

BOOK 5: THE EARLY CHURCH—THE CONSUMMATION

Answers •  
*Family*  
Bible Devotional

A faith-building walk  
through the Bible



MIKE & LIBBY WILD

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"READ &  
DISCUSS"  
DEVOTIONS

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# Introduction

A strong, foundational understanding of God's Word is the only answer for our families and future generations.

As Christian parents, we can list dozens of ways that the godless culture around us threatens the well-being of our children. However, instead of focusing on the negative and helplessly watching children walk away from the church, we can proactively build a strong and sure foundation in our children—a foundation built on the unchanging Word of the unchanging God.

Teaching God's Word clearly, systematically, and consistently provides an anchor for our children to cling to in an age of skepticism. Understanding God's Word enables our children to understand their sinfulness before a holy God and their need for a savior. Understanding God's Word prepares and equips them to face the anti-biblical culture around them and emerge resolute in their faith.

Our children are our first disciples, and if we want them to thrive in a world that grows more hostile to the gospel every day, they must know why they believe what they believe. In order for our children to remain steadfast in God's Word, they must know it for themselves.

God and his true story are the focal point of this Bible devotional. We will be discovering the historical events given in the Bible as they happened (chronologically), bringing attention to God's attributes and grand plan. We will be tracing redemption through the Bible as well as seeing God's amazing purposes (and how we fit into them) as it applies from before the beginning until the consummation of the ages.

While this is not a comprehensive devotional on every biblical topic, it will enable your family to study the clear, consistent, and thematic teachings in God's Word.

God has given us everything we need for life and godliness so that we might teach our children to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1). Let us study together as families for the glory of our good and gracious God!

## **How to Use This Devotional**

This devotional is the fifth in a series of five books that covers material from the beginning all the way to the consummation of the ages and the new creation. The goal is for you to develop a biblical perspective of the world past and future, understand God's redemptive plan which was set in place from the beginning, and realize God's purpose for you and your family.

The scope and content of these devotions have been carefully created based on over 20 years of real-life experience raising our four boys in biblical truth while church planting cross-culturally in Asia Pacific. Credit must be given to Trevor McIlwain for his curriculum *Beginning on Firm Foundations*, which we taught from for many years in a tribal context. Trevor's work gave us much inspiration toward the creation of this devotional series.

In our cross-cultural work today, we use an evangelical teaching approach that lets the message unfold chronologically from Genesis to Revelation. When working with people (of any culture) who know little or nothing of Jesus Christ, we introduce themes, important key terms, or people at the point where they first appear in the Bible. This approach has proven to be effective, especially among people who have never heard the name of Christ in its proper context. We plan to publish another series that follows this approach in the future.

The Answers Family Bible Devotionals take a different approach. For this series, we assume most families are church attenders and hear about the Lord and Savior Jesus regularly and have a basic understanding of biblical themes and terminology. Because of this, we bring Jesus and New Testament teachings into the Old Testament discussions early on—beginning in Genesis. The series, written in coordination with the staff at Answers in Genesis, closely follows the emphasis on apologetics in AiG's Answers Bible Curriculum.

While the Bible's message is timeless, we can adapt our presentations to fit our audience (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). Both approaches honor the Bible and make it the focus of study, and both approaches challenge readers to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

For you to get the most out of this devotional, we offer these guidelines.

1. Don't rush. This might be the hardest challenge you face!

Make sure that you set aside in your daily or weekly schedule the appropriate time to read and discuss each devotion. You and your children will need that time to marinate on each lesson. It won't take long for your family to "taste and see that the Lord is good!" Soon you will see the constant patterns and themes that permeate the Bible from beginning until the end. You may want to spend several days on one devotion, depending on your schedule. Feel free to pause any of the devotionals at any time and save the rest of it for the following day.

2. Read the core questions.

The core questions are foundational truths of the Christian faith. We encourage you to begin each lesson with the core question. You might even make it a goal as a family to memorize a few.

3. Read all scripture portions.

God's Word is where the power lies. We know that the clear reading of God's Word will not return void in the hearts of the hearers. Make it a practice to differentiate the reading of scripture and the devotion sections. When you get to a scripture reading, look it up in your Bible. This is a good opportunity for dad, mom, or older siblings to have a part in the devotion by taking turns reading the Bible portions. From the first day, we want to point clearly to the authority of God's Word and allow it to do its work in the hearts of our children. Some devotionals have longer passages to read than others. Feel free to read as you have time and pick up with the next portion the following day.

4. Don't skip devotionals.

These devotions are based on over 20 years of Bible teaching in different languages, cultures, and contexts. Each is important and builds on the previous one. Each has purpose and will direct your



family toward a confident biblical worldview. If you are faithful to read and teach from each one, we trust that by God's grace the same good results that we witnessed among our own children and the remote Wano tribe will be seen among your own children and loved ones.

5. Go over the discussion questions.

The discussion questions provide opportunities for you to review and apply the lesson with your children. We recommend that you not only end each devotion with the questions but start tomorrow's with a quick look back at the previous lesson's questions.

6. Encourage discussion with your children and loved ones.

During the body of each devotion, or during the discussion questions, encourage your children to discuss what they are hearing. This allows them to feel a part of the study and show what they are learning.

7. Review throughout the day.

Look for opportunities to review or back up teaching that you are learning through your study of God's Word together with your children. This shows them that all times are good times to discuss God's Word, not just during the devotion time. Impart a holistic, Christian worldview by reinforcing and living out what you are learning through this devotion.

May the Lord bless you and your family as you embark on this chronological journey through the Bible. Keep on the path until the end and you will be rewarded by a truly biblical worldview, which is the foundation for living lives that glorify the Lord.

*Mike and Libby Wild*



# 1

## Apostles and Deacons

Does God recognize different positions of authority in the assembly? *Yes, for example, God has ordained elders and deacons to lead and serve the body of Christ.*

We have been tracing the path of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis. We've studied the first six of the 7 C's of History: Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion, Christ, and Cross. In this book, we will continue to study the time after Jesus returned to heaven, and his church (those who follow him through repentance and faith) grew and spread the gospel around the world. We will also look forward to the last C—Consummation—when Jesus makes all things new.

With this lesson, we will continue studying the book of the Acts of the apostles, a term for Jesus' disciples who shared what they knew about Jesus with those around them.

### The Apostles Needed Help

**Read Acts 6:1–7.**

As the apostles continued to fearlessly teach about Jesus, many came to faith. Soon there were so many new believers that tending to everyone's needs became more difficult. Some of these new followers

of Christ were Jews from areas outside of Jerusalem who spoke Greek, while others from the local area spoke Hebrew or Aramaic.

We've seen how the early church functioned. Those who had plenty helped provide for those that lacked. And each day food was gathered and distributed to those who were poor and had no food. Yet jealousy and strife broke out among these new followers of Christ. Widows were included in the food distribution, but the different groups of Jews complained that the food wasn't being distributed fairly among their widows. This caused division, so the apostles gathered the disciples for a meeting.

The apostles were the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. They had been with Jesus and had been commissioned to teach and disciple others. The apostles' main jobs were to teach, instruct, pray, and lead the group of believers. Yet they still needed help with other jobs.

## **Moses Needed Help**

This principle of sharing the load by delegating responsibilities was modeled long ago in Israel by Moses and his father-in-law Jethro. Let's look back in the book of Exodus and see the problem they faced and what they did to overcome it.

### **Read Exodus 18:13–23.**

Moses was alone, and the responsibility of trying to manage all of the Israelites was wearing him out. His father-in-law Jethro rightfully suggested that he appoint faithful men to help him.

### **Read Exodus 18:21.**

The apostles followed this practice and asked the gathered group in Jerusalem to elect helpers. Another word for helper is deacon. These men would come alongside the apostles to help manage the church.

Do you remember the word *apostle* means “sent one”? These first “sent ones” were Jesus' 11 closest disciples and a few others who also walked with Jesus. When these men died, others would be sent out, although they would not be apostles in the same sense as the original men who actually walked with Jesus.

The original apostles became the first overseers of the church. As we continue our study of the New Testament, we will find other names for overseers, such as elders, shepherds, pastors, or bishops. And as

we saw above, helpers are called deacons. Notice that the apostles did not just say to choose one individual to be a helper—they chose seven in this case. And they chose men based on their character.

### **Read Acts 6:3.**

These men were to be wise men who were led by the Holy Spirit. As the apostles set apart these men, they served wholeheartedly and the church continued to grow.

### **Read Acts 6:7.**

God blessed the efforts of these faithful men. They established a model of leadership for all who gather in the name of Jesus Christ. Later, we will learn more about the standards, qualifications, and functions of deacons and elders.

## *Discuss*

1. What are those who walked with Jesus and were sent out to share the gospel called? *Apostles*
2. What was the function of deacons? *They were chosen to help the apostles care for the church.*
3. How did Jethro help Moses? *Jethro encouraged Moses to choose helpers to assist him in various tasks that he didn't need to be directly involved in.*
4. What caused division among the early church body? *Different Jewish groups were concerned that there was unequal distribution of food to the widows in their groups.*
5. What were the qualifications of the helpers? *They were to be men of good character, full of the Spirit and wisdom.*

