



### **Anchoring Scriptures:**

A courageous church is deeply rooted in the words and message of Scripture. All of Scripture moves us toward life in all of its fullness, toward growth and strength in Jesus Christ. Scripture calls us to grow in our faith so that we can bring a clear message of hope to a hurting world. As we remember the stories of Scripture and those who rooted us in God's love and power, we can love like Jesus, act for justice and unite in hope.

The passages chosen are a beginning point for your thinking about grounding our Growth and Vitality Initiative in Scripture. In your church or ministry setting, you might:

- Print a passage each week in your bulletin or newsletter, with the Vision statement of **A Courageous Church: Loving like Jesus, Acting for justice, United in hope.**
- Use these passages to guide a sermon series on growth and vitality in our own lives or in the church.
- Focus your own prayer or a pastoral prayer in worship on these passages, praying for God to help us grow.

#### **John 15: 1-17 (NKJV)**

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away," and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you, abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."*

#### **Ephesians 1:7-8a (NRSV)**

*"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us."*



**The Initiative for Growth and Vitality**  
in the churches of the  
Desert Southwest Conference

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**Ephesians 2:11-12 (NRSV)**

*“In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.”*

**I Peter 1:3 - 5 (NRSV)**

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

**Romans 5: 1 - 2 (NRSV)**

*“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”*

**John 13:34 (NRSV)**

*“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

**Luke 4:18 (NRSV)**

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me, bring good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.”*

**Ephesians 4:4 (NRSV)**

*“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling...”*

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)**

*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”*

**Acts 2:43-47 (NRSV)**

*“Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”*

**Hebrews 11:1 (NRSV)**

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*