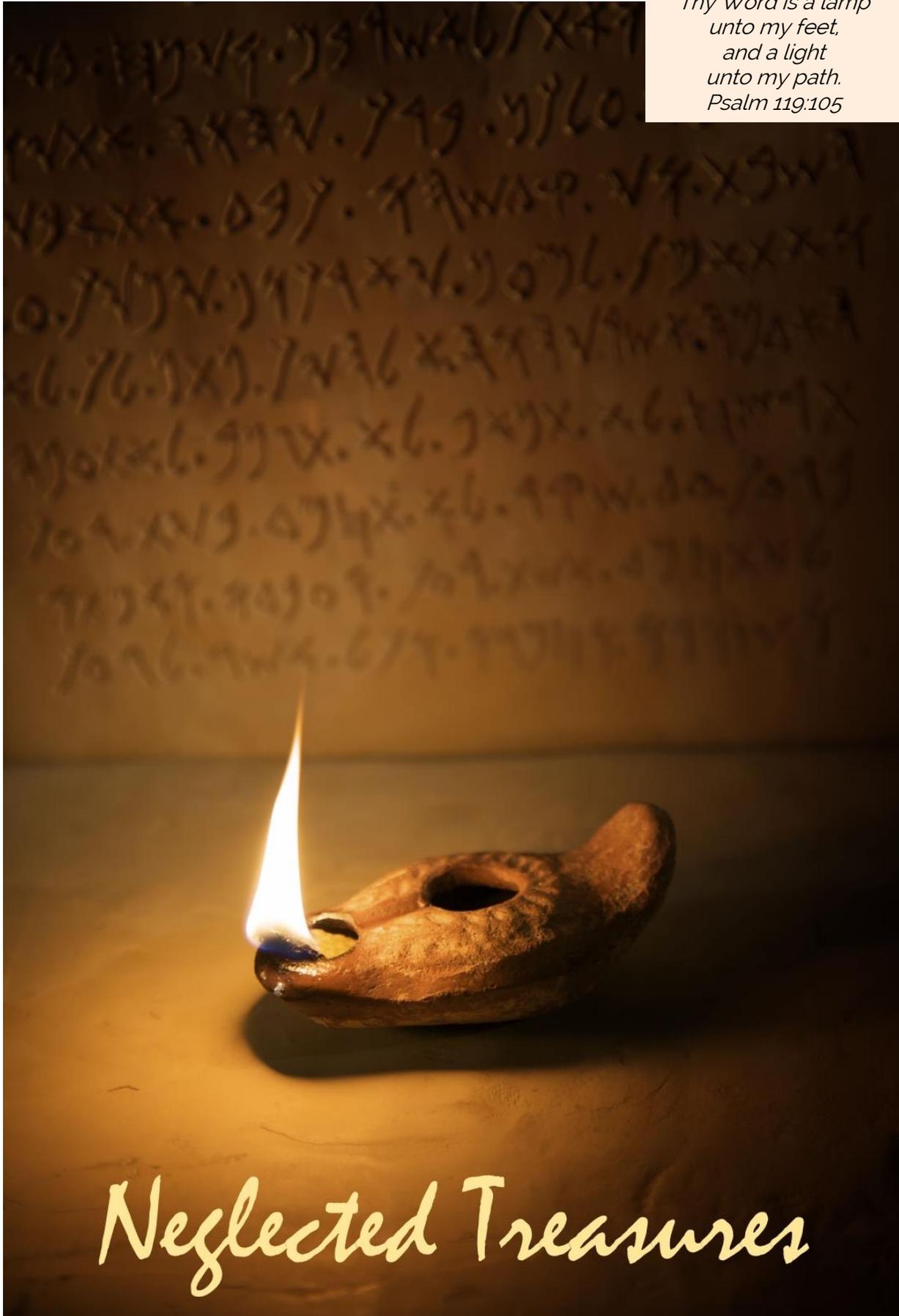


LIFE GROUP CURRICULUM FALL 2018

*Thy Word is a lamp
unto my feet,
and a light
unto my path.
Psalm 119:105*



Neglected Treasures

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON PLANS

EACH LESSON INCLUDES:

- A. **Specific Titles**
- B. **The Focus Text:** Please use these verses as a starting point for your discussion.
- C. **Lesson Summary:** Kelly has included a thorough summary of each topic to help you and your group understand the background and importance of each topic.
- D. **Discussion Time:** These questions are decided to make you think deeply about the verses (head), guide you into considering changes you need to make to align with God's Word (heart) and then challenge you to consider *Joining the Mission* (serving God's kingdom in some way).
 - a) Feel free to re-word these questions or to skip over some of them, if necessary. Kelly is always available during the week to clarify any questions you may have. This would, of course, require some prep ahead of time on your part.
 - b) Heart questions are designed to move our hearts toward changing and becoming what God would have us to be. They may take the most time.
 - c) Tip for *Joining the Mission* questions: prep another member of your group ahead of time, i.e. spouse or apprentice to think about their answer to these questions to get the ball rolling; they are the most important for contributing to the growth of our congregation
- E. **Prayer:** Prayer is a Spiritual Discipline that we all need to grow in more. Change the way that you share prayer with your group. Sometimes it might be a discussion of needs that everyone can take home with them, sometimes one person will pray, sometimes two and sometimes everyone will pray and sometimes it is silent as a group. Alter this from week to week so that prayer is new and enjoyable and a learning experience for everyone.
- F. **Resources and Inspiration:** If you or anyone in your group wants to dive in and understand any of these topics better, we will be/have included some starting points for you to study deeper. These could be anything from blogs to videos to books. We have included a few in this document but ran out of time, so please watch the bulletin and email for weekly inspiration.

ALTERNATE IDEAS FOR GROUPS

We know that some groups only meet every other week. We are providing you with two alternate ideas for a week off, or maybe just a break from the weekly study. Consider trying this once or twice throughout the fall.

- a) *Engage in a service project together as a group.* Darcy and Hope Pawlak have taken a sabbatical from groups for the last two years. They would like to be involved in life groups by encouraging groups to serve together. They can help you host a service project and have lots of ideas of things that can be done. They are also willing to come to discuss and plan with your group ways that you can serve. Some ideas are listed on the next page.
- b) *Participate in a hospitality endeavor.* If you are taking a week off of group, you may want to consider hosting a family from church. Hope can match you up with a family in need of connection and you can take it from there. This can be in any form: dinner out, dinner in, meet for coffee, etc.

PLANNING FOR THE YEAR

We will be kicking off our Fall Launch with group sign up and with a calendar on the back wall that highlights various events and ministries, particularly those ones that we need help with. We appreciate your help and your encouragement for other to participate. There will be some events that won't happen in 2018/2019 without more congregational support, so we are hoping to have a lot of people participating. Please let Hope Pawlak know if your group will be participating in one of these events.

September 9 - Fall Launch

- a) Please bring a plate of goodies (baking/fruit/cheese&crackers) to share. Communicate this to your group as well and encourage them to participate.
- b) Have a look at the events on the back wall, encourage your group to sign up and serve some way this year. Talk to Hope or another staff member if you need clarification on any of the events.

September 20-22 – Clothing Giveaway

We will be hosting our annual clothing giveaway and we need help in two ways:

- a) Setting up on Thursday, September 20, this involves a potluck at 6:00 p.m. and then working until about 8:30. We have a lot of fun and the work load is light. Please consider joining us.
- b) Cleaning up on Saturday, September 22 about 10:30 a.m.

October 7 – Prayer Time // 10:10 a.m. // Auditorium

Have your group join us for a special time of prayer during our Coffee & Muffin Time.

October 7 – Coffee & Muffin Time // 10:00 a.m.

We are looking for people to host these events this year. If your group did one, then we would have 10 people trained in how to do them. Simple and satisfying for everyone!

October 19-21 – PYPA

Prairie Young People's Association (PYPA) is an annual youth conference for churches in Western Canada, with most churches being part of the Restoration Movement (Church of Christ/Christian Church). It is a weekend of worship, fellowship, and time spent learning about God. This year our church will be hosting the conference, from October 19-21. We are in need of billets to host groups of teens from out of town by giving them a place to stay and providing two breakfasts (Saturday and Sunday). Please let us know if you can host by Sept 30.

November 4 – Sign Up for Christmas Gifts for Families and Homeless

Please make your group aware of this great outreach. We will be holding our sign up for a variety of gifts on Sunday, November 4th.

November 23 – SPARK (Grades 4-6) will participate in Operation Shoebox

You are welcome to join SPARK as they pack boxes to send overseas to children in need. These are delivered by mission groups throughout the year and is a great way to infuse a child's world with love and care. Karina Erhardt leads this endeavor and would welcome groups to participate, but please let her (or Hope) know by October 15.

December 8 – Christmas In Marlborough

We will begin planning for this event on October 2, if you or anyone in your group would like to be a part of organizing a portion of this event, please let Hope Pawlak know by September 30.

GROUND RULES

To be discussed in small group:

We would just like to take this opportunity to go over some ground rules that we believe will make our Life Group experience richer.

- **Transparency:** It's difficult to love someone as God called us to do without really knowing them in a deep and meaningful way. We're going to encourage you to share from your heart – to let down your walls, so that others can really know you. This isn't just struggles and fears, but also the positives – dreams, hopes, answered prayers, etc. We understand that's easier for some and we'll respect your boundaries.
- **Confidentiality:** It's very important to maintain the confidence of the group. Maintaining confidences, even in small issues, helps to build trust and will lead to deeper, personal and more meaningful discussions.
- **No Convincing:** Share your opinions – a difference in opinion is welcome. However, please don't try to convince others to your way of thinking.
- **Listen:** Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Hear what's being said – don't be thinking about what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond—really listen. Be aware of how much you are talking – we want to give everyone a chance to share in the group.
- **Pause:** After someone shares, give a pause to allow the group to feel the weight of what was just shared and to fully consider it before the next person shares. This also provides the person sharing with the opportunity to continue with their thought without feeling rushed.
- **Don't Fix:** Let's try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want your advice, they'll ask for it, which gives you permission to offer help. You may also ask for permission to offer advice, but do so with humility and not as one with all the answers.
- **Don't rescue:** When someone is sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and results in their not going as deep as they might have gone. Resist the temptation to rescue people.
- **No "Cross-Talk":** Be considerate of others as they are sharing – don't be having side conversations.
- **Use "I" Statements:** As much as it depends on you, keep your talk about you and Life Groups; it's easy to talk about issues of the church or other people from your group, but for our purposes this weekend, we want you to point the finger back at yourself. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.
- **Self-assess and Self reflect:** It's important that we all use this time to consider where we're at on any given subject or issue and what God would have us do. How am I walking this out in my personal life? How does this affect my ability to lead others? What is my part of the issue and/or solution? What changes does God want me to make?

WHEN STORY IS MORE THAN STORY

The Hebrew Bible is filled with stories, but we would be wise not to think of them just as stories, the way we sometimes do when they become the source of children's Sunday School curriculum. For example, the word "story" doesn't have to be synonymous with the word "fiction." Nor does it have to be equated with simply told, raw history. Old Testament history is *theological history*, told as much to teach us about God, His actions on behalf of humankind, and His will for us as to inform us of Israel's past. And it is important to see that the stories are woven together to form a cohesive narrative about the dealings of God with His people; no biblical story just stands on its own. One of the beautiful things about the cohesiveness of the Old Testament narrative is the repetition of some themes that derive from the stories and teachings. Unfortunately, we sometimes neglect some of these wonderfully rich themes found in the Hebrew Bible, missing the significance these are to have for God's people in every age and location. During the sermon time this fall we will give attention to some of these themes.



*And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1*

GROUP PREPARATION

Make sure that before coming to Life Group your group members have a chance to read Genesis 1 and 2.

DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

STORY

- What goes into defining the expressions "True Story" and "News Story"? Who tells true stories and news stories?
- What is the difference between "story" and "chronological history" or "chronological account"?
- How do you think what you have discussed relates to the expression "Creation Story" or "Old Testament Story"?

GENESIS 1 AND 2

- How does Genesis 1 and 2 strike you as being story and how does it strike you as being chronological history?
- Why do you think the writer of Genesis told the creation stories in the way they are told, as opposed to the stories reading like articles in an encyclopaedia?
- Does it make you nervous when someone suggests that maybe the days in Genesis 1 were not the same as our 24-hour days? Why or why not?
- What do you think are the most important truths to be gained in reading Genesis 1 and 2?

WHAT THE CREATION STORY MEANS FOR US

- What is revealed about God in the creation stories?
- How should the creation stories most impact your day-to-life?
- What should the creation stories have to do with what we often call our "world views"?

PRAYER TIME

HOSPITALITY

Genesis 18:2-8; Genesis 19:1-8; Job 31:29-32; Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Hebrews 13:2

Hospitality in ancient Hebrew culture was far more important than in our current self-focussed society. And for us it should mean more than simply a qualification in the life of those being appointed Shepherds in the church (see I Timothy 3:2). Hospitality includes care, kindness, generosity and respect. It is an act of service and sacrifice that can be fully relational and ministering. It breaks down barriers and brings lives and families together. In the church it is often hospitality that makes for *koinonia*, the special fellowship of sharing that is to characterize God's people.

DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- What exactly is hospitality, considered broadly and not just as having someone for a meal or having them over for coffee?
- What are the attitudes toward strangers shown in the passages read for this session?
- What are the actions taken that are hospitable and humble?
- How does hospitality reflect the character of God?
- Hospitality was clearly a strong feature of ancient culture; what about hospitality should be reflected in our spiritual attitudes today?

Heart

- How do you feel when someone has acted hospitably toward you?
- In what specific ways has God been "hospitable" to you?

JOIN THE MISSION

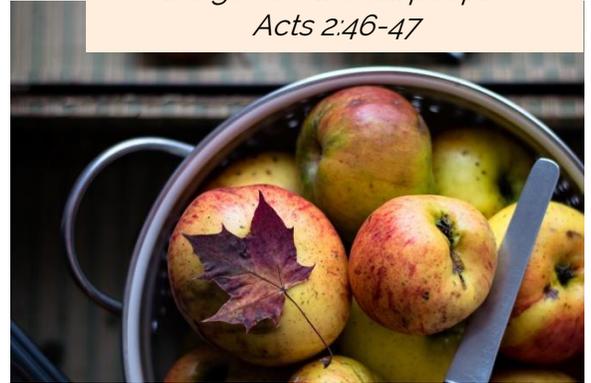
- What would it look like for our church to be "hospitable" to our community?
- What are ways in which you can specifically and intentionally increase your own level of hospitality?
- What are some not so obvious ways in which hospitality should be shown in our lives (beyond having someone for a meal or coffee, although these are certainly acts of hospitality in which we should be engaged)?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION:

Hospitality: - invite someone to your home for lunch after church next Sunday.

They shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all people.
Acts 2:46-47

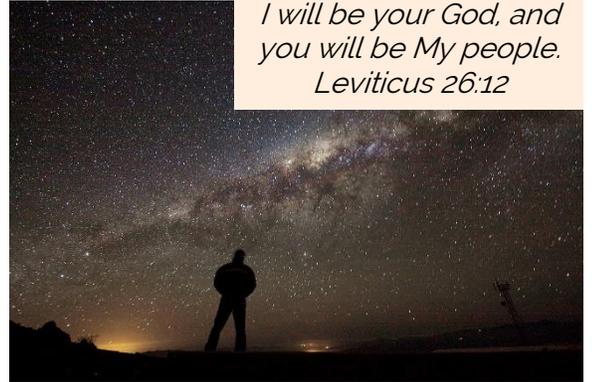


COVENANT/CHOSEN PEOPLE

Genesis 12:1-5; Acts 7:1-5

The choosing of Abraham is certainly more than just the choosing of an individual. When God called forth Abraham, He called forth the creation of a people, a nation, the covenant people of God. This theme recurs throughout the Old Testament, but it is at the beginning of Genesis 12 that the theme is first stated and the direction set for what would ultimately become the union of all peoples under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Here the relationship between God and humankind is established as a relationship of covenant, indicating much about God's relational nature and the kind of relationships in which God desires His children to participate.

*I will walk among you;
I will be your God, and
you will be My people.
Leviticus 26:12*



DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- What do you learn in Acts 7:2 that helps you understand Genesis 12:1?
- What must Abram leave behind when called by God?
- What are the promises God makes to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3?
- What word occurs most often in Genesis 12:2-3; what is significant about this?
- How does Genesis 12:2-3 become the foundation for a covenant relationship between God and Israel?

Heart

- How do the calling and promises made to Abram function as grounding to your faith in Jesus?
- What feelings come over you when you reflect on this calling and these promises?
- How does it make you feel when you see in these promises the frequent mention of blessing?
- How does your response to God's calling of you fit with Abram's response to God's calling to him? How does it not?
- Is there a time when you have had to trust God even when you could not know how things would turn out?

JOIN THE MISSION

- What specific steps can you take to more faithfully respond to God's call upon you to serve Him?
- In what ways should you move in your life so that your faithfulness becomes a blessing and foundation for the faith of others?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Covenant: Bible Project "Covenants" Video -<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/covenants/>

BLESSING

Genesis 1:27-30; Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 27:1-28:1

Sometimes we bless God, which is to bend our knees to Him; to pay Him homage: “Bless the Lord, O My Soul.” But blessings come in many other forms as God blesses nations, God blesses individual people, people bless people, people bless objects or places, or even a certain time period or series of events is said to be blessed by God. Whether it is the passing on of blessing or the state of being blessed, the Old Testament asserts the significance of blessing for God’s people.

Perhaps there is great loss when God’s people, for whatever reason (maybe because we think it makes us look as though we think we have the right or sufficient status to issue blessings?), do not protect and actively apply the act of blessing. To correct this, the gift nature of blessing must be maintained. If we issue a blessing, it is only a gift given by us as a gift we have received, so that blessing ultimately is from God and returns to Him in praise.

I will bless you and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Genesis 12:3



DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- Discuss the definition of blessing; what does it mean to give or receive blessing?
- Who receives and who grants blessing in the passages read for this lesson?
- What elements make up the blessings—what is offered or received?
- What responses to the blessings are made by those who receive them?

Heart

- Where do you see the idea of blessing surface in our culture?
- What connection might or should there be between our relationships with God and blessings that might be extended from one person to another?
- Have you ever received a specially bestowed blessing?
- What benefits might there be in allowing more a place for blessings in the church?
- How would it make you feel if you were to receive a blessing from another Christian?

JOIN THE MISSION

- Can you think of ways in which blessings might be given or received in your life?
- Can you think of ways that our church could effectively implement blessings in its life together?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

SHEKINAH; PRESENCE IN PILLAR OF FIRE AND CLOUD; TABERNACLE/TEMPLE

Exodus 13:20-22; 29:42-46; 33:12-23;

Exodus 40:34-38; Numbers 9:15-23

In the OT God's presence was first seen in the garden, prior to the fall. It is then present throughout the OT as God dwells among His chosen people. There are special times when He is present, as with Moses or in the Tabernacle and Temple. The Ark of the Covenant is a special place of meeting between God and His people, where God would dwell between the Cherubim of the Ark's cover. God is said "to be with" many individuals. Ultimately Jesus is the incarnation of God and is, therefore, present--God with us -- Emmanuel. The Holy Spirit indwelling us is the presence of God in us. "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He shall be their God and they shall be His people." Revelation 21:3. This is actually the definition of heaven.

*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He shall be their God and they shall be His people
Revelation 21:3*



DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- In the Scriptures you read, what forms do you see God making Himself present with His people?
- How do you see His people responding when God is present with them?
- What does it say about God that He wishes to be present with us?
- Why is it important that we have God's presence with us?
- Describe the differences between God's presence with His people under the Old Testament and under the Christian covenant.

Heart

- Can you think of a specific time or a period of time when you were sure God was present with you? What was the impact of His presence?
- How do you feel when you have a moment or a season when you feel like God's presence is with you, perhaps in a special way?
- Have you experienced times when it seemed God was not present? When has this happened, what was it like, how did it make you feel?

JOIN THE MISSION

- It makes sense that Christians should constantly seek God's presence. How does this happen in your spiritual walk?
- What changes of mindset or actions could you take to enhance your recognition of God's presence in your life?
- What should happen in your life to make it so that God's presence has more impact on you?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

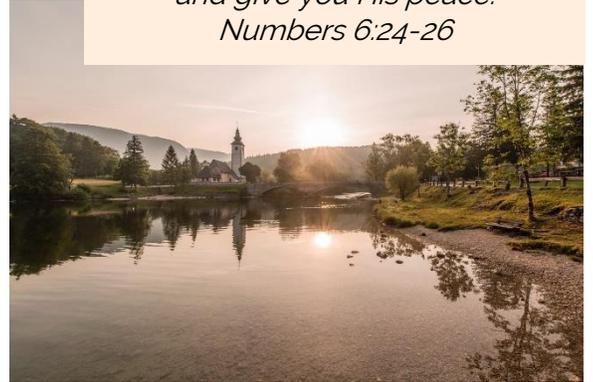
Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

SHALOM

Isaiah 26:1-4; 66:12-13; Philippians 4:4-7; John 14:1-4, 25-27

“Peace, Perfect Peace” we sing. But like so many of the ideas we are discussing in this series, *shalom* means much more than just a simple definition, like “the absence of strife.” There is a wholeness to life that is *shalom*, a residing in God’s presence both as an individual and in a community that constitutes a life of blessedness, where connection with God—experienced constantly—becomes a lifestyle, conforming even our personalities to His will for us. Confidence, assurance, overcoming struggles with graciousness, calmness, wisdom and a whole stream of similar elements will characterize the person who finds fulfillment in the Lord. This, in turn, can be passed on to others through us as they experience our peace and peaceful relating to us. We might even, on behalf of others, extend a greeting and blessing of *shalom* to others, where the peace we know in God and in His presence becomes theirs—a profound benefit those to whom we help bring His *shalom*.

May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you His peace.
Numbers 6:24-26



DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- How would you describe biblical peace as something different from the absence of external strife or the absence of war?
- What are the elements that you think would make for a biblical personal peace; what would need to be in place in one’s life for one to feel this kind of peace?
- To what extent can personal peace be expanded to a community (like a family, church or nation)? How can this happen?
- How should the life of the church reflect God’s peace?
- What is the connection between the Holy Spirit and peace?
- How does the biblical notion of peace connect or not with a pacifist perspective?

Heart

- To what extent do you typically feel God’s overall sense of peace in your life?
- When are you the least peaceful and when the most?
- Have you experienced a time when God gave you a peace that went beyond what we would expect from our circumstances?

JOIN THE MISSION

- What needs to happen in your life for you to experience a deeper personal peace?
- How can you help those around you to experience more or deeper personal peace?
- How should you propagate peace within our church?
- How should you propagate peace in our world?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Shalom: Bible Project "Shalom/Peace" Video - <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/>

HESED

Lament. 3:19-23; Psalm 13; 57:9-11; 103:8-11; 136:1-26

Hesed refers to the steadfast love of the Lord. *Hesed* occurs in the OT over 200 times. It is consistent, reliable allegiance that becomes the key word that assures Israel of God's perpetual, eternal care of His people. The concept is closely related to covenant promises, so that there is an obligatory bond of commitment and care that extends from God to Israel as a nation and to individuals. Often His *Hesed* is stressed at times when it is all but intuitive that God still loves His people. In such cases, it is their knowledge of *Hesed* that carries Israel forward and gives them hope, when anything but hope would be expected. Ultimately *Hesed* is shown in the Incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ, so that the church becomes a recipient of God's *Hesed* to an extent that matches God's care for Israel. The cross is itself the great means, guarantee, and fulfillment of God's *Hesed* expressed to humankind.

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.
Lamentations 3:22*



DISCUSSION TIME

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- What is the context for Lamentations 3:19-23?
- Why would the Psalms, in particular, convey so much of God's steadfast love, as opposed to other books?
- When you think of God's interaction with Israel, cite ways in which His steadfast love is seen in His mighty deeds.

Heart

- How does the fact that God holds for you and His people steadfast love shape your thinking about who He is? About who you are?
- Have you always or ever thought of God more as a great lover of humankind or more as a judge? If this has changed for you, what caused the change? When did the change take place? Describe what actually changed in your thinking.
- If you have always thought of God more as a lover of humankind than a judge, how did the idea of God as the great become part of your perspective? Were you taught this?
- To what extent do you think your life reflects God's steadfast love in the way you relate to others?

JOIN THE MISSION

- If you have not been greatly impacted by the steadfast love of God for you, how should this great love change your relationship with God?
- What are attitudinal changes or actions you could take that would enable you to show a God-like steadfast love to others?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Hesed: Bible Project "Agape/Love" Video - <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/agape-love/>

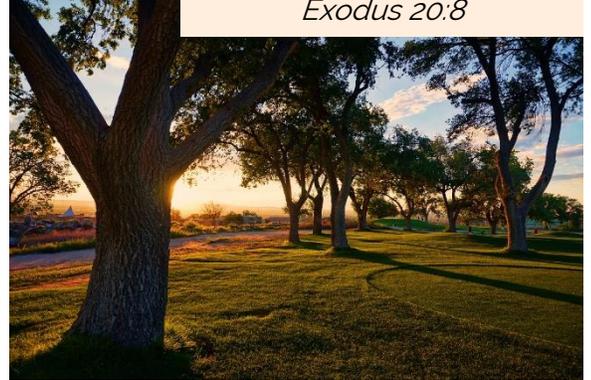
SABBATH

Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Colossians 2:16-17

The idea of Sabbath rest is, of course, found at the very beginning of the creation process as God sets aside the seventh day. And Sabbath is even integrated into the Ten Commandments. But Sabbath is certainly more than just a day on which work is not to be done, a holy day. Sabbath is any period or season of reflection where God and our relationship to Him is the focus. This doesn't have to be a specific "daily quiet time" as much as "God consciousness"; intentional notice, acknowledgement, appreciation, a dwelling with God in His presence. It may or may not include actual resting and quiet, but it needs to include moments when nothing distracts us from recognizing that we

are in the presence of God. Of course, given the nature of our new covenant with God through Jesus, this kind of "Sabbath" can come at any time, and even all the time, so that in Christ there is a sense in which we simply live out a life of Sabbath devotion to God. Life is in one sense a series or entire season of Sabbaths, so that Sabbath keeping is for Christians not the keeping of a commandment on a specific day, but is the offering of our lives to God, with special moments appropriately included where God is our consuming focus.

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Exodus 20:8*



DISCUSSION TIME

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- It makes sense that God did not need to rest after creating because He was tired. So why did He rest, which seems to be quite an intentional act on God's part?
- Why do you think God created and commanded a day of rest; why was this so important to Him? How do you know the Sabbath day of rest was important to God?
- What do you think a Sabbath day was meant to look like for ancient Hebrews?
- Why do you think that the New Covenant does not accentuate the keeping of a Sabbath Day?
- What is the specific relationship between Jesus and the coming of Jesus and the Sabbath day? How is Sabbath impacted by the mission and ministry of Jesus?
- For us, is Sabbath more action or more attitude?

Heart

- If Sabbath keeping is more of an action, what should that look like for us?
- If Sabbath keeping is more of an attitude, what should that look like for us?
- How does it make you feel to know that God intended Sabbath for your good?

JOIN THE MISSION

- How do you think God wants you to participate in some form of a Sabbath rest?
- What choices do you need to make, actions you need to take, or attitudes you need to hold in order to appropriately apply Sabbath in your own life?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

GOD'S CARE FOR WIDOWS/ORPHANS/ALIENS

Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:1-15; Job 31:16-23; Psalm 146

The Hebrew people were created when a wandering Aramaean was called by God into special covenant relationship. And often, it seems, God shows special care to those without status, without means, for whom He can be a Father and caregiver. There is in this a call and challenge for God's people to mimic God's care for those "who are not." In fact, bringing the presence of God's reign (His Kingdom) into the world around us, especially to those in our society who are disadvantaged, seems to be one of the things God most wants from His people.

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen...to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them?
Isaiah 58:6-7*



DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- Where do you see in this week's Bible sections God's concern for the widows, orphans, and aliens?
- What are some of the specific provisions God makes for the poor and oppressed?
- What does this tell you about God and what He wants for us?

Heart

- What elements in our society do you think make it hard for us to as easily respond to the widows, orphans, aliens, poor, and the oppressed as we should, if this is the case?
- How do you think non-Christians feel about Christian treatment of the widows, orphans, aliens, poor, and the oppressed?
- How do these passages make you feel about your treatment of those "on the outside"?

JOIN THE MISSION

- In what places in our society is there room for our church to enhance our treatment of widows, orphans, aliens, the poor, and the oppressed? Do you think any of this applies to our treatment of people in the LGBTQ community, and if so, or if not, how or how not?
- What steps can you take to be more diligent about your personal response to the widows, orphans, aliens, poor, and the oppressed of our community?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Read the Bible book of Ruth or the story of Ruth as told by Francine Rivers.

EXODUS/LIBERATION

Exodus 12:31-42; 13:14-14:31

The exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt is one of the key events in Israel's history. After the initial event, throughout the remainder of biblical history and beyond liberation, salvation, protection, security, election, direction, and God's presence and power have been central motifs in God's relationship with His children, and all of these are found in the Exodus story. How do these themes speak not only to our individual relationships with God, but how do they repeatedly appear in the life of the church, not only in its history but in the church's current efforts to reveal God and His Kingdom to a world that badly needs an exodus from its own circumstances?

*Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the
Lord is, there is freedom.
2 Corinthians 3:17*



DISCUSSION TIME

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- What do you think are the most significant historical events in the Exodus story?
- What are the events in the story that tell us the most about the character of God?
- Where do you see faith and lack of faith in the Exodus story?
- Draw out as many places as you can where you think the Exodus story in the life of God's people parallels the liberation we receive through Christ.

Heart

- How does the entirety of the Exodus story make you feel about God and His efforts towards Israel?
- Are there any questions about the Exodus story that plague you (pun partially intended)?
- Are there feelings that arise in you when you think about serving a God who killed the firstborn of the Egyptians in the way He did?
- To what extent do you feel the liberation of Christ in your life?
- How does this story lead or influence your thinking or your emotional response when you think of the liberation you have received in Jesus?

JOIN THE MISSION

- How should the Exodus story impact your efforts to help bring about the liberation of others from their forms of bondage? What might these forms of bondage be?
- What are steps you could take in your own life to increase your level of liberation from any of the ways that sin keeps you in bondage?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

JUBILEE

Leviticus 25:8-55; Isaiah 49:8-9; 61:1-2; Luke 4:19

Because Israel had been liberated from slavery at the original Exodus, there was not to be perpetual indentured service within Israel, and the Jubilee made sure this was the case. Each fiftieth year was to be a time when all land that had been taken from a family, for whatever reason, was to be returned to them. Hence the fiftieth year was a year of great joy, especially for the impoverished. They could perpetually be neither indentured servants nor landless. Theologically the Jubilee is described as a feature of the appearance of the Messiah, so that Jesus in Luke 4:18ff. describes His coming as a time of Jubilee. The grace of God toward all humankind in Christ runs parallel to the Jubilee. Here there is also found a social/economic ideal indicating God's desire for mercy and fairness to be extended to all. It is interesting that specific mention of an actual Jubilee taking place is not found in the Bible, so that it seems to be a condition that is unfulfilled until Jesus comes to fulfill it with the coming of His Kingdom.

*Sound a ram's horn all through the land...it shall be a jubilee for you!
Leviticus 25*



DISCUSSION TIME

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- What are the elements of the Year of Jubilee that were so wonderful for Israel?
- What places in Leviticus 25 explain why God implemented a Year of Jubilee?
- What does the Year of Jubilee indicate about God's compassion and priorities?
- How does the whole idea of Jubilee find expression in Luke 4:18-21?

Heart

- What are some of the key emotions the poor might experience in the midst of the Year of Jubilee?
- How do you think Hebrew slave owners and those who have taken the lands of others would emotionally respond to the Year of Jubilee? How should they respond?
- Explain how you feel when you read the incident in Luke 4:14-21.

JOIN THE MISSION

- In what ways does the liberation Christ offers human beings need additionally to be exemplified in your Christian walk?
- How should the impact of "the year of the Lord's favour" impact our church's ministry?
- In what ways is the liberation that God offers the world through Christ most needed and applicable in our community?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

WORSHIP

Exodus 25-30; I Samuel 15:22-23; Isaiah 1:11-19; Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 51:15-19; Hosea 6:6; John 4:19-24; Romans 12:1-2

At first glance, worship within Israel appears to be almost entirely ritualistic and legislated. The intricate descriptions of implements for worship and the tasks of the priests, Levites, and those who bring sacrifices lends to Old Testament worship a formalness and rigidity that looks externally motivated and without the involvement of the heart and spirit. But this is far from the case, as passages like Micah 6:6-8 and numerous Psalms indicate. Worship to Yahweh was intended even in the OT as an expression of the covenant relationship God wishes to have with His people, so that worshipping in spirit and truth was possible then and in the age following Jesus, wherever one worships with a heart filled with devotion and God's presence.

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8



DISCUSSION TIME

After more or less just glancing at Exodus 25-30 and talking about typical Old Testament worship, read the other sections of Scripture given for this session.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- Discuss the elements that make up worship under the Mosaic Law.
- How does what is expressed in the passages read for this session differ from how we usually think of Old Testament worship?
- What are the historical circumstances that stand behind the passages reflecting what we might call "heart worship"?
- In Churches of Christ we have historically discussed "five acts of Christian worship." How does framing Christian worship in these terms fit with what you see in the Bible regarding worship?

• **Heart**

- What is the relationship between intentionally planned times for worship and the worship you offer to God on a moment by moment basis?
- Describe the circumstances during which worship for you is most meaningful.
- What is the difference in how you feel when you have worshipped well and when you have gone through the motions?
- What about the worship you see in others positively impacts you the most?

JOIN THE MISSION

- What steps can you take to make your worship to God more meaningful and impactful for you, for others around you who experience worship with you, and for God?
- How does our church need to alter its Sunday morning worship practices to make them more meaningful for you?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

WISDOM

Proverbs 2-3, 8

In the Old Testament, and certainly in the Wisdom Literature, Wisdom plays a significant role in the spirituality of Israel. In fact, Wisdom is at places personified as a presence given to His people by God, a kind of intermediary between God and those to whom He extends grace. Because of this, many have seen in Wisdom a precursor to the incarnation of Jesus, even in some cases identifying Wisdom with the second person of the Trinity. In this way, Wisdom is compared to God's Word, so that Wisdom and Word are in some minds joined closely together. To seek God's Wisdom is to seek His Word, and vice versa. No matter what connections one draws along these lines, receiving Wisdom places one near to the heart of God, and to stand far from God is the height of folly.

Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment. Proverbs 8:7



DISCUSSION TIME

There are no right and wrong answers to the questions asked below, these are asked to help us explore ideas.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

Head

- Define wisdom.
- How would you separate spiritual wisdom from worldly wisdom?
- What are the ways in which wisdom is gained; what attitudes, perspectives, and decisions lead to wisdom and are, in fact, wise?
- What are benefits of wisdom found in Proverbs 2-3, 8?
- Define wisdom in a way that reflects faith in Jesus and the coming of the Spirit into your life. How might the definition of wisdom be changed from what we see in the Old Testament for one who has faith in Jesus?

Heart

- What does it feel like on the inside when you have acted or spoken foolishly?
- What does it feel like on the inside when you have acted or spoken in ways you think reflected wisdom?
- Describe a time when you experienced someone acting with spiritual wisdom.

JOIN THE MISSION

- What needs to happen in your life for you to gain in wisdom?
- What steps should our church take to encourage and propagate wisdom among us?

PRAYER TIME

RESOURCE / INSPIRATION

Watch the bulletin and weekly email this week for ideas!

MISSIONS SUNDAY

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-5

It is expected that on this day Jay Don and Mary Lee Rogers will make their annual visit to Calgary and will share with us about their work in the Ukraine.

DISCUSSION TIME

This week's Life Group discussion should include an overview of the Missions efforts in which our church is involved.

DEVELOP YOUR FAITH / JOIN THE MISSION

- After a careful reading of the passages for this session, what do you think are the key elements that make effective world missions possible?
- In what ways do you think our church carries out what is called for by these passages?
- In what ways do you think our church fails to carry out what is called for by these passages?
- In what ways do you think you personally do or don't carry out what is called for in these passages?
- There is a waning of interest in world missions in Churches of Christ; why do you think this might be?
- What, if anything, sets apart those who participate in foreign missions by travelling to foreign lands, from those who carry out the Christian mission in our own community?
- Have you ever been or considered being a missionary to a foreign land?
- To what extent are you personally a domestic missionary in your own community?
- What attitudinal changes need to take place in our church and in you for the Christian mission to receive more of our intentional attention and effort, especially in our own context

*I'll be with you
as you do this,
day after day.
Matthew 18:20*

