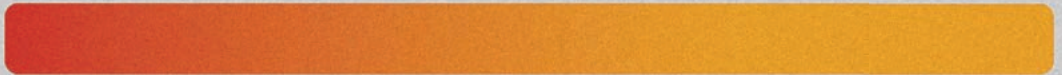


THE 2024 FALL JOURNAL



the stories in the story



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INTRODUCTION

JOURNAL

A journal is a simple tool intended to bring about a regular rhythm, or habit, in our lives. The purpose isn't simply to complete the journal, but rather to allow the journal to open a conduit between us and God. And that conduit could become an opportunity for the Spirit to transform our hearts and minds to be more like Jesus.

DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is an apprenticeship of sorts. In the Christian faith, for the past 2,000+ years, disciples have been those who have looked to Jesus as the Lord (KING) of their lives. Disciples have wanted to speak more like Jesus, hear more like Jesus, see more like Jesus, act more like Jesus, and love more like Jesus. This journal was designed to help us become more aware of and respond to the Holy Spirit, and move us in that direction.

COMMUNITY

The best way to journey with Jesus is to do so within a community. While most of us will engage this journal primarily in our own private, quiet times, it is good to have conversations about our experiences with a community of people. God designed us to live in deep, meaningful, healthy relationships. We need to gather for worship in community each week. And we need to have regular conversations about faith and practice and Jesus and questions with others. We need each other. Our perspectives and understanding will grow as we have these conversations in community.

JESUS

At the center of it all is Jesus. If we miss Jesus in the rhythms and activities of our lives, we miss everything.

May God's Spirit work in us, among us, and through us as we are formed into the image of Jesus.

Grace + Peace

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

INTRO


Each week, you'll find an introduction to the book we'll be jumping into for study. What's the big idea? Who wrote it? What was happening at that time in history? A space to take sermon notes. If you miss the sermon on Sunday, jump online and watch.

DAILY DEVO

Daily devo pages are here to spur some personal time with God. The scripture we provide each day is intended to be a starting point. You can go further, by opening the passage in your Bible (paper or digital) and read as much or little as you'd like. You can also use the scripture as a prayer. As you read and pray, consider how God's Spirit might be leading you to think, speak, or act differently.

CIRCLE UP

You'll also find a page of questions and some suggested video links from the Bible Project connected to the section of scripture we've been in together. Use this as a guide for your family or group—but feel free to deviate from these questions if something else jumps out to you from the week's scripture/sermon/themes.




GENESIS THE BIG IDEA
Out of darkness and darkness, God creates order, light, and goodness. From Genesis 1 onward, humans continue creating, settling, and ruling out, but God remains faithful and refuses to abandon them in His world.

WHO WROTE GENESIS?
Many Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Moses is the author of Genesis. However, scholarship is not explicitly stated within the book.

CONTEXT
The events described in Genesis generally take place in the ancient Near East and Egypt, the place where Jacob's family settles.

KEY THEMES

- God's good character and provision of life and safety amidst chaos.
- Humanity's choice to partner with God or reject His instruction.
- The complex and fractured relationship between humans, creation, and God.
- The consistency of God's promise to rescue and restore.

Content generously provided by the Bible Project. For more resources and to **STUDY FURTHER**, scan here: 

SEPTEMBER 8, 2024
SERMON NOTES
insights, thoughts, reflections, questions.

GENESIS GOD FORMED. GOD FILLED. *for others in the story*

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these verses.

READ: Genesis 1 and 2
REFLECT:
In the beginning, God is in the end. God. And throughout all five pages of history, God is not finished in His mission or work in our world. He is at the center of it. When we get that right, the world is in it should be. When we get that wrong, we find chaos, brokenness, and a lack of sense of purpose in the opening story of the world in which we live. Our world was God formed and God filled. God brought order out of chaos, and light in the darkness.

Genesis 1 is most likely an ancient poem, not intended to be read like a modern historical or scientific text. Notice the rhythm, the order, and the repeated phrases. Genesis 2 is an extended retelling of that same story.

RESPOND:
What caught your attention as you read these two chapters?
Are there any repeated phrases or words that might be intentional and significant?
What was your main story? Where were you born? Where are your parents from? Do you know where your ancestors are from?
What's your faith origin story? Who introduced you to Jesus? Who told you stories of God?
Read John 1:1-5. How does the creation story include Jesus?

Genesis 1:27 *So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them.*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these verses.

READ: Genesis 3 and 4
REFLECT:
Genesis 1 and 2 speak of God's creative activity in our world. Chapter 3 speaks to humanity's rebellion and disobedience. In Chapter 4 we see the relational realities of sin and the downward spiral that can occur when we turn our backs on God. From this point forward, God gives us the means, seasons, and occasions of His humanity to reveal. As we read, it's important we don't see ourselves in a position of superiority to those who were reading about, but rather that we identify with their brokenness and capacity for sin. Only when we're honest about our sin and rebellion can we fully understand God's faithful activity in our world.

RESPOND:
Did anything catch you off guard as you read today?
Adam and Eve "hid" from God because of their shame. Do you ever try to hide from God because of your guilt and shame?
Notice that God provides animal skins as clothing for Adam and Eve. Many scholars see this as foreshadowing how Christ's blood will cover all of our sin and shame. Take a moment to consider Christ's sacrifice and the grace He brings to you.

Genesis 3:10 *By origin, "I was just walking in the garden, and I hid." was what I heard / was asked."*

CIRCLE UP
Engage Questions

START HERE: You have the opportunity to spend a few hours taking in some art. Would you choose a museum, a concert, the theater, architectural tour, or other form of art? Why?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP
Watch the two GENESIS videos from the Bible Project. Run time is ~16 minutes. Jot down some notes or questions you have as you watch. 

- What one or two things stood out most to you from the video and/or Sunday's teaching?
- The story of Genesis opens with God confronting chaos and disorder to bring beauty and order in creation. What might this tell us about God's character from the beginning?
- In the opening chapters of Genesis, humans are formed and appointed to participate in God's divine rule of the universe. Why is this so significant? What causes things to go wrong?
- What are some specific categories of your life in which you have autonomy with your ability to create, make decisions, and have influence?
- God wants to be part of those areas of our lives too. How can you partner WITH God in your influence, allowing Him to direct your thoughts and actions in those categories? Try to come up with some specific examples.
- In the second video, the law connects to that God chooses one family through Abraham to become a blessing for the entire world. How might this truth help us better understand the role of the entire history of the Old Testament?
- God's plan to rescue and redeem His world through this one family has now been extended to us through Jesus. Have you ever thought about yourself being in the image of that original family? How can this story continue through you?
- What is something specific you could focus on this week to help keep God's plan of "blessing the whole world" moving forward?
- How can this group be praying for you?

HOW TO READ

FIND A BIBLE



Your first step is to get a Bible in an easy-to-read translation. The original Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and then translated throughout the years in common languages and speech of the time. It's important to find a translation that has been updated for modern readers, while also holding to the integrity of the original text. These are some great translations to start with: the New Living Translation (NLT), the New International Version (NIV), and for deeper study the New American Standard Bible (NASB). You can find a free, digital Bible in multiple translations on the YouVersion Bible App & website (bible.com).

While the Bible may look like a single book, it's actually a collection of books with many different authors, literary styles, and genres. It can get pretty overwhelming if you start at the beginning and try to read straight through to the end. Instead, we recommend starting with one of the Gospel accounts about Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). If you're new to the Bible, you may also want to look up the verses we've included in the daily devotions in this journal and read along in small amounts throughout the series. If you're ready for more, try reading bigger chunks or entire books of the Bible as we go.

WHERE TO START?

2.



LEARN TO READ IT BETTER



Everyone who reads the Bible will interpret its words and meaning. The big question is if you will learn to interpret the words well. And over time, it's important to learn how to read the Bible better. We can do this by discovering more about the ancient historical context, understanding the many different literary styles, and becoming familiar with tools that help us appreciate what the authors were trying to convey to the original audience. We recommend checking out the Bible Project's Online videos and Podcasts (thebibleproject.com), and the popular book, **How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth**.

THE BIBLE



5. READ IN COMMUNITY

Reading Scripture out loud in community was a simple, but powerful practice of the early church and throughout the Bible. The Bible can (and should) be read individually. Yet, we can better learn to engage Scripture when we read it in community with others. We encourage you at times to try reading the text out loud and having conversations with others on its meaning and application to our own lives. A great place to start is to find some friends or a group to go through this journal with. This is a simple, but powerful, practice that doesn't require much pre-planning.



4. COMBINE WITH PRAYER

We believe the best way to read the Bible is with prayer. Our ultimate goal is to read Scripture for transformation, not just information. The Bible itself tells us that Scripture is living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12), and that it is inspired by God to help train and grow us in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Whenever you open Scripture, start by asking God to use the words to speak to you and reveal Himself more deeply. It's also important to take time at the end to soak in the words and quietly listen to what the Spirit might be trying to say.

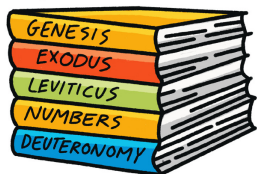
OLD TESTAMENT

AKA HEBREW SCRIPTURES

AKA TANAK

39 BOOKS | 1,000+ YEARS OF WRITING

≡TORAH≡



Torah is the first five books of the Bible. This section discusses God's creation and the forming of His people Israel. It also contains the Law God gave the Israelites for living differently than the world, and the terms of a covenant promise that God would use to then bless the world.

This section contains several books that continue the narrative story of Israel. These books take place over hundreds of years, from when Israel entered Canaan until they were carried away into captivity. These stories contain portraits of both good and bad characters that played a role in Israel's history.

≡HISTORY≡



≡POETRY & WISDOM≡



These writings are a combination of poems, prayers, songs, and wise sayings passed down by the Jewish people about how to live well in God's world. Instead of rhythm and rhyme, ancient Hebrew poetry used a lot of parallelism and stark, contrasting images to help the reader process emotions and be inspired in faith.

These books are not about predicting the future. Rather, the 'prophets' were Israelites who had a radical encounter with God and were commissioned to go and speak on His behalf. Through poetry and imagery, they would call out Israel's sins and injustice, encourage repentance, and warn about potential consequences for Israel's disobedience.

≡PROPHETS≡



NEW TESTAMENT

27 BOOKS | ~50 YEARS OF WRITING

⚡GOSPELS⚡



The Gospel stories are the “good news” that the Messiah Jesus has brought the Kingdom of God to our world through His own life, death, and resurrection. These four different accounts present historical events of Jesus’ life and teachings, with the hope to persuade the reader to acknowledge Him as Lord and become His disciple.

The book of Acts is the narrative story of Jesus sending His disciples, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to go out into the world and invite all nations to live under His Kingdom reign. The story begins with this message spreading in Jerusalem, then into the neighboring regions of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

⚡NARRATIVE⚡



⚡EPISTLES⚡



Jesus appointed apostles to spread the good news about His Kingdom. And those apostles often used letters to encourage, equip, and address problems in the early Christian communities. These small books give us a picture of how Paul, and others, envisioned Kingdom living in a Roman context.

The book of Revelation is a letter written to seven church communities, intended as both an encouragement and a challenge. It employs a style of writing that uses strange visions and symbolic imagery to reveal a glimpse of God’s ultimate purposes for humanity and a new creation.

⚡APOCALYPTIC⚡



IN THE BEGINNING,
GOD CREATED
 THE HEAVENS *AND* THE EARTH

GENESIS 1:1

GENESIS THE BIG IDEA

Out of disorder and darkness, God creates order, beauty, and goodness. From Genesis 3 onward, humans continue acting selfishly and doing evil, but God remains faithful and refuses to abandon them or His world.

WHO WROTE GENESIS?

Many Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Moses is the author of Genesis. However, authorship is not explicitly stated within the book.

CONTEXT

The events described in Genesis generally take place in the ancient Near East and Egypt, the place where Jacob's family settles.

KEY THEMES

- God's good character and provision of life and safety amidst chaos.
- Humanity's choice to partner with God or reject His instruction.
- The complex and fractured relationship between humans, creation, and God.
- The consistency of God's promise to rescue and restore.

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SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes for taking notes.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Genesis 1 and 2

REFLECT:

In the beginning, God. In the end, God. And throughout all the pages of history, God. God is not found only in the margins or outskirts of our world. He is at the center of it. When we get that right, the world is as it should be. When we get that wrong, we find chaos, brokenness, and sin all around/within us. Genesis is the opening story of the world in which we know. Our world was God-formed and God-filled. God brought order out of chaos, and light to the darkness.

Genesis 1 is most likely an ancient poem, not intended to be read like a modern historical or scientific text. Notice the rhythm, the order, and the repeated phrases. Genesis 2 is an expanded retelling of that same story.

RESPOND:

- What caught your attention as you read these two chapters?
- Are there any repeated phrases or words that might be intentional and significant?
- What’s your origin story? (Where were you born? Where are your parents from? Do you know where your ancestors are from?)
- What’s your faith origin story? (Who introduced you to Jesus? Who told you stories of God?)
- Read John 1:1-14. How does the creation story include Jesus?

Genesis 1:27 *So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Genesis 3 and 4

REFLECT:

Genesis 1 and 2 speak to God’s creative activity in our world. Chapter 3 speaks to humanity’s rebellion and disobedience. In Chapter 4 we see the relational realities of sin and the downward spiral that can occur when we turn our backs on God. From this point forward, God’s plan is to redeem, restore, and reconcile all of humanity to Himself. As we read, it’s important we don’t see ourselves in a position of superiority to those we’re reading about, but rather that we identify with their brokenness and capacity for sin. Only when we’re honest about our sin and rebellion can we fully understand God’s faithful activity in our world.

RESPOND:

Did anything catch you off guard as you read today?

Adam and Eve “hid” from God because of their shame. Do you ever try to hide from God because of your guilt and shame?

Notice that God provides animal skins as clothing for Adam and Eve. Many scholars see this foreshadowing how Christ’s blood will cover all of our sin and shame. Take a moment to consider Christ’s sacrifice and the grace He brings to you.

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Genesis 3:10 *He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Genesis 12:1-9; Genesis 15

REFLECT:

God's story isn't a set of propositions and theories about our world—it is set in the reality of women and men, families and friends, enemies, and outsiders. These stories give us a glimpse of people who believe and doubt, obey and disobey, love and destroy. Abraham trusts God and worships Him. And then, he fails. God's love for him isn't predicated on Abraham's perfection, but rather in his full trust and faith in the One, true God. Isn't this how we find ourselves? One moment we're in a place of abandon and love for God, and the next we're cursing our neighbor for infringing on our turf. God is patient and kind, just as He was with Abraham. Trust and faith is the key.

RESPOND:

What jumped out to you as you read these interactions Abraham had with God?

Read verse 6 in Chapter 15 again. How do you understand that sentence? Do you believe God counts us as righteous based on our faith/trust? Why or why not?

In the ancient world, covenants were often sealed by walking through the blood of dead animals—in essence saying, "If I don't uphold my end of the bargain, may it be done to me as it was done to these animals." God and Abraham enter into a covenant, but Abraham doesn't walk through the blood. God does symbolically—twice. When Jesus says, "It is finished," on the cross, many point back to this moment as the reason blood, and death, were needed. Not only was God faithful on His end, but He provided Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for us.

Spend a few moments thanking God for His faithfulness, His grace, and His love. It's so much better than we could ever imagine.

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Genesis 15:6

And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Genesis 32

REFLECT:

Sacred moments are those in which the divine intersects with our human lives. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament), we see moments where God intervenes, where God gives new names and new purposes. We find Jacob extremely fearful of a reunion with his brother Esau. He sends gifts to try to buy his forgiveness. He's trying to buy Esau's love and grace. Esau just seems to be interested in reconnecting with his long-lost brother. He's over what happened years ago. And as all of this plays out, we find a sacred moment. Jacob encounters "a man". Was this some sort of God-man, an angel, or was it Jesus? We may never know the answer to that question, but it was a moment when the divine entered into the human story. Sometimes we refer to our questions or struggles as "wrestling with God". God, through His Spirit, also "wrestles" with us. God is always drawing us in, working to redeem and restore who we were created to be. God never forces us to change—He never "wins" in that way. We're still free to choose and act however we want. But we're often left with scars, or a limp, that reveal the struggles of the fight.

RESPOND:

Did anything resonate with you in this strange story?

How would you define the significance of the name change (from Jacob: manipulator, to Israel: wrestles God)?

How does this story of name change point forward to the redemption and new name we find in Jesus?

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Genesis 32:28 *"Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."*

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: **Genesis 39**

REFLECT:

We often associate circumstances with God’s presence or blessing. When things are good, God is near and blesses us. When things are challenging, God is distant and unhappy with us. But we find that’s just not the case in the stories of human history. Joseph is a direct descendant of Abraham. His brothers can’t stand him and devise a plan to kill him. Instead, they sell him to traveling traders. Joseph ends up in Egypt as a slave. Throughout the story, there is a repeated phrase: The Lord was with Joseph. And herein is the blessing—God’s presence **WITH** us. Joseph’s story is one full of what seems to be bad breaks and misfortunes. But God is with him. Joseph remains faithful to God, and God remains with him regardless of the circumstances. What an incredible reminder to us in the joys and pains, the successes and failures of our lives—God is with us.

RESPOND:

Are you ever tempted to believe that your circumstances are a reflection of God’s love and blessings in your life? How might this story reframe that temptation?

Do you see any similarities between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus? How might this story point forward to the life and ministry of Jesus?

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Genesis 39:21 *But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden.*

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. You have the opportunity to spend a few hours taking in some art. Would you choose a museum, a concert, the theater, architectural tour, or other form of art? Why?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two GENESIS videos from the Bible Project. Run time is ~16 minutes. Jot down some notes or questions you have as you watch.



- What one or two things stood out most to you from the videos and/or Sunday's teaching?
- The story of Genesis opens with God confronting chaos and disorder to bring beauty and order in creation. What might this tell us about God's character from the beginning?
- In the opening chapters of Genesis, humans are formed and appointed to participate in God's divine rule of the universe. Why is this so significant? What causes things to go poorly?
- What are some specific categories of your life in which you have autonomy with your ability to create, make decisions, and have influence?
- God wants to be part of those areas of our lives too. How can you partner WITH God in your influence, allowing Him to direct your thoughts and actions in those categories? Try to come up with some specific examples.
- In the second video, the key concept is that God chooses one family (through Abraham) to become a blessing for the *entire* world. How might this truth help us better understand the role of the entire library of the Old Testament?
- God's plan to rescue and redeem His world through this one family has now been extended to us through Jesus. Have you ever thought about yourself being in the lineage of that original family? How can this story continue through you?
- What is something specific you could focus on this week to help keep God's plan of 'blessing the whole world' moving forward?
- How can this group be praying for you?

YAHWEH! THE LORD! THE GOD OF COMPASSION AND MERCY!

I AM SLOW TO ANGER AND
FILLED WITH UNFAILING
LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS.

EXODUS 34:6-7

EXODUS THE BIG IDEA

God rescues the people of Israel from Egypt and invites them into an agreement, or covenant, with Him. The people damage their relationship with God, which causes God to recommit to His promise to dwell with them.

WHO WROTE EXODUS?

Many Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Moses is the author of Exodus. However, authorship is not explicitly stated within the book.

CONTEXT

The events described in Exodus take place in Egypt and on the Sinai Peninsula, starting before Moses' birth until Israel arrives at Mount Sinai.

KEY THEMES

- God's confrontation with evil brings justice and rescue.
- God's desire and plan to dwell among His people.
- God's faithfulness to His promises and commitment to an often faithless people.
- Sin and idolatry as the greatest threats to the covenant promises and blessings.

Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

EXODUS EVEN WHEN WE'RE NOT, HE IS.

the stories in the story

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Exodus 2-3

REFLECT:

The Israelites have grown in number from the closing story of Genesis: the life of Joseph. The growing number of Israelites in Egypt is seen as a problem. The Egyptian Pharaoh, here at the beginning of Exodus, is a picture of humanity's desire to gain power for self. Out of fear, Pharaoh enslaves the Israelites, forces them into incredibly intense labor, and then drowns young Israelite boys—calling it all good. God intervenes and raises up a leader for His people—Moses. Moses isn't perfect, but grows to trust God's plan and call upon his life.

RESPOND:

What are some key moments from the life of Moses that stand out to you?

Have you ever felt like you have disqualified yourself from being used by God?

How does this story encourage you and remind you that God can always use us for His good purposes?

Thematically, there are some connections with the life of Jesus. How might the story of Moses and the enslaved Israelites point to the story of Jesus and His mission?

Exodus 3:11-12a

But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?" God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you."

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Exodus 12 (13-14)

REFLECT:

Pharaoh can not let go of his power over the Israelites. He doesn't want to lose the labor they have provided for him and his kingdom. Again, God intervenes. We find this strange story of God saving His people and leading them out of Egypt. They are to carry out specific instructions for a meal and mark their doorposts with the blood from a lamb. In doing this, they are asking death to "pass over" their home as death comes to the firstborn throughout Egypt. Finally, Pharaoh agrees to let the Israelites go (although he later changes his mind again). This meal will become an annual reminder of God's salvation. And the blood of the lamb will be known as a sacrifice that covers the people's sin and disobedience.

RESPOND:

What parts of this story are uncomfortable and leave you with questions? While there are many things we'll never fully understand, it's important to trust God with the questions and doubts we might have.

It's no coincidence that the disciples are celebrating the Passover on the night Jesus will be arrested. And Jesus redefines two elements on the Passover table: the bread and wine. What do these elements represent for us? Why is this significant?

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Exodus 12:42 *On this night the Lord kept his promise to bring his people out of the land of Egypt. So this night belongs to him, and it must be commemorated every year by all the Israelites, from generation to generation.*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Exodus 16-17

REFLECT:

The Israelites are on their way to their own land, provided by God. God has delivered them from slavery. But, like all of us, the Israelites complain about the journey. They are hungry and thirsty even though God has provided exactly what they need. God is teaching some important lessons about His provision, His care, and His guidance in their lives. There are so many nuggets of wisdom in these sections. Manna. Sabbath. Trust. Community. We tend to shake our heads in disbelief at the Israelite's grumbling. But the reality is, we're not that much different.

RESPOND:

Name two or three important lessons God is working to build into His people. How might you learn to trust God in these same ways?

What lesson is there in the story of Moses' arms getting tired? What can you take from that?

In the Gospel of John in the New Testament, Jesus claims to be the bread of life and to have living water. What do you think He meant by this? (John 6:25-59; John 7:37-39)

Exodus 17:2

So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded. "Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?"

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Exodus 20

REFLECT:

Many of us have heard of the Ten Commandments. In fact, these commandments have been used by millions of people as a moral compass of sorts. These commandments were given to the Israelites as a set of foundation rules for how they should relate to God and one another. This part of the biblical story is a direct link back to the original covenant God made with Abraham and his family. That covenant has not ended—God is a faithful God who will not walk away, even when His people are unfaithful.

RESPOND:

Write out the commandments. Draw a box around the ones that relate to our relationship with God. Draw another box around the ones that relate to our relationship with one another. What grabs your attention? Which ones seem easy and which ones seem difficult?

Jesus said that the Greatest Commandment is to love God, and is joined by the commandment to love our neighbor. How is this reflected here in the original Ten Commandments? What does it look like in our world to have idols or to place other gods above the One True God?

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Exodus 20:2-3

"I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me."

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Exodus 33-34

REFLECT:

These two chapters are a beautiful picture of God's faithfulness to and love for humanity. And it's a sad reminder of our capacity to sin, to turn our backs on the God who loves us more than we can imagine. Notice how important God's presence is to Moses and the people. Moses even says that God's presence is what sets them apart from all other people on the earth. Then, having been asked by Moses to know Him more fully, God gives words that describe His character (Exodus 34:6-7). These verses are the most quoted verses within the Bible. Notice that God is faithful and full of mercy. To be good, He must also deal with evil, which He does. Take note of the festivals and the offerings that will be reminders of God's faithfulness and a picture of the Israelites' commitment to Him.

RESPOND:

At the very beginning of Chapter 33, why does God say that He can't travel with His people? How do the people respond?

How might the Israelites' tendencies to love God, then forget God, reflect all of humanity? Do you struggle with this?

How might this picture of God's presence be foreshadowing the arrival of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament? Though God's glory could not be seen by Moses or the Israelites, how did this change with the arrival of Jesus? What does Paul say about Jesus in Colossians 1:15?

Exodus 33:14

The Lord replied, "I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you."

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. How do you prefer to travel for a long trip—car, boat, airplane, or train? Why? What is one trip you would like to take in the future?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two EXODUS videos from the Bible Project. Run time is ~16 minutes. Jot down some notes or questions you have as you watch.



- What one or two things stood out most to you from the videos and/or this Sunday's teaching?
- At the beginning of Exodus, we see Pharaoh trying to destroy God's blessing by abusing his power to enslave the Israelites. What are some examples of 'modern-day Pharaohs' who abuse their power over others?
- In the story, God shows up to Moses in a burning bush and asks Moses to lead His people out of captivity (Exodus 3). Have you ever had an experience where you felt God was calling you to do something? What did that look like? How did you respond? How did Moses respond?
- How can we learn to pay better attention or listen to God's voice and calling?
- The videos on Exodus point out that even Pharaoh had opportunities to listen to God, repent, and make things right. What might this teach us about God's love, forgiveness, and mercy?
- Moses' humility and openness to God contrast Pharaoh's pride and hardness. What does it look like to trust and rely on God in humility? Do you have any examples of how you've tried to do this?
- In the second Exodus video, we hear about the covenant God made at Mt. Sinai, including the Ten Commandments. Read through the Ten Commandments together as a group (Exodus 20). Which one stands out to you the most? Why? Do any surprise you?
- The goal for the Israelites (and for us) is to become people in which these ten commandments don't feel like 'rules' as much as they become natural, authentic ways of living and following God. Which of these ten commandments would you most like to practice or focus on this week?
- How can this group be praying for you?



MAY THE LORD,

the God

OF ISRAEL,

**UNDER WHOSE WINGS YOU HAVE COME
TO TAKE REFUGE, REWARD YOU FULLY
FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE.**

RUTH 2:12

RUTH THE BIG IDEA

God's grand story of redemption for all creation can be found in seemingly mundane events: tragedy, integrity in the face of opposition, and generosity. The book of Ruth invites us to consider how God might be at work in our lives.

WHO WROTE RUTH?

The book of Ruth does not explicitly name its author, though Ruth is one of the three main characters of the story.

CONTEXT

The events surrounding the book of Ruth take place during the ruling of the Judges, sometime after the Israelites enter the Promised Land but before David's reign.

KEY THEMES

- Human devotion to God and neighbor.
- Kindness and generosity bring life.
- Reversal of fates.

**Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:**



SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes.

RUTH WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST.

the stories in the story

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Judges 2

REFLECT:

Before we jump into the Book of Ruth, let's get our minds around the context. God created the world. Humanity turned from God to do things on their own. God called Abraham into a covenant to bring His goodness to the world again. Abraham's family ends up in Egypt (story of Joseph), where they eventually find themselves as slaves to Pharaoh. God leads the people out of slavery and toward the promised land. This is where we pick up in Judges 2. Notice the pattern of God's people. Honor Him, then turn away and forget Him. Beg for His mercy, He rescues. And the cycle begins again. Notice that other nations were inhabiting the Promised Land. The Moabites were one of those nations. Ruth is a Moabite. Now we've got a story.

RESPOND:

Repeated phrases are often used by an author to highlight something important. What repeated phrases do you find in Judges 2?

What else grabs your attention in today's reading?

God always seems to intervene to rescue those who turn to Him. How might this point ahead to Jesus? While these stories talk about rescue from other nations, what does Jesus come to rescue us from?

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Judges 2:16-17

Then the Lord raised up judges to rescue the Israelites from their attackers. Yet Israel did not listen to the judges but prostituted themselves by worshipping other gods. How quickly they turned away from the path of their ancestors, who had walked in obedience to the Lord's commands.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Ruth 1

REFLECT:

There are often little subtleties tucked into Scripture. Here in Chapter 1, we read that there is a famine in Bethlehem. The name Bethlehem means “house of bread”. Elimelech and Naomi, along with their two sons (Mahlon and Kilyon) head to Moab to find food. The Moabites were enemies of Israel. Mahlon and Kilyon both find wives from Moab. But in Moab, Elimelech dies. Then, both Mahlon and Kilyon die. Naomi decides to head back home. As she begins the journey, she permits her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab where they might have a future. Ruth refuses and will not leave Naomi.

RESPOND:

There is a powerful statement that Ruth makes to Naomi as she commits to staying with her. What does she say?

As Naomi returns to her home, she changes her name to better reflect her circumstances. What does she want her new name to be? Why?

Imagine you live in Bethlehem and see Naomi return with Ruth. How do you welcome her home knowing all she endured? What would you be tempted to think about God's thoughts/response toward Naomi and her move to Moab?

The word "repent" means to turn back or return. When Jesus began His ministry, He would often call people to "repent". How does this story give us a physical representation of that concept?

Ruth 1:16

So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the women asked.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Ruth 2

REFLECT:

Chapter 2 introduces another main character: Boaz. We find Naomi and Ruth looking for food. Ruth ends up in Boaz’s fields, picking up leftovers from the barley harvest. Interestingly, there is an Old Testament command that gives more context here. “When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain, don’t go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the Lord will bless you in all you do... Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt.” (Deut 24:19+) Boaz does this, and so much more.

RESPOND:

Why does Boaz do this for Ruth?

When Naomi hears about Boaz’s kindness, she tells Ruth that he is a relative. And then she has a specific title for him. What is the title she uses in verse 20?

How does this title point to Jesus?

Ruth 2:10 *Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. “What have I done to deserve such kindness?” she asked. “I am only a foreigner.”*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Ruth 3

REFLECT:

Naomi thinks that it is time for Ruth to find a husband. And they make a plan to help Boaz move in this direction. Ruth goes to meet Boaz at night, and makes it known that her time of mourning is over. She is ready to be married. Boaz is amazed again at Ruth. He recognizes that she could easily have gone after a younger man, but instead, she is loyal to Naomi’s family.

RESPOND:

What grabs your attention, or raises questions, about this chapter?

Kindness and loyalty are two themes that are seen throughout this story. Write a definition for each of those. What do they look like in our world today? Who is someone you think overflows with kindness? Who is someone you think is incredibly loyal?

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Ruth 3:11

Now don't worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are a virtuous woman.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Ruth 4

REFLECT:

While there is a closer kinsman to Naomi’s family, he passes on the opportunity to marry Ruth. Boaz marries Ruth and redeems the family. It’s a complete reversal of what took place in the first chapter. What’s interesting about the story is how little God’s activity is mentioned. It almost seems as though God is distant and not at all involved. But the reality is that God is very involved and brings redemption through the activity of loyal humans. This is a much larger theme in the story of Scripture. God often works through the loving, faithful activity of a people committed to Him. It’s why our words and our actions are so very important.

RESPOND:

Who is Boaz and Ruth’s great-grandson? Why is that significant?

There is a genealogy of Jesus found in Matthew 1. Scan that genealogy. How many women are listed? Who are the women? Do you find it interesting that one of the women listed (Ruth) was a Moabite, not an Israelite?

Ruth 4:16-17

Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. The neighbor women said, "Now at last Naomi has a son again!" And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. Have you ever signed up for something you weren't looking forward to, but it turned out to be a great experience? What was it? Why were you initially scared? Why did it turn out to be a great thing?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the video from the Bible Project on the book of Ruth (run time ~7 mins):



- What is something that stood out to you from the video or the message on Sunday?
- In the video, we see that one of the biggest themes in the book of Ruth is loyalty. How would you define loyalty?
- What does it look like to be loyal to God?
- Another theme from the book of Ruth is how God is involved in the day-to-day sorrows and joys of life. Can you share a 'high' and a 'low' you have faced in your life in this season?
- How have you seen God in those moments? If you haven't seen God in those moments, how are you praying and hoping to see God in those moments?
- Both Boaz and Ruth exemplify noble character in this story. What does it look like to be a person with 'noble character'? As a group, come up with some traits or words that describe noble character.
- Pick one of those traits you'd like to grow in and share it with the group. What is something specific you can do to work on that trait this coming week?
- How can this group be praying for you?



PSALMS THE BIG IDEA

Psalms teaches us to neither ignore our pain nor let it determine our lives. God will fulfill His promises from the Torah and send the Messiah. This book is all about the lament, praise, faith, and hope of God's people.

WHO WROTE PSALMS?

The Psalms contain several authors including David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, and other worship leaders. One-third of the poems are anonymous.

CONTEXT

The events described in Psalms span several centuries during Israel's history. Editors and compilers arranged the book of Psalms during the period after Israel's exile to Babylon.

KEY THEMES

- God as King of all creation.
- Hope for the Messiah after exile.
- Lament as a response to evil.

Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

PSALMS THE PLAYLIST OF OUR LIVES.

the stories in the story

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Psalms 1 + 23

REFLECT:

Psalms is a book of worship written as hymns, prayers, and poems. Authorship is attributed to many different individuals but Psalms 1 and 23 are considered to be from the pen of King David. While David is probably best known for stepping boldly into battle with only five smooth stones and a sling while facing the giant Goliath, several of the Psalms were written as he spent years of his life in the wilderness running from a giant of a different kind, King Saul before David himself became king. In his writing, David is vulnerable with God and gut-wrenchingly honest at times. These chapters are reminiscent of looking inside the private journal of a man weary of running. David finds solace in crying out to God for help in this way. We can learn valuable truths about how we relate to God, how we relate to others, and how we should live our lives on the good and the bad days from his writings.

RESPOND:

Read Psalm 1:1-2 and Psalm 23:1-4. What do these verses say about how and who we should walk with in this life?

Now read Psalm 1:3-6 and Psalm 23:5-6. What are the results of allowing God to lead us as we walk through life?

Read the last part of Psalm 23:6 again. What do you think it means to “dwell in the house of The Lord forever?” How did Jesus make it possible for us to dwell in God’s house forever?

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Psalm 1:2-3

But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Psalms 42 + 51

REFLECT:

As we read the book of Psalms we experience a myriad of emotions with David as he pours his heart out to God. Often we can identify with the way he is feeling. For example, in Psalm 42 he is experiencing a dry season in his spiritual life, a time when he is cut off from worship in the temple of God. Can you identify? Dry seasons in our walk with God can be overwhelming. They were difficult for David, and they are difficult for us. Then in Psalm 51, David is sorrowful over sin in his life, specifically the sin of adultery. We read in this chapter David's very personal words of repentance. Has there been a time in your life when sin caused you to be desperate for the forgiveness of God? In both chapters David's heart is broken; in both chapters, he asks for the evident presence of God, and he reminds himself of who God is and how he needs His help to overcome. David shows us what it is to bear our hearts before God.

RESPOND:

Read Psalm 42. Take note of anything you identify with. Have you ever experienced a dry season in your faith journey? Explain. How did you handle that season of dryness? What did God teach you in that season? If you are in a dry season right now, write a short prayer asking God for His presence to be with you.

Read Psalm 51. Take a mental inventory of your spiritual life. Is there anything you need to repent of? If so, consider using Psalm 51:10-12 as a prayer of repentance.

Read Psalm 42:1-2 and Psalm 51:11. How are these verses similar? How do you experience the presence of God in your life?

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Psalm 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Psalms 77 + 84

REFLECT:

Psalms 77 and Psalm 84 have some of the same emotional undertones as some of the other chapters we have read this week. But, in these particular chapters, we see a vivid picture of worship come alive. The writer(s) states very plainly that his heart is troubled, and then he quickly turns to remembering the goodness of God and praising Him for all He has done and for all of who God is. The psalmist also speaks fondly of the house of God because it appears that is where he encountered Him in the most profound ways. He remembers intense moments of closeness with God and he takes action based on the remembrance of God's faithfulness. He meditates on these moments and he talks about them with anyone who will listen. Remembering God, meditating on Him, and talking about the steadfastness of God seems to be our psalmist's process for healing and encouragement.

RESPOND:

Read Psalm 77. What does the psalmist remember about God? What do you remember about the faithfulness of God in your past?

Read Psalm 84. How does being in the house of God encourage you? Today, practice the psalmist's process: remember God, meditate on Him, then tell someone how good God is! Maybe your remembering will encourage someone else today.

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Psalm 77:11-12

But then I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Psalms 91 + 103

REFLECT:

Reading Psalm 91 and Psalm 103 is almost like reading a list someone jotted down on a sticky note of all the blessings and benefits of knowing God. We practiced remembering God yesterday and today the declaration of who He is continues. Psalm 91 begins by speaking of God's protection but doesn't stop with simple acknowledgment, it goes on to say how He protects, and the results of His protection. Psalm 103 has a list of the blessings of God prompting worship. Psalm 91 is thought to have been written by Moses and Psalm 103 by David. If you pay close attention to the words in each of these unique psalms, you can see the imprint of their lives on their writing.

RESPOND:

Read Psalm 91:9-10. What is the clue in these verses that Moses might have written this psalm?

Read Psalm 103:1-4. What is the first blessing listed in verse 3? This is indicative of David's humble repentant heart. Likewise, the worship and song of your heart for The Lord should flow from your unique life experience.

Using Psalm 91 and Psalm 103 as inspiration, write your own psalm of worship and blessing based on who you are because of who God is!

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Psalm 103:11-12

For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Psalms 121 + 139

REFLECT:

Psalms 121 and 139 were both written by David and carry a consistent theme of the care of God for His children. Much of the writing in this book is deeply personal and reflective of the writer's life circumstances and experiences with God during good and difficult seasons. In these two chapters, we see the psalmist praise God for His omniscient care, His omnipresent care, and omnipotent care. These attributes of God have inspired the author to declare how this knowledge of The Holy God he serves makes him feel. The words found in Psalms 139 and 121 are a declaration for the good of the psalmist's own soul and as we read, for our soul as well. Once again, we find in Psalms the inspirational reminders of the greatness of our God.

RESPOND:

Read Psalm 121. Here we read about our omnipotent God who can do anything even in His care for us. How have you seen the omnipotence of God at work in your life or the life of others?

Read Psalm 139. In this chapter, we see the omnipresence, the omnipotence, and the omniscience of God proclaimed. He is a God who is always present, always at work, and all-knowing. How does this knowledge make you feel? Do you see any other attributes of God in these chapters of The Bible?

We end today just as we ended on day one this week: how does Jesus make it possible for us to be "lead in the way everlasting" to be "kept from this time forth and forevermore"?

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Psalm 139:13-14

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. Have you ever been to an amusement park? If so, which one? Did you enjoy it? Were there any rides you really liked or didn't like? If not, would you like to experience an amusement park with rides? Would you go for the fast roller coasters or the full-on water rides?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the video from the Bible Project on the book of Psalms (run time ~9 mins):



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the video and/or Sunday's teaching?
- What has been your experience with the book of Psalms? Have you ever read through the book in order?
- The video says that Psalms is a collection of Hebrew poems, songs, and prayers. Have you ever written out a prayer or poem to God? Why or why not?
- Prayer is a vitally important practice of Christianity. What has been your experience with prayer?
- Have you ever spent time listening to God in prayer? What was your experience like?
- The book of Psalms is filled with metaphorical language. How can poetry and figures of speech help in talking about complex concepts?
- The Psalms provide insightful reflections on depression, anger, frustration, fear, and insecurity, as well as joy, exhilaration, triumph, and gladness. Why is it important to be able to talk to God through all of these emotions and feelings?
- What is one area of your prayer life you would like to grow in or practice this week?
- How can this group be praying for you?



ISAIAH THE BIG IDEA

God's acts of justice do not mean He is abandoning His covenant promises. He will renew creation and establish His Kingdom here on Earth as it is in Heaven.

WHO WROTE ISAIAH?

Many Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Isaiah wrote the entire scroll. Other groups and traditions ascribe the first 39 chapters to Isaiah and chapters 40-66 to Isaiah's disciples, who built upon Isaiah's visions.

CONTEXT

Isaiah does his prophetic work in Judah, under Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, in the period before and during the Babylonian exile.

KEY THEMES

- God's judgment as it relates to idolatry and covenant rebellion.
- The hope of new creation.
- God's mission through the suffering servant.
- The challenge to trust God.

Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



OCTOBER 6, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes (hyphens) arranged in approximately 20 rows and 40 columns, intended for handwritten notes.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Isaiah 1-2:5

REFLECT:

Isaiah is a rather long and complex book. But there is also a simplicity here. Isaiah is a prophet serving in Jerusalem in the later days of King Uzziah's reign. Assyria was a kingdom with great power in those years that often threatened Israel. Isaiah is speaking directly to the leaders and people of Israel, warning them that God's judgment is near. Israel has rebelled, having given themselves to various false gods, and allowed injustice to continue. Isaiah is calling them to repentance. Even the message of judgment is a message of hope, for God is faithful.

RESPOND:

Read Chapter 1, verses 11-18, Why do you think God has grown to detest their sacrifices and worship?

Verse 17 lists 5 things they should pursue. Write those 5 things down.

What would those things look like in today's world? Are you involved in any of those pursuits/missions?

How might we read verse 18, given our perspective of Jesus?

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Isaiah 1:17 *Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.*

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Isaiah 6

REFLECT:

Isaiah has an incredible experience and vision of God. He saw God exalted on a throne. Around the throne were angels who were calling out to one another talking of God's holiness. In this vision, Isaiah recognizes his sinfulness and his brokenness. And he is overcome by fear. Then, something strange happens. One of the angels picks up a burning coal and touches Isaiah's lips. Rather than being destroyed, he experiences forgiveness and restoration. It is a powerful picture of what Israel will experience—the fire of judgment, which leads to forgiveness and restoration. It is also a powerful picture of how we might understand our sinfulness and brokenness in light of the holiness of God.

RESPOND:

What is one of your current favorite worship songs? What lyrics do you most resonate with?

If you were transported to stand in front of God's throne, what do you think your response would be? What would you want to say to God?

Read the final line of Chapter 6 again. What do you think a holy seed might be referring to? Do you see Isaiah giving hope of a future Messiah for God's people?

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Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?"

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Isaiah 55

REFLECT:

God's desire has always been for all people to experience His blessings. Today we read an invitation to experience and rest in God's salvation. Read through this chapter a couple of times. Write down any verses that stand out to you or encourage you. God has provided exactly what we need. Will we receive all that He has for us?

RESPOND:

Verse 12 says "you will live in joy and peace." Think about those two realities: joy and peace. These are two words we talk about and see every Christmas season. They describe the life available when we receive the gift of salvation Jesus offers us. Have you received that gift from God? Are you living in the realities of the joy and peace from God?

What pulls you away from joy and peace? How might you grow in choosing joy and grow in peace-making in your world?

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Isaiah 55:3 *Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David.*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Isaiah 7:14; 9:2-7; 11:1-6; 42:1-8; 53

REFLECT:

Isaiah consistently paints the picture of a Messiah who will rescue and redeem Israel.

7:14 - A prophecy of Jesus' birth and the name Immanuel.

9:2-7 - In the New Testament, John refers to this. Write down the four titles Isaiah gives to Jesus.

11:1-6 - Look back to Tuesday's final devotional thoughts about the stump.

42:1-8 - Notice the reference to the Spirit and mission of the Messiah.

53 - Read this chapter slowly and consider all Jesus endured on our behalf.

RESPOND:

Given prophecies like these, why do you think it was difficult for so many to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?

Isaiah 53:6

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. What is something you've dreamed of doing for a while that you would still someday like to do?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two videos from the Bible Project on the book of Isaiah (run time ~16 mins).



- What is something that stood out to you from the videos or the message from Sunday?
- The prophets in the Bible were not fortune-tellers, but rather people commissioned to speak on God's behalf. Why is this an important distinction when reading these books of the Bible?
- Much like Psalms, the prophets used rich imagery, metaphors and other figures of speech. How can understanding this help when reading certain sections of Isaiah?
- Despite the threats of judgment, Isaiah has a strong focus on eternal hope and salvation. How would you define hope?
- How does hope relate to faith and trust?
- How have your past experiences shaped your outlook on hope?
- If you've been through a difficult trial, what would you tell someone who is about to go through one?
- Servant-heartedness and humility are important themes in Isaiah for those who will experience redemption, hope fulfilled, and a new humanity. How can you practice these traits this week?
- How can this group be praying for you?

I CRIED OUT TO
THE LORD IN MY
GREAT TROUBLE, AND
HE ANSWERED ME.

I CALLED TO YOU
FROM THE LAND OF
THE DEAD, AND
LORD, YOU HEARD ME!

JONAH 2:2

JONAH THE BIG IDEA

God's kindness and mercy extend to Jonah's enemies, the Ninevites. Ultimately, God's invitation is for Jonah to love his enemy as God does.

WHO WROTE JONAH?

Many Jewish and Christian traditions identify Jonah as the author. However, authorship is not explicitly stated within the book.

CONTEXT

The book of Jonah takes place in Israel, at sea, and in the Assyrian empire's capital city of Nineveh.

KEY THEMES

- God's love and compassion for His enemies.
- The disobedience of Jonah and Israel.
- Repentance and forgiveness.

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For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



OCTOBER 13, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes for taking notes.

JONAH RUNNING DOWN A DREAM.

the stories in the story

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Jonah 1

REFLECT:

Most people, even those disconnected from a church or faith background, have heard about Jonah. There are plenty of jokes about being swallowed and then regurgitated by a big fish. Stories like this one have the power to invite us in, to see our tendencies and temptations, our attitudes and expectations. This isn't about abstract theology for scholars—it's about the reality of life and the intersection of faith. Jonah is no hero—he's one of us.

As you read, look for the irony in the story.

RESPOND:

What does Jonah, the man of God, do when God calls him to preach to the Ninevites?

The ship is full of sailors who worship a variety of gods. What do they do when they hear about the one, true God?

How long did Jonah spend in the belly of the big fish?

How might this little detail point toward Jesus?

Jonah 1:3 *But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish.*

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Jonah 2

REFLECT:

Death can lead to life. It's one of the ultimate paradoxes of faith. Jonah experiences this firsthand. Chapter 2 is about Jonah's prayer, which almost reads like a psalm.

RESPOND:

What jumps out to you about Jonah's prayer?

If you were in Jonah's shoes (sandals?), what would you pray about/for?

The final line in Jonah's prayer says that "salvation comes from the Lord alone." If you have time, go read the first part of Acts, Chapter 4. In this amazing story, Paul says this: "Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that this man was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ... For there is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12)

In your own words, how would you define salvation?

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Jonah 4:11

As my life was slipping away, I remembered the Lord. And my earnest prayer went out to you in your holy Temple.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Jonah 3

REFLECT:

This part of the story is amazing. Jonah complies and heads into Nineveh. It's a large city. As soon as he "preaches", everything changes.

RESPOND:

Write down Jonah's sermon (it's only 5 words).

What do you think is missing? How do they know what they should do? Is there a reason Jonah is preaching such a limited message?

What is the response to Jonah's warning? How does this match what happened in Chapter 1?

What does God do?

Matthew 4:17: From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

How does this chapter give an example of repentance and turning to God?

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Jonah 3:10 *When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.*

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Jonah 4

REFLECT:

In this final scene, we find Jonah with a very different prayer than what he spoke in Chapter 2.

RESPOND:

What do you notice in this final chapter? Why is Jonah so mad at God?

Did you recognize the verse Jonah quoted from Exodus (34:6-7)? What is he trying to say?

There's a strange object lesson that enters the story here—about a vine and a worm. What does this illustrate?

We're left in the dark after this. What do you think Jonah did from here? Maybe it doesn't matter.

As the Bible Project proposes, "The book of Jonah holds up a mirror to whoever reads it. In Jonah, we see the worst parts of ourselves magnified, which should generate humility and gratitude that God does love his enemies and puts up with the Jonah in all of us."

This story is Good News. How does it point to the message of Jesus?

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Jonah 4:11

But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Luke 2:29-32 / Matthew 12:38-42

REFLECT:

Jesus. Salvation for the world. A light to reveal God to the nations.

John wrote that “to all who believed Jesus and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. So the Word (Jesus) became flesh and blood and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.”

Jesus is salvation. He brings us back to the Father who welcomes us home with open arms. He gave His life so that we might find life. When we submit our will and our way to His, when we trust Him above all else, and when we acknowledge His Kingship in our lives, we find the peace, joy, hope, and love we’re all looking for. It changes everything.

RESPOND:

Have you received His salvation? Have you submitted will and way to His Kingship? If not, today could be that day. His mercy and grace will cover you.

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Matthew 12:40 *For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.*

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

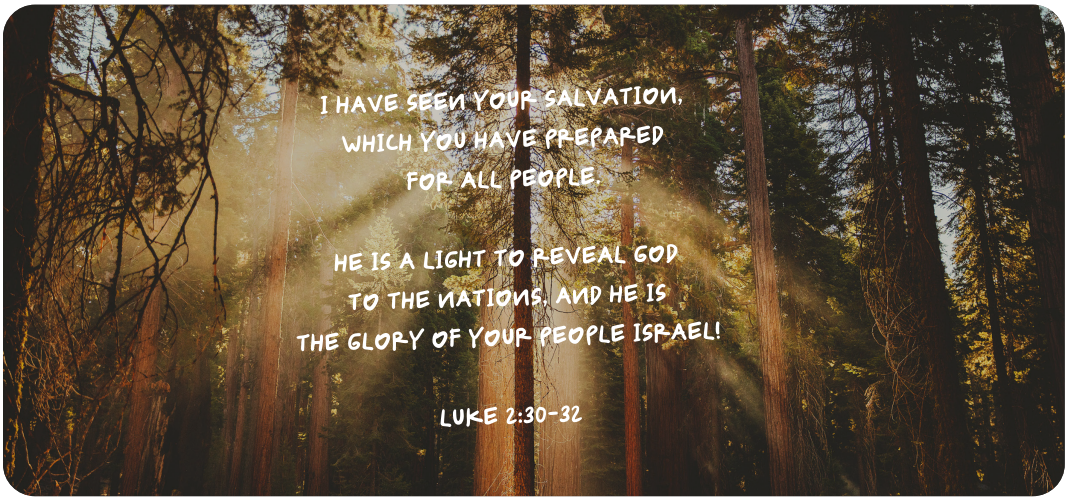
START HERE. If you could escape your day to day responsibilities and live anywhere outside the United States for a year, where would you live? Why?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the video from the Bible Project on the book of Jonah (run time ~9 mins)



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the video and/or Sunday's teaching?
- Have you ever tried to run away from God? Why?
- God's wisdom and compassion are so much bigger than ours. Why is this reassuring? Why might this be shocking?
- Is anyone outside of God's forgiveness? Why?
- Jonah knows who God is, but he doesn't like God's over-abundant grace and forgiveness. He wants a God who will punish evil, but the book asks: Can you accept and love God as God is, not as you would have Him?
- What are some specific ways we can get to know the heart of God?
- How does the book of Jonah expose feelings of superiority, self-righteousness, and/or hypocrisy?
- Do you have any examples of wrestling through this from your own life?
- What is one practical way you could strive to show compassion or forgiveness to someone this week?
- How can this group be praying for you?



LUKE THE BIG IDEA

Jesus was not the King Israel expected. He suffered and died to save humanity, showing true power is found in love. Jesus calls His followers to expand His Kingdom and invite all people into God's Kingdom family.

WHO WROTE LUKE?

Christian tradition holds that Luke, a first-century C.E. historian, physician, and disciple of Jesus, is the author of this compilation of stories and eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus.

CONTEXT

The events described in Luke take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman Empire during the early 1st century, between 10 B.C.E and 40 C.E. Luke was likely composed between 60 and 80 C.E.

KEY THEMES

- The upside-down Kingdom of God.
- Israel's freedom and the new covenant.
- God's faithfulness to His people is seen in His human incarnation.

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OCTOBER 20, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes for taking notes.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Luke 1 + 2

REFLECT:

Good News. Gospel. Salvation. Redemption. Restoration. Reconciliation. Everything has been pointing to this moment in history. And it is not simply a story of history, it is our story. Jesus is Good News for us. Jesus is salvation for us. Jesus is redemption for us. Luke also makes clear the Good News is for everyone, not just a select group. Don't miss the life Jesus has for you.

Luke's intent in writing this Gospel is to bring a well-researched, orderly account of the life of Jesus. And he wants the readers to see that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises we read about throughout the Old Testament. As you read, notice how the stories of John the Baptist and Jesus fall in line with one another. Mary's response, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." is one of trust and faith. God is faithful to His promises. We can trust Him. Chapter 2 tells all about the birth of Jesus and contains many of the traditional Christmas readings.

RESPOND:

What part of Jesus' birth story stands out most to you? Why do you think that piece grabs your attention?

Read verses 10, 14, and 30-32. These truths are so very important in the grand story of God's love for the world. Jesus is good news for whom? And what does Jesus bring with Him for people?

Fill your name in here: Jesus is Good News for _____. He is. He was sent for you, and He wants to bring out the best in and through you. You can trust Him with everything. The best response is one similar to Mary's—humbly receiving all that God has. And even the response of the shepherds—to search for Jesus in your current circumstances. He loves you. He is for you. And you can trust Him.

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Luke 2:11

The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Luke 5 + 6

REFLECT:

Good News. Gospel. Salvation. Redemption. Restoration. Reconciliation. Everything has been pointing to this moment in history. And it is not simply a story of history, it is our story. Jesus is Good News for us. Jesus is salvation for us. Jesus is redemption for us. Luke also makes clear it is Good News for everyone, not just a select group. Don't miss the life Jesus has for you.

These chapters are part of Luke's emphasis on the mission of Jesus in His home region—Galilee. One of the things to notice is that there are broader, social impacts of Jesus' mission and Good News.

Something interesting to note: Luke is probably the only Gentile author in the Bible. He was an outsider brought inside the Kingdom by the Good News of Jesus.

Also: 12 disciples. In the Old Testament, there were 12 tribes of Israel.

RESPOND:

As you read about Jesus' interactions, do you notice anything similar about the various people?

In the middle of Chapter 6, we find what might be familiar to us and known as the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew. While there might be a few differences, what themes are emerging here? If this is a sort of manifesto of the Kingdom of God, what key statements should we focus on as followers of Jesus?

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Luke 6:27 *But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Luke 14 + 15

REFLECT:

Good News. Gospel. Salvation. Redemption. Restoration. Reconciliation. Everything has been pointing to this moment in history. And it is not simply a story of history, it is our story. Jesus is Good News for us. Jesus is salvation for us. Jesus is redemption for us. Luke also makes clear it is Good News for everyone, not just a select group. Don't miss the life Jesus has for you.

Parables. Jesus taught using parables. Parables are stories that move past just sharing information or knowledge. They engage the heart and mind. They present familiar people and situations so that the listener can relate. And they almost always present something unexpected. These stories might reveal something about God or the world He created, or they might reveal something uncomfortable about us or those around us.

RESPOND:

Which parable stands out to you? What is it about that parable that engages or surprises you? What questions do you have? How might it cause you to see God, others, or yourself differently? How might it inspire you to live differently?

Luke highlights the outsider who is welcomed into the Kingdom. Jesus interacts with so many outsiders who are welcomed home into the Kingdom. How are you inviting others into His Kingdom? Ask God to give you the courage to be bold and invitational to those who may not have experienced the salvation and restoration of Jesus.

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Luke 15:7

In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away! (Jesus)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Luke 22 + 23

REFLECT:

Good News. Gospel. Salvation. Redemption. Restoration. Reconciliation. Everything has been pointing to this moment in history. And it is not simply a story of history, it is our story. Jesus is Good News for us. Jesus is salvation for us. Jesus is redemption for us. Luke also makes clear it is Good News for everyone, not just a select group. Don't miss the life Jesus has for you.

The resistance Jesus faces from the religious power brokers continues to increase. Jesus has known what is awaiting Him in Jerusalem. But His love compels Him to continue the journey. There are so many symbols present as Jesus celebrates the Passover meal with His disciples. A sacrificial lamb. The story of the Israelites being freed from slavery in Egypt. Bread symbolizes his body. Wine symbolizes the new covenant with God—confirmed with His sacrificial blood.

A betrayal. A prayer. An arrest. Denials. Trials. So much is happening. But don't read too fast. Take on the weight of Jesus' death. Picture the scenes. Understand the penalty of your own sin.

RESPOND:

Find a time to take communion on your own or with your family this week. Read Jesus' words as you do. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice. And then rest in His grace. You haven't earned a place in the Kingdom of God—you have been placed there by the grace and goodness of Jesus.

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Luke 22:42

Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Luke 24

REFLECT:

Good News. Gospel. Salvation. Redemption. Restoration. Reconciliation. Everything has been pointing to this moment in history. And it is not simply a story of history, it is our story. Jesus is Good News for us. Jesus is salvation for us. Jesus is redemption for us. Luke also makes clear it is Good News for everyone, not just a select group. Don't miss the life Jesus has for you.

While resurrection is something we have trouble fully embracing because of our modern insistence on personal experience and scientific reasoning, it is the single event that caused those first disciples to give up everything and proclaim that Jesus had risen from the dead. And Jesus' resurrection stands as a megaphone of hope for all of us—amplifying the truth that God really does love each of us and that this world that never fully feels like home is not all there is.

Luke includes a story of two men who have been in Jerusalem and witnessed Jesus' death. They are headed home to Emmaus, talking about all that had happened. Jesus suddenly shows up and begins walking and talking with them, but they don't recognize Him. As the Bible Project points out, "When a person imposes their agenda and view of reality onto Jesus, He remains invisible and unknown to them. We will only see and know the real Jesus when we submit ourselves to His Upside-Down Kingdom, epitomized in His broken body on the cross that was offered in self-giving love."

RESPOND:

In what ways do we impose agendas or views onto Jesus?

What does it look like to submit to Jesus and the Kingdom of God in today's world?

Do you believe that God's love for you was on full display in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus? How does this affect the way you live?

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Luke 24:6-7

He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. If you were made queen or king of the world for a day, what is the first thing you would do? Why? Where would your castle be?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two videos from the Bible Project on the book of Luke (run time ~16 mins)



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the videos and/or Sunday's teaching?
- Has your concept of Jesus changed over time? If so, in what way?
- The videos talk about how Jesus' upside-down Kingdom brings restoration and reversal of people's whole-life circumstances. What things do you see in our world, or in our culture in particular, you think need to be turned upside-down and renewed?
- Have you experienced an upside-down type of reversal through Jesus in your life? If so, how?
- Luke puts a big emphasis on Jesus welcoming outsiders and the poor, and inviting them to take on His Kingdom mission as their own. Why is this significant? What is the entrance requirement for God's kingdom?
- Talk about the significance of Jesus' death on the cross. Why did Jesus have to die? What hope does the resurrection give us today?
- Brainstorm as a group. What are some practical, everyday things we can learn from the life and teachings of Jesus and His interactions with others?
- Share with the group one thing from the list above you would like to focus on practicing this week.
- How can this group be praying for you?

But you will receive
power when
 the
Holy Spirit

comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 18

ACTS THE BIG IDEA

The good news of the risen King Jesus leads to the formation of communities where individuals from various backgrounds are treated with equality as they pledge their allegiance to Jesus and live according to His teachings. All of this stems from the power given by God through the Holy Spirit.

WHO WROTE ACTS?

Christian tradition holds that this book, also called the Acts of the Apostles, was written by the physician and historian named Luke.

CONTEXT

The events described in Acts take place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman empire as well as Asia Minor during the 1st century between 30-60 CE. Acts was likely composed between 60 and 90 C.E.

KEY THEMES

- The power of the Holy Spirit given to human beings.
- Jesus' ongoing mission to Israel and the nations after His departure.
- The self-giving faithfulness of the early Church.

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For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



OCTOBER 27, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Acts 1 + 2

REFLECT:

While the traditional (not original) name for this book is “The Acts of the Apostles”, it might be better to think of it as “The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the lives of the Apostles”. If we miss the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we will miss Luke's emphasis and invitation to be filled and empowered with that very Spirit.

Together. Teaching. Prayer. Generosity. Worship. The Lord's Supper. Meals. Thankfulness. Sounds like a pretty amazing community. And a great encouragement for our church too.

RESPOND:

In Chapter 1, what does Jesus talk to the disciples about when He appears to them after His resurrection? How might this point back to His teachings in Luke?

In Chapter 2, we see the incredible story of God's Holy Spirit falling and filling Jesus' disciples (Pentecost). And then we see the early church begin to take shape. As you read about the early church, what are the key activities mentioned? (Acts 2:41-47) Write down what they were doing together.

Jesus tells them not to leave Jerusalem until something happens. And then He emphasizes the power they'll receive, which they'll need for the Kingdom work ahead of them. What (or better yet, WHO) is He speaking about? In your own words, what does the Holy Spirit do in the lives of followers of Jesus? Have you experienced any of this?

Acts 1:3

During the 40 days after he suffered and died, Jesus appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Acts 4

REFLECT:

We pick up in the middle of a story about a man being healed. Peter and John are speaking to the crowd who had gathered to see what had happened to the man.

Miracles. Could they be tiny glimpses into how things should be? Could they point to the future healing and wholeness we'll all experience? Notice that the officials are angry that Peter and John are talking about resurrection after death. Could they be talking about how the miracle is pointing to that? Whatever the case, Peter is clear that it is the power of God on display. The religious elite and power brokers don't like what's going on. They want to maintain control. So they arrest Peter and John. The following day, they are brought before the council.

Boldness. Jesus. The Spirit. Unity. Generosity. It's contagious and it's beginning to spread.

Don't just read this as a historical account—read it as an invitation to be bold Jesus people, empowered by the Spirit, united and generous to all.

RESPOND:

Who empowers Peter to boldly proclaim the truth about Jesus?

Read verse 13. What was the council amazed at?

There's another line: They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

Maybe they had seen them with Jesus. Or maybe there was something about them that reflected their relationship with Jesus. What attributes would be evidence of someone who had spent a lot of time with Jesus?

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Acts 4:32

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Acts 8 + 9

REFLECT:

It seems like the persecutors who scattered the early followers of Jesus believed that by scattering them, they would be silenced. Instead, we read about how the scattering led to a multiplication of the faith. Believers proclaimed the Good News wherever they went.

These stories of transformation are amazing. And here, in Chapter 9, we find the story of Saul. Saul was working to destroy this growing movement of Jesus followers. He wanted to kill them all. One day, he had an encounter with Jesus, and his life took an incredible turn. This is the power of the Holy Spirit working to transform and restore everyone to the Kingdom of God.

Ask God to speak to you through His Spirit. Ask Him to convict you, to guide you, to empower you, and to encourage you. You can trust that the Holy Spirit is working for good in your life. From silencing and killing Christians to proclaiming Jesus as King and starting churches.

RESPOND:

Quick question...when was the last time you proclaimed the Good News verbally (not just with your actions)? Write a paragraph (elevator speech) that communicates the Good News. Make it simple. Ask God to give you an opportunity to share it—and then be bold.

Did anything catch you off guard in your reading today? What questions are you left with?

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Acts 9:31

The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Acts 15

REFLECT:

As the Good News spreads from region to region, something unique begins to take place. Christianity begins to reflect a multi-ethnic reality. While unity is a key to the Kingdom of God, uniformity is not. The Good News isn't bound by or controlled by an ethnicity; it's a global reality. With this comes some challenges. Some early believers believed there were still some Jewish customs and rituals that should be central to Christianity. Some even believed that the entire Law of Moses must be kept. Paul and Barnabas disagreed. They believed that entry into the Kingdom was based on the undeserved grace of Jesus. Period. The Jerusalem council met and eventually agreed with Paul and Barnabas. The Bible Project says: "This decision was groundbreaking for the history of the Jesus movement. Jesus, who is the risen King of all nations, is an ethnically Jewish Messiah. However, a person's membership among His people is not based on ethnic identity or Torah (Law of Moses) observance. Instead, one must simply trust in Jesus and follow His teachings."

RESPOND:

How have you seen people add expectations or laws to the grace of Jesus?

Do you feel a tension between that sort of grace and the importance of obeying Jesus?
How do you work this out?

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Acts 18:23 *After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went back through Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening all the believers.*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Acts 27

REFLECT:

What God accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the life of Paul is amazing. Paul traveled, starting and encouraging churches throughout the Mediterranean world. He boldly proclaimed, in word and deed, the Good News of Jesus to a Gentile (non-Jewish) world. He writes letters to many churches, encouraging and instructing them, which end up in our sacred scriptures. All of this was empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit. And that same Holy Spirit is alive and active in our world today. Open yourself to what God would do through you in this moment of history.

Paul spent much time in prison for his boldness. What would seem like lost time was viewed by Paul as an opportunity. He wrote many of our New Testament letters from prison. And he saw those moments as opportunities to share the Good News with jailers and officials wherever he was. He finally makes it to Rome, the center of the known world at the time. He spent time with the Jewish leaders of that city, explaining and testifying about the Kingdom of God and the work of Jesus. Some were persuaded, and others simply walked away.

The ending to Acts is an invitation and road map to us. Paul lived in Rome under house arrest. "He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him." May we welcome all. May we boldly proclaim the Kingdom as we submit to the Kingship of Jesus.

RESPOND:

What did you learn in your readings through Acts? What questions are you left with? Take a few minutes to write a summary paragraph of Acts as you also recognize that we are still living out that story today.

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Acts 28:30-31

For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. If you could travel back in time, and be a witness to one story of Jesus (besides the resurrection), what would you choose? Why?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two videos from the Bible Project on the book of Acts (run time ~16 mins):



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the videos and/or Sunday's teaching?
- Why does Jesus give the Holy Spirit to His followers?
- Has your concept of the Holy Spirit changed over time? If so, how?
- How can the gatherings of the early church (i.e. Acts 2:42-47) inspire us today?
- How can the spreading of Christianity recorded throughout the book of Acts be inspiring for us today?
- The videos highlight the clash of cultures that occur as Paul and company share the message of Jesus to the neighboring communities. How does Christ's Kingdom clash with our culture today?
- How did you first hear about Jesus? Who told you or invited you to church? What was your experience?

If you did not know anything about Christianity, how would you like to be told about it?
- Who is someone that you could invite to church with you this week or in the next few weeks? How will you invite them?
- How can this group be praying for you?

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THIS GOOD NEWS ABOUT CHRIST. IT
IS THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK, SAVING EVERYONE WHO
BELIEVES -- THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO THE GENTILE.

THIS GOOD NEWS TELLS US HOW GOD MAKES US RIGHT

IN HIS SIGHT. THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED
FROM START TO FINISH BY FAITH.

ROMANS ————— 1:16-17

ROMANS

THE BIG IDEA

Faith in Jesus creates new humans who are liberated to become a people characterized by love for God and their neighbors. This new humanity is being transformed by God's Spirit and is the fulfillment of God's ancient promises.

WHO WROTE ROMANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans.

CONTEXT

The events described in Romans take place primarily in the Greco-Roman empire. Romans was likely composed during Paul's third missionary journey between 50 and 60 C.E.

KEY THEMES

- God's gift of rescuing humanity through Jesus.
- God maintaining His promises to Israel.
- Love unifying the diversity of the Church.

Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



NOVEMBER 3, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes for taking notes.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Romans 1 - 2:11

REFLECT:

Romans is an incredible letter Paul wrote to a group of churches in Rome. What probably began as a unified group of believers has become divided, disagreeing on how to live out the faith. Paul wrote what we now understand to be his most expanded view of the Good News (Gospel) in an effort to bring them back together.

In a way, Paul is describing the downward spiral of sin that happens as we ignore or set God to the side. As he's doing this, he is consciously working to get the Jewish Christians to agree, pointing their fingers at others who are 'true' Christians. But Paul then turns the tables and reveals that they are just as bad, just as sinful, just as broken. He's magnified the truth that we are all in the same boat and lost without Christ.

RESPOND:

Do you ever look at others' sin and think to yourself that you're not that bad? You'd probably never say it out loud, but there are some really evil people out there, right?

When we go there in our minds, we also are tempted to think that we're not that bad. We forget just how much we need the work Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

Write a prayer today thanking God for His patience, kindness, and grace for you.

Romans 2:4

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Romans 3 + 5

REFLECT:

We are all, no one excluded, trapped by our sin and in need of a rescue. This cannot come about in our own power or intelligence; we need a Savior to pull us out and show us a better way. God is righteous and faithful. In Christ, He set out on a rescue mission and is working to redeem and restore everyone. When we trust that to be true, and place our faith in Him alone rather than in ourselves, we are rescued and restored. Sure, we still live in this broken world and are fighting our old nature, but we are now made righteous through Christ.

Paul often talks about our flesh or our sinful desires. If we're honest, it's not difficult to recognize it. Jesus absorbs all of that on our behalf, frees us from slavery it could create in our lives, gives us the power to be transformed, and then declares us righteous. It really is an unbelievable gift of grace.

RESPOND:

Let's walk this out a bit. Can you name a desire in your life, that if you fully pursued that desire would ultimately lead you to a really bad place? Maybe it would break the relationships that are most important to you? Maybe it would lead to an addiction that began to control you? Maybe it would lead to financial collapse? Be specific.

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Romans 5:8

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Romans 6 + 8

REFLECT:

Paul now shifts to begin talking about our new selves. We are being restored to God's original design. God's desire is to see the best version of you begin to emerge as you cooperate with the Spirit working in you. Jesus is the prototype. He is the perfect example of what God wants to do in each of us.

Baptism becomes a symbolic act of dying to the old self and being raised to the new. Just as Christ took on our sin in the crucifixion, we die to our old selves. And just as He was resurrected, so are we born again into our new selves. What is true of Jesus is true of us.

RESPOND:

Have you ever been baptized? If so, what details do you remember (when and where and with whom)? Do you see the incredible symbolism present in that act? If not, why wait any longer? If you've believed in Jesus and his work, and you have placed your faith in Him, it's time to be baptized. Talk to one of your pastors as soon as possible and take that step!

Chapter 8 is full of incredible truths and reminders. Which verses stood out to you as you read today? Read verses 31-39 a couple times through. Let those truths sink in today.

Romans 8:11

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Romans 12+13

REFLECT:

Paul has beautifully described the Good News, righteousness, justification, as he has laid out an incredible theology of faith in Jesus. Now he turns to the practical day-to-day application of that faith. I believe all of this is true... so now what? Paul writes that by the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are being transformed into this new humanity, a new united community marked by love and forgiveness and sacrifice and humility. Our role is to cooperate with the Spirit who is transforming us, which means we must pay attention to and obey the promptings the Spirit gives. Paul specifically pushes them toward humility, servanthood (using one's gifts), and intentional community.

Slow down as you move into chapter 13. Remember, Paul and the early Christians were eventually killed for their faith by those in power. And still he writes, "Everyone must submit to governing authorities."

And then, he instructs them to "Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law."

RESPOND:

There is so much in these two chapters. Write down the clear directives from Paul. What should a follower of Jesus be doing on a regular basis?

What did you read today that makes you scratch your head, or cause you to say, "but wait, what about..."? Humble yourself and ask God to give you wisdom and a clear path toward love as you work those things out in your day-to-day life.

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Romans 12:1-2

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Romans 14 + 15

REFLECT:

As Paul begins to wrap up his letter, he addresses the potential division we face because of our ethnic and social differences. He believes unity in the church is essential. Every tongue and every tribe will be represented in the Kingdom of God. We must humble ourselves and our preferences as we amplify Christ over our own traditions.

“Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong... Each of us will give a personal account to God. So let’s stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.”

What a great challenge! Stop arguing and condemning. Simply live in a way that would not create a hindrance to others. And then:

“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what you eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too.”

RESPOND:

Write down the three words Paul uses to tell us the kind of life we should live. What might that look like for you daily? If Paul instructs us to live this way, does that mean it’s a choice we can make? If so, how can we choose to live in goodness and with peace and joy in this current world?

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Romans 15:13

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. What is your favorite board game or card game to play with friends or family? Why?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two videos from the Bible Project on the book of Romans (run time ~17 mins):



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the videos and/or Sunday's teaching?
- What has been your experience with church?
- Is conflict or tension with someone at church an inevitable reality? Why? Have you ever had a conflict with someone at church?
- How should people in a church work through conflicts and seek unity? Is this different than how conflicts should be worked out in normal, everyday interactions? Why?
- The videos talk about how throughout the letter of Romans, Paul points to the Gospel as the great unifier for Gentile and Jewish Christians. What is the 'Gospel'? How would you describe it to others?
- What is sin? How does sin trap or enslave us? How do we overcome sin?
- How can the 'Gospel' give people a new status? What about a new family? And what about a new future?
- Have you personally experienced any of these things?
- Romans is also a call for Christians not to base their faith on performance, but on transformation into the image of Christ. How are we to do that? What are some pitfalls to avoid along the way?
- How are you personally working on your growth into Christ's image? What is something you want to intentionally focus on this week?
- How can this group be praying for you?

FOR GOD IN ALL HIS FULLNESS WAS PLEASED
TO LIVE IN CHRIST, AND THROUGH HIM

God reconciled

everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-20

COLOSSIANS THE BIG IDEA

No part of human existence remains untouched by the loving, liberating rule of the risen Jesus. We are invited to live a new-creation life here and now because the new creation began arriving when Jesus rose from the dead.

WHO WROTE COLOSSIANS?

Christian tradition holds that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians.

CONTEXT

The events described in Colossians take place in the city of Colossae. Colossians was likely composed while Paul was in custody in Rome between 60 and 64 C.E.

KEY THEMES

- Jesus as King over all creation.
- Liberation through Jesus.
- Freedom in the Messiah.

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For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



NOVEMBER 10, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes for taking notes.

COLOSSIANS KING OF ALL.

the stories in the story

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Colossians 1

REFLECT:

Colossians was a letter from Paul to Christians in the town of Colossae. He writes to them because there is a problem among believers rising to the level of great concern for the leaders. The first-century religious culture had many similar problems that we have today. Some were seemingly “borrowing” ideas and ideologies from other religions endeavoring to mix them in with the Christian faith. The result was a counterfeit version of faith leading the people of Colossae away from the foundational truths of Jesus. Whatever the problem, Paul chooses to focus on the solution: the supremacy of Jesus! He wants them to truly know Jesus because when we deeply know Jesus we can more readily identify a counterfeit. Think of it this way: federal agents are not trained to spot counterfeit money by studying the counterfeit. They are trained to spot the counterfeit by studying the characteristics of the genuine bill. Paul’s letter is the study of the true, unblemished, supreme son of God, Jesus Christ.

RESPOND:

Read Colossians 1. How does Paul describe Jesus in verses 15-21? In verse 26, Paul refers to a mystery. The mystery was the work accomplished by Jesus for every man, whether Jew or Gentile, to have hope in glory through Him. This was a revolutionary idea. The gift of salvation was not reserved for the Jewish people only. The redemptive grace of Jesus was for everyone. The hope of glory is “Christ in you”.

What do you think it looks like to have “Christ in you”? If our hope is found in Jesus alone, what does that mean to you today in our current cultural climate?

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Colossians 1:13-14

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Colossians 2

REFLECT:

Paul continues his letter by reminding them once again of the supremacy of Jesus. He then gives the readers some wise advice, cautioning them about deceptive teachings in their midst. He goes on to encourage them and affirm their dedication to the work of Jesus in them. Paul uses military terms in this portion of his letter addressing them as if they were an army under attack but has not yet been overcome. His desire is for the Christians in Colossae to stay alert and diligent in seeking wisdom from the right sources. As Paul continues he also reminds them of their powerful Savior and what He accomplished on the cross. He takes it a step further by challenging the false teaching of legalism or adhering to a list of rules for salvation. Striving to do enough to be saved results in an arrogant version of skin-deep religion and in this letter, we see the salvation we have cannot be based on what we do but on what Jesus did. There is freedom in Jesus, the bondage of the old system of animal sacrifices and legalism has been abolished through Him! Instead, we experience spiritual growth through our connection to God through Jesus and our connection with other believers. We begin to live and look like Jesus as we learn more about Him in community with other believers. We see clearly in this chapter the bondage that comes from a self-imposed religion based on human wisdom alone. True freedom, true wisdom, and true salvation are only found in Jesus.

RESPOND:

Read Colossians 1. What did Jesus accomplish on the cross for you personally? How do you see “human wisdom” invading Christian people today? How can you protect your heart and mind from being infiltrated by false teaching?

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Colossians 2:6-7

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Colossians 3

REFLECT:

Chapter 3 of Colossians is a continuation of Chapter 2. Paul has just spoken of the freedom we now have in Jesus. He has debunked the idea of legalism and a works-based faith. However, this is not a license to live in a way that disregards the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. We can live a holy life. Paul explains how our lives will look as a Jesus follower and provides an instruction manual of sorts for practically walking this out in our lives. He says things like: set your mind on Jesus, put to death earthly things, put on love, let the peace of Christ rule, let the word of Christ dwell in you, and whatever you do—do it in the name of Jesus. It is easy to list these things but the difficulty comes in actually living these out, especially in the world we live in today. But, the very first sentence in Chapter 3 tells us where the strength to live this way comes from: being raised to life in Christ!

RESPOND:

Read Colossians 3. How do you think you practically “put to death earthly things”? How can you let the peace of Christ rule in your heart this week?

How would our social media presence change if we were to “put on love”?

What are some steps you could take in order for the word of God to “dwell” in you?

Colossians 3:10

Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Colossians 4

REFLECT:

Paul begins this last chapter of Colossians with continued instructions on how Christ's followers interact with the world around them. The context of the day in which this was written was much different than it is today, but the main idea in verse 1 is that it matters how we treat one another, even if we are in charge. After all, everyone has someone they are accountable to. Paul reminds those in charge, that they too have an overseer in heaven. His instructions continue as he calls the Colossae people to prayer. The underlying principle here in the first few verses of Chapter 4 is the inner life of a Christian does directly affect the outer life of a Christian. To take this one step further, when our outer life begins to look more like Jesus, the world takes notice. This is where our witness begins to take shape; in our hearts. His list here contains prayer, thanksgiving, walking in wisdom, using time wisely, and choosing your words carefully. One other thing to take note of is his personal request for prayer. He is a preacher who desires to be supported by the prayers of other followers of Jesus. Every pastor or teacher of The Word needs prayer support and Paul was no exception. He ends this chapter by asking them to "remember his chains." He was writing from prison and did not know what the outcome would be for him in the courtroom of Caesar. There is some emotion here at the end. He desires their prayers not only for his preaching but also for his life circumstances, then he says, "Grace be with you." The only way forward in his circumstances, the circumstances of the Colossian people, and our culture today is by the grace of God.

RESPOND:

Read Colossians 4. What do you think it looks like to be "steadfast" in prayer? How can you be more diligent in your prayer life? How can you "walk in wisdom toward outsiders?"

Think about your speech. How would our social media and texting change if we took seriously the mandate to be gracious in our speech?

This week take time to pray for your pastor. Consider asking them how you can pray for them.

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Colossians 4:2 *Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Colossians 1:15-22

REFLECT:

Today we are going to go back to Chapter 1:15-22. In these specific verses, Paul focuses on the person and work of Jesus. As we said on day one this week, the underlying message of the book of Colossians is the supremacy of Jesus. In verses 15-22, Paul eloquently proclaims who Jesus is and the greatness of His work for all of mankind. He states that Jesus is the “image” of the invisible God. This word in the greek means “manifestation”. Jesus was the manifestation of the invisible God, He was born before all things—supreme in rank, Jesus was the creator. He is God. There is nothing before or over Jesus. Everything is held together in him. Jesus is preeminent. His blood shed on the cross was the only way to bring peace and reconciliation. Your sin was reconciled through Him so that you could be brought before God holy and blameless. He is enough. He is all. He is supreme.

RESPOND:

Read Colossians 1:15-22. If you had to describe Jesus to the world how would you describe Him? What does the supremacy of Jesus mean to you?

How might the world and our culture look different if we were to live in the knowledge of Jesus being preeminent over everything?

What difference does this make in how you live your life and what you find important?

Colossians 1:15

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. If you were forced to give up all of your possessions except for one, what would you keep? Why?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the video from the Bible Project on the book of Colossians (run time ~9 mins)



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the video and/or Sunday's teaching?
- Have someone in the group read Colossians 1:15-20. What word or phrase most jumps out to you? Why?
- The Bible is one unified story that points to Jesus. We see that here in this story, and Jesus even says it Himself in Luke 24:27. Why is this such an important element of reading and interpreting Scripture?
- What are some cultural pressures that cause Christians to drift from the centrality of Jesus at times?
- Which of those cultural pressures have had the greatest power on you? Why do you think that is?
- What are some ways God has given us power to fight those pressures?
- What are some specific ways Christians are called to live counter-culturally to those around us in the 21st century?
- Choose one of these areas you can personally work on this week. What did you choose? Why?
- How can this group be praying for you?

DEAR FRIENDS,
LET US CONTINUE TO

love one another,

FOR LOVE COMES FROM GOD. ANYONE WHO
LOVES IS A CHILD OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD.
BUT ANYONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT
KNOW GOD, FOR GOD IS LOVE.

1 JOHN 4:7-8

1 JOHN THE BIG IDEA

Following Jesus means entering into a way of life that is permeated with God's own life and love, beginning now and carrying on to eternity. To know Jesus is to know the creative God of life-giving and self-giving love.

WHO WROTE 1 JOHN?

The author is anonymous, but Christian tradition holds that it was written by John the apostle, as well as 2-3 John.

CONTEXT

The events described in 1-3 John take place in the city of Ephesus. 1-3 John were likely composed between 64 and 66 C.E.

KEY THEMES

- God's light and love.
- Righteousness by loving our neighbors.
- Jesus as truth.

Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:



NOVEMBER 17, 2024

SERMON NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes for taking notes.

1 JOHN LIVING AND LOVING LIKE GOD.

the stories in the story

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: 1 John 1

REFLECT:

John begins his letter to the churches with a couple of key statements. First, Jesus is eternal, came from the Father, and was revealed to the world. Second, John hasn't only heard about this, but was an eyewitness who was physically present with Jesus.

John then begins to set up a tension that must be a response to something going on in the churches. He says that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. And if we're living in darkness, then we are not walking with God.

Knowing that we all sin, he quickly reminds the church that when we confess our sin, we will be both forgiven and cleansed. This isn't just about God's grace. It's about transformation into people of light.

RESPOND:

We live in a world that likes to hide anything that would reveal weakness. And we tend to lie or deflect if confronted by others. Why do you think it is so difficult to admit our weakness and sin to God, ourselves, and others? What do you think confession looks like in our relationship with God? If God wants to cleanse us, not just forgive us, how might we experience that?

1 John 1:9

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: 1 John 2

REFLECT:

John wants the church to realize that Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for our weakness and sin, and He is also our advocate before the Father. This is incredibly GOOD NEWS! We are no longer condemned IF we will simply humble ourselves and confess our need for and trust in Jesus.

John then reminds the church that THE commandment that should be before us all is this: LOVE ONE ANOTHER. And if anyone says they are walking with God, yet hates a fellow believer, that person is actually living in darkness. Love reveals the light. Jesus showed us how to love through His humility, servanthood, and sacrifice.

John closes this section by reminding the church of the power within us: the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you and convict you today. Now cooperate with the Spirit and obey.

RESPOND:

John gives a list of the ways we tend to love the world over God and others. Write down the three things he says pulls at us in this world. Do you struggle with any of these temptations?

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1 John 2:5-6 *But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.*

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: 1 John 3

REFLECT:

We become God's children when we receive the Good News of Jesus. Jesus places us in the family and we become heirs of God's Kingdom. Let this settle in. The God of the universe chooses us to be a part of His family.

Now, let's grow up into that family and Kingdom. Let's reflect the values of love and humility and forgiveness and compassion by the ways we live. Love isn't just an empty word. Love compels us to speak and act in certain ways. Yes, we will still sin, but that sin need not control or trap us. We are being made new day by day. John summarizes it all like this: believe in Jesus, love one another, and obey God.

RESPOND:

What verse or passage grabbed your attention today? Spend some time reflecting and praying about that passage. Are you sensing the Spirit nudging you to speak or do anything differently? If so, what is it?

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1 John 3:16 *We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: 1 John 4

REFLECT:

There are two big themes John encourages in this chapter.

First, the Spirit who lives in us is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

Second, he returns to the primary theme of the entire letter: love. He writes that if we love, it shows us to be a child of God. But if we don't love, it shows that we do not know God.

RESPOND:

What do you think this means? How is this an encouragement to us?

Are there people or groups of people that you find difficult to love? Who are they? And what is it that makes them difficult for you to love?

How might you take steps toward a practical love for them? Be specific. List 2 or 3 things you can do to move in that direction.

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1 John 4:9

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: 1 John 5

REFLECT:

John closes his letter to the churches by summarizing all that he has been saying. When we believe in Jesus, we become children of God. Love is the foundation of the family, and we obey God by loving others just as Christ loved. This is how our faith is made known. And this belief in Christ, this faith in Jesus assures us of eternal life.

John ends the entire letter with one last directive: keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts. Let's spend some time here. Idols are anything in our lives that take the place of God. Idols aren't necessarily evil. But when we elevate anything above God in our hearts, we've made it an idol, a false god. All of us are tempted to elevate certain things in our lives above God. Back in Chapter 2, John gave us three categories that might point us toward what we're tempted by: 1.) Physical pleasure. Think lust and sexual gratification. 2.) A craving for everything we see. Think materialism and greed. 3.) Achievements and possessions. Think pride and eliteism.

RESPOND:

Which of these categories has the strongest pull or temptation in your life? Be honest. What does that look like in your life? How might you take steps to combat that temptation as you cooperate with the Holy Spirit?

1 John 5:13

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

CIRCLE UP

Group Questions

START HERE. If you could have your own food truck that served your favorite food/snack/dessert, what would you serve? Why? Where would you station your food truck?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the video from the Bible Project on the books of 1, 2, and 3 John (run time ~10 mins):



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the video and/or Sunday's teaching?
- Tell a story of a time when you saw someone doing something truly loving and selfless. How did that impact you?
- Have someone read 1 John 4:7-21. What stands out to you from this passage?
- When you think about the God of the universe loving and caring about you, despite your failures and hang-ups, how does that make you feel?
- How would you describe loving action, in terms of characteristics in which followers of Jesus are called to embody? What should it practically look like in the 21st Century?
- How can we come to truly know Jesus and have a growing relationship with Him?
- The videos highlight the theme from 1 John that God is also 'light.' Why do you think John uses that metaphor?
- What does it look like to 'walk in the light' (1 John 1:7) as Jesus is the light?
- What is something practical you can do this week to be light and love to those around you? Be specific.
- How can this group be praying for you?

And the one sitting on the throne said,

"LOOK, I AM MAKING
EVERYTHING NEW!

It is finished! I am the Alpha and Omega -- the
Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will
give freely from the springs of the water of life."

REVELATION 21:5-6

REVELATION THE BIG IDEA

Every human kingdom, like Babylon, eventually becomes corrupt and oppressive. We should resist evil kingdoms by loving people and trusting that Jesus will not let evil go unchecked. He will return to remove evil from the world and make all things new.

WHO WROTE REVELATION?

Though most Christian traditions hold that Revelation (or The Revelation of Jesus to John) was written by the disciple John, his identity is not explicitly mentioned.

CONTEXT

The events described in Revelation take place in Asia Minor to seven specific church communities. Revelation was likely composed between 94 and 96 C.E.

KEY THEMES

- The hope of Jesus' final return.
- Faithfulness to Jesus throughout one's life.
- The comfort of Jesus in suffering and persecution.

OUR CHURCH OF GOD ROOTS (Wesleyan/Armenian theological framework) speak toward an Amillennial view of the 1000 year timeline question which arises when reading. An amillennial view believes the 1000 year reign of Christ represents the time from the ascension of Christ until His Second Coming. Jesus is already the King of all, but His rule is not yet unopposed. The 1000 years is not a literal timeline, but represents the span of time we are currently living in. This is the most common view throughout church history.

**Content generously provided by the Bible Project.
For more resources and to STUDY FURTHER, scan here:**



NOVEMBER 24, 2024

REVELATION

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dashes arranged in approximately 20 rows and 30 columns, intended for writing or sketching.

REVELATION ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. *the stories in the story*

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Revelation 1 + 2 + 3

REFLECT:

Revelation is the most difficult book in the New Testament—both to read and to understand. John, the writer, is assuming a lot of the reader. As you begin in Revelation, it is helpful to utilize some outside resources that will help you navigate the complexities you'll be reading. As a starting point, there are five primary perspectives or lenses that scholars and pastors use to read the entirety of Revelation:

1. **Pretorist:** The text is pointing to actual events that already occurred in the 1st century. The symbolism would have been understood by the original audience.
2. **Predictive:** The text is pointing to future events that will take place. We may not fully understand until those events happen.
3. **Poetic:** The text is a poetic expression pointing to universal truths about God, our world, evil, and historical events.
4. **Political:** The text is meant as a protest against the Roman empire, and then future political powers that arise. The Kingdom of God is presented as the antithesis to worldly power structures.
5. **Pastoral:** The text refers to historical events, but is meant to be contextualized into every future generation of Christians. Images are meant to both challenge the real evil in our world, as well as give an enduring hope of the Kingdom of God.

RESPOND:

Have you read the book of Revelation before? What are your thoughts or assumptions as you approach this text? Which of the above lenses, or perspectives, resonates with you the most?

As you read the text, would you be willing to read with fresh eyes and an openness to what God's Spirit may want to reveal?

Revelation 1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Revelation 4 + 5

REFLECT:

As you read today, imagine God's heavenly throne room. John gives us images that refer back to images spoken of by the Old Testament prophets. The throne room is filled with people from every tribe and tongue, every corner of the earth. They are all giving their attention and affection to the one true God. In His hand, God holds a scroll, which points to the prophets' proclamation of hope that God's Kingdom would one day rule. No one is worthy to open the scroll, until a voice emerges. The Lion of Judah is an image well-known by the original readers, referring to the coming Messiah. But instead of a lion emerging, a bloody lamb stands to open the scroll. Don't miss the significance of this image.

RESPOND:

Could this image be pointing to a humble Jesus, bloody and broken on the cross, yet resurrected having conquered sin and death?

What hope might we find in the lamb opening the scroll, which represents the emerging Kingdom of God?

What questions do you have as you read this section? Ask God to give you wisdom as you navigate those questions.

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Revelation 5:13 *And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: "Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever."*

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Revelation 13 + 14

REFLECT:

You may find yourself overwhelmed and confused as you read these chapters. Remember, the original readers would have had more familiarity with the Old Testament prophets and the symbolism being used. In our current day, we use quotes from movies or TV shows and even create memes that make complete sense to us. If you tried to use those same quotes or memes 2000 years in the future, they may have no idea what those refer to. The context is foreign. That's one of our challenges in Revelation.

Two beasts probably represent leaders who exert military power and economic power demanding full obedience from the world at large. Here, you'll read about the "number of the beast: 666". There is a lot of symbolism here, including references to Nero Caesar (when spelled in Hebrew, adds up to 666). Human rulers, meant to bring good and order to the world, become beasts when they leverage power and money for their own purposes. Then comes a vision of Jesus with a faithful people. Will the reader be caught up in the evil expressions of power and wealth or remain faithful to Jesus? That's a great question in any space and time.

RESPOND:

What were your thoughts as you read today? Did you have any questions emerge?

Have you found yourself reading with a certain lens (look back at Monday's devotional)?

When you look around the world today, do you see how leaders can become 'beasts', corrupt in how they use power and financial resources?

How are we tempted to do the same, or get caught up in these structures?

Revelation 14:12

This means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently, obeying his commands and maintaining their faith in Jesus.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Revelation 18 + 19

REFLECT:

In Genesis 3, we first see rebellion against God. This rebellion is repeated over and over again throughout the course of history, and will continue to repeat itself until Jesus returns. In these chapters, we read about an announcement from Heaven, declaring that Babylon, which represents the rebellion, has fallen. There is rejoicing in Heaven as the multitudes once again worship, declaring God's power and glory. We see another image of Jesus, the Messiah, as a rider on a white horse. And once again, we read through a number of symbols that might seem foreign to us. These final sections, the final battles, represent God's ultimate victory over the rebellion of this world. They serve as warnings and encouragement, judgment and hope. Good will overcome evil once and for all.

RESPOND:

Were you able to keep sight of the hope that was present, even as the powers representing rebellion were destroyed?

How are you tempted to join in the ways of the world and rebel against life with God?

In Revelation 19:9, there is a reference to the marriage supper of the lamb. Jesus spoke of heaven like a dinner party. What do you think about this image of heaven—a wedding feast or dinner party?

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Revelation 18:4

Then I heard another voice calling from heaven, "Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her."

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Take a moment to pause/breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak and be present as you read and reflect on these words.

READ: Revelation 21 + 22

REFLECT:

These chapters are filled with hope for what is to come. Imagine the scenes as you read these passages.

RESPOND:

Take some time to write out Revelation 21:3-4. Memorize these words. Let them become a constant source of promise and hope of what's to come. And let's join with John (Revelation 21:20) in his prayer, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"

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Revelation 21:1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

START HERE. Do you tend to have dreams when you sleep? Do you remember any of those dreams?

WATCH THIS AS A GROUP

Watch the two videos from the Bible Project on the book of Revelation (run time ~24 mins):



- What one or two things stood out to you the most from the videos and/or Sunday's teaching?
- Why is it helpful to have a growing understanding of how to read the Bible, different literary styles, and the overall Biblical story when approaching books like Revelation?
- What have been some resources that have been helpful to you as you have engaged with Scripture? Why?
- The book of Revelation starts with some warnings and encouragements to Christian churches. What would be some warnings you think Jesus would send to churches today? Why?
- What would be some encouragements you think Jesus would send to churches today?
- What roles do you think pain and suffering play in our walk with Christ? Why?
- What is the hope that comes on the other end of enduring those kinds of trials?
- What questions do you have as you read through Revelation? Why?
- How can you continue to place a value on reading Scripture moving forward? What is your plan?
- What are you wanting to read in your Bible next?
- How can this group be praying for you?

RESOURCES

BIBLE PROJECT



“Our mission is to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. And the story of Jesus has the power to transform people and entire communities.”



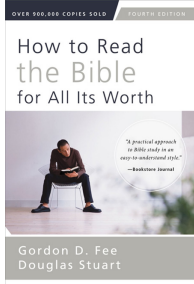
YOUVERSION



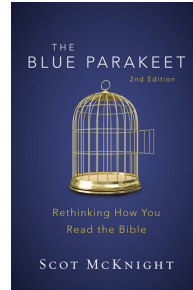
“Connecting everyone, everywhere, to God’s Word every day. We believe a daily rhythm of seeking intimacy with God has the power to transform lives.”



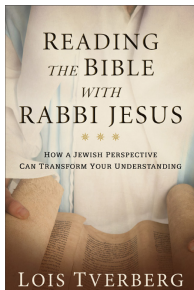
4 BOOKS TO CONSIDER



- 1.**
How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth
 Gordon D Fee and Douglas Stuart



- 3.**
The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible
 Scot McKnight



- 2.**
Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus: How a Jewish Perspective Can Transform Your Understanding
 Lois Tverberg

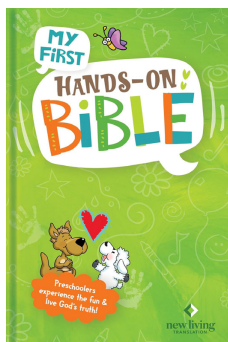


- 4.**
Reading the Bible for a Change: Understanding and Responding to God’s Word
 Ray Lubbeck

FAMILY RESOURCES

Families—we hope you take advantage of this guide to engage your kids in conversation as we walk through the Bible together. Each section has questions and conversation starters for all ages—use whichever works best for your family. There's no better way to help your child grow in his/her faith than by spending time in God's Word together.

Not sure where to start? Check out these Bibles for kids + students:



EARLY CHILDHOOD: HANDS ON PRESCHOOL BIBLE



ELEMENTARY: KIDS ADVENTURE BIBLE



STUDENTS: TEEN STUDY BIBLE

GENESIS

God created you on purpose and for a purpose.



Preschool

1. Stand in front of a mirror with your child and point out their eyes, ears, hair, and mouth. Call out different body parts and help your child identify each of them.
2. Who made you? Remind your child that God made them and that every part of them is special.

Elementary

1. What is something about you that is unique or special?
2. What does Psalm 139:14 tell you about the way God created you?

Students

1. What do you love about the way God created you?
2. What does culture/social media tell you about what gives you purpose? What does the Bible say about our purpose? Read Ephesians 2:10 as a family to find out more about your purpose.

EXODUS

Sin separated; Jesus made a way.



Preschool

1. What's your favorite food? Pretend that food is raining down from the sky and eat it up.
2. Read Exodus 16:4. God provided the Israelites with just enough food to keep them from being hungry. Remind your child that this story is an example of how God provides for us when we trust him.

Elementary

1. Read Exodus 16:4. Do you think it was hard or easy for the Israelites to trust that God would provide for them each day? Why or why not?
2. What is something you need to trust God to provide?

Students

1. In the wilderness, why did God only provide enough food for one day at a time? (Exodus 16:4)
2. When was a time it was difficult for you to obey God and you were tempted to take matters into your own hands?

RUTH

Jesus always protects His people.



Preschool

1. Name 3-4 people who take care of you or who love you. How do they show you they care about you?
2. How does Jesus take care of you?

Elementary

1. When was a time someone cared for you? A time when you cared for someone else?
2. How do you know Jesus cares about you?

Students

1. God used Ruth to protect Naomi. Who might God be calling you to protect or care for today?
2. Where have you seen God's protection in your own life?

PSALMS

Jesus is faithful through good times and bad.



Preschool

1. Name 2 good things that happened today.
Name 2 bad things that happened today.
2. Roll a piece of construction paper into a megaphone. You can use stickers and crayons to decorate. Use the megaphone to practice shouting out to God praise for the good things and asking for help with the bad.

Elementary

1. Make a list of both good and hard things that happened this week. How can you praise God for both?
2. Read Psalm 145:19. How can you encourage others to praise God today?

Students

1. What does it look like to praise God even when life is hard?
2. Read Psalm 146:2. What are you praising God for today?

ISAIAH

God sees the big picture.

Preschool

1. Isaiah's job was to tell people about Jesus. Pretend to call people on a toy phone and practice saying, "Jesus is King."
2. Read Isaiah 9:6. What were some of the special names Isaiah called Jesus?

Elementary

1. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. Why can it be hard to trust God when we go through hard times?
2. How does knowing God is in control change how you live today?

Students

1. Think about one difficult situation in your life right now. How do you think God's perspective of that situation is different than yours?
2. Read Isaiah 26:3. What does perfect peace mean to you?



JONAH

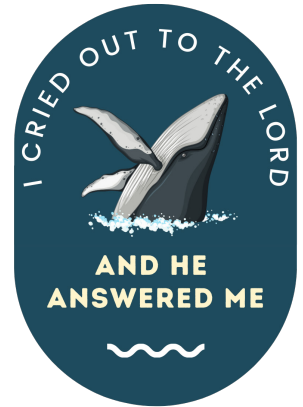
God loves everyone—even our enemies.

Preschool

Watch this video with your family.



1. Did Jonah choose to obey or disobey God's directions?
2. What did God do for the people who lived in Nineveh? Thank God that he forgives us, even when we make poor choices.



Elementary

Watch this video with your family.

1. How did Jonah's decision to run from God affect others?
2. Who can you share the love of Jesus with today?



Students

Read the book of Jonah as a family.

1. Why do you think Jonah ran away from God's plan?
2. What did you learn about God's compassion for all people from the story of Jonah?

LUKE

Jesus—not the king we expected, but the King we needed.



Preschool

1. Make or buy a cupcake or other special treat. Place a candle in it and sing, “Happy Birthday” to Jesus.
2. Why is Jesus’ birthday so special?

Elementary

1. What was surprising about Jesus’ birth?
2. If you were king/queen for a day, what kind of kingdom would you create? What kind of kingdom did Jesus create?

Students

1. What’s the difference between a worldly king and the kind of King Jesus is?
2. Jesus’ upside down kingdom teaches us to serve and put others first. Who can you serve today?

ACTS

God builds His church through us.

Preschool

1. Write a thank you card to one of your teachers at church. Thank them for helping you learn about Jesus.
2. What’s your favorite thing about going to church? Who can you invite to come with you to church?



Elementary

1. Why is it important to be a part of a church?
2. Read Acts 1:8. How can you use your gifts and talents to tell others about Jesus?

Students

1. God uses the church to reach people for Jesus. What role do you play in the church?
2. Read Acts 2:42. Why is it important for God’s people to gather together?

ROMANS

Living differently because of Jesus.



Preschool

1. Read Romans 1: 3-4. Who is Paul talking about when he talks about Good News?
2. Why is this Good News? Who can you share the Good News with today?

Elementary

Read Romans 1:16-17.

1. Why do you think Jesus is called 'good news'?
2. Why does it matter that people around you know that you follow Jesus?

Students

1. How do we show love to people we don't agree with?
2. Read Romans 12:2. How can you live in the world but not be changed by it?

COLOSSIANS

Jesus restores.



Preschool

1. Have your child identify different items of clothing (ie. shirts, socks, shoes etc.).
2. Read Colossians 3:12-14. What does God say we should clothe ourselves in to show God's love? Pick one characteristic to practice this week with your child. Make it a game to call it out when they do it. (ex: "I see you practicing patience!")

Elementary

1. Read Colossians 3:12-14. How do these verses tell us we should treat others? Which characteristics are easy for you? Hard?
2. What comes to mind when you think about peace? How does Jesus fit that description?

Students

1. Read Colossians 1:16-17. What do these verses tell us about God's involvement in our lives?
2. Name 3 places you feel peace. How could you connect with God in those places?

1 JOHN

Love God. Love Others.

Preschool

1. Name two people who show you love.
2. Name two people you can show love to this week. What can you do to show them you love them?

Elementary

1. Who is someone that makes you feel loved? What do they do that shows they love you?
2. What did Jesus do to show that He loved you?

Students

1. How can you love your family this week? Your classmates? Your friends? Your coaches/teachers?
2. How is God's love different than the love we see in movies or TV shows?



REVELATION

Jesus will make all things right.

Preschool

1. Color a picture of what you think heaven will look like.
2. Read Revelation 21:16. Make a star of your own to remind you that Jesus is coming back someday.



Elementary

1. Close your eyes and think about heaven. What do you picture?
2. We know that Jesus will come back at just the right time. Why is it sometimes hard to wait for God's timing?

Students

1. What is something you hope Jesus makes right?
2. What does it look like to live in the present but have hope for Christ's return in the future?

NOTES

insights. thoughts. sketches. questions.

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows of dots.

