

2025 Series Guide



January 5, 12, 19, & 26: FAQ: Frequently Avoided Questions

Be honest. There are questions about faith, God and the Bible that you have avoided for years. Questions you've never been given permission to ask or are scared to voice out loud. At Calvary, we believe there's no better place for our questions than church.

- **January 5: Is Christianity just a crutch?** (1 Corinthians 15:12-19) Some people claim that Christianity is a crutch. In one sense, they're right. In this message we'll share how, for broken people like us, it's crazy not to lean on Christ and live in complete reliance upon His mercy. If Jesus is the Son of God and He has come down to meet my needs, then it'd be utterly foolish for me to try to live without that crutch.
- **January 12: Is it ok to doubt?** (Matthew 28:16-17, or John 20:24-29) Paul Tillich said: *The opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty. Certainty is missing the point entirely.* It's easy to think of doubt as a sign of weak faith. But it's not. God isn't afraid of our doubts, so we don't have to be either. Doubt can actually build our faith. Oswald Chambers once said, *"Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong; it may be a sign that he is thinking"*. Your doubts don't disqualify your faith.
- **January 19: Must I choose between faith and science?** (Psalm 8:3-8) Can I believe in science and be a Christian? Are science and Christianity rivals? We're led to think you either believe in evolution OR the story of creation as found in the Bible. You're either for or against genetic engineering. Recognize Global Warming or not. For Immunizations or not. There's this rivalry that's been going on, but Christianity and Science haven't always been seen as rivals. In

fact, just a few 100 years after the death of Jesus, St. Augustine wrote these words: "The perceived conflict between science and faith comes from a misunderstanding of science and a misinterpreting of the Bible." When Johann Kepler - who discovered laws of planetary motion - reflected on his work as a scientist, he said I'm simply "thinking God's thoughts after him." Science is a gift that allows us to see the depth and breadth of God's love.

- **January 26 Is the Bible reliable?** (Psalm 119:105) Critics of the Bible often contend: How can you be sure the Bible is the same now as when it was written, given that it's been copied and translated so many times? Historians and scientists have uncovered contradictions, inaccuracies and errors. Are they right? Is it outdated, inauthentic, and full of scientific and historical errors as so many assert? In short, Can we trust the Bible? How Reliable Is The Bible? Infallible, Inerrant, Or Neither?

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, you welcome our questions, you welcome our doubt. Guide us to further understanding of your work in the world. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

Generous Savior, as winter chills us, you send your light, your son into the world. Guide us to listen to your voice above the others voices in our world. Lord in your mercy,

Beautiful God, you gift us with all kinds of good things. Use our gift of discernment to figure out where we can help each other, where we can serve our neighbors, offer a kind smile, a gentle helping hand, or just companionship. Lord in your mercy,

Wonderful Counselor, you see the things going on in our lives and in the lives of our friends and family. As we worry and fret, take those worries into prayers. Prayers for those who are hurting, depressed, lonely, or lost. Lord in your mercy,

Prince of Peace, there's pain in the world. Division, Conflict, War, Trials, guide us to be people who build bridges between each other rather than dividing walls. Use us to be peace makers in the world. Lord in your mercy,

Finally God, you know what's on our heart today, the things we've told others and the things we've kept to ourselves, you see it all. We thank you for carrying the burdens we've held onto for too long. In your son's name. Amen.



February 2, 9, 16, 23 & March 2: How Faith Grows

While we all know what it means to grow up physically, we don't always know what it looks like to grow spiritually? How do I know if I'm growing? What leads to spiritual growth? What gets in the way? We will work through those questions as we explore how we grow faith together

- February 2: An Unshakable Group.** (James 5:16, Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 6:1-2) You can't tell your life story without referencing people who played significant roles along the way, right? The same is true of your faith story. Following Jesus is complicated. We all need help figuring it out and sticking with it. The role of relationships is key in the development of our faith. We all want to be known for something. What we really need is to be known *by someone*.
- February 9: Practice Makes Progress.** (Matthew 6:1-6) God leverages our faith practices - things like worship, reading Bible, prayer and generosity - to grow our confidence in God. We'll explore how Jesus fleshes this out in his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount.
- February 16: Ask Big Questions.** Key to an alive and vibrant faith are questions. In the Jewish faith of Jesus, questions were critical. If you were to follow Jesus around, you would find he was always asking questions. Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" In other places, he's asking questions like, "Who do you say that I am?" & "Why are you so afraid?" He asks the blind beggar, "What do you want me to do for you?"
- February 23: Put Faith in Action.** (Matthew 14:13-33) If you have ever volunteered to do something for which you felt totally unqualified, then you already know what an experience like that can do for your faith. One of the primary ways God grows our faith is through those times when we explore

personal ministry - when we serve. We will explore the relationship between our faith and our service to others.

- **March 2: Pivotal Seasons.** (John 11:1-45) Life is full of surprises and milestones—some good, some not so good. But each season - expected or unexpected - that comes our way is actually an opportunity. We'll explore the role that pivotal circumstances and seasons play in the development of our confidence in God.

Prayer of the Day: Wonderful God, you didn't make faith to be still, guide us, to ask questions, and put our faith into action, and to grow. Amen.

Prayer of the church:

Good God, Thank you for using today to water our tree of faith. To root and ground us in your love and your ways. Lord in your mercy,

Lord Jesus, you encourage us to become people who work for the good of others. People who set aside our own egos to pay attention to the needs of our community. Encourage us, nudge us, guide us to serve. Lord in your mercy,

Prince of Peace, guide us to be advocates and peacemakers in our community. Where there is conflict, help us to be resolution makers. Where there is war, help us to create treaties. Where the marginalized are taken advantage of, help us to be bridge makers, Lord in your mercy,

Mighty God, Give us a spirit of gentleness as we care for those in our church, our community, and our world who are hurting. You know the people we worry about and the stresses we carry. Come close in struggle, Lord in your mercy,

Wonderful Spirit, We pray for all those who are suffering from depression, anxiety, mental health crises, grief, loneliness, despair. Be with them and those who care for them. In your son's name, Amen.



March 5 (Ash Wednesday), 9, 16, 23, 30, & April 6: Wonder Bread

The word "bread" appears 81 times in the New Testament - Jesus multiplied bread in the feeding of the 5,000, uses bread as a symbol for his body at the Last Supper, and even refers to himself as the "Bread of Life." It's a symbol that helps us envision the world Jesus came to create and it's that world we'll wonder about during this series.

3/9 - When there's not enough / Matthew 14:13-21

There's only one miracle mentioned in all four gospels. Which is like God putting up a big sign saying "Pay attention! I'm showing you something here." We live in a culture where we feel like we're lacking. Like there's only so much to go around, so much time, so much energy, so much money. When we're worried about not having enough, we hoard. We hold onto what we have because we fear for the future. On top of that, we're sold a narrative that we need more (time/money/energy) to be satisfied, in order to be enough.

Jesus is surrounded by a multitude of who has followed him into the wilderness as he's teaching. As evening started to settle in the disciples gathered around him, they began to panic. Philip turned to Jesus and told him to send the people away so they could go get dinner. Jesus looks at him and says, "You give them something to eat." In each gospel, there's the command, you give them something to eat. Philip looks at Jesus and his lacking kicks in, he believes there's no way they could feed this amount of people. Jesus pushes Philip a little more. The disciples scan the crowd and all they can come up with is a small boy who offers his barley loaves and his fish. Jesus multiplies the bread and ends up feeding, probably close to 20,000 people (if you include the women and children). Reminding us that there's more than enough.

3/16 - **Necessary ingredients / Matthew 4:1-11**

In order to make any recipe you need the right ingredients. For bread, you need flour, yeast, water, salt, and oil. If you're making sourdough, you need to grow your starter before adding it to your bread. If you want to take your bread to another level, you can make it sweet by adding cinnamon, maybe some sugar. Or if you prefer savory, tomatoes, onions, and basil. We keep adding on, bread isn't just bread, it's challah, bagels, focaccia, baguettes, biscuits, buns, rolls, croissants, ciabatta, brioche.

In our lives we keep thinking we need to add something (to do a +1) in order to make it better. We add piety or a diet, adding money or a winning sports team. In the gospel of Matthew, the devil tempts Jesus by trying to get him to add a +1 in order to have the necessary ingredients for life. First, the devil tempts Jesus with caring for his own needs instead of trusting that God's got his best interests in mind. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy, saying, It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' The Devil then tempts Jesus with power and wealth. Jesus teaches us that we already have the necessary ingredients for life. We don't need to add anything.

3/23 - **Are you hungry?**

When my kids were little one of their favorite books was "The Very Hungry Caterpillar". They loved as the caterpillar ate his way through the book. He munched on Monday: one apple, then on Tuesday: 2 pears, Wednesday: 3 plums, Thursday: 4 strawberries. He continued on gaining more and more weight, before his big transformation into a (spoiler alert) butterfly!

My high school son lifts four days a week in the mornings, in the afternoons he has six days a week of ski practice. He pushes himself to the point where when he comes home, he eats one apple, two protein shakes, three snacks, four eggs... and on and on. He's getting as the kids call it, 'the gains'.

Let's be real, we're hungry too. As we grow and transform ourselves, we keep seeking more to fill ourselves. One house, two kids, three cars, four side by sides... and on and on.

Back in Jesus day, the same people who Jesus fed when he fed the 5000+ went to find him so they could get a piece of his miracle working. They asked Jesus, *"What must we do to do the works God requires?"* Jesus answered, *"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."* So they asked him, *"What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

Can you imagine Jesus' reaction? He just fed the whole crowd and now they want a sign? They're hungry, but not for what Jesus came for but for "the gains" of this world.

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Want a transformation? What are you hungry for? Jesus is 'the gains'.

3/30 - Our Daily Bread

There's a story about an orphanage during World War Two: As the war drew to a close, the Allies created facilities for children who were orphaned as part of the combat's toll. Though they were safe and well-nourished, the children were unable to sleep at night. Those working with the children consulted a psychologist. He encouraged the caregivers to place a piece of bread in each child's hand as they went to bed at night. The orphanage staff balked, "But we feed the children well and do not send them to bed hungry!"

The psychologist explained that after the destructive trauma these children had experienced, they were inclined to worry about tomorrow. If they could be assured there was still food left for the next day, they would have peace enough to let slumber come. It turns out, he was right. Once assured they'd have their daily bread, the children relaxed and slept soundly.

When my mom died I got one of her rings. As I wear it around, I remember her, her laugh, her goofiness, her persistence, her listening ability. Wearing it makes me feel close to her, even though she's been gone for years. When we lose people in our lives, many of us do something to mark that loss. We wear a necklace, we plant a tree, we put up a gravestone, we do something to be reminded of the person. It gives us a sense of peace in feeling like they're close by.

Jesus, knowing that he was going to die, ate one final meal with his disciples. He sat around the passover table with them and took the most basic thing, bread. He held it up and said, "This is my body given for you." The disciples didn't even get what he was saying. After Jesus died the next day, I'm sure they looked at the bread and every time, were reminded of Jesus. But can you imagine after he was resurrected? What that little piece of bread reminded them of? They could relax and sleep soundly. God was with them, part of them, and all around them.

Guess what? The same is true for us.

Great quotes and excerpts to possibly use from this [book](#).

4/6 - **Surprised by Jesus**

When I was a kid I loved when we had special occasions at our house because my mom would make my favorite **“Champagne salad”**. As a kid it sounded like super fancy. Champagne salad. But I learned it didn’t actually have any champagne and didn’t actually have any salad. I looked up the recipe recently. It was basically cool whip, cream cheese, and frozen fruit like strawberries and bananas. Yeah, not a salad at all. (Thanks Midwest)

But then my mom would take this all mixed together and she would put it a bundt pan and freeze it. When we had a special occasion, like family coming over, for a birthday or Thanksgiving or Christmas she’d let it sit out for a minute to thaw enough and then flip it over onto a plate to serve. Champagne salad. And I loved it. It was my favorite, I knew it was something she made for me. I knew something special was happening when we had Champagne salad. And if I have a bite of it now, or even the smell of it now, It’s like all those memories of all those special occasions come back to me.

Food and smells have this ability to do this to us. These rituals marked with food that remind us of the past of a time remembered. Maybe for you it’s the smell of a pie that your grandma used to make at Thanksgiving, or the wings you eat together while watching the Vikings. It’s the glass of wine that reminds you of a vacation you took or the ice cream that reminds you of ... well probably yesterday’s ice cream. :) Food does this... it has the ability to transport us, to remind us, to capture us, to satisfy us.

After Jesus died and was resurrected, a couple walked down the road to Emmaus. They were troubled and upset about all the gossip going around Jerusalem. There was this guy Jesus, who was crucified, but then his friends claimed he was resurrected from the dead. What crazy headlines. They didn’t know what to believe. They met a man on the road who ‘claimed’ to not know what was going on as they told him the gossip. As he heard it, he unpacked all that he knew from the Jewish scriptures and how all of this ‘gossip’ actually made sense. How everything that Jesus had said was actually part of a bigger plan. The couple got excited and invited this man into their home for dinner. At dinner, the man (Jesus) picked up the bread and broke it, just like he had on the last supper. They were transported, reminded, captured, by the truth in the story and came to realize it was actually the truth.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, Bread of life. Come to us this lenten season and sustain us with your love and grace. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

Generous God, Sometimes we focus on the wrong things. We think about where we lack, what's scarce in our lives, we focus on the things we want. Help us reflect, during this lenten season, not on what we lack, but on the abundance that you've given us. Lord in your mercy,

Holy Spirit, we thank you for advocating on our behalf. For lifting up in prayer the words we cannot mutter because we're in pain, grief, denial, or that the tears are falling too hard. Guide us to care for others. Lord in your mercy,

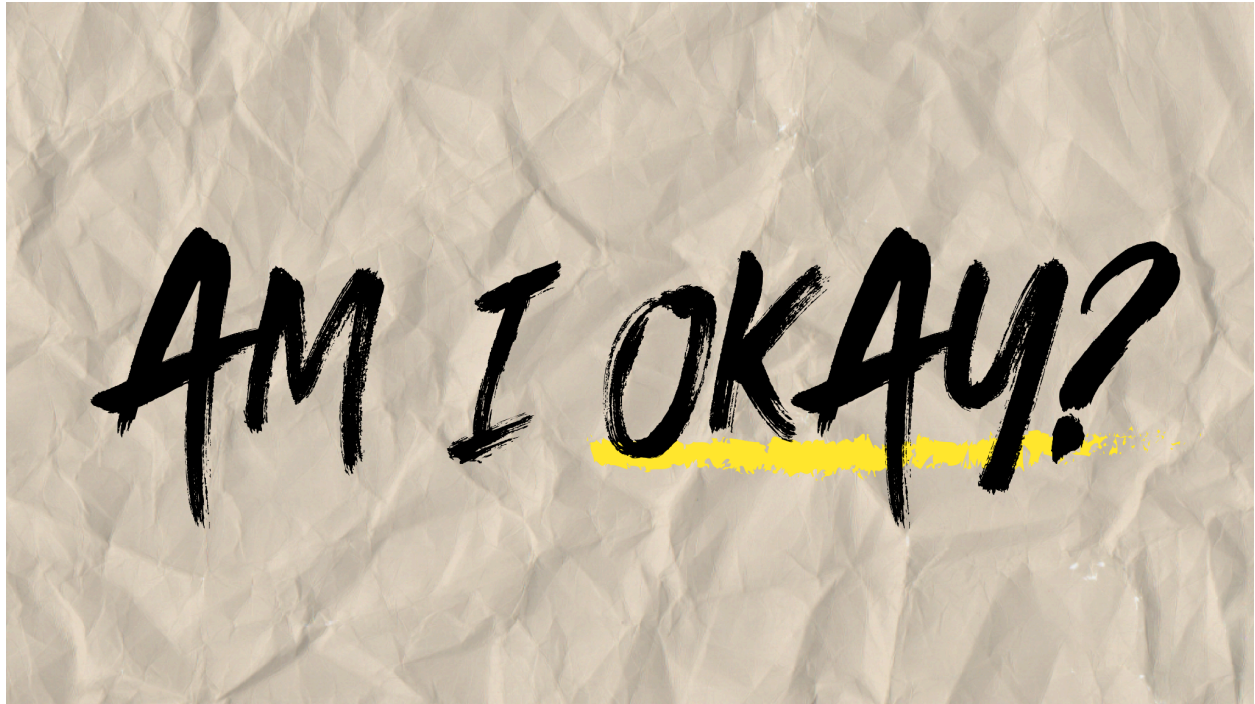
Gracious Jesus, be with those who go without. Those who are without food, shelter, safety. Those who fear and worry about how they'll get through the day. Use us as your ambassadors for care of the world. Lord in your mercy,

Wonderful Counselor, guide us to be peacemakers. Give us courage and wisdom to speak up when we see injustice. Give us patience and serenity when we should listen. Help us to discern your work and your will in the world. Lord in your mercy,

Finally God, there are people in our lives who are hurting, you know who they are. Be with them as we say their names silently, help us to care effectively. In your son's name, Amen.

April 13: Palm Sunday

April 20: Easter



April 27, May 4, 11, & 18: Am I okay?

Too often, churches gather and talk about just the cute things in life, instead of talking about reality and the things we struggle with every single day. At Calvary, we want to hold the Bible in one hand and the needs of people in the other. This series is designed to serve that purpose. Far too often we're led to believe that everything in life should be grand, and "up and to the right" and so we put on this facade that says, "Everything is great!" while on the inside something else is going on. Countless numbers of us struggle with mental health challenges and relational wounds from our past. Maybe you. 84% of Gen Z report burnout. 75 – 90% of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related problems. 19% of U.S. adults experience an anxiety disorder in a given year. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health challenge affecting 40 million U.S. adults.

Churches too often talk about just the cute things in life, while ignoring reality and the things we struggle with every single day as though everything in life is grand, and "up and to the right." We want to be a church that holds the Bible in one hand and the real challenges we face in the other - the things that cause us to ask: "Am I okay?"

- **April 27: Scars (Trauma)** / (Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 8, 11:23-28, 12:8-10, Psalm 34:18) The majority of us have endured some relational trials, wounds or abuse. And, maybe you've never thought of it this way, but those experiences possibly from your childhood have lingering effects, which is called "trauma." When we experience trauma it leaves scars. Trauma is a response to a deeply disturbing or distressing event. Trauma can be physical, but the wound you can't see hurt as much as those you can see. Sadly, Christians throw Bible verses like (Romans 8:28). Not helpful, but well intentioned. I grew up in North Dakota where if you got hurt, "Just buck up. Just walk it off. Just get over it." Not helpful. There are 3 types of scars/trauma: 1) *Acute*: response from a

one-time event (complicated birth, lose business, raped) 2) *chronic*: a longterm response from prolonged or repeated events (bullied throughout school, sexual, abused, home never felt safe, racism) 3) *Complex*: a response to multiple and ongoing events (raised in a home or marriage where there's a combination - chemical abuse, physical, sexual...) These events change us. They leave scars. [Share your own story of trauma and its effects - how it changes you] Effects: fear of not having enough, lack of trust, control, etc. Paul was killing Christians and a light from heaven knocked him to the ground, and Paul blinded for three days and became a Christian. Everywhere Paul went, people were trying to kill him. Trauma. How do we heal? 1) *Process the pain of our trauma*. In order to process, we have to acknowledge it first. "I have been abused. I was raped. I was abandoned." *Instead of seeking connection, we prioritize protection*. We push people away. The problem is... *We don't heal in isolation. We heal best in community*. Why groups are so important. In isolation, we go to work, alcohol, drugs. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) Paul is processing his pain here. 39 lashes? It was well-known you wouldn't die at 39. (2 Corinthians 1:8) This is how trauma can make us feel - how Paul felt. He's talking about it and processing it. We don't heal when we ignore it. 2) *We prayerfully press into God with our trauma*. We take it to God. Paul had a "thorn" - something that tormented us. Some of you are sitting by your thorn (12:8) Paul begged God to take his thorn from him. You can be totally honest with God. Cast all your burdens on God. How did God respond? (12:9) Paul's response (12:10) - I take it to God. Even if God doesn't take it away, this is what I need. *Nothing can change your past. But God can heal your broken heart*. (Psalm 34:18) 3) At some point on the other side - maybe you are here yet, but on the other side you won't be just healed, but so strong that: *We pursue purpose in the trauma*. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) God comforts us so that one day we can comfort someone else. [Share own story - I've been hurt too. Have had to recover from it. I know your story - I'm just not okay. If not ok, it's because you are not ok. It's why "you are not you" these days. I'm with you.]

- May 4: Anxiety** (Matthew 6:28-31, Luke 10:38-40, Luke 22:39-44) Anxiety is like the check engine light on the dash of your car. It alerts you to the fact that something's not right. The problem is when I'm always stressed, I'm always worried, I'm always overwhelmed. Anxiety is the most common mental health concern in the U.S. - 61% of Americans struggle with some level of anxiety. Typically we respond in one of two ways: "all medicine" or "all spiritual." What if the truth is somewhere in the middle? What if God gave us both to address our anxiety? See your counselor and/or doctor - they are a gift from God - and today we're going to address the spiritual. In Matthew 6, Jesus invites us to: 1) *Look outside ourselves*. We can get consumed by this tornado of voices inside us. Jesus says, "Look at the birds and the flowers. They do nothing, but look at them." One of the greatest sources of peace is to go outside, look outside of yourself - step outside of yourself and that tornado in your mind - grab coffee with a friend, go for a walk. 2) *Put the one thing over many things*. Jesus said to Martha, "You are so anxious about so many things." We are bombarded by so many things in the media, on our phones, in our overconnected world. What if we put the one thing over the many things - Jesus? What Jesus thinks about you? (Song: Can't Steal My Joy) When we put the one thing ahead of the many things, the many things get put in their right place. 3) *Prayer isn't always a cure, but it changes our perspective*. Jesus knew he was going to

experience betrayal and death and was filled with anxiety. Jesus talked to God. Thy will be done.

- **May 11: Burnout** (1 Kings 19:3-5) More than half of workers in America feel as though they are on the edge of burnout. Burnout is the inability to compete with all the competing demands in our lives - finances, kids, social media, activities, caring for aging parents, division in our world, not enough for God. Break a bone and you come to school - "Hey that's cool!" You break down mentally and there's stigma. Stress is short lived because of a temporary event. Burnout is chronic stress that feels never-ending. No relief in sight. I don't even care anymore. In the Bible, Elijah struggled with burnout. He confronted evil king Ahab. Prophesied a drought. King tried to kill Elijah. God provided meat for him from ravens. Brought a widow's son from the dead. He stood down an army of false prophets. Called fire from heaven. Did all this for God. That's when King Ahab's wife said to the king, "By this time tomorrow, Elijah will be dead." Think about Elijah: He experienced the presence and power of God, then one irritated woman made a threat and he fell apart. You've been there: You get a bad report at work, kids forgot their hockey skates, the furnace goes out - you endure it all - but then something - one thing - pushes us over the edge and we fall apart. Stress and burnout manifest it in our bodies in 3 ways: Physical (fatigue, low energy, headaches cause us to cope with food, alcohol, medication), Mental (our Amigdala grows - the fight or flight part of our brain that makes us more fearful - and weakens our Prefrontal Cortex - hard to focus), and Emotional (total loss of self-confidence, feel isolated, don't like anything in life cynical, bitter and *feel disconnected to God &/or blame God*). How do we get there? We make some of the mistakes Elijah made: 1) We run ourselves into the ground (19:3). Elijah ran from Jezreel to Beersheba (over 100 miles). 2) We try to do it all on our own. (19:3) Elijah left his servant behind. 3) We play the comparison game. (19:4) I thought I'd do more, I'd be happy and wealthy like them. In Elijah's darkest moment, God moved towards Elijah: Angel didn't say: If you prayed more, or didn't sin more. No (19:6) The angel said - "Get up and eat" and then lays down for a nap. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is to rest. The most spiritual thing can be a day off. But, what do you need? 19:11-12: God was not in the earthquake, wind or fire. God wasn't in the extraordinary, he was in the ordinary. A whisper. When we slow down, we see God in the ordinary - washing dishes, changing diapers, the difficult person at work, when trying to pay bills, driving from one place to another. Why does God whisper? Because God is so close. (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG) "...you'll learn to live freely and lightly." When we pause, we encounter God like Elijah. What do you need? Rest? Different Rhythms? Jesus in the ordinary.
- **May 18: Depression** (Proverbs 12:25 NKJV, Lamentations 3:5-6, 17-26 NIV) We have no idea. On the outside we look hopeful. On the inside things have felt hopeless for years. We find out and say, "Come on! Pull yourself out of it." The problem is it's this constant darkness that we can't will ourselves out. And the church, sometimes we make people feel as though it is a spiritual problem - not enough faith or prayer - only compounding the depression. If someone has a sore throat, we say, "See a doctor." If someone is depressed sometimes at church, we imply, "Keep smiling and keep it to yourself." [share your story of depression] The following verse you may identify with and it might make you mad (Prov. 12:25): "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression...but a good

word makes it glad.” If you are battling with depression, you likely say: It’s not that simple!? If that feels too simplistic, that a good word might bring a little hope and healing today. Depression is very complex, but essentially 4 root causes: **Biological** (a chemical, nutritional, hormonal, sleeping issues), **Relational** (divorce, rejected, pandemic isolation), **Circumstantial** (lost love one, bankruptcy, retirement, empty nest), OR **Spiritual** (who am I to God, purpose, meaning, why?) Prophet Jeremiah - Solomon’s temple destroyed in 587 bc - saw the temple destroyed - friends killed, temple destroyed, town ravaged. Jeremiah was depressed. (Lamentations 3:5-6, 17-20 NIV) If you’ve experienced depression, you can relate. When you battle depression, here’s what you need to know: 1) Your emotions are valid. 2) Your situation feels hopeless. These are true - but, I want to suggest these are incomplete. You see, 1) *Your emotions are valid, but they’re not permanent.* If you feel angry, empty, afraid - we name them. Label your feelings. Naming your emotions opens the door to changing your emotions. God gave them to you. Name them, because they are temporary. Why? We’re not going to make permanent decisions based on temporary emotions. God knew what God was doing when God made you. Emotions are real, but not going to be ruled by them. 2) *Your situation feels hopeless, but with God, there’s always hope.* (Lamentation 3:21-23 NIV) (Love = *hesed* = “unbreakable devotion to God’s promises.” A covenantal commitment to God’s character) (Compassion = *rahamah*, womb, every day new love, compassion). There’s always hope! So what do I do when everything feels dark? 1) *Acknowledge emotions.* 2) *Admit “I need help!”* Not a sign of weakness, but a sign of wisdom. In some churches, in worship, people raise hands during worship. What is raising hands all about? What symbolize? You rob a bank and a cop puts a gun to you, you raise your hands. Why? *Surrender.* Wise people surrender. I admit my emotions and that I need help...and that there is a God whose love is greater than what I’m feeling. (Lamentations 3:24-26 NIV, Romans 8) NOTHING will separate me from God’s love for me.

Prayer of the Day

Wonderful Counselor, you care about our mental health. Come close when we struggle. Amen

Prayer of the Church

Generous Savior, you promise to be with us through everything. When our mental health struggles, or the mental health of our friends and loved ones, guide us to resources, care, and support. Lord in your mercy,

Beautiful God, You’re in the ordinary, in the mundane, in the everyday. Help us to see your work in the world. Lord in your mercy,

Wonderful Counselor, you see the things going on in our lives, the things we’re worried about. As we worry and fret, take those worries into prayers. Prayers for those who are hurting, depressed, burned out, lonely, or lost. Lord in your mercy,

Prince of Peace, there’s pain in the world. Division, Conflict, War, Trials, guide us to be people who build bridges between each other rather than dividing walls. Use us to work for justice in the world. Lord in your mercy,

Finally God, you know what's on our heart today, the things we've told others and the things we've kept to ourselves, you see it all. We thank you for carrying the burdens we've held onto for too long. In your son's name. Amen.



May 25, June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, July 6, & 13: What our World Needs Now

What the world needs isn't necessarily more people who claim to be spiritual. It needs Jesus followers who are united and moving in the same direction. Paul suggests that what the world needs are the fruits of the Spirit: *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."* – Galatians 5:22-23 (North Point Community Church series)

- **May 25: Mature Jesus Followers.** (Matthew 5:45-48, Ephesians 4:11-13, Galatians 5:22.-25) *The Holy Spirit was given to us not so we could be more spiritual, but so we could become more mature.* There's a huge trend in the world: Spirituality. "I'm not religious. I'm spiritual." You find what works for you. It's a reaction for some to bad or toxic church experiences. You are deconstructing your faith. Which can be good. We believe: A faith that isn't allowed to grow up won't bear up under the pressures of adulthood. When you follow Jesus through the Gospels, though, he never once encourages people to "be spiritual." How can that be? He doesn't. He points his followers in a better direction. He insisted, instead, on maturity. Which stands in stark contrast to "all about me" spirituality, Christianity, and theology. The ultimate expression of maturity is "Saying no to me for the sake of we." It's an internal movement from "me to we." Maybe you had parents that were in church every time it was open - they considered themselves "spiritual" but lacked "maturity" - they were judging others, looking down on others. Jesus reserved his harshest criticism for people who created their own, self-serving "spirituality", rather than having "maturity." Jesus referred to these sorts of people as "Whitewashed Tombs" - wealthy people would have the outside of their tombs whitewashed and beautiful. Jesus said, "You are a whitewashed tomb, but on the inside you stink and are rotten." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus got their attention: Matthew 5:48 *Be perfect as your father is perfect.* Perfect - teleioi. Teleioi isn't perfect - it's maturity. I want you to grow up. See Matthew 5:45. Paul never calls people to spirituality either. He even chastises people in

the church who are “spiritual.” See Ephesians 4:11-13. God put these people in the church to do something - not for themselves - but for other people. This is maturity. You will become grown up. How mature? Ephesians 4:13 - “Christlike”. Ephesians 4:14. Here’s what is so distressing about our country’s leaders and church leaders today: If you have to have an enemy in order to lead, you are a poor leader. This is not maturity. Ephesians 4:15. As followers of Jesus, we are called to pursue maturity. What our world needs now is not spirituality. What our world needs now is you. It’s us. Jesus followers who want to become more mature. As Paul said, “...who put childish ways behind us” “who refuse to bite and provoke each other” as children. Christianity in our nation and leadership in our nation is all about biting. I don’t need to go to church to get that!? Paul said, “whose daily lives win the respect of outsiders”. If we aren’t winning the respect of outsiders, we’re not doing this right. What our world needs is mature Jesus followers. More Christlike-ness. What’s coming in this series is the “Fruit of the Spirit” - not the outcome of our hard work, but the outcome of our submission to God’s spirit within us. Galatians 5:25. “Keep in step with the Spirit.” The fruit of Spirit - exactly what you hope you spouse is, boss is, kids are - whether a Christian or not, what you strive to be. Galatians 5:22. Good. Patient. Kind. Self-controlled. Faithful. Imagine a family characterized by all of these. You’d need no rules. No laws in our community and country. If we all had this, think about what our world would look like. What it would do for our economy. Who wouldn’t want to be a Christian? Our nation spends a lot of time focused on “who” our nation needs. Maybe what we should be talking about is “what” our nation needs.

- **June 1: Finding Joy Amid the Struggle** (joy) **Galatians 5:22–23, 25; John 15:5, 8–12** Is it possible to experience a consistent, constant, and steady joy amid everything life might throw at you. Jesus believes it is and tells us how to experience it.
 - Example messages:
 - <https://northpoint.org/messages/what-our-world-needs-now/journey-to-joy>
- **June 8: Missing Peace** (peace) **Philippians 4:6–9; John 14:27** Jesus never said life would be easy, but he did promise us a path that leads to peace.
 - Example messages:
 - <https://northpoint.org/messages/what-our-world-needs-now/the-missing-peace>
- **June 15 (Father’s Day): A Longer Fuse** (patience) **Romans 7:15–16, 18–19, 24–25** We all have a little bit of patience but we also know how limited it can be. How do we increase our capacity for patience? And why does it matter?
 - Example messages:
 - <https://northpoint.org/messages/what-our-world-needs-now/a-long-fuse>
- **June 22: Human-kind-ness** (kindness) **1 Thessalonians 5:14–15; 1 Corinthians 13:4** What does kindness look like, act like, and react like?
 - Example messages:
 - <https://northpoint.org/messages/what-our-world-needs-now/human-kind-ness>
- **June 29: How to live a happier life** (goodness)
 - Example messages:
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- **July 6: The Ultimate Expression of Faithfulness** (faithfulness) **Luke 19:1-10**
 - Example messages:
 - <https://northpoint.org/messages/what-our-world-needs-now/faithfulness>
- **July 13: Me and My Big Mouth** (self-control) **James 1:19-20 NIV** We all know what it's like to be hurt by someone who just couldn't listen long enough to understand us. Maybe in their attempt to be right, they damaged a relationship that could have been saved with a little patience and curiosity. You've probably been on the other side of that coin too. Taking the verbal offense may have won the argument but you lost relationally. What if we didn't settle for being right, but tried to make things right instead? The longer we listen the more we learn, and the better chance we have of protecting ourselves from our own big mouth
 - Example messages:
 - <https://youtu.be/kcI3y-MhqOg?si=ZRu78NhDV97BIJtN>

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, Thank you for the gifts of the spirit. Teach us to live in a way the world needs. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Generous God, You are what the world needs. Teach us to act with more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Lord in your mercy,

Holy Spirit, guide us to places where there is hurt and pain. Use us to care, guide, and advocate for people who are suffering. Lord in your mercy,

Gracious Jesus, be with those who go without. Those who are without food, shelter, safety. Those who fear and worry about how they'll get through the day. Use us as your ambassadors for care of the world. Lord in your mercy,

Wonderful Counselor, guide us to be peacemakers. Give us courage and wisdom to speak up when we see injustice. Give us patience and serenity when we should listen. Help us to discern your work and your will in the world. Lord in your mercy,

Finally God, there are people in our lives who are hurting, you know who they are. Be with them as we say their names silently, help us to care effectively. In your son's name, Amen.



July 20, 27, & August 3: A Next Generation Faith

We are responsible for the church of our generation, which means we are responsible for what we pass on to the next generation. But, what does a “next gen” faith look like? What’s always worked, doesn’t seem to be working anymore. And, as parents, grandparents and the church we are individually working harder than ever to build faith, but with diminishing returns. So, what if...we synchronized our efforts? In unison, let’s mobilize a generation to love God and serve others.

July 20: (Angie) Faith is caught

You’ve heard the saying, “Do as I say, not as I do.” As parents we throw that out when we know what we’re doing isn’t exactly how we want our children to do. When we swear or drink too much but then tell them not to swear and not to drink. Or we tell them to talk kindly to themselves and others but then we don’t talk kindly to ourselves or others. As they grow up they’ll start to emulate more of what we do rather than what we say. Our behavior matters more than our words.

The same is true with faith. We want our kids to grow up and have a robust faith life then we need to have a robust faith life. As parents and caregivers we sometimes want the “experts” to guide their faith. People like pastors, Sunday school teachers, and small group leaders. We worry that they’re going to ask us questions we don’t have the answers to. It’s ok if we don’t have all the answers. Your kids don’t expect you to be a perfect person, they expect you to try, we can all do that.

There's a saying that Faith isn't taught, it's caught. Proverbs puts it this way: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6 How do we help our kids "catch" faith?

July 27: (Maddie) Generation Gaps

Every generation tends to get identified by particular traits. The Silent Generation 1925-1945 is known for being patriotic, generous, and a strong work ethic. Baby Boomers (1946-1964) are known for being divided on the Vietnam War, Boomer parents notably redefined parenting by being the first generation to look at their kids' perspective of growing up, and they started the concept of having family meetings. Gen X (1965-1980) grew up in a changing landscape of technology, the AIDS epidemic, and MTV generation. Often known as being latch-key kids and growing up in two-parent working homes. Millennials (1981-1996) are known for their quick adaptation to technologies as well as socially conscious. Gen Z (1997-2010) grew up as digital natives. They're socially, environmentally, and politically conscious. They're known for being wildly accepting of differing points of views. Gen Alpha (2011-2024) are also digital natives, but an increase in anxiety and attention deficit have been researched and studied. This generation is marked by the Covid 19 pandemic and political division.

Often generations are separated by activity. Time spent in schools or work leave people with their primary interactions being with those in their own demographic. We've siloed generations in our culture.

Luther Crest Bible Camp is celebrating its 80 year anniversary. One of the greatest gifts of camping ministry is the ability to bring generations together. Young Adult camp counselors and middle school kids, family retreats, and generations of people who love camp. It's a beautiful thing but sometimes comes with some challenges as generations seek to understand each other and each other's perspective. God created us in a way that we are better together. How can we learn from different generations and embrace what both bring to the table? How can we understand that God gives each of us the same agency?

Genesis 17:7: And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you *in their generations*, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.

August 3: (Hans) It's a phase

Parenting is hard. And sometimes we, as parents, make it harder. I love how Paul says, "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*" *Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)* Part of the reason we often feel like we're floundering as parents is that we're not always clear about the goal of parenting. It's less about getting your kids to behave

and more about cultivating the kind of relationship that lasts into adulthood. What if we were to parent with purpose, presence, and grace, keeping the long-term relationship in focus while navigating the everyday challenges? In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: “Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39) Isn’t that what we want our relationship with our kids to look like? Isn’t that what we wished our relationship to our parents looked like? We’ll explore how, whatever season you find yourself in, parenting isn’t just about control—it’s about a relationship built on love and trust.

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, you care about the faith of future generations. Help us to share faith and grow together. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

Generous Savior, you’re for the faith of the next generation. Guide us to creative ways to engage the faith of our kids and students. Use us to rally together to continue to pass the faith.. Lord in your mercy,

Beautiful God, Where there’s anxiety, create peace. Where there’s division, create understanding. Where there’s depression, create companionship. Guide us in your restorative work for the world. Lord in your mercy,

Wonderful Counselor, you see the things going on in our lives, the things we’re worried about. As we worry and fret, take those worries into prayers. Lord in your mercy,

Prince of Peace, guide us to reflect your light in the world. To work together across generations to shine generosity, kindness, and faithfulness into this world. Lord in your mercy,

Finally God, you know what’s on our heart today, the things we’ve told others and the things we’ve kept to ourselves, you see it all. We thank you for carrying the burdens we’ve held onto for too long. In your son’s name. Amen.



BOOK OF LUKE

It's interesting. 81% of Americans believe in God. We own Bibles and maybe even go to church now and then. Some of us have our kids baptized and celebrate Christmas and Easter. We have crosses on the walls of our homes, around our necks, even tattooed on our bodies. Someone sneezes, we say, "God bless you!" We believe in God and love Jesus. But, there's a problem. **The Bible.** As people who believe in God, we have a fondness for the Bible. It's the word of God, after all. It's the #1 best-selling book of all time. But... **Most of us don't actually read it.**

During this series, we want to make it easy for people to read the Bible - remembering for most this is likely their very first experience reading an entire book of the Bible. In addition to weekly worship messages, we'll provide members with a copy of a devotional book that walks them through the Book of Luke, written by Pastor Hans, and we've recorded 20 5-minute video devotionals that also walk people through the Book of Luke at home.

August 10, 17, 24, 31: The Book of Luke

The book of Luke contains arguably the best-known and best-loved stories of Jesus. From the announcement of the coming birth of Jesus and John the Baptist, to the account of Jesus' birth and shepherds visiting the stable, to Zacchaeus, Mary and Martha, and the parables of the good Samaritan and the prodigal son, these stories are memorable and meaningful. Most powerfully, Luke's Gospel gives voice to those who have been excluded with its messages of ethnic inclusivity and economic justice, and Luke uniquely shines a light on women, giving them a prominent place in its narrative. It reminds us that Jesus came us into a life where by faith we too are called to advocates for inclusion, participation, and compassion for all.

Jesus came to lift up the lowly. Throughout his ministry to his final days on the road to the cross, we find stories of his relationships with ordinary, flawed, and unexpected people. He met, dined, and traveled with people who were not perfect. Many of them were struggling, some were outsiders or even outlaws. Whoever they were, from

those he healed to the outlaws with him at his crucifixion, we find Jesus' care and compassion for all as he welcomes sinners and outcasts. (* During this series, we develop a companion study book to help walk people through the book of Luke)

August 10: *Born among the humble, the lost & small, Jesus came as proof God is for all.*

The Birth and Beginning of a New Way (Luke 1:1-4:13)

We all have Bibles—some of us have shelves full—but how many of us have actually read it? In this message, we explore why the Bible is the most popular book of all time... and yet, one of the least read. You'll discover why that is, why it matters, and how we can change it—starting with the Gospel of Luke. Join us as we unpack not only what's in the Bible, but *how we got the Bible*—and why it's a story worth reading. Whether you're skeptical, curious, or hungry to reconnect with Scripture, this is for you.

August 17: *He loved the lost and bent the rules—so they broke his body to keep their rule.*

The Way Goes Public in Galilee (Luke 4:14-9:50)

With final wilderness preparations for ministry behind him, Jesus goes public. His ministry begins and the first story (4:14-30) sets the stage. There in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus provides Biblical justification for his mission and ministry, and we see for the first time the negative response he will receive. Jesus declares his God-ordained mission and ministry is to “bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free,” but the people want nothing of it. The people of his hometown - the people who raised him and love him the most - want to throw him off a cliff - they want to kill him. This will be the story of Jesus' ministry. He will proclaim the freedom of God that ignores the human categories of privilege and that message will again and again evoke hostility and oppression.

August 24: *Discipleship means counting the cost and seeking the lost.*

He Set his Face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:28)

Jesus' ministry in Galilee comes to an abrupt halt, as Luke begins the narrative of Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem. Like the Israelites, wandering in the wilderness, the route he's on takes a backseat to the instruction provided to the people along the way. The beneficiaries of this instruction are those who have been following Jesus since his beginning in Galilee and - by extension, this includes us, the church. As he travels toward Jerusalem, he's reminding us - his followers - of the demands entailed in following Jesus. Being a “disciple” involves major changes in behavior and understanding, putting aside common wisdom and adopting Jesus' new way. His teaching prepares disciples to respond to what will come once he arrives in Jerusalem and to prepare the church to continue the ministry of Jesus after the events of his death and resurrection.

August 31: *From cross to grave, the God above brings hope to all through perfect love.*

An End with a New Beginning (Luke 19:29-24:53) Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to a welcome that isn't necessarily the welcome befitting a king. He arrives on a borrowed donkey - humble, common and unimposing. There were no trumpets or fanfare. No dignitaries or elite. Rather than lavish costumes and military pageantry, the crowds divest themselves of symbols of their status, laying their articles of

clothing on the road to cushion Jesus' ride. Similarly, Jesus will lay down his status - lay down his life - rather than taking the Roman throne. Sharing his last meal with the disciple, he says my body and blood will be given for you - confusing to the disciples, but a sign of what it will require of him to enact God's reign characterized by good news to the poor and release to the captives. And, just when all seems lost and Jesus' mission is all for not, God does something new!

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Lead us, guide us, and direct us in your ways and your will. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

Lord God, teach us. Teach us to learn to love your Word and your wisdom. Give us a passion to hear your voice and encounter your truths.. LIYM, HOP

Abundant Creator, we give you thanks for educators and principals, paraprofessionals and coaches, staff and students. We ask you to be with those who are starting school. Guide and protect them. LIYM, HOP

Merciful God, just as you healed in the Bible, your healing power is everywhere about us. Strengthen those who work with the sick; give them courage and confidence in all they do. Encourage them when their efforts seem futile or when death prevails. Provide them support and care, LIYM, HOP

Holy Spirit, in the places where we feel fear, guide us to lean into our faith, into your love, and into your presence. LIYM, HOP

Generous Savior, we ask you at this time to come close to those in our hearts who are struggling at this time. People suffering from illness, depression, grief, addiction, anxiety, and loneliness. Come close in struggles.

We pray this in Jesus name, Amen.



September 7, 14, 21: Faith & Firewalls

In a world full of constant notifications and distractions, it's easy to lose focus on what truly matters. We benefit from the innumerable gifts of technology, and yet it has the power to eat away at 3 of the greatest gifts God gives us: our connections, our hearts and our time. Inspired by the book, *The Digital Fast* by Darren Whitehead, this series explores how to protect our hearts and minds, much like firewalls protect our computers, so we can stay spiritually connected to one another and God, despite all the digital noise. Together, we'll discover practical ways to balance technology use with family and faith, ensuring our spiritual and home lives remain strong and vibrant.

September 7: Unplug to Connect

(Introduction & Chapter 2, Part 2 - Your Guide to the Digital Fast, *The Digital Fast*) In this message, we explore why stepping back from digital distractions to deepen our relationship with each other and God. Inspired by *The Digital Fast*, we'll learn how intentional breaks from technology can refresh our spirit, deepen our relationships, and restore true connection with God and others.

- Mary & Martha (Luke 10:38–42)
- Elijah's Encounter with God in the Whisper (1 Kings 19:11–13)
- Jesus withdraws to Pray (Luke 5:15–16)

September 14: Guard Your Heart

(Chapter 3, *The Digital Fast*) Just as firewalls protect our devices from harmful attacks, we need safeguards against the sometimes negative influences of technology. This message will unpack practical ways to set boundaries around our digital lives, in order to protect our faith and nurture lasting spiritual growth.

- Daniel Refusing to Defile Himself (Daniel 1:3–17). In a culture that pressured him to conform, Daniel resolved to guard his integrity and identity. Like digital

culture today, Babylon aimed to shape Daniel's mind and values. His boundaries were an act of faith.

- Jesus Resisting Temptation in the Wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11) Jesus faces direct temptations that mirror the pulls of modern tech: instant gratification, pride, shortcuts. Digital fasting is a tool to sharpen discernment and spiritual resistance.

September 21: Reclaim Your Time

(Chapters 1 & 10 of *The Digital Fast*) Time is one of our most valuable gifts, yet it's often stolen by endless scrolling and notifications. How do we live with purpose in a distracted world? This message challenges us to reclaim our time by prioritizing presence and purpose over all the digital noise, helping us live intentionally and fully alive in faith.

- Martha Tells Jesus Lazarus Wouldn't Have Died If He Had Come Sooner (John 11:1–44) Jesus doesn't rush—even when we think He should. He teaches us that *His* timing brings life.
- The Apostle Paul's "Make the most of every opportunity" Teaching (Ephesians 5:15–17) Paul encourages believers to be wise and intentional with time, especially in challenging times. This speaks to our need to live purposefully rather than passively scrolling through life. "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (v. 15–16) It's not just about managing time—it's about reclaiming it for God's purposes. Paul's words challenge us to be intentional in a distracted age.

September 28: Guest Preacher - Dave Adamson

Prayer of the Day:

Gracious God, In a world full of distractions, guide us to be spiritually connected to you and each other. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Gracious God, You have called us into one Body through Christ. You gather us from every place, every path, every story. Draw us deeper into relationship with You and with one another. Lord in your mercy,

Holy Spirit, Where there is division, bring healing. Where there is silence, open lines of care. Where isolation takes root, plant seeds of presence and peace. Lord in your mercy,

Mighty God, Give us a spirit of gentleness as we care for those in our church, our community, and our world who are hurting. You know the people we worry about and the stresses we carry. Come close in struggle, Lord in your mercy,

Lord Jesus, there's so many distractions in this world and in our lives. Guide us to live with the purpose and intention you created us for. Lord in your mercy,

Finally God, show us your will and your work in our lives. Help us to reclaim our time, our hearts, and our relationships. In your name we pray: Amen

October 5 & 12: All In

When Jesus called His first disciples, He didn't ask for half-hearted commitment. He invited them to leave behind what was comfortable, familiar, and secure—to follow Him with everything. Giving isn't just about money—it's about trust, surrender, and saying “yes” to the adventure of faith. In this two-week series, we'll look at how the call of the disciples invites us to go all in with our lives and our resources.

October 5: Drop Your Net

(Luke 5:1–11, *The calling of the first disciples*)

Peter, James, and John were ordinary fishermen. But when Jesus met them on the shore and filled their empty nets, He invited them to something greater. Their response? They dropped everything and followed. True generosity starts with trust—letting go of control, fear, or comfort to follow Jesus wherever He leads. What might God be asking you to lay down so you can step into something more? **Key**

Verse: Luke 5:11 – “So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.” **Key Idea:** Following Jesus means letting go of what holds us back.

October 12: All In with All You've Got

(Matthew 10:1–10 – *The disciples sent out with nothing but faith*, Mark 12:41–44 – *The Widow's Offering*)

When Jesus sent out the disciples to share the good news, He told them to take nothing for the journey—no money, no bag, not even a backup pair of sandals. Why? Because being “all in” meant depending fully on God, not their own resources. Jesus was teaching them (and us) that real generosity and boldness don't come from having everything figured out—they come from trusting the One who sends us. Sometimes the greatest act of giving is not what we give from our surplus, but the faith we show when we hold nothing back. Jesus praised a widow's tiny offering not because of the amount, but because of the heart behind it. She was all in—trusting God with everything. In a world that measures worth by how much you have, Jesus flips the script. He calls us to give not out of guilt or pressure, but out of gratitude and faith. When we go all in, we find joy, freedom, and the adventure of following Jesus with everything we've got. **Key Verse:** Mark 12:44 – “They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Key Idea: *Wholehearted generosity flows from a heart captured by Jesus.*

October 19, 26, November 2, 9, & 16: Ordinary People. Extraordinary God.

From fishermen and farmers to failures and fugitives, God has always worked through everyday people to accomplish extraordinary purposes. This series explores the stories of men and women in Scripture who were deeply flawed and yet deeply used by God. Their stories remind us that God isn't waiting for perfection—He's looking for availability, faith, and a willing heart. Discover how your ordinary story can become extraordinary in the hands of God.

October 19: From Hiding to Leading

(Story of Moses, Exodus 2–4)

Moses ran from his past and doubted his abilities. Yet God met him in the wilderness, called him from a burning bush, and gave him a mission. If you've ever felt unqualified, Moses reminds us that God's call isn't based on our confidence, but His presence. **Big Idea:** God calls insecure and reluctant people and equips them for His purposes.

October 26: From the Pit to the Palace

(The Story of Joseph, Genesis 37-50)

Joseph's life was a rollercoaster—betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and thrown into prison. Yet, through it all, God never left him. God did the extraordinary—not just for Joseph, but for an entire nation. When life feels unfair or your dreams seem distant, Joseph's story reminds us that God is still at work behind the scenes.

November 2 (All Saints Sunday): From Sinner to Saint

(Story of Peter, "cloud of witnesses", Luke 22:54–62; John 21:15–19; Hebrews 12:1–2)

Peter denied Jesus at His moment of greatest need, yet Jesus restored him and built the church through him. On All Saints Sunday, we celebrate how God uses everyday, ordinary, imperfect people—like Peter, and like us—to carry forward His mission. We stand on the shoulders of saints who weren't perfect, but who followed faithfully. **Big Idea:** Saints aren't perfect—they're forgiven and faithful.

November 9: From Outsider to Instrument

(Story of Rahab, Joshua 2, Hebrews 11:31)

Rahab wasn't just an outsider—she was a prostitute in a pagan city. Yet her courage and faith gave her a role in God's rescue plan and placed her in the lineage of Jesus. Your past doesn't disqualify you. In fact, it may just be the platform God uses to display His grace. **Big Idea:** Your past doesn't preclude you from being an important part of God's story.

November 16: From Persecutor to Preacher

(The Story of Paul, Acts 9-28)

Saul was the last person anyone expected God to use. A fierce persecutor of Christians, his past was full of pride, violence, and control. An encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed everything. In this message, we'll see how Paul's story is a powerful testimony of grace. No matter how far you've gone or who you've been, God is determined to write a new story through you.

November 23 & 30, December 7, 14, & 21: A Way in a Manger

Have you ever lost your way? Usually by the time we realize we're lost, we've been lost for quite some time. We're lost before we know it. Your family. Your marriage. Your finances. That addiction. And, when we realize we're lost, we instinctively ask, "Which way should I go?" At Christmas we are presented with a better way. The way.

December 23 & 24: Christmas Eve Worship**December 28: New Year. Knew You.**

What to do when what you thought you knew turns out to be not true (anymore).

January 2025: Toxic Religion: When Religion Becomes Evil

In the book, "When Religion Becomes Evil," Charles Kimball, a religion and Middle East expert, examines when and how religion can become corrupt and toxic. He effectively argues that all religious traditions can become corrupt, but authentic faith can prevent it. Kimball identifies five warning signs that a religion may be becoming corrupt:

- Absolute truth claims
- Blind obedience
- Establishing the "ideal" time
- The end justifies any means
- Declaring holy war