea. At the same time they loosened the ropes that tied the steering-oars; then hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. But striking a reef, they ran the ship aground; the bow stuck and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the force of the waves. The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none might swim away and escape; but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest to follow, some on planks and others on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was

cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us around it. Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god. Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It so happened that the father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him. After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They bestowed many honors on us, and when we were about to sail, they put on board all the provisions we needed."

Thoughts

- As we sail across the sea, being shipwrecked is a terrifying thought. Imagine Paul being shipwrecked. How did he use something disastrous in his life for good?

- Paul wrote in Romans 8:28, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." How has God used something bad that has happened to you for good?

Messina (Sicily), Italy

Both Peter and Paul, according to mythology, brought Christianity to Messina. When Jesus' mother, Mary, learned of the Messenians' conversion by Paul, locals believe she addressed a letter to them. A tiny, flimsy canvas with two inscriptions is kept in the Regional Museum of Messina. The first is in Italian, and the second is in Chinese. However, forensic scientists identify the letter as the manuscript by the Sicilian Jesuit Metello Saccano, a missionary in China in the 17th century.

Despite this, the letter ends with "Vos et ipsam civitatem benedicimus" (I bestow my benediction upon you and your city). These lines are carved into the wall of the Messina Cathedral, beside a tableau depicting Mary and Paul holding the letter. Of note, the cathedral houses the world's largest and most sophisticated mechanical and astronomical clock.

Luke 1:46-55

*"And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,*

*in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.””*

Thoughts

- This passage in Luke is called The Magnificat (Latin for magnify). How has your soul been magnified so far during this trip?
- We look up to Mary as possibly the greatest saint because she said yes to God. The people of Malta also said yes to God, even before they knew it, by helping Paul. What new things can you do to say yes to God?

Capri (Naples), Italy

Augustus was the first to "discover" Capri in the early Roman Empire. Capri, however, was not highly populated or visited since it was frequently raided by pirates and left to fend for itself. As a result, the island's economy, which was based entirely on fishing, suffered a setback. The oldest church on the island is Chiesa di San Costanzo, which is devoted to Capri's patron saint, Constantius of Capri. Little is known about him (literally only two scholarly articles exist about him, both dating to the 1800s). The church was built on the site of an ancient Roman basilica in the 5th century.

John 10:22-39

"At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.' The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?' The Jews answered, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.' Jesus answered, 'Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled— can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in

the Father.” Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.”

Thoughts

- Because he was confident of his relationship with the Father, Jesus always risked his reputation to openly love everyone and confront injustice everywhere. Is your identity in the radical nature of Jesus, or in something else?
- Fear of pirates prevented Christian missionaries from reaching Capri. How does this make you feel? What acts of discipleship have you been to coward to work on?
- How can we be bold and audacious and bear a confident witness of our faith to the world?

Florence, Italy

When you first arrive in Florence, you will immediately notice the stunning Duomo, also known as the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. The current structure dates from 1436. However, the first structure was dedicated as a church by St. Ambrose of Milan in 393.

In 1439 the Duomo hosted the Council of Florence, an assembly of Catholic and Orthodox bishops. The Council s considered the Seventeenth Ecumenical Council by Catholics, but the first to bring Catholicism's Western and Eastern branches together. The Council convened amid a period marked by poverty, pestilence, and conflict. Because religion and state were so intimately interwoven, it was essential to unite the Eastern and Western churches to fortify Constantinople against its foes. Unity was desired for various reasons, but political strength appears to be the most convincing. In fact, the bishops who had attended the Council were ostracized, and some were jailed as traitors and heretics. The rift between East and West persisted until 1453 when the Muslims captured Constantinople, and the Byzantine Empire disintegrated due to political pressure against merging with Rome.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not

with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power."

Thoughts

- Division has always plagued the people of God. Paul addresses the problem of factionalism with a positive appeal for the Corinthians to "be in agreement." What are some disagreements and divisions in the church that trouble you?
- The assembly that gathered in Florence sought unity over division. In what ways can we be unified in our community, without necessarily giving in or selling ourselves or our faith out?

Cannes, France

According to legend, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and a few other friends were exiled from Jerusalem and sailed the Mediterranean in a rickety boat, landing in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in Arles, some 250 kilometers west of Cannes. However, the oldest documented accounts of Christians in France come from the 2nd century, when Irenaeus described the martyrdom of Bishop Pothinus of Lugdunum (Lyon) and other martyrs during the 177 persecution in Lyon.

The monks of Lérins, whose abbots were rulers of Cannes, defended France in the 4th century and erected fortifications under Pointe du Chevalier in the 10th century to protect against Muslim sea pirates. Napoleon stationed his little army outside the hamlet on the first night of his return from Elba. Lord Brougham, who was prohibited from entering Nice by quarantine procedures in 1834, stopped in the fishing town of Cannes. Overwhelmed by its beauty, he constructed a summer holiday home and gave Cannes its international notoriety.

Philippians 2:1-11

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.*

*And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”*

Thoughts

- The monks of Lérins felt a call to protect their land. In what ways can we look beyond ourselves to protect our neighbors?

- If we are to count others more significant than ourselves, how do we determine “which” others? Also, can we go too far and make protecting others, harming others?

Rome, Italy (Day 1)

We've finally arrived in Rome, the ultimate destination for Paul. Although Paul did not start the church in Rome, his Epistle to the Romans contains his most detailed account of the Gospel. That letter was his introduction to the Roman church, which had only heard of him but had never seen him or heard him preach. The world's stability, which Rome provided, permitted the Gospel to expand quickly. There was a shared language in Rome that made it easier to disseminate the message. More so, Rome constructed an enormous road infrastructure that made travel simpler and, therefore, aided in the spread of the Gospel.

Due to Roman governance, crime was at an all-time low for the period, making travel safer for first-century apostles and missionaries. Nonetheless, Christianity was a risky business in Ancient Rome. The impoverished and enslaved were frequently the earliest converts. Yet, if they were discovered, they would be executed for refusing to worship the emperor. Christianity was outlawed, and Christians were persecuted for many years. In Ancient Rome, feeding Christians to the lions was considered entertainment.

The most famous religious site in the world is the Vatican. The Constantinian Basilica, where the Vatican is today, was built in 326 on top of what is considered to be Peter's tomb. A palace was erected during Pope Symmachus' fifth-century reign. Between 318 and 322 C.E., the construction of the first church, St. Old Peter's Basilica, started. The Popes gradually gained influence over neighboring provinces, and when Catholicism became the Roman Empire's official religion in 380, the Pope's power rose even more. Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Pope served as a source of authority and continuity; yet, the Eastern Roman Emperor kept control of the church for several decades. However, Vatican City was not established as an independent state in its present form until 1929.

Romans 1:6

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith.""

Thoughts

- Rome is where it all is. The city will be overwhelming. How can you calm your senses, and soak it in? In what ways can we just linger in Rome?
- Romans is the most quoted biblical book of all time. Pastors, scholars, and Christians of all types throughout the centuries have raided the letter to find meaning, themes, and theologies. Like the way we should take in the city, maybe Paul would rather us linger in Romans. What does it mean to linger with this passage?

Rome, Italy (Day 2)

The earliest pilgrims of the faith traveled to Rome. In 1553, Philip Neri began a Roman pilgrimage, inviting Christians from all over the world to visit the "seven churches of Rome." Let us look for the seven on our journey through Rome:

1. Basilica of St. John Lateran
2. St. Peter's Basilica
3. Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls
4. Basilica of St. Mary Major
5. Basilica of Saint Lawrence outside the Walls
6. Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem
7. Sanctuary of Our Lady of Divine Love

Genesis 12:1-9

"Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to

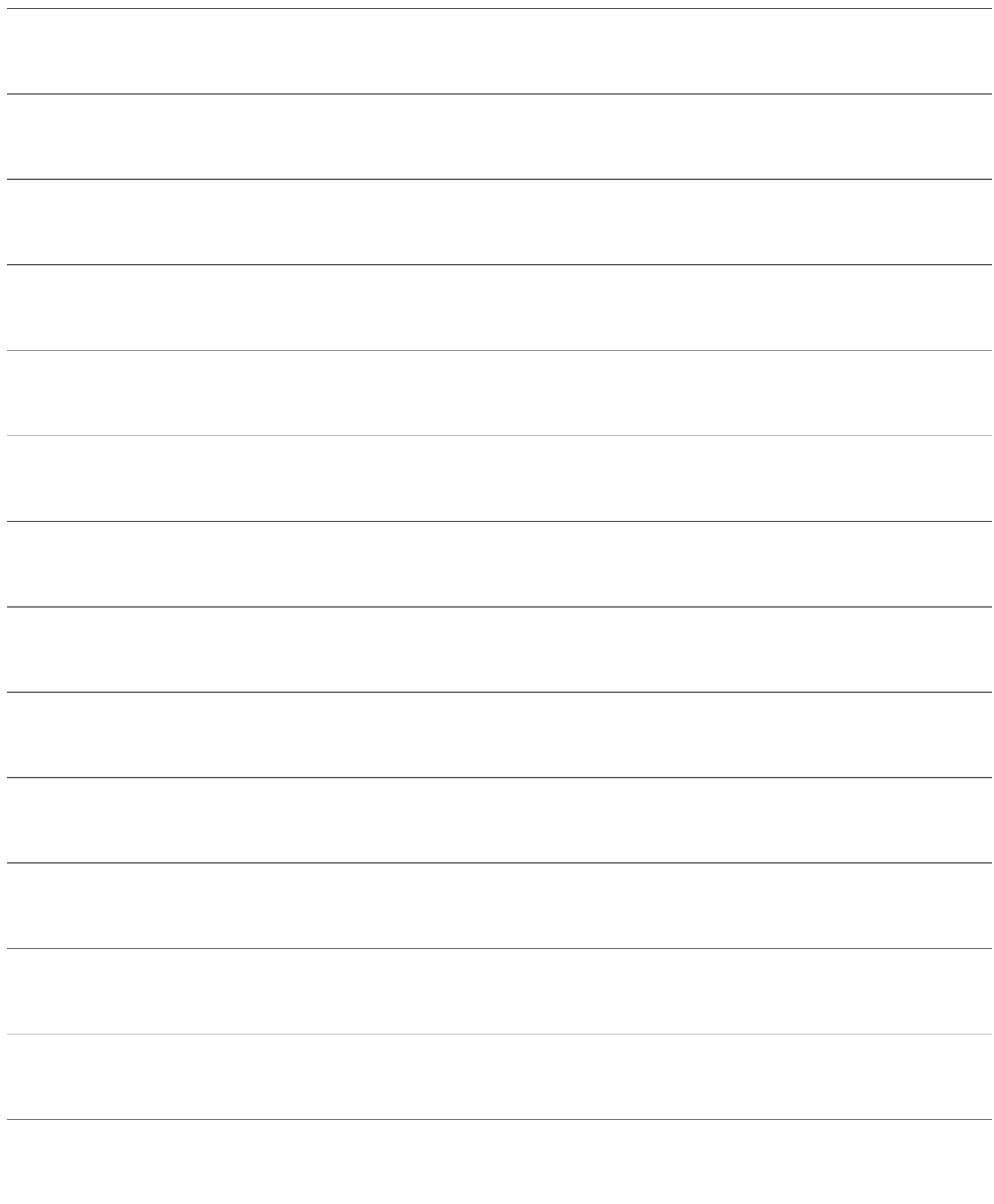
the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb."

Thoughts

- Abraham, was the first pilgrim leaving his home to go in search of a land which God promises to show him, becoming a 'pilgrim' or 'sojourner' whose willingness to obey God makes him a model of faith and obedience. How has this journey helped you be a model of faith and obedience?

- You came on this journey with "two bags." A pilgrim is committed to traveling light, carrying with them only what is essential for the journey at hand. When you started, were you carrying extra baggage that I need to surrender? What about now ... are you carrying extra baggage that I need to surrender?

[illegible]



Paris, Zurich, and Milan:

Cities that shaped Christianity

PART 1

THE INTRODUCTION

A lack of clarity often clouds our appreciation of the church's rich past. Our journey through Europe will expose us to some of the most pivotal moments of the Protestant Reformation. Still, to truly grasp its impact, it's essential to have a foundational understanding of the events that preceded it.

Early Christianity

The New Testament biographies of Jesus commonly referred to as the **Gospels**, provide the most comprehensive accounts of Jesus' ministry and teaching. **Mark**, the earliest of the Gospels, was followed by **Matthew**, then **Luke**, and finally **John**. The **Book of Acts**, which continues the narrative established in Luke's gospel, holds a significant place in Christian history as it provides the first written account of the early Christian church. The book covers the pivotal period between the resurrection of Jesus and the death of the **apostle Paul**, during which the beliefs and ideas of Christianity were being formulated, and the organization of the church as a worldwide movement was being developed.¹

Martyrs & Apologists

The early years of Christianity were formative in shaping the church's entire history. Decisions made during this period continue to influence Christianity to this day. Christianity emerged within a world that already had its own religions, cultures, and social and political structures.

As the new faith made its way, it had to define its nature in relation to the **Jewish** tradition from which it emerged. The **Roman Empire** was the backdrop for this endeavor, and early Christianity faced conflicts with the state. These conflicts resulted in the growth of **martyrs** and **apologists**. Martyrs died for their faith, while apologists sought to defend it, resulting in some of the earliest theological works of Christianity. Additionally, various **heresies** threatened the core of the Christian message. In response to these, the early church established the **canon** of the New Testament, the **Apostles' Creed**, and the doctrine of **apostolic succession**.²

Church Fathers

The first great teachers of the faith had a significant long-term impact on Christianity. Irenaeus, a theologian of the second century, wrote extensively on the nature of God and Christ. He emphasized the unity and coherence of God's **revelation** in the Old and New Testaments and defended the idea that only one true faith was passed down from the apostles. Tertullian was a theologian and apologist of the second and third centuries. He was one of the first Latin authors to write on Christian theology, and his

-
1. The first four books of the New Testament are called **gospels**, meaning good news. The gospel of **Mark** was written shortly before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Emperor Nero. It focuses on Jesus as representing God's kingdom in opposition to the empire. The gospel of **Matthew** emphasizes Jesus' Jewish identity as the awaited prophet and Messiah (both Messiah and Christ mean "anointed one"). The gospel of **Luke** presents Jesus as a teacher and healer who calls disciples to follow him and continue his ministry in the world. The gospel of **John**, written much later by followers, emphasizes Jesus' spiritual and mystic nature and highlights his divinity. The book of **Acts of the Apostles** showcases the establishment of the church by Peter and its spread through the efforts of **Paul**, an **apostle**, which is an important leader in the early church.
 2. The **Roman Empire**, established in 27 BCE, was a vast empire that controlled Western Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. It was known for its authoritarian rule and oppression of occupied lands. Jesus, was a **Jewish** rabbi (teacher) who lived in the occupied areas of Palestine and Israel. Christianity arrived in the empire early on, and its followers were often persecuted and **martyred** for their faith. **Apologists** defended the religion with reasoning and theology. **Heresy** was any belief that contradicted official church doctrine. **Canon** refers to the accepted writings of the church. The process of determining which texts were considered to be authoritative and inspired by God took place over several centuries and was not completed until long after the books of the New Testament were written. The canon of the New Testament was not definitively established until the 4th century. The **Apostles' Creed** is a statement of faith dating back to early Christianity. The concept of **Apostolic Succession** holds that bishops have a continual lineage dating back to the apostle Peter. A **bishop** is a senior leader in the church who holds a position of authority, and are responsible for the spiritual well-being of their diocese, including the ordaining of priests and deacons.

work significantly impacted early Western Christianity. He is known for his writings on the nature of God, the **Trinity**, and the relationship between faith and reason. Clement of Alexandria was a theologian of the second century who wrote extensively on the relationship between Christianity and Greek philosophy. He believed that Christianity was the fulfillment of Greek philosophy and that the wisdom of the Greeks could be used to understand and explain Christian teachings. Origen was a theologian of the third century, known for his extensive writings on biblical interpretation and the doctrine of the Trinity. He is considered one of the greatest biblical scholars of the early church and is credited with being the first to develop a formal **liturgy** of the **Mass**. Cyprian was a bishop and theologian of the third century who wrote extensively on the nature of the Church and the role of the bishop. He emphasized the importance of the unity and continuity of the Church and the need for bishops to be in complete agreement with one another. He also defended the idea of the **visible Church** as opposed to the "invisible Church" as a way to understand the nature of the Church. Jerome wrote the **Vulgate**.³

The Age of Antiquity

Constantine the Great ruled the the western half of the expanding Roman Empire from 306 until he died in 337. In 312, Constantine marched from France to Italy to fight against Maxentius. He was seeking a powerful god to protect and aid him in the upcoming battle and remembered that his father, the Emperor of the West, had always been prosperous by praying to the God of the Christians. He had a vision of a cross in the sky with the inscription "by this conquer," and in a dream, Jesus appeared to him and directed him to use the sign of the cross as his standard in war, assuring him that he would be victorious. The next day, his troops were victorious at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, and he became ruler of the entire western half of the empire. Although Jesus preached a message of peace and was vehemently opposed to the same Roman Empire when he lived, Constantine felt he owed his victory to God. As a result, Constantine's most important accomplishment

was meeting in Milan with his rival emperor, Licinius, to reconsider the policies regarding the Christian population. Until Constantine's actions, early Christians had suffered terrible persecution. An agreement was met, and the Edict of Milan was issued in 313, which granted religious tolerance to Christianity. It ended the persecution of Christians and restored any property seized from them. It also allowed Christians to practice their religion openly and rebuild their churches. The edict marked a turning point in the history of Christianity, as it paved the way for the eventual establishment of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. The result was explosive.

The Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, Christianity continued to dominate Europe and significantly influenced the continent's cultural, social, and political development. The persecuted church became first the tolerated church and eventually the Roman Empire's official religion. Consequently, the church, which until then was primarily composed of people from the lower echelons of society, made headway among the aristocracy. The office of the **Pope** was established, the church established its headquarters at the **Vatican**, and throughout Europe, grand cathedrals, **monasteries**, and **convents** were built incorporating incredible works of art, and housing relics, manuscripts, and silver and gold. During this time, a quiet group of **mystics** arose and tried to make reforms to the problems they saw as a result of the church's massive expansion.⁴

Ambrose & Augustine

Two prominent figures in Christianity during the Middle Ages were Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo. Ambrose was born in 340 and became the bishop of Milan in 374. He was a strong and influential leader who played a key role in developing Christian theology, particularly in **Christology** and the Trinity. Augustine of Hippo was born in 354 and is considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Christianity. He was a theologian and philosopher who wrote extensively on topics such as

-
3. God's **revelation** is the sum total of all that God has ever revealed. **Trinity** is the theological concept that God is of one essence essence, revealed in the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Liturgy** refers to the pattern of worship, particularly in Christianity. **Mass** is the Eucharist, or Holy Communion celebrated in worship. Cyprian argued that in order for a church to be **visible**, the people must come together under a set of trained leaders, just as the Jewish priests and Jesus himself was trained. The concept of the visible church remains important today, as opposed to churches who hide or have no visible transparency, training, or accountability from their leaders. Jerome's **Vulgate** became the standard Latin translation of the Bible for the Western Church and was widely used for over a thousand years.
 4. The **Pope** is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Unlike a bishop, priest, or deacon, the position and concept doesn't exist in the Bible. On some occasions persons elected as pope made great advances as spiritual and faithful leaders. However there were quite a number of popes in history who greatly abused their authority and power. The seat of the Pope is at the **Vatican**. Seat is a term used to mean the headquarters. The Vatican is a massive city-state with its own international autonomy surrounded by the city of Rome. **Monasteries** and **convents** are compounds where monks, nuns, and others who leave their family and society live together in communion. **Mystics** were (have remained) the theological voice of the church who in their writings and practices called the church to return to the simplistic sacredness of God found in the Bible, humanity, and in nature.

God's nature, human beings' nature, and the relationship between faith and reason. His most famous work, "Confessions," is considered one of the greatest Western literature and provides insight into his spiritual journey. Even though the Roman Empire fell in 476, Christianity continued to grow for centuries.⁵

Charlemagne

Charlemagne, also known as Charles the Great, was a very significant figure in the Middle Ages, a Frankish king who ruled much of Western Europe from 768 to 814. He is known for his contributions to the church, particularly in Paris, Zurich, and Milan. Charlemagne was a devout Christian and worked to expand and strengthen the church throughout his empire. In Paris, he established the Palace School, a center of learning and religious study. In Zurich, he founded the St. Gallen Monastery, an important center of education and culture. In Milan, he supported the construction of the Basilica of St. Ambrose, a major center of Christianity in Northern Italy.

The Schism

With great expansion came great conflict. By the 11th century, a series of religious wars were fought between Christians and Muslims over control of the Holy Land. The **crusades** significantly impacted the history of the Middle East and remained one of the lowest periods in the church's history. Perhaps the most significant event in church history during the Middle Ages, however, was the East-West Schism of 1054. This event marked the formal split between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, which had been increasingly estranged over the preceding centuries. The Schism was caused by a combination of political and theological differences, resulting in the permanent division of Christianity into two branches, each with its hierarchy and doctrine. The Schism had far-reaching consequences for the Church and the political and cultural relations between Europe and the **Byzantine Empire**. It set the stage for centuries of conflict and competition between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Also, it led to the formation of different forms of Christianity in Eastern and Western Europe.⁶

The Renaissance

The Renaissance, often known as the "Rebirth" period, was the time following the Middle Ages in European civilization. A rise in interest in classical values and learning generally characterizes it. The Renaissance is also the period that most Americans think of when they think of European history, thanks mainly to the works of great artists, musicians, and authors. As depicted well in most works of fiction, there was a sharp distinction between the royals who lived in castles and controlled the villages and the poor who barely had the means to eat, much less any access to education. The Renaissance was also the period of the Bubonic plague, which remains the most deadly virus of all time. The only possibility of what we might consider a middle class would be the clergy, who were also trained in law, medicine, and other academic elitist professions. Without a true working middle class, tension continued to arise.

The Age of Scholasticism

The Age of Scholasticism was a period of intense intellectual and cultural development in Western Europe that lasted from the 11th to the 14th century. This period saw the rise of universities and the development of a new method of learning and teaching called Scholasticism. Scholasticism was a method of learning and teaching based on the use of reason and logic to understand and interpret the texts of the Bible and the works of classical authors. It was characterized by the use of a systematic and organized approach to learning and teaching and formal debates to explore and resolve theological and philosophical issues. Universities began offering literature and art courses rather than just theology. This shift in focus sparked a sense of optimism and the belief that the world could be transformed through a rediscovery of ancient wisdom. Paris was the most significant place for learning during this period, and **Franciscans** and **Dominicans** used it as their primary training location. Many notable scholars studied or taught in Paris, including William of Ockham, Anselm of Bec, Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas. These scholars worked to combine the theology of Augustine with the philosophy of classical Greek thinkers, notably Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas' "Summa Theologiae" is a particularly important example of this synthesis of Catholic doctrine and logical

5. **Christology** is the area of theology concerned with the study of Jesus Christ.

6. The **Crusades** were a series of military expeditions, starting in the late 11th century, organized by the church in response to the Muslim conquest of the Holy Land. Some Christians still use the term today to signify the need to expand and gain control over geographical areas or audiences, including white supremacists. Many organizations and groups, such as the Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) have sought to distance themselves from the term, yet haven't fully discarded it. The **Byzantine Empire** was the continuation of the Roman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean.

reasoning and remains one of the most important theological writings ever written.⁷

Humanism

The universities remained exclusively to train the clergy, and the liturgy of the Mass remained in Latin, despite the many spoken languages in Europe. The Bible remained either in Latin or its original Hebrew and Greek. Initially, a humanist was a term for a teacher or professor of Latin. But during the Renaissance, these professors started to re-read Latin and Greek classics and began to incorporate the values and ideas from these classics into their life. The shift was called “humanism,” Milan was its birthplace and center of the movement that called for a reform of education, critical thinking, and even society. It was now only a matter of time before true reform was about to explode.

Erasmus

Desiderius Erasmus, a Dutch Catholic priest, and brilliant philosopher, visited Milan in 1498, where he met the humanist Pietro Bembo, who introduced him to the Platonist circle of Cardinal Francesco. Almost immediately, he became the leading humanist scholar. In 1515, after studying Greek, he published an edition of the New Testament in Greek, along with critical notes and corrections to errors he found in the Latin Vulgate.

One of the most significant **errors** he identified was in the translation of Matthew 3:1-2. Most of our Bibles today read something like the New Revised Standard Version: *In those days, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."* But the Latin Vulgate read closer to today's Wycliffe Bible, which states: *In those days John Baptist came, preached in the desert of Judaea, and said, "Do ye penance, for the kingdom of heavens shall approach."* The discrepancy was between the words repent and penance. Repentance is a call for followers of Jesus to turn from sin and change. However, penance refers to the task assigned by the priest after confession of sin in order to make amends.

At the time, the Catholic Church taught that through the sacrament of Penance, forgiveness could be obtained through various means, such as by performing particular good works, visiting specific holy places, or buying indulgences. Some church officials began to promote the sale of indulgences aggressively, even to the point of promising salvation to those who purchased them. This led to wide-

spread abuse and corruption, and many people, particularly the poor and uneducated, were taken advantage of. In his translation and notes of Matthew 3, Erasmus **reasoned** that the word was repent, not penance, which called into question this entire system. This simple phrase challenged centuries of **tradition** and the western Church's understanding of the Bible. Specifically, Erasmus believed that Jerome had introduced errors in his translation to support specific theological **interpretations**. Erasmus' concern was that the errors could lead to further abuse of the biblical text. His ultimate goal was to translate the Bible so that it could be read and understood by everyone, not just scholarly priests. He believed that the words of the Bible should be accessible to everyone.⁸

7. The **Franciscans** and **Dominicans** are orders of Catholic priests. The Franciscans follow the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and are known for their simple way of life. The Dominicans follow the teachings of St. Dominic and are known for their focus on education and preaching.

8. Although the today the church relies on the Bible, it must use **reason** and **tradition** for **interpretation**. As the Bible continues to be translated into different languages, **errors** can occur. While great care is taken to ensure accuracy in translation, it is ultimately impossible to guarantee that every translation will be completely error-free. Therefore, the belief that the Bible is completely without error, a doctrine known as biblical inerrancy, is considered by many to be a losing battle from the start.

PART 2

THE PROTEST

During the same period that Erasmus was translating the Bible, the Spanish Inquisition was in full swing, and the conquest of the Americas was underway. Following Columbus's first voyage, efforts were made to organize and regulate the colonization process through a series of Church-issued decrees. The Church held significant influence and control over all aspects of life in Europe, including the sale of indulgences. Now, they aimed to expand their territory through the actions of conquistadors who forcibly took land from Native Americans and used enslaved Africans to carry out their tyranny.

Johannes Gutenberg

The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440 made it easier and more affordable to produce books, and this new technology supported the desire to use words (as opposed to lies, manipulation, or weapons) to bring about change. Before the printing press, books had to be copied by hand, a time-consuming and costly process that limited the number of copies that could be produced and made them less widely available. But now even the poor had access to books, and therefore they could also **access**⁹ education. The printing press, therefore made scholars and intellectuals like Erasmus work accessible to everyone. Finally, 1500 years after the earthy life of Jesus, the Bible was no longer only read by priests. It was now available to anyone. Hence, most scholars believe that the printing press became the single most important factor in the success of the Protestant Reformation by providing the means for widespread dissemination of the “new teachings” and encouraging independent thought on subjects previously rigidly controlled by a literate elite.

Martin Luther

The German monk and professor at the University of Wittenberg Martin Luther is known for his deep reading of the

Bible and the significant political consequences that resulted from it. Like other 16th-century humanists, Luther was interested in critical study, but he approached it through the lens of his anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. Despite following the rules of his monastic life, Luther like many scholars had a **crisis of faith**¹⁰, finding it hard to find God's love and began to view God as a harsh and unforgiving judge. The crisis culminated when Luther celebrated his first mass as a priest, at which point he was overwhelmed with fear. The emotional strain coupled with his intestinal problems made things very difficult for him. Due to this, Luther spent hours on the toilet, which, in his opinion, wasn't the worst thing since it was the only heated area in the monastery. As a means of passing the time (on the toilet), he read the Erasmus translation of the Bible. Historians today joke that the toilet was the birthplace of the Reformation.¹¹

Historians also say Erasmus laid the egg from which Luther hatched. During Luther's reading of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, the reading the words of scripture in a new translation frustrated him. In addition to his agreement that the church was wrong to sell indulgences, Luther focused heavily on Paul's writings, especially the letter to the

9. Prior to the printing press **access** to the written word of the Bible was limited to those who could both afford the text and could also read and write. This gave priests a significant amount of power and influence, as they were the sole intermediaries between the written word of the Bible and the general population. The priests were able to use their exclusive access to the Bible to control the interpretation of the text and shape the beliefs of the people. They were able to exert a great deal of influence over the population by selectively interpreting certain passages to support their own political or religious agendas. This created a power dynamic in which the priests held a great deal of control over the people and the spread of knowledge.

10. A **crisis of faith** refer to a period of questioning and doubt in which an individual's previously held religious beliefs are called into question. This can happen for a variety of reasons, such as exposure to new ideas, a personal life experience, or a lack of understanding of certain aspects of their faith. For theological scholars, this crisis of faith can be particularly challenging, as their studies and understanding of religious texts and concepts may deepen their questioning and uncertainty. However, for some individuals, a crisis of faith can also lead to a deeper understanding and a strengthened connection to their beliefs. It can be a difficult and transformative process, but many people find that the experience leads to a more meaningful and authentic relationship with their faith.

11. Luther was far from modest in respect to his intestinal issues. He once wrote “Dear Devil ... I have shat in my pants and breeches; hang them on your neck and wipe your mouth with them...Have you not had enough, you Devil, so have I also shat and pissed, wipe your mouth on that and take yourself a full bite!” This was written in Table Talk (German: Tischreden), a collection of Martin Luther's sayings from the 1500s.

Romans. One verse in particular, Romans 1:17, proved particularly challenging for Luther. The NRSV reads: *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."* Medieval interpreters believed Paul meant that those who love God have faith; therefore, those who do not love God do not have faith. This distressed Luther. Even though he was a monk, he didn't feel as if he loved God, but rather was mad at God for all of his issues. However, when he studied the Greek version of the verse, he realized that it was a **passive sentence**,¹² meaning that faith is a gift from God and not something we earn through our actions.

Martin Luther's understanding of God underwent a significant transformation as a result of his reading of the New Testament. He came to see God as a loving and compassionate being, rather than a strict judge. Additionally, he realized that good works were not a prerequisite for receiving faith, but rather a natural outcome of living a life of faith. This understanding led him to reject the idea that salvation could be earned through good works, and to emphasize the importance of faith alone in the process of salvation. Luther's struggles and the theology of justification by faith that resulted from them were presented in the Ninety-five Theses, a list of points for disputation that he invited other scholars to debate. These ideas, which challenged the church's theology and finances, were made public on October 31, 1517, when they were posted on the door of a church in Wittenberg,

Huldrych Zwingli

The Protestant Reformation was not solely the work of Luther but rather a movement with various strands of reform. Variations of Reformation theology emerged in the Switzerland, for example, with Zurich at the forefront. Like Luther, Huldrych Zwingli was influenced by humanism, particularly by the works of Erasmus, and had a strong interest in the humanities. However, in 1519, Zwingli became the pastor of Zurich. During this time, he was influenced by Lutheran ideas and had a personal conversion experience. He challenged the Roman system by declaring that the payment of tithes was not mandatory, but rather a voluntary act.

In 1523, Zwingli drafted his own 67 Articles, which placed emphasis on salvation through faith, the authority of the Bible, the leadership of Christ in the church, and the right of clergy to marry. His Church stopped charging fees for baptisms and burials, monks and nuns were allowed to wed, and religious images and relics were prohibited. In 1525, the Zurich Reformation was completed with the elimination of the Mass, with the introduction of a more casual style of worship.

However, from 1522, Zwingli faced opposition from churchgoers who demanded **re-baptism**¹³ of his converts. In 1525, the city council banned their gatherings and expelled them from the city. Felix Manz, a follower of Zwingli, was executed by drowning in 1527. Years later when Zwingli tried to implement more reforms more tensions arose between the Protestant and Catholic cantons (Swiss states) and ultimately led to the outbreak of the Second War of Kappel. The war resulted in the defeat of the Protestant forces and the death of Zwingli, which dealt a significant blow to the Swiss Reformation movement.

John Calvin

A few hundred miles to the northwest, the French Reformation faced a major crisis in 1534 when Parisians discovered placards condemning the "horrible, great, and insufferable abuses of the papal Mass" posted in public places. The individuals responsible for this action were executed, and burnings and persecution followed. The placards were the work of a French pastor, Nicolas Cop, who was exiled in and part of a network of reformers in Switzerland. John Calvin, a French humanist who studied at the University of Paris, fled Paris because of his association with Cop.

Luther and Zwingli were known for their radical acts, but the mild-mannered Calvin was considered the Reformation's greatest teacher. A French reformer who studied at the University of Paris, Calvin believed that everything, including nature, scriptures, and the church, was a means for learning about Christ. While he valued academic learning and was a humanist scholar, Calvin was skeptical of the human intellect's ability to comprehend spiritual

12. In the **passive** Romans 1:17 refers to a gift from God through faith, not something that can be earned through good works. Luther found that the Latin word for justification at the time (*justificare*) came from the Roman judicial system and meant "*to make righteous*." However, he discovered that the Greek word used in the New Testament (*dikaio*) meant "*to declare as righteous*." This realization led Luther to the understanding that the righteousness by which a person is saved comes from outside of themselves, namely the righteousness of Christ. He believed that this righteousness was not earned through good works (making righteousness happen), but rather given as a gift from God through faith (declaring that righteousness is already present). This discovery was a turning point for Luther.

13. The reformers did not support **re-baptism**. They viewed baptism as the start of a person's Christian life and saw it as a symbol of God's faithfulness in leading them towards a full life in Jesus Christ. They recognized any baptism performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by an authorized person as a valid Christian baptism. They viewed baptism of infants, who have not yet developed the capacity to choose or understand, served as a poignant reminder of God's boundless love and grace. Thus, the idea that one must have faith and consciously request baptism misunderstands the nature of the sacrament, as it places emphasis on human effort rather than divine intervention.

matters fully. He believed that faith resides in the heart, not in speculative philosophy. Calvin once remarked that there are many "poor dunces" who, through their simple and sincere faith, understand Christ better than the theologians of the Pope with their complex philosophical speculation.

Calvin and Luther were two different personalities in the Protestant Reformation. While Luther was seen as the face of the movement with his powerful preaching, Calvin was the architect who organized and structured the ideas of Protestantism. Luther was robust despite suffering from digestive problems, but Calvin was frail and weak throughout his life. Luther had a strong attachment to his family and home, while Calvin was a solitary scholar. Luther placed importance on preaching, while Calvin was interested in constructing a systematic theology. Both agreed on the authority of the Bible, but Luther emphasized justification by faith and Calvin emphasized the sovereignty of God.

Backlash

The name "Protestant" is derived from the Latin word "protestari," which means "to protest." The name was given to Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and their followers as they began to break away from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. As with any protest, violence accompanied the changes. One of the main challenges was resistance from the Catholic Church and its powerful leaders. The Catholic Church saw the Protestant Reformers as a threat to their authority and power and actively sought to suppress their ideas and teachings. This led to the persecution of many Reformers and their followers, with some being exiled or even put to death.

Another challenge faced by the Reformers was the lack of unity among their own ranks. While they shared a common goal of reforming the Catholic Church, they had different interpretations of the Bible and different ideas about how to achieve reform. This led to a fragmentation of the Reformation movement, with various Protestant denominations emerging. This lack of unity made it harder for the Reformers to achieve their goals, as they were not able to present a unified front to the Catholic Church and other opponents.

Furthermore, many European rulers were also opposed to the Reformation, as it threatened their political and economic power. The Catholic Church was a powerful institution that held significant land and wealth and was closely tied to many European rulers. The emergence of Protestantism threatened the Church's power and influence, and as a result, many rulers saw the Reformers as a threat to their own power and actively sought to suppress the Reformation. This led to a number of wars and conflicts throughout Europe, known as the Wars of Religion, which further hindered the progress of the Reformation.

For example, in 1572 the Queen Mother of France, Catherine, instigated the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, a series of attacks on Protestant Huguenots (French Calvinists). The scale of the attacks was massive, and thousands were killed. The massacre represents one of the most extreme examples of the religious violence that characterized the period, making some scholars call the Reformation "Christianity's Most Dangerous Idea," setting the stage for continued religious conflict and further wars in the Europe.

Counter-Reformation

The early reformers were, for the most part, devout Catholics who sought to reform the Church from within. They believed that the Church had strayed from its original teachings and that a return to those teachings would bring about a needed change. They saw the corruption and abuses within the Church and sought to address these issues through reform, rather than breaking away and forming new denominations. They sought to purify the Church and bring it back to its former glory, rather than abandoning it entirely. Sadly for them, the Church was not receptive. Throughout western Europe the reformers were victims of persecution and violence.

However, between 1545 and 1563, Pope Paul III convened a series of meetings in northern Italy called the Council of Trent. The council was convoked in response to the challenges put forth by the Protestant Reformation and aimed to address the issues of corruption and abuses of power that had led to the split in Western Christianity. The council affirmed traditional Catholic doctrine and made important reforms in areas such as clerical training, liturgical practices, and the sale of indulgences.

The Catholic Church began to reform itself in response to the criticisms and challenges put forth by the Reformers. This process of internal reform, known as the Counter-Reformation, aimed to address the issues of corruption and abuses of power that had led to the split in Western Christianity. The Church began to implement a series of changes, including the Council of Trent, which clarified Catholic teaching and strengthened discipline within the clergy. They also started to establish new religious orders such as the Jesuits, which focused on education and missionary work. Additionally, the Catholic Church began to place a renewed emphasis on devotion to Mary and the saints, and on the importance of the sacraments. These efforts helped to strengthen the Catholic Church and bring about a resurgence of faith among its followers. Indulgences were no longer sold, but new divisions arose. The council's theological shifts reflected an anti-Protestant bias and for the next several centuries drew the lines for opposition between Roman Catholics and Protestants in their understanding of doctrine.

The Legacy

The Protestant Reformation had a significant impact on Christianity today in several ways. Perhaps most significantly, it led to the formation of Protestant denominations such as Lutheran churches. Calvin's theology resulted in the establishment of Presbyterian churches as the reformation moved north to England and Scotland.

Through John Calvin, the Reformation made a significant contribution to America. Whatever its merits or shortcomings, Calvinism left its mark both inside and outside the churches. Our nation was so affected by him, the German historian Leopold von Ranke noted, "John Calvin was the virtual founder of the United States." Those same teachings that the English Reformers brought back from Switzerland produced American parliamentary democracy and politics. Theologically, Calvinism continues to be the theological disposition of Presbyterians, Baptists, and most evangelicals and fundamentalists.

The Church in England was also influenced greatly by Calvin and officially split from the Catholic Church during the English Reformation. The Church of England today is responsible for the Episcopal and United Methodist denominations. Methodist theology, however, differed from Calvin's doctrine of predestination and election and was influenced by Arminianism, a theological movement that arose as a liberal reaction to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The movement began early in the 17th century and asserted that God's sovereignty and human free will are compatible.

Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation have had an impact on Christianity today through the way it changed the political and social landscape of Europe, which in turn affected the world. The religious conflicts that arose from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation led to both religious wars and political upheavals, which contributed to the formation of nation-states and the development of modern politics. These events also led to the greater religious toleration and freedom of religion that we see today in many countries. This means that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation were not only religious movements but also social and political movements that have shaped the world as we know it today.

PART 3

THE REFORM

Luther and Calvin, especially, saw themselves as carrying on the tradition of Ambrose and Augustine and sought to reform the Church by returning to the teachings of these early Christian leaders. Here, we will explore the theology of the Protestant Reformation, examining the key beliefs and teachings of its leaders and how they shaped the new forms of Christianity that developed during this time.

Doctrinal Theology

Doctrinal theology, also known as systematic theology, is a branch of Christian theology that seeks to organize and articulate the beliefs and doctrines of the Christian faith. It is concerned with examining the fundamental beliefs of Christianity, such as the nature of God, the nature of humanity, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, the nature of salvation, and the ultimate destiny of human beings. Doctrinal theology draws from a wide range of sources, including the Bible, church history, philosophy, and human experience. It seeks to integrate these sources into a coherent and comprehensive understanding of Christian doctrine. It often involves using logical reasoning and argumentation to clarify and defend particular beliefs and show how they are related to other beliefs within the broader Christian tradition. The reformers, such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, challenged many of the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, the Reformation led to the development of new doctrinal positions having a significant impact on Christian theology.

Justification

When Erasmus translated the Bible, the Catholic Church was offering forgiveness of sins through various means, such as performing certain good works, visiting specific holy places, or buying indulgences. Martin Luther followed in Erasmus's footsteps in criticizing the sale of indulgences as an abuse of the Church's authority. However, Luther's critiques went beyond this, as he had fundamental theological issues with the Church's teachings on the role of good works in salvation. He instead proposed a theology of justification by faith alone, which holds that salvation is given to an individual as a gift through their faith rather than through their good deeds or works. This theology was a major departure from the Catholic Church's teaching and would become a cornerstone of Protestant theology. The idea of justification by faith alone greatly influenced the Protestant reformation. It rejected the Catholic Church's teachings on merit and the sale of indulgences and instead emphasized the grace of God.

Priesthood of All Believers

Luther was also the first to reject the Catholic Church's teachings that only priests had the authority to offer sacraments and perform other religious rituals. He believed that all baptized Christians, regardless of their social status, were equal in their access to God and the ability to perform religious duties. He also believed that the spiritual office of the laity was just as important as that of the clergy and that lay people had the right and the duty to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Zwingli, like Luther, believed in the priesthood of all believers, but he had a different understanding of how it should be applied. He thought the state had a role in enforcing religious conformity and determining who was qualified to perform religious duties. In contrast, Luther believed in the freedom of the conscience and that only God could judge a person's faith. He also believed that only a select group of individuals, who were chosen by the state, were truly capable of performing religious duties. Calvin believed the church had a role in selecting and ordaining individuals to serve as leaders and teachers, to guide and shepherd the congregation. He thought that the spiritual office of the laity was just as important as that of the clergy but that the clergy had a special responsibility to lead and teach the congregation.

Sola Scriptura

Zwingli also made several theological contributions to the reformation. One of his most significant contributions was his emphasis on the authority of scripture. He believed the Bible was the sole authority in matters of faith and practice and should be read and interpreted literally. Unlike modern-day fundamentalists, Zwingli was not opposed to using reason and scholarship to understand the Bible. Thus, his literalism was rooted in his belief that the Bible was the only source of authority in matters of faith and practice, not in scholarship. Zwingli's interest was in rejecting the authority of the Pope, arguing that the Bible should be the only guide for Christian beliefs and practices. This emphasis on the authority of scripture would become a fundamental principle of Protestant theology, and it would be adopted by many other Reformers, including Luther and Calvin.

Eucharist

Eucharist means to give thanks and refers to the liturgical celebration of the Great Thanksgiving, also known as Mass, Communion, or the Lord's Supper. Zwingli rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which holds that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Instead, he taught that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of the Last Supper and not a "real presence" of Christ. Zwingli also rejected the idea that the bread and wine contain any spiritual or supernatural qualities but rather as a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice. This view is known as memorialism.

This distinction would be a point of contention with other Reformers, especially Luther, who believed in consubstantiation. Consubstantiation holds that the body and blood of Jesus are present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, but they are not transubstantiated. Instead, it is believed that the body and blood of Jesus are "in, with, and under" the bread and wine and that they coexist alongside the bread and wine. This doctrine emphasizes that the bread and wine retain their natural substance while the body and blood of Jesus are present in them during the Eucharist.

The Episcopal Church's theology of the Eucharist underwent significant changes during the 16th century as part of the English Reformation and moved towards a more Protestant understanding of the Eucharist. Influenced by the ideas of Zwingli and Calvin, the Church of England rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. However, they retained the traditional Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but they understood it spiritually and mystically. This doctrine, known as "spiritual presence," holds that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, not through a physical transformation of the bread and wine, but through a spiritual presence.

Later, John Wesley, who was part of the Church of England, taught that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament that is a means of grace, which is a way to remember the sacrifice of Jesus and to receive spiritual nourishment and growth. Instead of either transubstantiation or consubstantiation, he believed that the grace of God is made available to believers through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and that it helps to strengthen their faith and deepen their relationship with God.

Practical Theology

Practical theology is a branch of theology that focuses on the practical application of Christian beliefs and values in the everyday lives of individuals and communities. It seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to bring theological reflection to bear on real-world issues and problems. Practical theology encompasses a wide

range of fields and approaches, including pastoral care, homiletics (preaching), Christian education, social ethics, and missiology. It is concerned with issues such as the development of spiritual practices, the formation of Christian communities, the integration of faith and work, and the role of the church in promoting social justice. In this section, we will explore how the developments in doctrinal theology caused by the Reformation are expressed in practical ways then and today.

Vocation

Prior to the Reformation, the Catholic Church taught that the work of the clergy was more important and valuable than that of laypeople. The Reformation challenged this view by emphasizing that all work done in service to God was valuable, regardless of whether a priest or a layperson did it. This led to a greater emphasis on the dignity of all work and a more egalitarian view of the value of different forms of service. Luther expressed this specifically in his theology of vocation. Once he wrote, "all work and all workers deserve honor. Whereas the world might look down on milkmaids and garbage collectors, they actually bear the sacred presence of God, who works in and through them." In other words, Luther believed God calls every Christian toward a vocation of Christian service.

Calvin emphasized the idea that all work, regardless of its nature, could be done to the glory of God. This meant that even the most mundane tasks could be seen as a way of serving God and fulfilling one's calling. This view of work helped to elevate the status of everyday occupations and to give people a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. Of course, with all change, there were negative consequences. For example, the reformers did not expect that some affluent Christians would promote the idea that poverty and low-status occupations result from individual failing or lack of faith. On the flip side, others believed this theology prolongs poverty and limits social mobility. For example, suppose someone feels that a cleaning job is a divine calling and that it is the individual's role to be satisfied with their station in life. In that case, they may be less likely to push for higher salaries or better working conditions. Therefore, they may be seen as "called by God" to serve at the whims of someone more fortunate. Sadly, many protestant Americans defended slavery in this way.

The Bible & Education

For the first 1,500 years of the church, there were no Bible studies, family Bibles, or bookstores to buy and read Christian literature. There were no home churches, non-denominational churches, or hundreds of denominations because only the Roman Catholic Church in the West was able to train a pastor. Today protestant pastors can be trained in the same seminarian fashion as a Roman Catholic priest, or they might just learn what they know from their own reading of the Bible, or watching YouTube.

With the Bible accessible to all, this renewed an emphasis on Bible study. Simply put, before the reformation, groups did not gather to read or talk about the Bible. The Bible itself was only taught in worship, or if outside of worship, only by a priest or a university scholar. Bible study, however, contributed to the development of the doctrine of biblical infallibility and inerrancy. The doctrine of biblical infallibility holds that the Bible is completely trustworthy and free from error in all matters, including matters of history and science. In contrast, the doctrine of inerrancy goes even further to assert that the Bible is without error in its original manuscripts. Although theology can evolve, it is interesting to consider that neither of these doctrines was important, much less developed for the first 1,500 years of the church.

However, the Bible has played its most significant role in the development of education, with many universities and schools founded on Christian principles and values. The university system was so closely tied to the Christian Church that all universities before 1500 were founded as institutions to train priests and other religious leaders. However, after the Reformation, many universities became more secular and began to focus on other areas of study beyond theology. One of the key ways that the Reformation changed university education was by promoting the idea of individualism and the importance of personal interpretation of scripture. This led to a greater emphasis on studying the Bible and theology and developing critical thinking and reasoning skills. The Protestant emphasis on the priesthood of all believers also led to an increased focus on the education of laypeople rather than just clergy.

Personal Faith

The Enlightenment drastically changed the way people viewed the world. One of the most significant shifts in thinking was from a communal to an individualistic focus. With this in place, consider how protestants and Catholics had greater access to the Bible, understood a sense of God's calling no matter their vocation, and were encouraged by pastors and priests to live out their faith. The result was a shift from a communal life of the church toward individuals personal faith experiences. By its very nature, the church is a gathering or assembly of people that share communion (i.e., community with God and others). However, we are also encouraged to have a strong personal faith. The latter was a new development of the reformation.

The unintended consequence of this shift was the reduction of the Christian Gospel to an introverted and self-centered individualism. According to the Bible, the Christian Gospel is "Jesus Christ is Lord of All," and the Apostles proclaimed this good news to the entire world regardless of whether individuals accepted it. The formula, "I accept

Jesus as my savior," which appears nowhere in the New Testament and only dates back a hundred or so years, has limited the Gospel's purview from its universal scope to a private matter benefiting only those who decide to accept it. The intention of the reformers was to assert that we are not the authors of our faith because the ground of our faith is in the saving work of Jesus Christ alone (*solus Christus*). While we are justified by faith alone (*solo fide*), it is not our personal faith that causes our individual salvation. In fact, the reformers agreed with the Catholic theologian Anselm, who taught "faith seeks understanding."

Pastorate

One of the key changes that occurred as a result of the Reformation was the decentralization of the pastorate. Prior to the Reformation, the Catholic Church had a highly centralized system of authority, with power concentrated in the hands of the Pope and the bishops. The reformers, however, emphasized the importance of local congregations and encouraged pastors to have a direct relationship with their congregants. This led to a new emphasis on the pastoral care of individual believers. Pastors were no longer seen as mediators between God and the people, but rather as shepherds who were responsible for nurturing the faith of their flock. They were expected to preach the Word of God, offer pastoral counseling, and administer the sacraments, but their primary role was to equip the laity for ministry.

Another significant change that occurred was the shift in focus from ritual to experience. The Catholic Church had placed a strong emphasis on the sacraments and the liturgy, which were thought to be necessary for salvation. The reformers, however, rejected this idea and placed a greater emphasis on the Bible as the source of authority for the Christian faith. This led to a new emphasis on preaching as the primary means of communicating the Word of God to the people. Pastors were expected to be skilled expositors of the Scriptures, able to explain the meaning and application of the text in a way that was relevant to their congregants' lives. This emphasis on preaching led to the development of a new style of worship, with sermons, and then later with music, becoming central features of Protestant worship services.



Notre Dame: Steeped in history, no visit to Paris is complete without a visit to Notre Dame. In 2019 a major fire destroyed most of the church.



The Louvre: St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which was a targeted killing of French Protestants, began within the Louvre palace.



Latin Quarter: Home to prominent universities such as Sorbonne and the University of Paris is the the former residence of John Calvin.



Temple du Marais: The church was founded in the 16th century as a place of worship for French Protestant reformers.



Sacre Coeur Basilica: Located at the summit of the butte Montmartre, the highest point of the city is one of the most iconic sights in



Palace of Versailles: The palace is known for its beauty and its contributions to justice and peace including the 1787 Edict of Versailles.



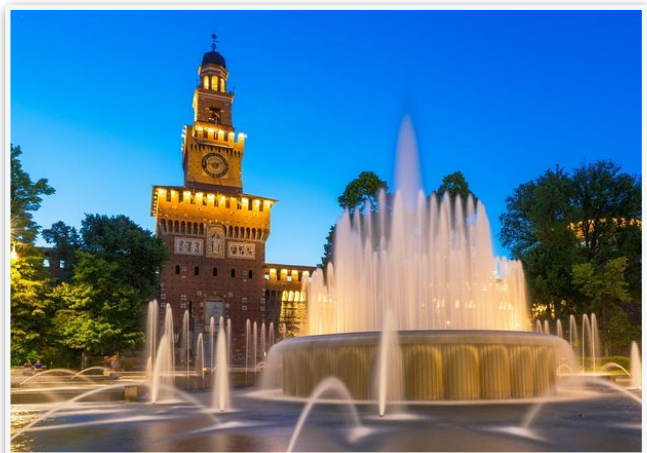
Duomo di Milano, also known as the Cathedral of Milan, is the largest cathedral in Europe and is an iconic masterpiece of Gothic architecture.



Santa Maria delle Grazie: The church and convent where Leonardo painted his masterpiece, the Last Supper.



Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio: Dedicated to Ambrose and home to many of Ambrose's relics, including his tomb and his bishop's mitre.



Castello Sforzesco: A majestic castle built during the Spanish occupation. Leonardo da Vinci worked at the castle as a painter.



Piazza Mercanti: Once the center of medieval commerce in Milan, also holds significance as the location where Saint Augustine taught.



Leonardo Da Vinci's Vineyard: Recognized as one of the most important figures in art and science his home gives insight into his curiosi-



Grossmünster: Meaning “Large Cathedral,” the church is particularly notable for its association with Zwingli who served as the pastor from 1519 to 1531.



Fraumünster: Meaning “Women’s Church” was founded as a Catholic convent in the 9th century it became a central church in the reformation.



St. Peter's Church: After the reformation, its first pastor Leo Jud translated the Bible into German, today it's known as the Zürich Bible.



Zwinglihaus: Museum located in the Old Town that was once the home of Zwingli and is dedicated to the teaching of the Reformation in Switzerland.

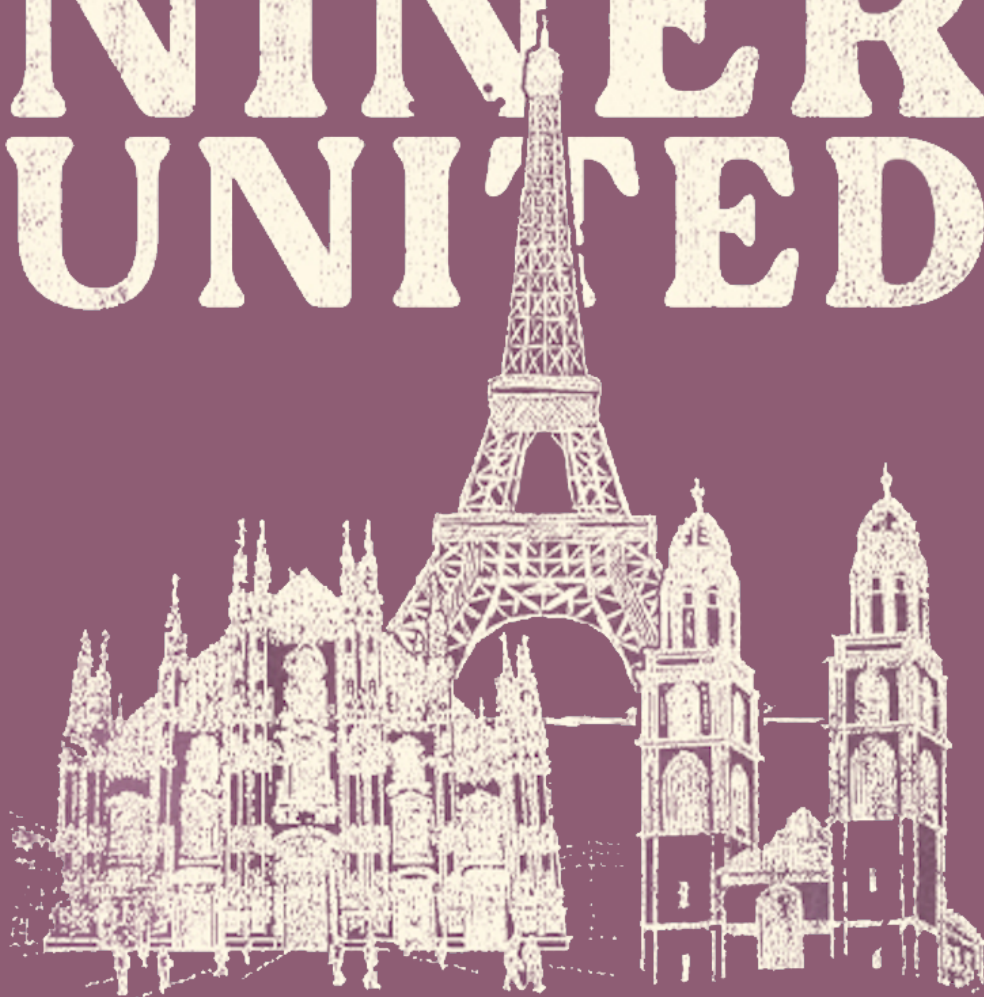


Liebfrauenkirche: Meaning the “Church of Our Dear Lady,” is a Catholic church and one of the oldest churches in Zurich.



Wasserkirche: Meaning “Water Church” is literally built on pilings in the river. It played a central role in the reformation.

NINER UNITED



SPRING BREAK 2023

Niner United

Spring Break Pilgrimage

February 24 - March 5

- ☐ February 24 - CLT to PHL to ZRH
- ☐ February 25 - Zurich, Switzerland to Paris, France
- ☐ February 26 - Paris, France
- ☐ February 27 - Paris, France
- ☐ February 28 - Paris, France to Milan, Italy
- ☐ March 1 - Milan, Italy
- ☐ March 2 - Milan, Italy
- ☐ March 3 - Milan, Italy to Zurich, Switzerland
- ☐ March 4 - Zurich, Switzerland
- ☐ March 5 - ZRH to PHL to CLT

Paris Train Prep - February 25

Part 1

The French protestant reformer John Calvin studied theology at the University of Paris. In his writing *Institutes*, he opened with a discussion of how we know anything about God. According to Calvin, only Scripture can provide true and detailed knowledge of God. Theologically this is called "specific revelation." Despite this, Calvin believes knowing God without the Scriptures is possible. Theologically this is called "natural revelation." He believed that natural revelation lays the foundation for the more comprehensive and specific understanding of God found in the Scriptures. Reflect on what he wrote:

There is within the human mind, and that by natural instinct, a sense of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. So that no one might take refuge in the pretext of ignorance, God frequently renews and sometimes increases this awareness, so that all people, recognizing that there is a God and that he is their creator, are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to worship him and to give their lives to his service. If ignorance of God is to be looked for anywhere, surely one is most likely to find an example of it amongst the more backward peoples and those who are really remote from civilization. Yet, in fact...there has been no region since the beginning of the world, no city, no home, that could exist without religion; this fact in itself points to a sense of divinity inscribed in the hearts of all people...There are innumerable witnesses in heaven and on earth that declare the wonders of his wisdom. Not only those more arcane matters for the closer observation of which astronomy, medicine, and all of natural science are intended, but also those which force themselves upon the sight of even the most unlearned and ignorant peoples, so that they cannot even open their eyes without being forced to see them.

Reflection 1

In this piece, Calvin distinguishes two types of "natural revelation." One has been implanted within the human mind, and the other is acquired from observation of the world. In light of Calvin's assertion that there is a natural sense of divinity within all people, how do you personally understand your own awareness of God's presence in your life? Are there moments or experiences where you feel especially attuned to the divine? How can you cultivate a greater sense of awareness of God's presence in your daily life?

Reflection 2

Calvin notes that there has been no region, city, or home that could exist without religion, suggesting that a sense of divinity is inscribed in the hearts of all people. How does this speak to the universality of faith and spirituality? How can we learn from and appreciate the diverse ways that people around the world experience and express their faith? How can we work towards building greater understanding and unity across different faith traditions?

Part 2

Paris – the City of Light – has served as a world capital of art, fashion, literature, and theology. Paris represents all that human civilization has to offer, with the awestruck beauty of its sunsets and architecture. But it also comes with its shady side, crime, espionage, and even pickpockets. So be careful. Paris has wide boulevards (don't be in the streets or rotaries), a world-class museum, excellent hot chocolate, friendly crepe vendors, and street artists. Here's what we will see at a glance:

- Champs-Élysées and Avenue Montaigne - Europe's grand shopping district.
- Trocadéro Platform - the famous square where thousands have taken selfies with the Eiffel Tower
- Montmartre - - an enchanted neighborhood with the church Sacré-Coeur and Place du Tertre, Paris' famous cobblestone street.
- Louvre - Europe's oldest and greatest museum, starring the Mona Lisa
- Sainte-Chapelle - a beautiful gothic cathedral featuring some of the world's most detailed stained glass.
- Notre-Dame Cathedral - France's most beloved church. The interior closed following the April 2019 fire.
- Latin Quarter - the quirky and trendy neighborhood where John Calvin lived. The neighborhood includes the Panthéon and Luxembourg.
- Arc de Triomphe - Europe's triumphal arch.

Paris was a Christian center at an early date, its first apostles being St. Denis, a 3rd-century Christian martyr and the most famous cephalophore in Christian folklore. This isn't a word one would use in everyday talk, for sure. A cephalophore is a person depicted as carrying their head, as Parisians alleged that the bishop who was beheaded on the hill of Montmartre picked up his head and went several kilometers to the site

where the Basilica of Saint-Denis now stands while offering a sermon on repentance.

This is common in Paris. It is a place that longs to be bold and never forgotten. Saint Genevieve, for instance, was a patron saint of Paris, and according to legend, she saved the city from invasion by the Huns. A thousand years later, in the fourteenth century, the Shroud of Turin, believed by many to be the burial cloth of Jesus, was brought to Paris. It was displayed in the Notre-Dame cathedral, where it attracted many pilgrims. It was later returned to Turin, where it remains to this day. In the Middle Ages, the Feast of Fools was a popular festival in Paris. People dressed in ridiculous costumes and engaged in irreverent behavior, including mocking the clergy.

Reflection 3

Reflecting on Matthew 5:14 where Jesus said, "you are the light of the world - like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden," how can your experience in Paris, the city of lights, inspire you to shine the light of Christ in the world? In what practical ways can you spread the love and hope of Jesus Christ?

Reflection 4

The French poet Charles Baudelaire, wrote that Parisians have an essence or quality about them that he called "flâneur" which literally means to lounge, but he widened the concept to mean being a passionate observer of one's surroundings and experiences. How can the Parisian mindset inspire you to see God's work in the world and motivate you to be unique, daring, and beautiful as a child of God?

Reflection 5

Jesus died for us, and many martyrs died for the faith. What does the story legend of St. Denis teach us about the nature of faith and devotion? How can we apply this example of perseverance and sacrifice to Jesus' demand for us to make sacrifices for others?

Evening Reflection - February 25

1. It's likely that some grumpy, hangry, nasty things have been shared and said since we've flown for 11 hours, traversed Zurich with our bags, and trained for another journey. With all this exhaustion, how can we still honor God during our long travel day?
2. How can we encourage one another during times of exhaustion or frustration, during this trip, and beyond?
3. What are our expectations for tomorrow and the rest of the pilgrimage, and how can we align them with God's expectations for us?

Evening Reflection - February 26

1. Reflect on the highs and lows of the day.
2. What are your thoughts on worshipping, in English, at the American Church of Paris?
3. As we crisscrossed Paris, were there any occurrences or sights that stood out as sacred, Godly, or a "God moment?" If so, what were they?
4. With a day of Paris wrapped up, what do you hope for tomorrow?

Evening Reflection - February 27

1. Did your experience at the Louvre inspire you to think about God's creativity? If so, explain.
2. What about Paris, for you, is most enchanting? What about the most surprising? Most disturbing?
3. The two most common things Americans are warned about when traveling to Paris are that Parisians don't like us and that you're not safe. Reflect on these warnings. Was there any truth in this?
4. As you experienced the city, would you say you acted more as a tourist or more as a pilgrim? If you answered tourist, do you plan to do anything differently in Milan.

Milan Train Prep - February 28

Part 1

Ambrose of Milan was an influential theologian who played a key role in developing Christian theology. His most famous work, *Confessions*, is considered one of the greatest pieces of Western literature. In his commentary on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9), Ambrose stresses the unmerited nature of the privilege of being able to address and approach God. Reflect on what he wrote:

O man, you did not dare to raise your face to heaven; you lowered your eyes to the earth - and suddenly you have received the grace of Christ, and all your sins have been forgiven! From being a wicked servant, you have become a good son! And do not suppose that this is due to any action on your part; it is due to the grace of Christ...So raise your eyes to the Father who has redeemed you through his Son, and say: "Our Father..." But do not claim any privilege. He is the Father in a special way only of Christ; he is the common Father of us all, in that although he has created all of us, he has begotten none but Christ. Then also say by his grace, "Our Father," so that you may merit being his son.

Reflection 1

Despite our best intentions, each of us is somehow privileged and entitled. Of course, there is a scale, but we live in a developed country, have access to higher education, and somehow afforded this trip. Thus we are advantaged to varying degrees. Knowing this, reflect on your personal faith. To what degree are you a Christian elitist? How have you used your faith to make you feel better than others? This will be hard, but it is undoubtedly present. For example, have you ever felt God blessed you because someone you loved recovered from a sickness? If so, how do you reconcile this to those who don't recover?

Reflection 2

Now that you have reflected on privilege, entitlement, and Christian elitism, build on Ambrose's argument that we are also not privileged to be called children of God by reflecting on ways our faith can recognize how God's gift of grace is a blessing to all, not just us.

Part 2

Milan, the city of fashion and design, has long been a hub of creativity and innovation. From its stunning architecture to its world-renowned shopping, Milan is a city that truly represents the best of humanity. Milan is a vibrant and energetic city. Many Italians critique it for being too American. As we explore the city, consider and assess this for yourself. Ask what this could possibly mean. However, don't let this distract you. Also, sink back into history and imagine Ambrose and Augustine as they talked theology into the late night and early morning hours in the various historical city squares, around some of these fascinating sites:

- Santa Maria delle Grazie - While its famous for hosting Leonardo da Vinci's mural painting of The Last Supper, the church offers much more than this.
- Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio is an early Christian church in Milan, Italy, dedicated to Saint Ambrose, the city's patron saint.
- Catholic University of the Sacred Heart - Lauren L's UNC Charlotte of Milan.
- The Duomo di Milano - This impressive cathedral, which took nearly six centuries to complete, is one of the most iconic landmarks in Italy.
- Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II - This is one of the world's oldest malls and features some of the most luxurious stores in Milan.

While in Milan, we will also visit Santuario di San Bernardino alle Ossa. This church is known for its gothic decor made of human skulls and bones. In the 17th century, a small adjacent ossuary was added to the church to house the remains of the deceased from the nearby hospital. The ossuary was quickly filled with bones and skulls, and the decision was made to use them to decorate the walls and ceilings of the chapel. The use of human bones for decoration was not uncommon in Europe at the time, as it was believed to be a reminder of the transience of life and the inevitability of death. The practice also had practical benefits, as

overcrowded cemeteries and limited burial space often led to the need for bones to be reused or stored in ossuaries.

If this wasn't odd enough, in the 14th century, the Black Death ravaged Europe and claimed millions of lives. However, Milan was remarkably spared from the epidemic. Although the plague swept through Italy, beginning in Venice and Genoa in January 1348, Milan experienced only a small outbreak. It is possible that the city's low mortality rate was due to isolating households where the plague appeared by closing them off, which forced people to remain inside and perish there, being the first city to practice social distancing.

But there is even something weirder about Milan. Of the more than 3,500 statues in the Milan Cathedral, there are 135 spires. Well, lucky you - they're available for adoption, and Niner United has adopted the beloved "spire" of St. Francis of Assisi. When we visit the Cathedral, try to find him. The current Pope took his name after St. Francis because of his devotion to the poor, his living simply, and his love for nature and animals. Francis grew up as entitled as he could be, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, and lived a life of luxury. However, after a spiritual awakening, he renounced his wealth and decided to live a life of poverty, devoting himself to serving God and helping the poor. One day, while walking through the streets of Assisi, Francis came across a beggar who was barefoot and shivering from the cold. Feeling compassion for the man, Francis took off his shoes and gave them to the beggar. From that day on, Francis went barefoot, believing that giving to those in need was more important than wearing shoes.

Reflection 3

We are in the season of Lent, which started on Ash Wednesday just before we left for this trip. Reflecting on the use of human bones for decoration in Santuario di San Bernardino alle Ossa, what does this practice remind you of regarding your mortality and the importance of cherishing life?

Reflection 4

Considering the story of St. Francis of Assisi and his devotion to the poor and living simply, what lessons can we learn from his life today in a world where materialism, consumerism, and fashion often overshadow our spiritual and moral values?

Reflection 5

We will visit the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, where Lauren studied. In many ways, our pilgrimage is a short study abroad. Thinking of your status as a college student, how can we as Christians balance our faith and reason in a world that often separates the two, and what are some practical ways we can integrate our beliefs into our daily lives?

Evening Reflection - February 28

1. How did you use travel time between Paris and Milan as an opportunity for devotional reflection and spiritual growth?
2. The train was just as long as our transatlantic flight. Hopefully, you found some rest on the journey. How can intentional rest and relaxation during travel help you connect with God and deepen your spiritual journey?
3. Just by your experience so far, what do you already know will be different between Paris and Milan?
4. What are you looking forward to experiencing in Milan, and how can you approach those experiences with a heart of gratitude and humility?

Evening Reflection - March 1

1. How did our time in Milan today help you better understand God's presence?
2. Did your visits to either Santa Maria delle Grazie or Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio teach you anything about God or the Christian faith?
3. Now that we are midway through the trip, how has this particular group you're with strengthened your relationship with God? What one or two people with us have impacted you the most, and how?
4. Today did you encounter any surprises or unexpected moments? If so, what?

Evening Reflection - March 2

1. Building Duomo di Milano took nearly 600 years (1386 – 1965). What does this teach you about dedication and perseverance, especially in faith?
2. The Duomo is the largest cathedral in the world. There is no doubt that it was built to make a statement. Describe how you have built your life, faith, and circumstances to reflect the magnitude of God.
3. The Galleria Vittorio is one of the world's original and oldest shopping malls. Locals refer to it as il salotto di Milano – which means Milan's dining, not because of the food, but rather because it is the place to be seen in Milan. How can our faith, and even Niner United, be referred to similarly, leveraged to cultivate a more welcoming and hospitable environment for others?
4. Tonight we learned to make pizza and hopefully enjoyed a deeper sense of connection with each other. In what ways was this a spiritual exercise?

Zurich Train Prep - March 3

Part 1

We have talked a lot about Huldrych Zwingli in preparation for this trip. However, it is likely that you've never heard of him before this trip. This is because Zwingli is the forgotten reformer. Luther, the first reformer, and Calvin, the prolific writer, set the stage for these two to take the spotlight. Remember, church historians claim it was Christianity's most dangerous idea because it was so divisive. Zwingli, though like Switzerland in general, was quite the peacemaker:

How does it happen that we Christians who are united by such powerful agencies have much greater quarrels than unbelievers? And how does it happen that in an alliance in which until now a fraternal love prevailed, for the sake of foreign lords violent quarrel has arisen? Answer: Real piety, by which is meant true worship and prayer to God, has disappeared among us, as St. Paul writes to the Romans (Romans 1:28-31: And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to an unfit mind and to do things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of injustice, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless).

Reflection 1

Zwingli suggests that the disappearance of real piety is a key factor in the conflicts among Christians. What does he mean by "real piety," and how might we cultivate such devotion in our lives and communities? What things help you overcome the distractions and temptations that often draw us away from a truly authentic relationship with God and peace with others?

Reflection 2

Zwingli references Romans 1:28-31. Paul's words here suggest that those who persist in things against God are ultimately self-destructive. What could our alternative vision of the good life in Christ be like? Be specific.

Part 2

Zurich, the largest city in Switzerland, is smaller than Charlotte. Even though we skipped through the city briefly and tasted our share of chocolate, we probably haven't given Zurich (like Zwingli) much thought. However, Zurich is worth getting to know. For starters, Zurich is known for its breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps and picturesque scenery. The city is famous for its banking (Swiss Bank Accounts), but it also has a richness that attracts visitors worldwide. The Old Town of Zurich is a charming district of winding cobblestone streets and hidden courtyards, and Bahnhofstrasse is one of the most luxurious shopping areas in the world. Here, we will find exclusive boutiques, designer shops, and some of the world's finest chocolatiers. This street represents the essence of Swiss luxury and elegance. Along the way, we will visit:

- Quaibrücke - a famous bridge that offers panoramic views of the city and the lake.
- Wasserkirche - The water church, located on the banks of the Limmat River.
- Grossmünster - The iconic Romanesque-style church where Zwingli pastored.
- Lindenhof - offers panoramic views of the city.
- St. Peter Church - famous for having the largest clock face in Europe.
- Fraumünster Church - a 9th-century church in Zurich that is famous for its stained-glass windows.

The great poet and philosopher Lizzo once said, "boss up and change your life." Although Lizzo will be in Zurich on Saturday, this speaks to the Zurich way of life. There is an agency about Zurich. Zurich knows itself. It's self-confident, but not arrogant. Soft-spoken, yet impactful.

There are a few abstract concepts that are soft-spoken, yet impactful. Think of time. Time is an incredibly impactful and powerful force. It can't be stopped, controlled, or manipulated. Time also shapes most of our existence. However, if we lose track, it will exist in the background of our lives, ticking away without us always being aware of it. But not in Zurich. Zurich is not only timeless, it is time-full, represented by their obsession with watch and clockmaking. There is a giant, functioning polydactyl clock in the middle of the city that is called the "Urania-Sternwarte." More so, the St. Peter church has the largest church clock face in Europe.

Something else that is soft-spoken yet impactful is the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, its referred to as a "still, small voice" and the "gentle whisper." This suggests that the Holy Spirit has a soft-spoken nature that isn't always easily noticed or heard. Theologians refer to the Holy Spirit as the humble one. But the Holy Spirit is also described as a comforter, guide, and advocate. The Spirit speaks to our hearts, and has the power to transform lives. God's impact, through the Holy Spirit is undeniable.

Reflection 1

How does Zurich's obsession with watch and clockmaking reflect on the city's understanding of time, and how can this concept of time shape our understanding of God's timing in our lives?

Reflection 2

How can Zurich's self-confidence and agency inspire us to be more self-assured in our faith and our personal lives, and what steps can we take to cultivate this confidence?

Reflection 3

How can Zurich's humility and the Holy Spirit's soft-spoken nature remind us to listen more closely to the quiet voice of God in our lives, and what practices can we adopt to be more attuned to the Holy Spirit's guidance?

Evening Reflection - March 3

1. What are you most thankful for today?
2. In what ways has this pilgrimage challenged you?
3. As the trip wraps up, what are some last things you hope to do, see, or experience?
4. European high speed trains are an engineering marvel that we simply can't experience in the U.S. Racing through the Alps and European countryside at 320kmph or more is in many ways similar to how fast this pilgrimage has flown by. Before you know it, your collegiate experience will have flown by too. How has this pilgrimage helped you slow down and experience God in a high-speed life?

Evening Reflection - March 4

1. What about Zurich's distinctiveness is most appealing to you?
2. If you had to describe the personality of Paris, Milan, and Zurich with one word each, what would their words be and why? What city is most like you, and why?
3. What was the most unexpected part of your Zurich experience? How can we look for glimpses of God's beauty in unexpected places?
4. What is one significant takeaway from this pilgrimage that you will carry with you and apply to your everyday life and spiritual journey going forward?

Final Reflections

Our pilgrimage has been intended to be a practice of theological reflection, a discipline that involves exploring individual and corporate experiences in conversation with one another. Hopefully, you have been able to weave the thread of our lives and religious heritage more strongly into a single story of your faithfulness.

In many ways our questions for this pilgrimage have asked “where is God in this?” Discovering God’s presence, though is a gift of a faithful life lived. Asking the question is the actual process. A pilgrimage is not just a journey to one place where God might be, its a journey to multiple places to experience the mystery that God can be found in all places and in all people.

Having the capacity to combine these experiences and our discoveries becomes the key to releasing and receiving the power of the Christian religious foundations we claim. Believe it or not, though, this can only take place when we allow the discovery of God’s real presence to assume primacy and set aside our fears. That is to really and actually believe God is here and God is real. Otherwise we are simply liars and frauds about our faith. Instead, we pray this pilgrimage has affirmed for you that your faith is real and relevant.

Reflection 1

How has the practice of theological reflection during this pilgrimage deepened your understanding of your faith journey and the role of God in it?

Reflection 2

What were some of the most significant experiences or encounters on this pilgrimage that challenged your beliefs and assumptions about God's presence in the world?

Rapid Fire

1. What was your favorite food you tried on the trip?
2. What was your favorite place you visited?
3. Who was the lightest sleeper in the group?
4. Who made you laugh the most during the trip?
5. What new food did you try?
6. What was your favorite church you visited?
7. What was the hardest city for you to navigate?
8. What was the hardest city to understand things in?
9. What student fit in the most in Paris? Milan? Zurich?
10. What student fit in the most at the chocolate factory?
11. Who's your new found friend?
12. Where was the best view?
13. Who was the best dressed for this trip?
14. Who surprised you the most?
15. What was your favorite restaurant?
16. What was your favorite place we stayed?
17. What was the most unique thing you did?
18. What was the most fun part of traveling with this group?
19. What is your favorite trip memory?
20. Who got into trouble the most?
21. What was the weirdest thing you saw?
22. What is one new phrase you learned?
23. What was the most adventurous thing you did?
24. What is a historical fact that you learned while here?
25. Who did you have the most memorable conversation with?

Train Seating

Name	Zurich to Paris (17)	Paris to Milan (16)	Milan to Zurich (1)
Alex	86	48	87
Amber	61	72	74
Austin	72	18	84
Cailee	73	13	66
Jenna	75	46	64
Jennifer	68	24	65
Lauren L	63	14	68
Lauren W	66	11	67
Maggie	65	16	76
Matthew	85	12	61
Morgan	64	47	72
Nicole	67	71	78
Reagan	62	45	77
Riley	77	55	71
Sade	78	56	73
Sammi	71	15	75
Sophia	74	23	63
Steve	76	17	62

1: Reading Romans

What Is Romans and Why It Still Matters

Reading Romans on a pilgrimage through the Mediterranean opens your eyes to the depth and reach of God's story. As you travel through Barcelona, Nice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Mykonos, Athens, and Ephesus, you're not just exploring ancient cities. You're stepping into the world where the message of Romans first spread.

Paul wrote this letter to early believers living in the heart of the Roman Empire. They were trying to live out their faith in real cities, among real people, with real challenges. That is exactly where you will be, standing in places filled with history, beauty, culture, and questions that still matter today.

Romans speaks about a God who is healing the world, not abandoning it. It reminds us that through Jesus, freedom, restoration, and new life are already underway. This message does not stay locked in a church or a classroom. It belongs in the streets of Rome, on the shores of the Aegean, in the crowded markets and quiet corners of these cities.

As you travel, Romans becomes more than a book. It becomes a voice that echoes through temples, cathedrals, and ruins. It calls us to be people shaped by grace, people led by the Spirit, people who live with purpose in the places we walk. Reading it in these settings grounds the words in real landscapes. It brings the hope Paul describes to life, making it feel present, active, and alive.

This trip offers a chance to see the story of God at work, past and present. Bring Romans with you and let it shape how you see the world around you. Let it remind you that your faith is not separate from culture, art, or everyday life. It is woven into it, just as this journey is.

What Romans Says That Still Matters

Romans speaks into a world that aches for healing. It reminds us that while the world is deeply wounded, it is not forgotten. Sin and Death are not abstract. They are real forces at work in the systems that dehumanize, the hatred that divides, and the anxiety that drains us. But through Jesus, God stepped in. Jesus did not avoid the worst of the world. He faced it, overcame it, and rose into new life. His resurrection is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of something entirely new (Romans 8).

This letter tells us we are not only rescued from destruction. We are set apart for renewal. Romans reveals that God is not just transforming individuals. He is shaping a new kind of people. People who reflect His character. People who live with courage, joy, and love that does not back down. People who build communities that show what God's kingdom looks like right now.

Everyone has a place in this. When Paul wrote, he was speaking to Jews and Gentiles, groups that did not share meals, customs, or much trust. Romans called them into one family. Today, our divisions may look different—by race, politics, economics, or history—but the message remains the same. There is one table. One Spirit. One family where everyone belongs. That remains as powerful today as it was then.

Why Travel These Places?

This journey through Spain, France, Italy, Greece, and Turkey is more than a trip. It is a return to the landscape of the early Church. These were cities of culture, commerce, and empire. They were also the places Paul longed to reach with the Gospel. He did not want to escape the world. He wanted to transform it.

- Italy, especially Rome, was at the center of everything. Paul wrote Romans while in Corinth, longing to get to the capital. He knew that if the message of Jesus could thrive there, it could reach the world.
- France and Spain were his next horizon. They marked the edge of what was known. Paul hoped to carry the Gospel there, not to complete his travel list, but to stretch the reach of God's hope to the ends of the earth.
- To walk these places today is to step into that same calling. The stones may be older. The languages may have changed. But the hope is the same. The Gospel still moves. Still speaks. Still invites.

The Takeaway

Romans does not hand us a checklist. It offers a vision. The world shaped by fear and death is fading. In Jesus, something new has already begun. And we have been drawn into it, not to stay quiet, but to live boldly.

As you stand in ancient ruins or modern cities, reading Paul's words where they first took root, you realize this is not just history. It is present. It is ongoing. The movement has not ended. You are not a visitor to it. You are part of the story God is still writing.

Focus: Read Romans 1

1. What does Paul say about Jesus? What is emphasized about Jesus' identity and role in this opening chapter?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Who is the message of the Gospel for, according to Paul? Does it sound exclusive or inclusive? Why do you think that matters?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Why does Paul say he is "not ashamed" of the Gospel in verse 16?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2: Barcelona

Theme: Good News for a Global World

Modern Barcelona welcomes you with Gaudí's fantastical architecture, from the unfinished Sagrada Família to the whimsical Park Güell. This Catalan capital blends medieval Gothic quarters with modernist masterpieces and bustling markets, such as La Boquería, with pristine beaches along the Mediterranean. The city pulses with artistic innovation, culinary excellence, and fierce regional pride.

In Paul's Time

While Paul never visited what would become Barcelona, the region was part of Hispania Tarraconensis, a prosperous Roman province. The area was known as Barcino, a small coastal settlement founded around 15 BC. Roman roads connected this outpost to major cities like Tarraco (modern Tarragona), and Roman merchants would have traded along these shores. The region's Roman heritage is still visible in Barcelona's Gothic Quarter, where ancient walls and gates remind visitors of the empire's reach.

Journal Prompt:

As you walk around Barcelona, think about this: How would Paul's idea that everyone is equal change the way people treated each other back then? How does that idea make you feel as you see all the different people in the city today?

[illegible]

Focus: Read Romans 3

1. Romans 3 speaks of how everyone is in need of grace, regardless of their background. As you stand before the unfinished La Sagrada Família, how might this ongoing construction remind you of humanity’s unfinished nature and our shared need for growth and grace?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Barcelona’s Gothic Quarter blends ancient Roman walls with medieval and modern buildings. Romans 3 teaches that God’s grace breaks down barriers and unites all people. As you walk through these layers of history, what does it mean to you that the “good news” of grace can unite the old and the new, the ancient and the modern, into one story?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Gaudí’s Park Güell is filled with vibrant mosaics made from broken tiles, forming something beautiful from many different pieces. Romans 3 states that everyone, regardless of their flaws, can be part of God’s story through faith. How does Park Güell’s mosaic art help you picture the way grace can transform brokenness into beauty, both in people and in the world around us?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3: Nice

Theme: Grace, Not Performance

Modern Nice embodies French Riviera elegance with its Promenade des Anglais, azure Mediterranean waters, and Belle Époque architecture. The city attracts millions with its perfect climate, world-class museums, and proximity to Monaco's glamour. Old Town's narrow streets and colorful buildings create an intimate contrast to the grand coastal boulevards.

In Paul's Time

This region was part of Gallia Narbonensis, the Roman province that encompassed much of southern France. While Nice itself wasn't a major Roman settlement, the area was connected to important Roman cities, such as Antipolis (modern Antibes). It was located along the Via Julia Augusta, the coastal road that linked Italy to Spain. Roman villas dotted the coastline, and the area's mild climate and natural beauty attracted wealthy Romans just as it does modern tourists.

Journal Prompt:

As you spend time in Nice, surrounded by its beauty and luxury, think about this: How do you think Paul's message about valuing spiritual things over material wealth would have sounded to people living in such a rich place? How does that message speak to you today?

[illegible]

Focus: Romans 4

1. Romans 4 highlights Abraham's faith, not his achievements. As you stroll along the Promenade des Anglais, where people often display their best clothes and cars, how does the idea that God values faith over outward success challenge the way you view beauty and status in a city like Nice?

2. The architecture and grand hotels of Nice were designed to impress and attract the wealthy. Romans 4 teaches that God's promises are not material gifts. Looking at these luxurious buildings, what helps you remember that the most important things in life, like grace, can't be earned or bought?

3. Nice's Old Town, with its humble, winding streets, stands in contrast to the city's grand boulevards. Romans 4 teaches that faith isn't limited to impressive places. As you explore both sides of Nice, how does this remind you that God's grace is for everyone, regardless of their background or status?

4: Rome

Theme: Peace in the Heart of Empire

Modern Rome is a living museum where ancient ruins coexist with Renaissance palaces, baroque churches, and contemporary Italian life. The Vatican, Colosseum, and Roman Forum draw millions of pilgrims and tourists, while Romans navigate their daily lives around monuments that have stood for millennia. The city serves as both Italy's capital and the heart of the Catholic Church.

In Paul's Time

Rome was the caput mundi—the capital of the world. With over one million inhabitants, it was the largest city in the ancient world, a cosmopolitan metropolis where people from every corner of the empire lived, worked, and worshipped. Paul wrote his letter to a Christian community already established in Rome, a city where the emperor was worshipped as a god and where gladiatorial games celebrated imperial power. The Forum bustled with political debate, the Circus Maximus entertained the masses, and the Palatine Hill housed emperors in unprecedented luxury.

Journal Prompt

As you walk through Rome, think about this: Paul was imprisoned and killed here for his faith. How do you think his message about a crucified Messiah would have sounded to people in a city that celebrated power and military victories? What does that message mean to you as you stand in the heart of Rome today?

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features ten sets of horizontal dashed lines, each set consisting of two parallel lines. These lines are evenly spaced vertically across the entire page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The background is white, and there are no margins or other markings present.

Focus: Romans 5

1. Romans 5 says, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." As you stand among the ruins of the Colosseum, once a symbol of violence and power, how does Paul's message of peace challenge the values of a city (ancient or modern) built on conquest and glory?

2. Rome's churches and monuments have stood for centuries, surviving wars and empires. Romans 5 promises hope that endures even while suffering. As you reflect on the endurance of these ancient sites, how does Paul's message give you hope that God's peace can last, no matter what challenges you face?

3. Standing in St. Peter's Square, how does Romans 5's message of peace with God through faith, not through impressive buildings or religious achievements, shape your understanding of what truly brings people together in Christ?

5: Florence

Theme: Faith that Builds a Family

Modern Florence is the Renaissance capital, home to Michelangelo's David, the Uffizi Gallery, and Brunelleschi's Dome. The city that gave birth to the Renaissance continues to preserve its artistic heritage while serving as a major hub for fashion, tourism, and Italian culture. The Arno River flows past medieval bridges and Renaissance palaces.

In Paul's Time

Known as Florentia, this was a Roman colony established around 59 BC. While not a major imperial city, it was an important stop along the Via Cassia, connecting Rome to Gaul. The settlement featured typical Roman urban planning with a forum, amphitheater, and baths. The fertile Arno Valley supported agriculture and trade, making it a modest but prosperous provincial town.

Journal Prompt:

As you admire the art and beauty of Florence, consider this: The Renaissance celebrated human dignity and worth, ideas that resonate with Paul's message that everyone is made in God's image. How do you see Christian beliefs shaping the art and culture around you? What does this make you think or feel about the value of each person?

This image shows a full page of white paper with ten horizontal rows of small black dots. Each row consists of two parallel dotted lines, creating a series of uniform gaps across the entire page. This type of paper is commonly used for teaching handwriting or as a template for children's writing practice.

.....

Focus: Romans 6

1. Brunelleschi's dome rises above Florence as a symbol of vision, perseverance, and faith. Romans 6 speaks of being raised to new life with Christ. As you stand beneath the Duomo's soaring dome, how does its grandeur and light remind you of the hope and transformation that faith brings?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Florence's beauty is the result of generations working together to build something greater than themselves. Romans 6 calls believers to live not for themselves but for God and others. As you reflect on the city's collaborative spirit, how does this inspire you to use your gifts to build up those around you and strengthen the "family" of faith?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. The Ponte Vecchio has connected the two sides of Florence for centuries, surviving floods and wars. Romans 6 describes how faith bridges the gap between our old life and new life in Christ. As you cross this historic bridge, how does it help you picture the way faith connects people, families, and generations?

.....

.....

.....

.....

6: Naples

Theme: A New Humanity in Christ

Modern Naples is a vibrant, chaotic city famous for pizza, passionate inhabitants, and proximity to Mount Vesuvius and the Amalfi Coast. The historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage site, layered with Greek, Roman, and medieval history. The city embodies southern Italian culture with its emphasis on family, food, and animated street life.

In Paul's Time

Known as Neapolis ("New City"), this was originally a Greek colony that became an important Roman city. It retained much of its Greek character even under Roman rule, serving as a center of Greek learning and culture. Wealthy Romans built villas in the beautiful Bay of Naples, and the city was known for its schools of philosophy and rhetoric. Paul likely passed through the nearby port of Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) on his final journey to Rome.

Journal Prompt:

As you spend time in Naples, think about this: Paul landed here on his way to Rome and was welcomed by a local community. What spiritual lessons can you draw from Paul's journey through Naples, especially about hospitality, faith during travel, and finding support in new places? How might his experience connect to your journey today?

This image shows a full page of white paper with ten horizontal rows of small black dots. Each row consists of two parallel dotted lines, creating a series of uniform gaps across the entire page. This type of paper is commonly used for teaching handwriting or as a template for children's writing practice.

Focus: Romans 8

1. Naples has faced disaster and change yet remains full of life. How does Romans 8:28 help you see God bringing good even from hardship?

2. A whirlwind day in a city like Nice can feel chaotic. How might Romans 8:6 invite you to find spiritual peace amid the rush?

3. Romans 8:22–23 speaks of creation groaning in hope. As you explore the beauty and history of Nice and Italy, where do you glimpse that hope breaking through?

7: Athens

Theme: Life in the Spirit

Modern Athens combines ancient glory with contemporary urban challenges. The Acropolis dominates the cityscape while modern Athenians navigate traffic jams around ancient ruins. The city serves as Greece's capital and a major tourist destination, balancing its role as the birthplace of democracy with the realities of modern European politics and economics.

In Paul's Time:

Though past its classical peak, Athens remained intellectually prestigious in Paul's era. The city was famous for its philosophers, schools, and monuments. Paul famously preached at the Areopagus (Acts 17), engaging with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. While politically subject to Rome, Athens maintained its reputation as the intellectual center of the Mediterranean world.

Journal Prompt:

As you walk through Athens, think about this: Paul shared his faith here with philosophers and people who worshipped many gods. How do you think his message about Jesus and one true God challenged the ideas of the people in Athens? What spiritual thoughts come to you as you stand where Paul once spoke about faith in a city full of history and ideas?

This image shows a full page of white paper with ten horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Focus: Romans 9

1. Romans 9 wrestles with God's freedom to choose and show mercy. In a city like Athens, full of competing philosophies, how might Paul's view of God's sovereignty have confronted the idea that humans control their destiny?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Romans 9:25–26 speaks of God calling people "not my people" into belonging. As you walk through Athens, where Paul spoke to outsiders, where do you sense God's Spirit still calling unexpected people into new life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. In Athens, ancient temples stand as monuments to many gods. Romans 9 insists there is *one* God writing a bigger story. How does being here help you reflect on what it means to be part of that story?

.....

.....

.....

.....

8: Mykonos

Theme: Dead to Sin, Alive to God

Modern Mykonos is synonymous with luxury tourism, pristine beaches, vibrant nightlife, and iconic white-washed buildings. This Cycladic island attracts visitors worldwide with its cosmopolitan atmosphere and stunning Aegean beauty.

In Paul's Time:

Mykonos was a small, relatively insignificant island in the Cyclades, primarily known for its proximity to the sacred island of Delos. While Paul didn't visit Mykonos specifically, he sailed through these waters during his missionary journeys. The island would have been home to fishermen, farmers, and those serving the religious tourism to nearby Delos.

Journal Prompt:

As you relax on the beach in Mykonos, think about this: Paul's message about Jesus was the same whether he was speaking to people with a lot of money or very little. How does the idea of valuing spiritual things over wealth or comfort speak to you as you enjoy both the simple and the luxurious parts of life?

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Focus: Romans 10

1. Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe...you will be saved." In a place like Mykonos, full of image and indulgence, what does it mean to claim a deeper identity in Christ publicly?

2. Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." As you enjoy the beauty and ease of this island, does that invitation feel too simple—or surprisingly freeing?

3. Paul traveled through these waters with urgency to share the gospel. Romans 10:14–15 asks, "How can they hear without someone preaching to them?" What does it look like to carry good news in a world chasing pleasure but longing for purpose?

9: Santorini

Theme: Creation Groans, Hope Endures

Modern Santorini captivates visitors with its dramatic volcanic landscape, cliff-top villages, and spectacular sunsets. The island's unique beauty, created by ancient volcanic activity, makes it one of the world's most photographed destinations.

In Paul's Time:

Known as Thera, this island was part of the Roman province of Asia. While not a major population center, it was part of the network of Aegean islands connected by trade routes. The island's dramatic geography, created by a massive volcanic eruption around 1600 BC, would have been as striking then as it is now.

Journal Prompt:

As you take in the breathtaking views of Santorini, reflect on a moment in your life when the beauty of nature made you feel close to God or brought you peace. How might Paul have used the stunning scenery around him to talk about God's presence and love? What does the natural beauty of Santorini inspire in your faith journey?

[illegible]

Focus: Romans 11

1. Romans 11:17 talks about being grafted into an olive tree, a symbol of belonging and legacy. As you look out at Santorini's ancient landscape, what does it mean to be grafted into something older and deeper than yourself?

2. Romans 11 explores the themes of rejection and restoration. This island rose from volcanic devastation to become a place of beauty. How does Santorini mirror the idea that God isn't finished with what looks broken?

3. In Romans 11:33, Paul bursts into awe: "Oh, the depth of the riches...of God!" Surrounded by cliffs, sea, and sky, what stirs your sense of wonder at God's mystery and mercy today?

10: Ephesus

Theme: A Living Sacrifice in a City of Power

Modern Ephesus is primarily known as one of the world's best-preserved ancient cities, located near the modern Turkish town of Selçuk. Visitors can walk the marble streets Paul once traveled, sit in the theater where riots erupted over his preaching, and see the remains of the Temple of Artemis.

In Paul's Time:

Ephesus was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire, serving as the capital of the province of Asia. The Temple of Artemis was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and the city was a major center of commerce and religion. Paul spent over two years here, establishing one of his most important church communities. The city's prosperity depended partly on the temple economy and the silversmiths who made religious artifacts.

Journal Prompt:

As you walk through the ruins of Ephesus, think about this: Paul's message about Jesus didn't just challenge people's religious beliefs. It also disrupted the businesses and wealth built around pagan worship, like the famous temple of Artemis. How does it make you feel to know that faith can impact an entire culture and economy?

[illegible]

Focus: Romans 12

1. Romans 12:2 urges, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world.” In a city once shaped by power, wealth, and idol worship, what patterns do you feel called to resist today?

2. Romans 12:1 calls us to be living sacrifices. As you stand where Paul challenged a city’s core identity, what might it mean for *you* to offer your life to God, even when it disrupts the status quo?

3. Romans 12 paints a picture of a countercultural community marked by humility, generosity, and love that disarms evil. As you walk through a city once built on status and spectacle, how does Paul’s vision challenge the way we define greatness today?

11: Istanbul

Theme: Wake Up to Love

Modern Istanbul, situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, is Turkey's largest city and cultural hub. The city showcases layers of Byzantine and Ottoman history alongside contemporary Turkish culture. The Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, and Grand Bazaar reflect its rich multicultural heritage.

In Paul's Time:

Known as Byzantium (later Constantinople), this was a relatively minor Greek city on the Bosphorus. While Paul didn't visit here, the location was strategically important for trade between Europe and Asia. The city wouldn't achieve major prominence until Constantine refounded it as Constantinople in 330 AD.

Journal Prompt:

As you travel through Istanbul, using it as a bridge between your Mediterranean journey and your next stop in London, notice how the city itself connects two continents and many cultures. Just as Istanbul links East and West, Paul's life and ministry connected people from different backgrounds. As you take in the sights from your drive, reflect on how you can be a bridge-builder in your own life, bringing people together and embracing new experiences as you continue your journey.

This image shows a full page of white paper with ten horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school handwriting practice paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the entire width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

Focus: Romans 14

1. Romans 14:1 urges us to welcome those who think differently without judgment. As you pass through this city where cultures and faiths collide, how might God be inviting you to practice hospitality over hostility?

2. Romans 14:19 says, "Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification." In a world divided by opinions, how can you be a peacemaker, someone who builds bridges, not walls?

3. Driving through Istanbul reminds us how connected the world is. Romans 14 reminds us that faith isn't about winning arguments but walking in love. Where might God be asking you to choose love over being right?

12: London

Theme:

Modern London is a global financial hub, a cultural center, and one of the world's most diverse cities. From the Tower of London to the London Eye, from Shakespeare's Globe to cutting-edge galleries, the city embodies both deep historical roots and contemporary innovation.

In Paul's Time:

Londinium was founded by the Roman Empire around 50 AD, just as Paul was beginning his missionary journeys. The settlement on the Thames was a trading post and administrative center for Roman Britain. While Paul never traveled to Britain, early Christian communities likely reached London within decades of his death through Roman trade networks and military connections.

Journal Prompt:

As you explore London, think about how this city grew from a small Roman trading post into today's global metropolis. Paul's message about Jesus spread far beyond the places he visited, reaching people worldwide. As you notice the diversity and international connections in London, reflect on how the gospel is meant for everyone, everywhere. How does being in such a vibrant, multicultural city help you understand the universal message Paul shared?

[illegible]

Focus: Romans 15

1. Romans 15:7 states, “Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.” In a city as diverse as London, how does this call to radical welcome challenge the way you see others and yourself?

2. Paul longed to go where Christ hadn’t yet been preached (Romans 15:20). Walking through London’s global streets, where do you think the gospel still needs to show up, not just geographically, but socially or culturally?

3. As your journey ends here, Romans 15:13 offers a blessing: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace.” Looking back on this pilgrimage, where have you seen God’s hope take root, and how will you carry it home?
