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Encounters

Cedar Springs' Women's Ministries

Summer Study Handbook

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Introduction to Summer Study

Summer Study fits into the rhythm of summer: come when you can. It's okay to smell like sunscreen. Bring your dinner, bring your extra garden veggies and herbs, bring the more relaxed pace of our hottest months. Take some of the pressure off. You're not being graded; you don't have to perform. Sip a cold drink with our famous crushed ice.

Getting Started

Bring your Bible and this booklet to class. If you can cover our printing cost, we'd appreciate it (about \$3-\$4).

Come grumpy or happy.

Come creative or bound up tight.

Come with a tan or office-lady white (me!).

Come as you are, and let's learn together.

Our Key Question

The key question of this study is “How do we encounter God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?”

We will trek through the Bible watching how people encounter the Trinity; gleaning from and inquiring of these encounters; and applying them to ourselves.

Over five classes, we will look at encounters in four Biblical sections: Week One, the ancient days; Week Two, the era of the Promised Land; Week Three, the Prophets; Week Four, Jesus' time, Week Five, the emerging Church and the Holy Spirit.

*Any words *in italics* are direct quotes from Scripture.*

Group Dynamics

Love each other well by listening well. Keep confidences. Allow others to be imperfect, vulnerable, sad, angry, and glad. Don't interrupt or try to “fix” each other; let God do that.

Listening well = Lean in. Pay attention. Put your phone away as much as possible. Maintain eye contact. Be reflective. Don't have all the answers; be humble and kind; be honest.

If you need us

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Class One: A 30,000 View; Job's Encounter

Hello, Life

Introduction: What we see when we fly

When you climb to a height of 30,000 feet, you see things differently. What seems massive when you're on the ground is barely visible from the sky. From the window of a plane, you begin to see patterns and places, water and land features, cities and countryside, boundaries and waterways. You see how things and places fit together and connect. You gain perspective that you are unable to have from the ground.

Encountering the Trinity is like that. Most of our lives, we live in hyperfocus, seeing what is ahead of us by a few feet or a few calendar screens or pages. But when we encounter God, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, our perspective shifts. We see God's sovereignty rather than our limitations; we see people who are beloved, not condemned; we look with compassion, not judgment. We see possibilities more than problems. We become strong when we were once weak. We grow where we were once stagnant.

The premise of Summer Study is this: We are transformed when we encounter God, when we are with Jesus, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

We are going to start with the ancient days of the Bible and visit with Job today. In Class Two, next week, we are going to see what happens when Joshua encounters God. In Class Three, we are going through fire to see what happens when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego encounter Jesus. In Class Four we are going into the New Testament and will experience Jesus through the eyes of Mary Magdalene; and our final class will be about encounters with the Holy Spirit, starting in the book of Acts.

Now, the class has a simple format. We will begin promptly, starting with prayer and announcements. You will have Table Time, which is interactive and designed to help you enter into our topic of the day. Next, we will show a brief video of someone who attends this church; you won't want to miss those videos! Then I'll speak, then you'll have more Table Time in the Scriptures or an activity. This hour and a half is going to fly.

Let's get started with Table Time today.

Table Time questions:

1. How have you encountered God? Are you hoping for an encounter but have never had one? Tell the story; keep it to 3-4 minutes.

An Encounter from Scripture: Job: Job 1:8-12,20-22, 2:4-6; 38-40** for the Questions; 41,42 for the resolution

1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

Like a proud father, God points out the good character in His son Job, an honorable, God-fearing man and the wealthiest sheik in all of *the people of the East*.

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

So Satan throws down the gauntlet; the question is, can Satan get Job to curse God?

12 The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”

Take note: Satan is fully under God’s authority. He must ask permission to manipulate circumstances and weather and people to produce harm. It’s difficult for us to understand, but sometimes God allows all kinds of destruction. More on that later.

Because of Satan’s actions against him, Job suffers greatly: he loses seven sons and three daughters; oxen, donkeys, sheep, servants, camels, and buildings, all through God-sized calamities. Everything that brought him fatherly joy, satisfaction, productivity, provision ... gone. And it looks like God has done it, all of it.

1:20 At this [multiple losses], Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship **21** and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

So after Job’s multiple losses, after this massive simultaneous devastation, Job does not curse God. Job loves God freely, beyond what he can **use** God for: happiness, prosperity, status, out for himself. Job is humble, emotionally real, without sin in his crying out, acknowledges his losses, acknowledges God’s sovereignty, and lets himself grieve. He lets go of all things God allowed to be taken away. His family, his position, and his prosperity were not idols, not his gods: God was his God, and God was still present. Job allows himself to feel the impact of this cataclysmic day, all the while still keeping respect in his heart for God. God points this out to Satan in ch. 2.

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”

4 “Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life. **5** But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

The gauntlet hits the ground again, and God releases Job’s health into Satan’s hands.

6 The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”

Satan causes harm. That’s who he is; that’s what he does. He’s a liar, a thief, an accuser, a cynic, and a masquerader. Job’s own body is now covered with putrid *sores*. His own wife recommends that he *curse God and die*, the focus of the entire test. Job doesn’t get a break from any direction: physically, relationally, emotionally; his property is attacked, his family is killed, and his goods are taken. His wife doesn’t help him, but rather encourages him toward the dark side. Perhaps, just perhaps, a few friends are just who can help Job through this difficult dark night of the soul.

But no, that is not to be. Job is joined by several friends who comfort him best when they sit with him in silence, grieving with him by simply being present. We would do well to follow this part of their example: just **be with** those who are sad and grieving. Just sit down. Stop talking. Cry with your people.

After a week, the friends begin to speak, and all of their incomplete and errant theology comes against Job as one more round of assault. When Job needed comfort, he got criticism; when he needed friendship, he was accused of failure and falsehood; when Job needed love, they gave him well-intended lectures. It sounded like this:

- Job, you’ve sinned. God is getting back at you.

- If you say you're blameless, you're lying, and also saying God is not good or just. That makes you even worse!
- All suffering is bad.
- Trials in our lives are punishment for our sins.
- Hurry up and confess all of your hidden sins and get this over with!
- There is no place for this type of suffering; you're supposed to be happy if you're a believer.
- Wealth is a sign of God's blessing. Therefore, you are cursed, because God just demolished your wealth.
- The righteous prosper, the wicked are judged. That's how it always works.
- God is like Tinkerbell: if you're good, He'll sprinkle His happy dust on your life.
- God **owes us** justice, happiness, and light. If you're not getting that, it's your fault.

Behind all of this talk, God is still God, and He is bringing Job to the deeper Christ-like place of "Not my will, but Your will be done." He is taking away the bit of spiritual pride Job had. He is correcting incorrect thinking about Himself.

But Job did not have the benefit of reading his own story, of seeing behind the veil of the supernatural as we do; he had to live it, and in the moment it was absolutely devastating. It was not a life to be analyzed and scrutinized and evaluated; it was **his** life, and he was hurting. He did not know about Satan's bet with God; he just felt excruciating pain in his body and soul.

Throughout the rest of the book of Job, he encounters God through suffering; through loss; through questions; through despair; through depression; but also through renewal and blessing. You can too, in your household, property, family, body, mind, and soul.

Time passes. Job goes into times of anger, times of deep depression, times he wants to die, times of defensiveness, and times he wants to have conversation with God. In fact, he even **demand**s dialogue with God about his condition. He wants to find out what was behind all this tragedy and trauma; he wants to present his case to God. He refutes his friends, who alternately accuse him of lying, of hiding, of not understanding God, of being a horrible sinner. Job becomes defensive with them and defensive with God.

Every now and then, Job affirms his belief in God's goodness and sovereignty (*13:15: Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him; I will surely defend my ways to His face. Also 23:10-17.*) Job's friends discuss their views of God, which God later says are incorrect, so always be careful when you quote from the book of Job.

Job, in chapter 26 (verses 6-14), beautifully describes God as the sovereign Creator of all natural wonder and phenomena. God hears this, listens for a while more, and then breaks His silence. He is ready to act. In chapters 38-41, Job encounters the LORD God Almighty.

God simply asks Job questions. That is their encounter: recognizing who God is through questions. As God asks Job 70 questions about one of Job's favorite topics, natural wonder, Job not only sees more of who God is, but more of who he is — and he is not God.

God never addresses Job's suffering in the questions He asks Job. Not once in 70 questions does God pamper Job, address his body, his family, or his animals. Rather than focus on Job's losses, God focuses on all that Job can really stand on. God simply, majestically, intensely reminds Job that **He is God**, immortal, invisible, wise, holy, creative, phenomenal, brilliant, exceptional, powerful, and superior.

God's questions had great purpose. They weren't meant to simply squash Job, or snub him, or demean him. They were meant to remind him of the God who knew him; the God who would restore him; the God who is ascendant and commanding and firmly in control.

Job is humbled. Even mortified and confounded. Move forward in your Bibles to chapter 42:

Then Job replied to the Lord:

42:2 “I know that you can do all things; no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

3 You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures My plans without knowledge?’

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

4 “You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak;

I will question you, and you shall answer me.’

5 My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You.

6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

— — THE TRANSFORMATION — —

We must take care not to make God into a masochistic version of Tinkerbell here. Let’s review the truth:

GOD was behind the scenes, setting up the affliction and then the encounter;

GOD was in the midst of Job’s misery, actively part of the crisis of Job’s faith, listening;

GOD was with Job during the despair, depression, heartache, and horror, but He was silent and watching;

GOD was in the transformation of Job into a more humble servant;

GOD was in the answering of Job’s prayers. Let’s continue to read, 42:7:

42:7 After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. 8 So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.”

Did you notice how God proudly repeats “My servant Job” and twice lets the friends know that Job was correct and they were wrong? God is not Tinkerbell. God sees nuances and reasons and shadows and causes regarding people’s hearts, souls, and actions that we will never see. No wonder Jesus tells us to not judge each other.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer. 10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. 11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

GOD was in the blessing after the affliction and encounter. We encounter God in times of devastation; we encounter God in times of blessing. In other words ladies, look for Him ***all the time***. Listen for Him ***all the time***.

What are some take-aways for today? Let’s conclude with some lessons we learn from Job’s encounter with God through calamity and blessing:

- Satan tries to use our pain to convince us that God is absent, angry at us, or, worse, indifferent. “He doesn’t love us. His love is a sham.”
- In our saddest, darkest, most difficult days, we need to run TO God, not away from Him.
- We will never have God’s full perspective on what’s happening in the world; we are too small.
- There is a raging spiritual battle in which Satan wants to steal, kill and destroy all that God loves.
- Our fallen world reflects Satan’s work as well as God’s salvation.
- The Holy Spirit has the power and weapons needed to fight Satan;
- We are **all** subject to God’s ultimate will. Including Satan. And he ends up in the lake of fire.
- Sometimes we just have to grieve and rest or writhe while God is at work, trusting Him that our circumstances will always work for our ultimate benefit (Romans 8:28), even when that includes harm.

Job never saw **the why, the theater**, behind his suffering and later blessing. He did encounter God, though, and that was more than enough. He was transformed. For us, that means Christians are called to hold onto the mystery and stay in a relationship with a God we cannot control - but whose goodness we cannot doubt when we truly grasp the Gospel, which says **God is trustworthy, He is love, and He offers us grace**. How can we trust this news? How can we trust God’s love, especially when we suffer?

Jesus was the ultimate innocent Suffering Servant under God’s fist. He obeyed Him fully, knowing God would crush Him (Isaiah 53), kill Him, and send Him to hell. Why? Jesus acted out of love for His Father and love for us. His suffering and death proves His love for us. Jesus suffered (Psalm 22) that we might become like Him in our suffering (Phil 3:10). He works for our good. He transforms us to be like His Son. He has purposes we do not see, in calamity and chaos, in blight and blessing, in bust and boom, in woe and in welfare, in decrease and increase.

Job could live out Jeremiah’s advice in Jeremiah 9:23,24:

This is what the Lord says:

“Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches,

but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me,

that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

Closing Table Time Questions

How have you encountered God in your afflictions?

How have you encountered God in your prayers, both in answers (yes/no) and in silence?

How have you encountered God in a faith crisis time?

How have you encountered God in your blessings?

In the Quiet:

Skim through Job 38-41. Imagine this scene with you in it, and listen without trying to solve them.

Let God's majesty blow over you!

OR

Look up these famous verses from Job:

1:21; 2:9,10; 13:15; 19:25; 23:10; 28:28; 40:2; 42:2-6

AND

Look on Suzanne Stelling's Pinterest Board called "Art Journal."

Choose one of the verses on Job and illustrate it, and send me a copy when you're done. Don't be shy!

Write your take-aways from this week here:



Day 2: Adam & the Woman

Hello, Life and Death

Read Genesis 2 and 3.

List the encounters the man and woman have with God throughout these two chapters:

Verses	Encounter
1:7	God formed the man and breathed life into him
v16-17	
	God brought the animals to the man so he could name them
21	
22	
22	God brought them together
2:8	
9-13	
14-19	
	God made garments of skin for them
23,24	

And Everything Changed

The man and the woman went from the freedom and innocence of being *naked and unashamed*,* from the simple and unperturbed enjoyment of God, from straightforward purpose and industry, from peace and beauty, to fear, cover, hide and blame. And it happened so quickly, so easily.

The encounter that strikes me most is when God is *walking in the garden in the cool of the day* and calls out for them. God's questions are most profound: "*Where are you? Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?*" and "*What is this you have done?*"

"*Where are you, My children?*" Do you really think God did not know? I think God knew where they were hiding, but He wanted them to own their fallenness, and to do that, they had to speak up. I think He wanted them (and wants us) to know He is searching for us, seeking to save that which is lost (Luke 19:10). It is for this reason that Jesus came (John 12:27); His very name means "God saves."

I can hear God sadly saying, "Have you left Me so soon? Ah, My children. You have broken My heart. *What is this you have done?* You have set in motion things you know nothing of. As a consequence of your choices, the very universe itself has fallen into disrepair and disorder. You have brought harm to all of mankind on multiple levels: purpose and work now have futility and frustration; relationships are now self-centered and ugly; wellness has been disrupted by death. You and I will never be the same. For these reasons, you must leave this Garden and the tree of life. But come, let us look toward a Savior. My own arm will work salvation for you."

With this encounter, God began to pursue His lost and errant people, creating encounters with each of us for our good and His glory. Encounters with God do not only bring judgment or damnation; they also bring hope.

*Any words in *italics* are direct quotes from Scripture.

Day 3: Noah

Hello, Obedience

Read Genesis 6:5-22 and all of spectacular, cataclysmic chapter 7.

List several facts you learn about Noah and God from your reading.

Verses	Facts about Noah or God
6:5,6	God saw man's wickedness, was greatly grieved He had made man, heart filled with pain
6:7	
6:8,9	

When Noah encountered God, it was during a wretched time in the history of mankind. *The earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.* * Amidst the darkness of violence and corruption, the bright light of righteousness shone in one man: Noah. One person, dear reader: **one person** was lit up from within (*For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light*, Proverbs 6:23).

In their encounter, God instructs Noah to do the improbable, the implausible: build a massive ark through which God would equip him to save the world. *Everything on earth will perish, but I will establish My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark.* Noah's response? *Noah did everything just as God commanded him* (6:22, 7:5). *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family*, Hebrews 11:7.

When Noah encountered God, how was he impacted? Noah's life work completely changed: he became an ark builder. Noah's trajectory moved from [providing for his family by vocation] to [providing for mankind and the animal kingdom by faith].

Noah's focus shifted from faithfully [obeying God's instructions in a normal, though difficult, setting] to [obeying God's instructions specifically, diligently, in the face of opposition and ridicule, for the sake of God's chosen, preserved species]. When the ark was finished, the Great Flood Migration complete, God Himself closed the door (7:16).

Through Noah's obedience, his diverse family and the animal kingdom were able to survive a year on the ark and then repopulate the world.

Wherever you are today, light up your world. *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16). God takes notice and *He is our praise* (Deuteronomy 10:21). We must strengthen our ties to God's approval rather than people's approval in order to be this light. *I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you. How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?* (John 5:41,44). *The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by their praise*, Proverbs 27:21.

Day 4: The Community of the Hebrews

Hello, God

Read Exodus 19 and 20:1-21.

Notes

Verses	How the people felt and acted when they encountered God on the mountain
19:10-15	God said to wash clothes, be ready, don't go on mountain, no sex
19:16,17	Everyone in the camp trembled bc of thunder, lightning, thick cloud, trumpet blast, smoke
19:24	
20:18	
20:19	
20:20,21	

Deuteronomy 4 replays this scene for those who would have been mere children at that time. Moses recalls, *You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you His covenant, the Ten Commandments, which He commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God* (4:11-13,24).

The author of Hebrews, thousands of years later, repeats that truth: *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire* (12:28,29).

At this point in the history of the Hebrew community, the Israelites were growing in understanding and relationship with God, and God was diligently training them about who He was (and is). As Solomon writes in Proverbs, *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge* (1:7, 1:29, 2:5).

The Hebrews responded to God with awe, trembling, and worship. We cannot forget this aspect of being a child of God. He's not our toy, our play-thing, our sugar-daddy. He owes us nothing but death and hell, apart from Jesus. He is mighty, we are not; He is sovereign, we are limited; He is beyond our imaginations, we are puny.

Yet *fear and trembling* not the final words. The ultimate Word to describe God in all His fullness, in all His glory, and in all His heart, is Jesus. Jesus is God, spoken. Jesus is the invisible God, seen. Jesus is the untouchable God, held. So when we want to see God, we look at Jesus; He Himself said, *I and the Father are One and Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father* (John 10:30, 14:9).

The *consuming fire* without, so foreign and powerful and frightful, becomes for a believer a fire within, the fire and warmth and energy and light of the Holy Spirit, consuming our sin and calling us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

We remain in awe of God, but not solely because of His power; also because of His inclusive love, His unfathomable mercy, and His holy forgiveness. What today is causing you to be in awe of your heavenly Father?

Day 5: Abraham

Hello, Prayer

Read Genesis 18:1-5,16-33

Using these verses, identify who the three visitors were:

Genesis 18:17, 20, 22 _____; Genesis 19:1 _____

Describe their appearance: _____

Abraham, probably at this time around age 99, had the beautiful gift of Eastern hospitality. He and his wife Sarah had set up their tents near *the great trees of Mamre* and were resting during the heat of the day. Into this lovely setting appear *three men standing nearby ...* but were they merely mortal men? No.

Abraham's immediate, gracious, respectful hospitality reminds us of Hebrews 13:2: *Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*

Astoundingly, the LORD includes Abraham in His plans to evaluate the city of Sodom for destruction *because the outcry is so great and their sin so grievous.*

Abraham, intercedes for the people by appealing to God's character. He asks many good questions: *Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

Abraham and the LORD continue their conversation, with Abraham asking God to spare Sodom for the sake of 45, then 40, then 30, then 20, then ten righteous people. Do you think Abraham was thinking about his own nephew Lot, an inhabitant of the city, hoping that Lot's influence had spread for good?

The rest of the story is in chapter 19: Sodom is destroyed and Lot is (barely) saved. There were not even ten righteous people there, and God sent *catastrophe* (Genesis 19:29).

Moses follows Abraham's example when he too intercedes for the Hebrews by appealing to God's character. Read Deuteronomy 9 for a front-row seat on the drama and possible destruction around Moses' prayer.

Abraham's encounter with God was centered on their **conversation**, which now we would call **prayer**. We now can go to His throne with all of our anxieties and concerns *because He cares for us* (1 Peter 5:7).

Dear reader, for whom are you interceding? Who is interceding for you? What are the dramatic events in your life right now? Get alone and pray to the LORD, appealing to His character. Lastly today, look up these Old Testament verses about the character of God, so that you will know Him more intimately as you pray to Him:

Verses	Notes about God's character
Exodus 33:18-23, 34:6,7	
Numbers 6:24-26	
Deuteronomy 10:14-20	
2 Samuel 22:26-37	
Isaiah 40:21-31	



Day 6: Hagar

Hello, I see you!

Read Genesis 16 and, if you have time, 21:8-20. Prepare for family dysfunction and drama.

Does God really know you and me? Do you ever feel like He has forgotten you or doesn't see what's happening in your life?

An Egyptian female slave named Hagar was in a dreadful spot. The awkward family situation: Abraham and Sarah were married, and Sarah was Hagar's mistress. Abraham had been promised by God that he would have a son, an heir, but they had never conceived, so Sarah reasoned with her husband, "Have a child through my maid Hagar, and we'll claim him as yours." Abraham slept with Hagar and she got pregnant with Ishmael. Strife, bitterness, and disgust broke loose between Hagar and Sarah, and Hagar fled. Encounter #1.

Ishmael was a teen when miraculously Sarah had a son, Isaac. Sarah, protective and territorial, noticed Ishmael was mocking her son, and she was enraged. Hagar is then discussed, dismissed, divorced, and discarded. It's awful. Poor Hagar and Ishmael are sent into the desert without many resources, and Hagar cries out to God. Encounter #2.

Hagar's first encounter was with Jesus, *the angel of the LORD*. In Scripture, experts agree that this is a theophany, a pre-incarnate experience of Jesus on earth. The key is to read the "the angel," not just "an angel."

Jesus *found Hagar near a spring* and identifies her by name: *Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?* Do you know Jesus knows you by name, and that He knows where you are? He knows the questions to ask: what are your circumstances? He sees them. Where are you going, now that you are running away? He sees your limits, your heartache, your capacity for taking on sorrow and hardship.

To Hagar's honest reply, Jesus instructs her to *go back* and gives her prophetic promises about her son. He tells her to name her son *Ishmael*, which means **God hears, for the LORD has heard of your misery**. Jesus sees your circumstances and misery too, and has encouragement for you.

Hagar names Jesus: *You are the God who sees me* and named the area *Beer Lahai Roi* which means "well of the Living One who sees me." Hagar rises from ugly immaturity: once a foolish, belittling servant, she becomes the divorced and discarded young mother who proclaims, "You are the God who sees me."

Are your circumstances tough, like Hagar's? How does her story encourage you? Rejoice! He sees you.

Meditate on these related Scriptures. Pick 1-2, write them on notecards, and carry them around with you. Refer back to them, and let them gladden your soul.

Verses	Key thoughts from the verses
Deuteronomy 31:6-8	
Psalms 19:12-14	
Job 23:10	
Daniel 2:22	
Psalms 34:18	
Psalms 139	

Day 7: Jacob

Hello, Wrestler

Read Genesis 32:22-33.

There are times when our encounter with God (or, in this case, pre-incarnate Jesus) is a night of reckoning, a holy confrontation with Him. Such was the case for Jacob.

Jacob was alone, nervous, unsure, and pleading with God for rescue (see the first part of chapter 32). Instead of an effortless deliverance, God brought him a Wrestler, a wound, and a new name.

Through Jacob's encounter, we learn that wrestling with God is allowed, and sometimes just plain necessary. We learn that wrestling with God is difficult, painful, and ordained by Him. He does not spare us from difficulty and pain, but rather uses it to remake us, to re-form us.

Jacob's encounter teaches us to not let go of God until He blesses us, just like Jacob. As with Jacob, we need to understand that the wound may come first, and the blessing, later.

We learn that something dies in this holy encounter, and something else is given life. Along with the wound Jesus inflicts (Jacob's limp), He also gives him a new name (Israel, "he wrestles/struggles with God"). In other words, God gives him a new identity.

An area or stronghold of sin is broken down as we wrestle with God, and through His grace-filled touch, we are given new life as a gift.

When we re-join the world after this dark night, we are different. As the sun rose on Israel, he named the place *Peniel* (face of God), saying, *It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.* We, like Israel, want to name our struggles so we can understand them.

Here are a few questions to ponder from Jacob's encounter:

Questions	Your thoughts
How is God wrestling you down lately? Is He pinning you on the mat of your life, waiting for you to humble yourself in some specific way?	
When have you wrestled with God or given up on the wrestling?	
How can you intentionally engage and receive God's gifts, even if they are both beautiful AND painful?	
What gifts has God given you from your tensions, your wrestling with Him?	

Class Two: Joshua's Encounter

Hello, Lord and Leader

CLASS 2, the era of the Promised Land and Kings: Joshua

Summer Study premise: We are transformed when we encounter God, when we are with Jesus, when we are filled with Holy Spirit



Introduction and Prayer

“The word 'Christian' means different things to different people. To one person it means a stiff, upright, inflexible way of life, colorless and unbending. To another it means a risky, surprised-filled adventure, lived on tiptoe at the edge of expectation... If we get our information from the Biblical material, there is no doubt that the Christian life is a dancing, leaping, daring life.” - Eugene Peterson

Eugene Peterson’s quote describes Joshua’s God-centered, listening, conquering life. In order to give you some background, let’s do a bit of Biblical work together during Table Time.

Table Time Together: divide up the verses to fill in the chart. This will help create a character sketch for Joshua.

Verses	Key thoughts from the verses
Exodus 33:10,11	
Joshua 1:1,2	
Joshua 1:5-9	
Numbers 27:18,22,23	
Deuteronomy 34:9	
Numbers 11:28	
Numbers 14:1-10	
Joshua 24:1,14,15, 29-31	

An Encounter from Scripture: Joshua 1-5 = background; focus Scriptures, 5:13-chapter 6

Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as

one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent. Exodus 33:7-11

Joshua's Story

What was Joshua's training? Did he make bricks back in Egypt or train as someone's apprentice? Did he read a lot of books like a scholar or watch for details like an artist? We don't know, but here's what we observe from Exodus 33: Moses was at God's feet; Joshua was at Moses' side. This is how mentoring works, how faith is passed through friends and generations. Who are you mentoring? For whom are you modeling faith? As you consider this older-to-younger relationship between Moses and Joshua, who do *you* take with you as you live a God-centered life in your work, your home, your play?

Joshua had been a slave under Egyptian whips; had gone through the parted Red Sea (Exodus 14); had sung the victory song as the Egyptian army drowned after the Israelites' escape on dry land (Exodus 15); had gone through the wilderness, seen water come from a rock (Exodus 17) and quail blanket the land and manna fall to the earth (Exodus 16); he had been on the mountain when it was lit with the fire of God and been near when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24, see verse 13). He had stayed in the tent of meeting with God after Moses left it (Exodus 33).

Joshua had given a good report of the Promised Land (Numbers 13,14), stood his ground when the people wanted to turn back to Egypt, survived the death of his generation in the wilderness (Numbers 26:65), been Moses' aide all this time, fought the battle on the ground when Moses had help keeping his hands lifted up (Exodus 17:9-14). He was commissioned by Moses to lead (Dt 31) and accepted by the Israelites (Joshua 1). This man had faith in God. He had experience with God, numerous personal encounters with Him. He didn't merely believe *in* God; he **believed God**. He was God's man, and God's man for this hour.

Joshua 1:1-9 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua has enough experience with God that he knows God is trustworthy and true, mighty and majestic, real and relational. When God makes these promises, He does not lie.

Three Gifts from Joshua 1

Gift One: Review with me first how God encourages Joshua through promises:

1. *No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life.* What a relief that must be as a military commander! The only thing that would cause problems is "sin in the camp" (Joshua 7).
2. *As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.* Joshua had seen with his own eyes that God had been with Moses. God was with Moses in rebuke, in blessing, in guidance, in vision, and in instruction. He would be with Joshua in those very same ways. What a comfort!

3. *I will never leave you nor forsake you.* To know beyond the shadow of a doubt that God will never, ever, ever, ever, ever leave you; that He will never, ever, ever forsake you, leave you in the lurch, leave you hanging in the middle of a battle or conversation or difficulty or blessing — that is **security**. As Joshua listened to God in this encounter, Joshua believed Him. Are you secure in God — do you honestly believe He will never, ever, ever, ever, ever leave you?

Gift Two: God helps Joshua know who he is and how he is to be emotionally.

1. *Be strong and courageous.* God says this three times! He wants Joshua to be fearless, bold as a lion, and lead the people of Israel against every foe with an audacious faith in God. God wanted Joshua to be intrepid and independent of others' opinions about strategy. Dauntless. Valiant. Game. Hardy. **Before God, humbly submitted; but before man, lion-hearted. Does that describe you?**
2. *Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged* God knows that He is about to put Joshua in many difficult situations against mighty foes, armed to the teeth, seasoned in war and weaponry. It could be a terrifying position to be in. Yet God wants Joshua to fight his fears and any discouragement. God knows Satan will try to thrash Joshua's faithful obedience. **The basis for Joshua to not fear and not be discouraged was entirely God: God's promised Presence.** In other words, God is saying to Joshua, "Stay with Me. I am an indomitable force to be reckoned with. You are Mine, and I win. As long as you are on My side, you are safe. I will personally see that My plans take place. I am God, I have chosen this for you and the Hebrews, and I am not leaving. Put your fears under your feet and let's go out together to make My plans happen."
3. *Numbers 27:18: Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership.* You may have met someone like this before: leadership is in their bearing, filling their words, constructing their thoughts, engineering their strategies. They think, talk, and serve like a leader. They are not necessarily an executive or a diva; they are shepherds, servants, and filled with the Spirit of God. They are willing to step away from the crowd; their affirmation comes from God. Joshua had this spirit of leadership within him. He was not arrogant or conceited or power-hungry; in fact, he was, as we just said, **Before God, humbly submitted; but before man, lion-hearted.**
4. *Deuteronomy 34:9: Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom.* The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; Joshua learned to fear the Lord at Moses' side. The word used refers to technical skill and skill in war (Biblehub word 2451, **chokmah**). Joshua's technical skill as the commander of the Hebrew army was significant. If you run a company, you want employees like Joshua who have a bent toward technical skills and a trainable spirit. Are you that person today?

Gift Three: God gives Joshua very specific assignments:

1. *Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to the Israelites.* The great boundary of the Jordan River put them firmly into the Promised Land, and Jericho, just beyond the river, would be their first challenge. How does one get around 2 million people across a river at flood stage? No matter: God had commanded it and He would see to it.
2. *You will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.* If appointed, then anointed. In other words, **if God chooses you to do something, He will give you what you need to get it done. The pressure is off.** Obey and put one step in front of the other.
3. *Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.* To God being **successful** means to obey His instructions, keep them in mind, take the land, and settle it. What God calls successful may not be what the world calls successful. Are you successful in God's eyes? Are you keeping the Word in your mind, mulling it over, thinking it through? Are you doing what He tells you to do in His timing and in His way? If so, you are successful.

To summarize, **Joshua has backbone**, that wonderful quality of a person who will stand his or her ground on God's authority and not their own. They will not make decisions based on fear, but rather will make decisions based on faith in God's leading, Word, and character. After they stand and as God's strength surges within them

by faith, people with backbone move forward, in motion for the Kingdom of God. They have the faith and courage to do what God has told them to do.

Backbone, not wishbone

What is the basis for Joshua's backbone as he goes forward into the world as a warrior, a military commander, a strategist, a leader of a nation and a man of God? He is sure that **God is with him; God will help him; and God will tell him what to do.**

Joshua 5:10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. **11** The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. **12** The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

During this time, we see God transition them in three ways:
they were **prepared** by circumcision;
purified through Passover;
part of the land now (no more manna).

Then they were ready. It was time for them to move into the land to take all of it. Joshua took some time to think away from the crowd of the Israelites. I picture him in the scrubby bushes, listening for the voice of the Lord, scuffing his feet in the dirt, brows knitted down, looking very intense.

Joshua 5:13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a Man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua went up to Him and asked, "Are You for us or for our enemies?"

Joshua, as commander of the Israelites, needs to know who this person is and what his intentions are. Joshua shows his backbone by walking up to the Man. He asks the key question and no doubt is ready to fight, depending on the stranger's answer. After all, the stranger did have a drawn sword in his hand.

"Are you for us or for our enemies?" **14** "Neither," He replied, "but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked Him, "What message does my Lord have for His servant?"

Who is the commander of the Lord's armies? I believe it was pre-incarnate Jesus. He did not rebuke Joshua's worship; He commanded Joshua about his shoes, similar to Moses and the burning bush. According to 6:2, "The LORD said to Joshua." Jesus will again resume that position and authority in the final battle between Himself and Satan's forces:

Rev 19:11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and wages war. **12** His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. **13** He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. **14** The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. **15** Coming out of His mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the

winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. **16** On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.

Now, back to the encounter with Joshua.

15 The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

6:1 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. **3** March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. **4** Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. **5** When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

In this encounter, Joshua is expecting the Soldier to take sides, but **instead of taking sides, He takes over**. His view of this battle is larger than Joshua's. He is about God's will, not who wins. This is about doing what the Lord wants done, not partisan battles. I think God is like this with Republicans and Democrats; borders between nations; earth's limited resources and peoples' claims on them; our agendas and our smaller causes. I think His perspective is different, much larger, much grander, and outside of time.

Instead of taking sides, He takes charge.

When the Commander of the Lord's Armies comes to take over and instruct Joshua, Joshua immediately falls facedown in reverence and fully submits his will and authority to the heavenly Commander. And first things first: take off your shoes: this is sacred space, holy ground, more real than you know. I love this encounter for teaching me we need to **surrender, worship, and inquire**.

Following God, humbly submitted; leading man, lion-hearted.

Following and Leading

☀ Where are you in **the mentoring model**? **For whom are you modeling faith**? As you consider the relationship between Moses and Joshua, who do *you* take with you as you live a God-centered life in your work, your home, your play?

- ☀ Joshua had a lifetime of training before God put him in the position of leader. Even in his position of leadership, **he was primarily a follower**. Following Moses, then following God personally, then following the Commander of the Lord's armies, kept him close to God.
- ☀ Jesus is seeking **followers**. He says, "Follow Me." If you follow Jesus closely, a few friends at your side, you will be His type of leader. It's not about you or your leadership style or your leadership qualities; it's about Him and who He has made you to be over your lifetime. *That* spirit of leadership is holy and God-given.
- ☀ How would your life be different if you truly believed **God's promised Presence**? Revisit what God says to His us, His children: "Stay with Me. I am an indomitable force to be reckoned with. You are Mine, and I win. As long as you are on My side, you are safe until the day I ordain you will die and come to Me. I will personally see that My plans take place. I am God, I have chosen this for you and I am not leaving. Put your fears under your feet and let's go out together to make My plans happen."
- ☀ Jesus gives us the gift of being **secure** by saying He will never leave us. Are you **secure in God** — do you honestly believe He will never, ever, ever, ever, ever leave you? (Matthew 28:20)
- ☀ If God chooses you to do something, He will give you what you need to get it done. The pressure is off. Is that the opposite of what you have been living? **The pressure is off**. He will help you. Just obey, one step at a time, follow closely.
- ☀ **Before God, humbly submitted; before mankind, lion-hearted. Following God, humbly submitted; leading mankind, lion-hearted.** I love this image. Pray this for me and for yourself.
- ☀ What is the basis for backbone? Being sure that **God is with you; God will help you; and God will tell you what to do.**

Lastly: Jesus and Joshua

- ☀ **Jesus** is the NT equivalent of the OT name Joshua, and means "YAHWEH is salvation," or "God saves." Jesus is our Commander. As believers we live lives fully open before Him, fully willing to do what He commands. We are surrendered to Him, accepted by Him, and directed by Him. He watches out for us and has our good in His heart as He sends us out to do Kingdom work.

Closing Table Time Questions

How can you grow as a follower and a leader? Both are not only good, they are necessary in a Christian person. **Following God, humbly submitted; leading man, lion-hearted.**

What are your battles? In what ways has God prepared you for them (your past experiences, your skill set, your prayer life)?

How can you encourage others at your table? How can you encourage them and yourself to be women who have backbone, in the Name of Jesus?

Do you need to stop being sectarian in your thinking? In what ways can you see all sides, all parties, as under the Lordship of Christ, God's Commander of the armies of heaven?

Activity: YouTube on Joshua by the Bible Project: https://youtu.be/JqOqJlFF_eU

In the Quiet

Jesus is your commanding officer. In what way in your life is He "coming not to take sides, but to take over"? Ask Jesus for a fresh encounter with Him.

In the chart below, list the battles you are facing, then list some promises of God for your battles:

My Battles	Scripture's promises to encourage me!

Psalm 46:1-3

Isaiah 41:10

Psalm 34:17,18

Hebrews 12:1-3

Proverbs 18:10

John 14:26,27

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

1 Peter 5:7-10

Romans 12:2

Psalm 118:5,6

Matthew 11:28-30

Philippians 4:6-8

Why not put some of these Scriptures on your phone reminders/alerts/notes so you are reminded to be strong and courageous, and that Jesus is sovereign and mighty and loves you?

Do you have notecards? Why not put some of these Scriptures on notecards or on phone alarms so you are reminded to be strong and courageous in your battles?

Write your take-aways from this week here:



Day 9: Deborah

Hello, Women Warriors

Read Judges 4, skim Judges 5; Genesis 2:18, 20; Genesis 5:1,2.

Write what you learn about Deborah and the situation with Barak.

Verses	Key thoughts from the verses
4:1-3	
4:4	
4:5	
4:6,7	
4:8-10	

The word God used when He created the woman in the Garden of Eden was **ezer**, which, when examined through the breadth of Scripture, distills to mean *warrior companion*. Men and women were created in God's image; but in what ways do women specifically reflect His image? As warrior companions, as strong, insightful, relational beings who hear a cry for help and respond wisely and powerfully, just as their Father does. The presence of an ezer sways the battle.

Deborah (and her friend Jael) were such women.



Barak respected Deborah's walk with the Lord and her connection with Him so much that he refused to go to battle without her.

To double the honor of women, God elevated Deborah, the judge and leader of the nation, and Jael, a tent-dweller, a normal, nationalistic Israelite. From top officials to little-known working women, God calls His women to battle. *In the days of Jael*, Deborah sings, *the roads were abandoned, village life ceased, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.*

What does it look like to *mother* a nation? I picture a woman seeing injustice and setting it straight; hearing fights and separating the parties, helping them discuss their problems; prioritizing what needs to be done first and well; bringing order and beauty; and calling forward honest and good leaders of integrity. Is God calling you to be alarmed by the injustices in our nation, to take a stand, to judge with authority, and to act like a mother within it to save and secure it? Is God empowering you, like Deborah, to *arise*?

To what battle is God calling you? What issues or problems burn within your country, your community, your place and just won't let you go? Pray to the Lord and ask Him to tell you what He wants you to do for His kingdom.

One last point: Deborah joins Miriam, Elizabeth, and Mary as women who have recorded songs of joy to the Lord in Scripture. What song or poem could you write to Him today as you exult in His victories in your life, community, family, or nation? Arise! See the work that needs to be done and prayerfully, faithfully, do it, whether you are seen (like Deborah) or not (like Jael).

Day 10: Gideon

Hello, I'm Trying

Read Judges 6 and 7.

Do a character sketch of Gideon from facts and insight you glean from Judges 6 and 7.

Verses	About Gideon
6:12	Jesus sees him as “a mighty warrior”
6:13	Gideon is disillusioned, upset with God’s absence
6:14	Jesus commissions Gideon to go fight the Midianites and rescue Israel.
6:15	

Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt weak, downtrodden, fairly powerless, restless, and full of complaints? I think this was Gideon’s mindset when he encountered the angel of the Lord (pre-incarnate Jesus). The kicker for Gideon — what probably made his eyebrows rise and his bitterness even worse — was that Jesus said *The Lord is with you, mighty warrior*. Gideon bluntly states his complaint: Where is God? He used to do miracles. Why not now? Why has He *abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian*?

Jesus then commissions Gideon to be the warrior He knows he will become. He recognizes Gideon’s weaknesses but still sends him. *Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand*.



Do you think of yourself as a mighty warrior? Do you complain about the issues of our day? Do you see oppression around you and want things to change, but you think the change will come from someone else, not you? Gideon’s story of encounter causes us to pause.

Do you have little strength to tackle the issues and oppression of our day? That’s okay, as long as God is with you when you go into battle. Is it safer to complain than to enter into the fray? Of course, but God may be commissioning you to step up, step out, enter in, and win some battles in His Name for His people. Ask Him.

What makes all the difference? The presence of God with Gideon as he begins to take steps of faith to gain ground against the Midianites. *Am I not sending you? I will be with you*. That Jesus reveals Himself and His sovereign power to Gideon emboldens Gideon to step out. He starts small: he remains hidden, *going at night*, to break down his family Asherah pole (idol worship). Then *the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon*, and he became the warrior Jesus knew him to be.

What battle is God calling you to? What confirmation do you need from God (Judges 6:36-40)? How is God making your circumstances almost impossible so that He will get all the glory (Judges 7)? Remember God is going before you in battle (7:13-15) to prepare His victory. Go participate and invite Him to build your faith!

Day 11: David and Nathan

Hello, Conviction

Read 2 Samuel 11,12 and Psalm 51.

What has happened between David, Bathsheba, and Uriah? Then what happens between Nathan, God, David, and the child?

Verses	The Situation
2 S 11:1-5	
2 S 11:6-13	
2 S 11:14-25	
2 S 11:26,27	
2 S 12:1-6	
2 S 12:7-12	
2 S 12:13	
2 S 12:14-17	
2 S 12:18-22	
Psalm 51	

Encountering God in conviction and judgment is devastating. David had sinned, no one had called him on it, and he had had a baby with Bathsheba, widow of Uriah, one of David's loyal elite soldiers. But God is a God who sees, and He was *displeased*. Nathan drew David into rebuke through a story, and David saw the truth about himself through God's eyes: *I have sinned against the Lord*.

Thankfully, we have a God who is also forgiving. *The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But God did not exempt David from consequences: Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die.*

After clear confession of his sin, David personally encounters God's redeeming love, His forgiveness of sin, and His merciful restoration of His beloved fallen ones. David offers up prayers for his son, who does die; for his own sinful soul; for God's cleansing; and for his nation. Then he moves forward with his life.

I pray you too recognize your sin and confess it, then freely offer up *the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit*, experience the *mercy, unfailing love, and compassion* of our heavenly Father, and encounter His grace today.

Day 12: Solomon

Hello, Priority Me

Read 1 K 3:1-15, 9:1-9, 11:1-10.

Record some salient facts about Solomon from your reading.

Verses	Facts about Solomon

Solomon encountered God profoundly twice in his life. When Solomon became king, he pursued God's Presence through the usual route: ritual animal sacrifice. He did not encounter God in the sacrifice: no supernatural lightning, no angels singing, no clouds of glory or pillars of fire or burning bushes came during the offering time. The path of religion had left a deafening silence while a young ruler's unanswered prayer lingered in the air.

Yet in the quiet ... in the contemplative's time of night ... when life got still ... God spoke. God prompted Solomon with an amazing invitation: He said, *"Ask for whatever you want Me to give to you."*

"So give Your servant a discerning heart to govern Your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."

What would YOU have asked for? What is the greatest need in your life today? Talk to Him about it.

Out of a blazing need to govern the people of God as their new king, Solomon requested wisdom and God responded generously: *"God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore"* (1 Kings 4:29). God gave Solomon understanding, knowledge, intellectual capacity, skill, discernment, the ability to judge, and then wrapped those up in the totality of wisdom, the way of life that knows and glorifies God, serves mankind, and brings gladness of fulfillment to ourselves.

Solomon encountered God in blessing yet ended up rejecting Him. It's strange how a wise man will sometimes not follow his own advice. As Solomon entered his later years, the cool breeze of success-tainted compromise turned into the cold wind of abandonment as he chose to prioritize himself rather than God. What were Solomon's areas of compromise? In what parts of his life did he progress from whole-hearted to half-hearted to cold-hearted? Why did he grow older and colder?

Solomon as an older man lost his strength to insatiable polygamy, and the beauty of his wisdom was tainted with heinous practices of other gods. Where had his love gone? Where was the heart-felt, God-centered man who loved God and did noble work for God's honor? What do we do with Solomon's cold-heartedness? What do we do with our own?

May we learn from Solomon's encounters and finish well.



Day 13: Elijah and the Showdown

Hello, Challenge

Read 1 Kings 18

Create the scene of the showdown.

Verses	About Baal's Side	About God's Side
16-18	King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah	Elijah
	one bull and an altar	one bull and an altar doused in water
26-29	morning till noon, nothing; dancing and slashing till evening, nothing	one straightforward prayer
29, _____	There was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.	
	prophets slaughtered	
		Rain!

The big showdown is set: Elijah went before the people and said, *How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him. Get two bulls for us. Let Baal's prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God.*

Have you felt alone in your faith? Have you felt opposition? Distress? Deprivation? Have you felt that no one around cares, understands, or relates to you as a believer? Are you fed up with all the ungodliness around you? Are you ready and willing to stake your life on what you believe? Elijah understands. Sometimes being a believer can be a lonely thing, but it's no reason to abdicate your faith. You might need a fresh encounter with God that is **based on** your faith.

“Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

God's fire fell and the people were never the same. *When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”*

What happens when we encounter God? Revelation. Wide-eyed worship. A re-orientation of our lives and hearts and activities around Him. When we see Him, we are transformed. Yet there will always be those who reject God and do not believe (the prophets of Baal and Asherah; also see Mark 16:14 and Matthew 28:17).

What kind of showdowns are happening in your life? How are you praying for the people around you to have a fresh encounter with the God you so dearly love? Are you whole-heartedly following God, or do you need to make a crisp, new choice to commit your whole heart to following Him?

Day 14: Elijah and Depression

Hello, Depression

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18.

What happened to Elijah after the big showdown in 1 Kings 18? Write a clear sequence of events.

Verses	What happened to Elijah

We may not like it, but times of depression are part of being human. Sometimes we feel low, sad, disappointed, defeated, frustrated. It often hits hard after a major victory or time of happiness (see 1 Kings 18). The pendulum swings fast and hard for Elijah. The same man who was just fearless and taunting the prophets of Baal hears Jezebel's threat and something within him breaks. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life." What does Scripture have to say about this? Let's explore.

"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. When [his friends] saw [Job] from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was. "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come?" Job 2:10,12,13; 3:20,21

...The sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." Jonah 4:8

I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. Your hands shaped me and made me. Will You now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will You now turn me to dust again? Job 10:1,8,9

When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all that I had toiled for ... so my heart began to despair. Ecclesiastes 2:11,17, 18,20

So is there hope? Yes, in Christ we can lift up our eyes. He makes true joy and hope possible.



 *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10 The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. Luke 19:10 ∞ A Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11 ∞ He carried our sorrows. Isaiah 53:4 ∞ In Him was life, and that light was the life of men. John 1:4*

So take hope. Are you down or blue, feeling low? You're human. Follow Elijah's prescription: get away. Get rest. Eat well. Let others in to give you some gentle help and provision. Listen for the still, quiet voice of God. Let Him encourage you. Do the next thing, whatever it is that He tells you to do.

Class Three: Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego's Encounter

Hello, Living an Open-Hands Life

CLASS 3, the era of the Prophets: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (hence Sh, M, A)

Summer Study premise: We are transformed when we encounter God, when we are with Jesus, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Table Time questions:

1. When in your life have you experienced great difficulty, but clearly God was with you in the midst of it? Tell the story briefly.
2. When in your life have you completely defied the culture around you for the sake of your faith? Tell the story briefly.

Background

Daniel 1 - Noble, excellent young men were taken by the Babylonian army into what I call "Babylon University," where they were to master the language and literature and learning of Babylon. They trained for three years; were tested; none were equal to the Four (Daniel, Sh, M, A). The Four became part of "the wise men of Babylon" group (ie, magicians) in King Nebuchadnezzar's service. The famous "Daniel Fast" (God's standards of holiness and shalom with food) included the three friends..

Why were the Jews in Babylon? Idolatry. Unfaithfulness. What is tested in Daniel 3? Loyalty. Faithfulness.

Daniel 2 - The 3 are praying for Daniel as he interprets Neb's dream. "Plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery' so they might not be executed. Prayers answered! 2:49 - The 3 appointed to be administrators over the province of Babylon; Daniel put in high position, lavish gifts, at the royal court, ruler over the entire province of Babylon, in charge of all its wise men. The Four are in leadership positions over Babylon.

Daniel 3 - Focus shifts to the three and their situation with Neb's command to worship a gold image.

God has done some signature things throughout Scripture: shut the mouths of lions; brought water from a rock; taken care of His people through a whirlwind of light and darkness; died on a cross to pay for our sins. This encounter ... this one is remarkable too.

An Encounter from Scripture: Daniel 3

The Image of Gold and the Blazing Furnace

3:1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold about 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. **2** He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. **3** So [they] assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: **5** As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. **6** Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

You've got to picture this. Everyone in the area is on their faces and there stand Sh, M, and A. No one else is standing except for them. How incredibly awkward!

8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "May the king live forever! 10 Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, 11 and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

Notice how the Babylonians incite Nebuchadnezzar: "The Jews ... pay no attention to you, Your majesty." Strike one. They don't "serve your gods." Strike two. They don't "worship the image of gold you have set up." Strike three.

Sh, M, A are identified specifically, not only as Jews, but as *officials appointed by Nebuchadnezzar*. This makes him look bad. The Jews are not obeying Nebuchadnezzar's laws; that makes Neb look bad. He will have nothing besmirch his royal name or power and gets highly emotional.

So what about civil disobedience? Listen to this from bible.org: "Even when our obedience to God requires us to disobey a human law, there are proper ways to disobey. ...They quietly obeyed God by not bowing down; and then, without resistance, they accepted the king's punishment. They left the rest to God." This is confirmed in Acts 5: 27 **The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"**

Nebuchadnezzar considered this to be intolerable effrontery. If you've ever seen someone who is offended, often they will have one of two responses: outward anger and outrage or inward bitterness or distance. Nebuchadnezzar seems to fall on the spectrum at the extreme of explosive rage.

13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Now we begin to see what's at stake here. Nebuchadnezzar is challenging the God of Sh, M, and A. Neb had honored their God before, in chapter 2, but as about ten years passed, Nebuchadnezzar's pride increased and his regard for God decreased.

As my Mama taught me, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Nebuchadnezzar was using the gift of leadership and kingship inappropriately: worship or fire. Obey me or die.

Another point here: We must always remember that God is a God of nations, not just individuals. God, it seems, wants Nebuchadnezzar's worship. Nebuchadnezzar was the great ruler of his day, extensively building up Babylon after crushing the king of Assyria. For Nebuchadnezzar to honor God would have sent a message to the world about the glorious God of the Jews, but he seems to have forgotten his prior interaction with Daniel about God.

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able

to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

No "May the king live forever!" Just a straight-forward address that completely cuts off King Nebuchadnezzar. "We're not going to defend ourselves. We're seeing clearly: God can deliver us from your furnace, and will. Our lives are in His hands and are completely, unreservedly His. But *even if* He doesn't deliver us, we're not compromising our faith. We're not saving our own lives with false worship and idolatry. We're not jeopardizing the relationship we have with God Almighty because of your pride or your decree. We will put ourselves in peril first. But our God — our God! — is so mighty that YES, He can save us. Regardless of what God chooses to do, we will not worship your image or obey your ridiculous command. We entrust our lives completely to His care — *even if*. Sh, M, and A have their hands wide open.

Live with open hands.

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Indignant Nebuchadnezzar's attitude changes. His offense rises from substantial intensity to unmitigated frenzied furor. The Three don't put Nebuchadnezzar's wishes first, and he abhors a lack of allegiance. If he can't control these men, if he can't twist their loyalty, if he can't force them to do what he wants them to do, he'll just kill them. But it has to be big. Nebuchadnezzar goes into a show of force with stronger fire and stronger soldiers. Flammable clothing and flammable skin, an intensely hot furnace and fire ... it all seems to add up to death and harm, **yet watch** as God brings miraculous life and beauty to this situation.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

Note: the word for *amazement*: "tev -AH' - startled, alarmed, astounded; related to "to grieve."

Is Nebuchadnezzar already beginning to grieve his action, his attitude? Is he alarmed that something or someone has somehow overruled him? Is he amazed that the natural order of things has been displaced ... by faith?

24 They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty."

25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Who is the Fourth Man? Pre-incarnate Jesus! He didn't just look "like a son of the gods"; **He is the Son of God**, and He can walk on water, calm a storm, stand in the fire, open the eyes of the blind, give the deaf their hearing, help the lame dance, deliver the oppressed, heal a leper, straighten the bent, or raise the dead if He wants to! Fire is a created thing, and He is the Creator! He's no more afraid of fire than ... well, there's nothing

He's afraid of. Not fire, not Nebuchadnezzar, not lost men's arrogant decrees, and not the death of His saints. Ah, don't you love Him?

What are you afraid of?

To what — to whom — are you clinging or clutching, holding far too tightly, fists white-knuckled and balled up? Let it go, friend, *even if*. Live an open hands life. He's got you. He is trustworthy. Let go.

To what horrible situation do you want God to bring miraculous life and beauty? Pray to Him. Ask. *Even if* He says no, you've given Him your heart. *Even if* He doesn't fix a situation or a person for whom you care, He still extends great love to you. *Even if* you don't understand what He's thinking ... *even if* ... open up your hands and offer Him your life.

Jesus, the Fourth Man, is our best friend in the fire, in every *even if* situation. It's great to have buddies, but there's no one like Jesus when you're in the fires of life and the furies of people. **THERE IS NO ONE LIKE JESUS, who has already walked through the fires of death and hell in order to win you!**

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

Nebuchadnezzar is a smart guy; he's been paying attention. About ten years previous to this situation, he had said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery" (2:7). Now, Nebuchadnezzar is identifying their God as "The Most High God."

Here's a question to ponder: What if Jesus had come out of the furnace too? What do you think would've happened next?

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes God's power and forces; honors the loyalty of Sh, M, And A; and does a characteristic swing from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Jesus, the Fourth Man, is our best friend in the fire.

As a Christian, you're going to believe things, do things, and **not** do things that will cause offense to the cultures of the world. How you handle yourself in those situations is important.

Do you freak out? Get violent? Get offended? Get aggressive? Shrink back? Lose your voice?

In the Name of Jesus, don't have those responses. Rather, follow the lead of Sh, M, and A:

- ☀ Realize there are consequences to being a Christian which show up in small ways as well as life-or-death ways.
- ☀ Tell the truth. Stand on it. Don't be overwhelmed or intimidated by people. Remember your faith: God is watching and listening. He is in control, and He wants you to glorify Him. "Neb, we do not need to defend ourselves to you in this matter." Stay calm.
- ☀ Live an open-hands life. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil 1:21. You win either way. So shine! Live or die faithfully. Give your life over to God completely. You're His; your life is His. He's got you; don't be afraid. Open your hands. Keep your integrity as a believer and stake your life on God. **18** "But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."
- ☀ See what God will do. Sometimes God shows up in the most remarkable places ... even a fiery furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar

- ☀ P.S. A man with power is best when he's stable, fully submitted to God, and has several checks and balances. That does not describe Nebuchadnezzar at this time of his rule!

Pattern: Nebuchadnezzar ultimately acknowledges God, but it didn't seem to "stick" as he continues through his royal responsibilities and routines. Test → choice for God → Nebuchadnezzar's humility or wonder → Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God → promotion of the Jews (1:19,20; 2:46-49; 3:28-30).

We've already noted that Nebuchadnezzar misused the gift of leadership and kingship: worship or fire. Obey me or die. Worship the way I want you to or you'll die by fire. Some people describe God that way too.

God wants lovers, not robots. God wants to build a family, not send people to hell. **2 Peter 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Does God always save Christians from harm? Absolutely not. Think ISIS beheadings. Think Egyptian Christian martyrs. Remember the martyrs under God's heavenly altar in **Revelation 6:9-11**: *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.* Interestingly, those martyrs had been beheaded, which is also the MO of ISIS.

Whether we live or die is God's call. We won't die until He is ready for us to come to Him. It's a wonderful comfort, really, to know *our times are in His hands* (Psalm 31:15).

But sometimes, God just shows off. When people seem to put Him in a box; when pride overextends into self-aggrandizement; when God sees people who are ripe for the truth; when His Lordship is challenged by pagan gods or forces; He often chooses to shine His light into the darkness. He loves to proclaim His glory, to dispel the lies of the evil one, and to confound the arrogant and self-centered.

Questions: Discuss the quote with your table:

... God was with Daniel and his three friends at all times.

But in the fiery furnace, God was with these three in a very special way.

How often we pray God would keep us *from* suffering, rather than keep us *through* suffering.

Often God reveals Himself in our suffering in a much more personal and glorious way.

So it was with these three.

God was present with them *in* the furnace.

(bible.org)

In the Quiet

In what ways are you living with your hands open, your life offered up to God? To what or to whom are you clutching and need to let go?

Here are some Scriptures that affirm the holy ground of surrendering your life.

Philippians

1:21,27-29

John 15:18-25

Matthew 5:10-12

1 Peter 2:21-23;

4:12-19

James 1:2-4

Isaiah 43:1,2

Phil 3:10

Re-write Psalm 40
in your own words.

Write your take-aways from this week above.



Day 16: Daniel

Hello, Cost

Read Daniel 1 and Daniel 6. (If you have time, read the whole book! It's amazing!)

Write out a brief character sketch of Daniel based on your Scripture reading.

Verses	Facts about Solomon
1:3-6	
1:8	
1:12,13,15	
1:17-20	
6:3,4	
6:23	

As Daniel was forced into the “University of Babylon” (1:4,5) by his Babylonian captors led by King Nebuchadnezzar, he chose to boldly, bravely stand with God and stand away from the crowd (1:8). Academically he mastered the knowledge of Babylon so that it would not master him. He rose to high political positions, worked under several world-class kings, and endured a political ambush that landed him in a den of hungry lions. Daniel always, without fail, chose God. Period. God rewarded his faithfulness with clear revelation and companionship. Daniel had many encounters with heavenly beings. He also encountered God and saw things to come in *dreams and visions* (1:17).

In Daniel 1 we see the young captive Daniel choosing to obey God under the intense pressure of being identified as a potential leader: *showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace*. In what ways does that apply to your life? What are your pressures? In what way are you required or expected to perform or produce? This can be in management (children or crises or business or meal planning), administration (home or office), directing (a small company, a board of directors, little errant toddlers or eye-rolling teens), strategy (prayer or people or positions or pursuits or passions), or any number of facets in a woman's life. To meet this challenge, *God gave knowledge and understanding*; He will help you too. Seemingly impossible situations are often where we encounter God's provision and power.

In Daniel 6 we see elderly Daniel (at least 80) still faithfully discharging his government duties: *The administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”* So they created an irrevocable (but modifiable) law to trap Daniel. Has anyone ever intentionally put you in a bind? Have you been in a situation in which you had to choose God's ways or compromise what you believe?

Daniel's unwavering faithfulness brought him into a life-or-death encounter with God. *“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”* The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ... King Darius wrote, *I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.* In what ways has God delivered you and shown His power and provision for you? In what ways has your difficulty been a strong witness to God in your friend and family groups?

Day 17: Hosea

Hello, Bride



Read Hosea chapters 1,2, and 3.

Notes

Verses	Names & meanings of the children, chapter 1		Names & meanings of the children, redeemed!, chapter 2
1:4	Jezreel: bloodshed and shame (a predicted future battle)	2:22	
1:6	Lo-Ruhamah: _____	2:23	
1:9	Lo-Ammi: _____	1:10, 2:23	
1 Peter 2:9,10	How does 1 Peter 2:9,10 relate to this story and to us as God's people?		

When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.” So he married Gomer ... and she conceived.

To be entrusted with being a living image of God’s faithful love, His disappointment at being forsaken, and His reconciliatory covenant is bittersweet.

Just when we think that God is going to justly destroy His unfaithful beloved (then Israel, now symbolically the church), He instead chooses to *allure her*; *I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her*. “In that day,” declares the Lord, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’”

Astonishingly, God renews the covenant with His errant people, saying *He will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you and you will acknowledge the Lord*.

Then the living illustration Hosea and Gomer render for us confounds us: *The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods” So I bought her Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.”*

Just when you think God’s mercy has run out, He calls us to Himself gently, not as an authority or master, but as a lover. He calls us to repent, to be done with our former ways of life (and we know they don’t satisfy). He pledges His own heart *in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion ... in faithfulness*. He calls us to love Him again and separate from our idols.

Are you ready to see God as your faithful husband, the One who loves you best and most, the One who will never, ever, ever leave you? That is who He is. He calls to you and me, winning our hearts with His words and actions of affection, gently leading us back to wholeness and health and understanding. There is no better way to live. There is no better encounter to have than with the living, almighty God who declares His love for you.

Is there anything or anyone holding you back from God’s magnificent love? Journal about it. Name it; leave it, and run into God’s open arms. _____

Day 18: Isaiah

Hello, Throne Room

Read Isaiah 6.

Describe the throne room: what do you see there? Who is there? What is happening? What are they saying and doing?

Verses	About the Throne Room

Isaiah's encounter with the Lord was other-worldly, awe-inspiring, and fearsome. He had eyes to see and ears to hear the holy world of the spiritual, and he was undone. In the light of God's glory, Isaiah cursed himself; in the majesty of God's Presence, we see ourselves as we are, and are devastated.

Isaiah humbled himself. As a prophet, his lips were to be clean, strong, and pure, as he spoke the Word of the Lord, yet he declared, *I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips*. A seraph brought a live coal, touched Isaiah's lips, and his *sin is atoned for*.

Then God reveals His heart for a broken world and asks for a volunteer to carry His Word to *the people*. Isaiah famously says, *Here am I. Send me!*

Isaiah had to humble himself and deal with his sin before his commission. His encounter also applies to us: have we humbled ourselves before the Lord? Have we believed in Jesus' atonement (reconciliation between mankind and God through Jesus' life and death and resurrection) of our sin? Have we responded to His call to *go and tell*, regardless of what others are doing and saying? In what way are you and I 'sent people'?

God gives Isaiah words to speak; they are words of future judgment coupled with grace.

Jesus quotes 6:9,10 when He explains why He used parables, stories with a smokey layer over understanding. To understand a parable, the listener had to enter into it, think about it, ruminate over its meaning. Not everyone has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Isaiah's encounters with God continue throughout the book, but none compares to seeing God's throne room. In your imagination, put yourself there. Enter into it. When you hear "Holy, holy, holy" and feel the shaking and smell the smoke, what happens within your soul? What area of sin jumps up to be forgiven? What mission do you hear God give to you?

Day 19: Jeremiah

Hello, Pictures

Jeremiah uses metaphor and imagery to help us encounter God and understand what He is doing. Write in these examples:

Verses	Metaphor	Scripture
1:13-16	boiling pot tilting from the north	
1:18,19	fortified city, iron pillar, bronze wall	
2:21	vine	God planted them like a choice vine but they became corrupt & wild
17:8,9		
18:1-6		
20:9		
23:29a		
23:29b		
24:1-10		

Jeremiah's encounter was personal and determined the course of his life. *The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." "Alas, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord. Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."*

From that point on, Jeremiah faced opposition, yet remained faithful. He was beaten, misunderstood, ignored, opposed by the religious establishment, thrown into a well, and left for dead. He represented the truth; they preferred a lie. He represented judgment; they preferred fabricated peace. He represented God's Word; they preferred to ignore or assail it.

Becoming God's prophet cost Jeremiah everything, but he was obedient, even to the possibility of death.

Do you, like Jeremiah, have your doubts about God's call on your life? Do you say *Alas, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to ...?* Have no fear, He will teach you and train you. Do you, like Jeremiah, need to be strong and fearless? *Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you.*



Do you, like Jeremiah, have the honor of telling the truth to your culture, though they may not want to hear it? *You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.* He will be with you and within you. Encountering God may cost you everything, but after all, we in Christ have died, and this is not our home. To find our life we must lose it. So be brave, ezer warrior, and move forward.

Day 20: Nebuchadnezzar

Hello, God Almighty

Read Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar's letter to the people of the world during the time of Daniel.

Verses	What do you learn about Nebuchadnezzar?
Jeremiah 25:1-11	
2 Kings 24:1	
2 Kings 24:10-20	
Daniel 3:4-6	
Daniel 3:13-23	
Daniel 3:24-30	
Daniel 4:34-37	

When a prideful, powerful person encounters the power of the living Almighty God, they are forever humbled. The glory they once claimed as their own, they pass upward to God. The accomplishments, kingdoms, and authority they once owned, they attribute to the greatness and generosity of God. This radical shift happened to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.

The king was ruler of most of the known realms of the world, powerful beyond what we have experienced in our lifetimes as a world ruler. He was greatly feared and a conqueror. God chose to use Nebuchadnezzar as a weapon of His wrath against His own people, the people of Egypt, and other nations. The king's exploits are in the annals of history if you want to read more about him.

He had his eccentricities, and his arrogance grew; God took note. After the debacle of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had passed, Nebuchadnezzar again wandered from his limited knowledge of the Lord into his own self-centered, godlike ruling, and God brought judgment on him.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a chance to repent and humble himself by sending Daniel to him: *Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.*"

Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.

God loved him so dearly that He changed Nebuchadnezzar's circumstances from being human to being like an animal. *Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.* [continued on the next page]

I don't know how long the seven times was, but thankfully, *At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.*

Nebuchadnezzar had a complete change of heart. Because of his encounter with the living, Almighty God of an *eternal kingdom*, he delighted in speaking of God's praises rather than his own. He exalted God, not himself; he gave God credit for his successes.

It is his pleasure to *tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"*

Do you see the radical transformation in the king who encountered the King of Kings?

While he could still acknowledge the *honor and splendor* God restored to him, *now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

Nebuchadnezzar received honor yet did not keep it; he transferred it to the King of the universe through his words and his humility.

What do you learn from King Nebuchadnezzar?

How has God challenged your pride?

How does this inform what you do with praise, compliments, recognition, power, position, and prestige? Take time to journal your thoughts below. Listen for what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

Day 21: Jonah

Hello, Compassion

Read Jonah 1-4. Really, it's super fast (only 2 pages) and an entertaining story as well.

Summarize the four chapters of Jonah below.

Chapter	Summary
1	
2	Jonah prays from inside the fish about his adventure into the fish, his cries of distress, and his change of heart for the salvation of Ninevah. The fish vomits him out onto dry land.
3	
4	

I hope you never have an encounter quite like Jonah's! On hearing God's command to preach to the dreaded, war-like, ferocious Ninevites, Jonah said, "No way. Not them. They are so hateful, they despise You, and are unthinkably cruel. The darkness in their hearts is unfathomable. They torture, maim, and kill without thought." Not only did Jonah balk, but he went in the opposite direction. The classic definition of disobedience can come straight from Jonah 1:3: *But Jonah ran away.* Have you ever been like Jonah?

God not only cared for the lost Ninevites, but He also cared for Jonah, so He arranged for a storm to rage until Jonah acknowledged his wrong. *Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the sailors greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.* Everywhere Jonah goes, people acknowledge the Lord.

Would Jonah drown in his disobedience? No. *The Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* From inside the fish Jonah prayed. Here, the encounter pivots, for Jonah relinquishes his will and right to his own opinion of the Ninevites (2:8,9), and as the fish swims to Assyria's coastline, Jonah unwraps the seaweed from his head (2:5) just in time to be spit out onto the shore (2:10) for a long walk into Ninevah.

Jonah arrived in the city with the message of God but not the heart of God (*Should I not be concerned with that great city?*). *120,000 people* lived there, and it took *three days* for Jonah to walk through it *proclaiming* God's wrath. The people were alarmed, *believed God*, and repented in a *city-wide fast*. *God was merciful and did not bring about the destruction He had threatened.* Jonah was upset and pouted. The only unrepentant heart in Ninevah was Jonah's!

In the face of God's character (*"Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*) *But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"*) Jonah was mad enough to die.

God's grace and compassion and forgiveness reach farther than we can imagine. In what parts of your heart are you hard, like Jonah toward the Ninevites? Toward a race, a relative, a political party, an organization, a person? What can you learn from Jonah's encounter with our grace-giving, generous, compassionate God?



Class Four: Mary Magdalene's Encounter

"Hello, Beloved," she said; "Hello, Wholehearted," answered He.

CLASS 4: the Time of Jesus and the Church

Summer Study premise: We are transformed when we encounter God, when we are with Jesus, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Ancients: Job; History: Joshua; Prophets: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Today, we're looking at encounters during the time of Jesus and the early church.

Table Time Together:

1. Think of a time when you had a noteworthy before-and-after experience: in other words, something or someone changed profoundly from the "before" image or idea to the "after." For example, remodeling an area of your home (think of the before/after pictures); a completely new haircut, etc.).
2. Tell the story of knowing someone who was wild or godless in attitude or behavior or scruples and, when they turned to Christ, totally changed. (That person can be you!) [1:45 plus 15 min for table time]

5 pictures of Mary Magdalene's encounters with Jesus:

1. First encounter: Jesus cast out 7 demons (Mark 16:9, Luke 8:2).

Luke 8:1-2: After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out....

Now what did that look like? Let's look at one portrayal of what it might mean to be delivered.

Video of MM being set free~Chapter 5 of "Magdalena"

Because Jesus set her free, she was wholeheartedly devoted to Him. She was aware that she owed Him her life. Are you beautifully, faithfully devoted to Him for setting you free? Do you realize that you owe your life to Jesus, who died for you, who set you free, who purchased you with His blood?

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 7:22 For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price.

MM became the Lord's free person and voluntarily gave herself over to be His "slave." How about you? Are you freely giving yourself into Jesus' service? Are you, like MM, wholeheartedly following Him?

2. Second encounter: She supported Jesus materially, travelled with Him in an honorable band of women for about two years, and used her wealth for His service.

Luke 8:1-3: After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Mark 15:40,41: Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Matthew 27:55-56: Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene

I love how God finds people who are strategic, though not necessarily well known.

People who are hidden and faithful have a special place in His heart. Does that apply to you? Are you home with babies, unseen except for social media? Are you taking care of an elderly parent or a husband with dementia, rarely getting a break to get out into the world other than to get a few groceries? God sees you. Be encouraged. He will see you through until you complete your task or until He chooses something else for you. He sees you.

The woman called **Joanna** undoubtedly influenced her husband, who perhaps influenced some of Herod's staff. You never know who can be connected to Jesus through a faithful follower. Who was Susanna? Who was Salome? Who were the *many others*? God knows.

Here's my personal question to you from MM's second contact: Are you using your wealth for the service of Jesus? If you've got wealth, don't apologize. It's not a sin to be wealthy, although Jesus does caution His people about wealth being a hindrance to entering the Kingdom of God. So let's all take the advice of Steve Moldrup: "Wealth is like a idol with claws and teeth that will bite into you, wrestle you down, stand over you and howl. The best thing I know to do to fight the idol of wealth and riches is to give it away. Let it go. Just as it came to you, keep it moving to others."

Do you use your wealth, talents, time, and skills to bring the Kingdom of God to earth? Are you "traveling with Jesus" as MM did as you go through your life, as you mature, as you work, as you age?

3. Third encounter: When Jesus was on the cross and during His burial, MM watched over Him. She was present when He died. She saw where He was buried (Matthew 27:56,61, Mark 15:40,47; John 19:25) and waited to be able to help Him by lovingly wrapping Him in the cloths and spices.

Mark 15:40-47: Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. **Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.**

Matthew 27:55-61: Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, [f] and the mother of Zebedee's sons. As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.**

At this point in the narrative, MM is completely broken-hearted. Dejected and disconsolate, she watches from a distance as the focus of her faith, the confidence of her heart, and the hope of her future dies the miserable death of crucifixion. She doesn't know the end of the story. She doesn't know what to do, so she chooses to stay

near Jesus' body with a heart full of love and sorrow, waiting to care for Him when the Sabbath is over. And so she sat. So she watched. So she waited.

Has your walk of faith ever come to a point of bewilderment? of being heartsick? Have you experienced "faith fatigue"? You didn't or couldn't understand what God was doing ... nothing made sense ... everything was going wrong. All you could do was be near Him in the best way you knew how.

Years ago when I went through my divorce, there were days when nothing made sense. What God was doing and allowing threw me a few curves. I didn't know what to do. Sometimes I just sat there on my bed, no words, emotionally consumed, and held my Bible close to my chest. I didn't even have the energy or clarity to read it. All I wanted was the nearness of God. He was enough; He was everything. I just had to be with Him as best I could, and that simple act was a comfort. I waited. I watched for Him. I prayed. That was all I could do.

Perhaps you're in that place today, or you know someone else who is. Go sit with her. Put an encouraging verse on a card and put it in her hand. Give her love and affection. Wait and watch with her. While none of us knows what God is up to in times of death, we do know He is a God of life. Look for the life. He is faithful to complete what He starts. He will bring life. It's who He is. Keep watching and waiting.

4. Fourth encounter: Resurrection! Mt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18.

Mark 16:1-4 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

Mt 28:2-7 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples and Peter; 'He has risen from the dead ...

Mark 16:5-11 ... He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

So Mary Magdalene saw Him first! What a glorious privilege! Let's focus in on John 20 for the details:

John 20:1,2: Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

11-14 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

Now why wouldn't she know it was Jesus? How's your vision when you've been sobbing? Your eyes are puffy, mascara is running, your nose is running, you feel shy about looking at someone else directly in the face ... but you can easily be aware of someone's presence.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

I picture her not really looking at Jesus, not turned toward Him, but alluding to the grave and wiping her nose and trying really hard not to completely lose it as she confessed her deep devotion to her beloved Lord.

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."
She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"

Here she does turn toward Him, full on, eyes up, hope lighting up her face for the first time in days. She cries out with joy and amazement, calling Him "Teacher!"

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

I imagine MM has flown to Him, wrapped her arms around His body or His feet, and I picture Him smilingly telling her to turn Him loose, that He has work to do and needs her to deliver His message. Mary is the "sent one": that's the definition of "apostle." He assures her that God the Father is her God too. They are family.

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Mary recognized Jesus' voice. Jesus said in John 10 27-29, *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*

5. Pentecost: She was present as the Holy Spirit was given.

Acts 1:12-14 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk [a little over half a mile] from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

MM was present to receive the Holy Spirit and be empowered by Him. She was with the early church, enjoying the formation of the Body of Christ and witnessing to the reality of all Jesus said and did.

Is your life of faith such that you practice hospitality *with a glad and sincere heart*, opening your doors or perhaps paying the bill at dinner, so that others may see and hear from you how you experience Jesus?

Do you live out your faith in winsome ways?

Table Time

In what ways are you like Mary Magdalene?

Which of her encounters do you most relate to?

What are you learning?

Watch this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e45dVgWgV64>

In the Quiet

Do you love Jesus like MM: all out, wholeheartedly, like someone who has been given a whole new chance at life, like someone who has come back from the dead?

Look up these verses about being wholehearted:

Psalm 86:11, Proverbs 3:5-6, Deuteronomy 5:29, 1 Chronicles 29:17, Psalm 9:1, Psalm 86:12, Psalm 119:10, Psalm 119:58, Psalm 119:145, Proverbs 4:4, Jeremiah 24:7, Numbers 14:24, Joshua 14:8, Isaiah 38:3, Ezekiel 11:19, Ephesians 6:7

•whole•hearted•

Write your
take-aways
from this
week here:



Day 23: Simon becomes Peter

Hello, Rock

Read the Scriptures in the table.

Do a character sketch of Simon Peter based on these “stops” on the journey of his life:

“Stop”	Verses	Facts about him
Introduction		You are Simon, but you shall be called Peter, and on this rock I shall build My church.
	John 6	Loyal even when he did not fully grasp the truth. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”
The Great Confession		“You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” He believed and voiced it first!
		He refused the cross and it’s horror for Jesus; “Get behind Me, Satan!” For you have in mind the things of men, not the things of God.”
Mount of Transfiguration		
His three denials		
Malchus’ ear		
Forgiveness, reconciliation		Jesus and Simon Peter were reconciled in a private meeting
Pentecost		
1,2 Peter		He is long-suffering and filled with love; he has truly become the rock!

The story of Simon becoming Peter reminds me of the image of a large rock of alloyed metal, debris, and being placed into a cauldron. God, as the silversmith, adds heat to the cauldron, and the dross begins to rise to the surface as the essential elements heat and melt. God skims off the dross and increases the heat, then repeats the process until He has pure, unadulterated silver reflecting His glory. Such was Simon Peter.

He was a risk-taker; asked simple yet deep questions; expressed affection; acted impulsively; had spiritual insight; and felt his own sin and unworthiness profoundly.

There are two moments that are very significant in Simon Peter’s development which share the look of Jesus: first, when Jesus met him, and second, when Jesus looked at him as He was led out of the high priest’s house during His trials. Both of those very different events had one common theme: Jesus looked at Simon Peter, and the word indicates seeing into the depths of a person, penetrating all that is cluttered and without to carefully see what is within.

These two looks frame *Simon*; then, after the resurrection, after being purified and refined by fire, Simon becomes *Peter*, filled with the Holy Spirit, strengthened by God to witness to the world about the Christ he loved and followed.

Simon had to be disciplined into Peter, the rock. Who around you is a Simon, a Peter in the making? Possibly full of debris and detritus, yet if you look—really look within—you see the shining brilliance of God’s glory?



Day 24: The Woman at the Well

Hello, Living Honestly

Read John 4.

What do you learn about the woman at the well from John 4? Make some notes below.

Verses	Facts about her

A Samaritan woman, hated because her ancestors were Assyrian conquerors mixed with Jews, encountered Jesus in the most simple of circumstances: Jesus requested a drink. Quite the scandal, He a man and a Jew, and they alone. Jesus broke social mores for the sake of souls; the kingdom is more important than social rules.

Jesus used skilled metaphor to invite her into the encounter. *If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.* Jesus, God's gift to her and the Source of true life, used her need for water in the metaphor 'living water.' Metaphors as pictures invite us into imagery and conversation that is more open than concrete, factual definitions of words. She continued to use concrete language rather than metaphor, but her curiosity was aroused.

The water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Jesus spoke of spiritual realities using physical terms, trying to bridge the physical to the spiritual - an invitation to the next level of living and understanding. She still didn't understand, so Jesus shifted by asking her to *get your husband.*

I have no husband, tersely acknowledging this difficult area in her heart and soul. She was honest with Jesus. He appreciated and affirmed her honesty and left judgment out. Next, she drew lines, both religious and political, between them; was she defensive?

As in any encounter with Jesus, He saw through her; He is *the God who sees!* He perceives her heart: she longed to *worship God,* and He clarified that worship is not about the place, it's about the worshipper. I imagine His eyes full of genuine, serious delight, and her eyes filling with tears as He spoke her language.

I know that Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us. She revealed the source of her hope: the Messiah. Jesus jumped in: *I who speak to you am He.* He revealed Himself to her so plainly, so clearly. 'Here I am, true worshipper. I'm the Messiah.'

She became the town's first evangelist, genuinely leading people to Christ. *They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.* Do you need a fresh drink of living water today? Do you long to tell others about your encounters with Jesus? Who can you invite to encounter Jesus today?

Day 25: The Centurions

Hello, Marvel

Read Matthew 8:5-13 and 27:54, then Luke 23:47 (but read 44-49 so you'll know what's going on) with Mark 15:39-45

Note: Google the role and training of a centurion in the Roman army. It's astounding how fierce they were!

The first Centurion (we'll call him C1) is a humble and caring man seeking Jesus' help. C1 calls Jesus "Lord," a term of respect in which he acknowledges that Jesus is the greater of them. That would not happen with every centurion! Jesus asks him, *Shall I come and heal him?* It's as if Jesus knows that the centurion is a man under command and He gives C1 room to express his faith.

C1 acknowledges that he is *a man under authority, with soldiers under me* [100 men]. *I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.*" In other words, C1 acknowledges Jesus' Lordship, and with it, His authority over all things: nature, disease, people, events, weather, to name a few. C1 has faith that all Jesus needs to do is speak healing and it will be so.

Jesus' response to this non-Jew is to "to wonder at, be amazed (marvel), i.e. astonished out of one's senses; awestruck (HELPS Word-studies, **2296** thaumázō)."

Both men wondered at the other: Jesus marveled at C1's faith; C1 marveled at Jesus as healer and Lord.

The second Centurion (let's call him C2) was stationed at the cross. He was familiar with death; it was part of his job. C2 carefully observed the crowd just as our Secret Service people do when they guard someone; he waited patiently for the criminals on their crosses to die; and he kept order. *C2 stood near Jesus.*

When Jesus died, a series of events came together to greatly impress *C2 and those with him*: the land had been dark for hours, yet it was during the afternoon; a substantial earthquake rocked the city; and Jesus' manner of dying was so majestic and holy that C2 was changed from the inside out. *Surely he was the Son of God!* Luke includes that *C2 praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."*

When questioned by Joseph of Arimathea about getting the body of Jesus, *Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.*

This trusted centurion did his duty, yet being with Jesus even for such a short, tragic time transformed him. Watching Him die and seeing how nature responded profoundly affected this trained, battle-hardened man. He too marveled at Jesus.

My question of you today is, Where is your wonder? Do you look at Jesus and marvel? What makes you marvel at Jesus?

Take a few minutes and write down everything that comes to mind when you think of why you marvel and wonder and are astounded by Jesus.

Day 26: Simon of Cyrene

Hello, Interrupt Me and Wreck my Life

Mt 27:32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Mark 15:21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Luke 23:26 As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Picture the scene: Jesus is on the Via Dolorosa after having been beaten several times, flogged, deprived of food, water, and sleep. Isaiah 52:14 says *His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and His form marred beyond human likeness* after this horrific night and morning. He is stumbling through the streets because loss of blood and dehydration and trauma. Then a Roman soldier scans the crowd to find someone to help move this process along, and *seizes Simon of Cyrene*.

All the gospel accounts mention that Simon was from *Cyrene*, modern-day Libya, on the northern coast of the African continent. We don't know if Simon was a black man, Jewish, Greek, or some combination, but tradition says he was of African descent. We can speculate that he was not Roman, because a Roman soldier would not seize a Roman or give him the task of carrying a cross beam. Simon was *on his way in from the country*, minding his own business. He may have had friends there or possibly he was celebrating the Passover.

His day was completely, horrifyingly interrupted as Jesus sauntered and stumbled past him. Simon was forced to shoulder the 30 to 40-pound crossbar beam for a physically faltering Jesus. We can only speculate on what happened next: what if Simon reached the top of the hill and had to pause and get his breath? What if he saw them nail Jesus to the cross while He said, *Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing*? What if Simon saw and heard the jeering from the Jewish leadership, read the sign "King of the Jews," saw the women weeping and speaking of Him, and possibly heard Jesus' words to His mother and the thief?

What if his sons *Alexander and Rufus* had many questions about what happened to their dad, and then Jesus? Would Simon have told his sons the story about the interruption in his day, the crossbeam, the crucifixion of Jesus, the uproar and sorrow in Jerusalem?

Paul in Romans 16:13 writes, *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too*. Wouldn't Simon have told his wife, and then did she become that woman in Romans 16:13? Was his son Rufus *chosen in the Lord*? Was Simon one of the *men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus* in Acts 11:20? They were the first disciples to be called "Christians."

I don't know, but I love making these connections throughout Scripture and considering the possibilities. If these connections are true, we can surmise that Simon's life was completely, irrevocably wrecked that morning by meeting Jesus at His hour of greatest need.

What interruptions is God allowing, even sending your way?

How will you remind yourself that interruptions, though inconvenient, may be exactly what God wants to happen?



In what way has God wrecked your life in order to reshape it for His Kingdom? If you pray *Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven*, that interruption may be an answer to your prayer.

Remember: when God ordains an interruption, often we are never the same. Open your schedule to this possibility. Ask God to rule and overrule your daily plan today.

Day 27: Saul → Paul

Hello, Now Let's Change EVERYTHING

Read Acts 9.

Notes:

Verses	About Saul/Paul
Acts 8:1-3	
9:1,2	
9:3-6	
9:7-9	
9:15,16	
9:17-19	
13:2,3	
13:9	
Philippians 1:21	

Saul was the caterpillar; Paul, the butterfly. Saul was the persecutor; Paul, the sacrificial truth-teller. Saul was the extremist and terrorist; Paul the lover and church-builder. Saul was self-centered; Paul was Christ-centered. Saul was structured, rigid, about the minutiae and the rules; Paul was constructive, expansive, discerning, and welcoming.



Are you more like Saul, or more like Paul?

In the book of Acts, Paul is sent to numerous cities and regions: Cyprus. Perga. Pisidian Antioch. Iconium. Lystra. Derbe. Jerusalem. Philippi. Thessalonica. Berea. Athens. Corinth. Ephesus. Greece. Troas. Jerusalem. Caesarea. Rome. Where is God sending you —next door? to your own child or spouse or parent? to a certain community, city, or nation?

He was called by God to plow the dirt of the nations and sow the seed of the gospel. Trouble inevitably followed him like his own shadow, but he did not stop. He continued forward, straining toward what was ahead: a prize, and a crown, because he had fought the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7,8; Philippians 3:14).

What we see in Paul is a dramatic change, then a long and costly obedience in the God's direction. Paul's trajectory toward God is dotted with churches planted along the way. Perhaps you are a boundary-jumper like Paul, crossing lines of tradition, culture, language, and national borders, making one disciple at a time through the power of the Holy Spirit. What are leaving in your wake? May your legacy, like Paul's, be replete with life, Christ, and hard work. May you also live a life filled with the Holy Spirit's power, purpose, and Presence. May you too hear *Well done, good and faithful servant!*

Day 28: John on Patmos - The Revelation

Hello, Faithful and True Warrior

Read Revelation 1.

John actually encountered the Risen Christ! Describe what John saw and how he described Jesus in the table below.

Verses	What He saw
1:4	
1:5	
1:8	
1:13	
1:14	
1:15	
1:16	
1:17	
1:18	

When I see John leaning back on Jesus to ask a question (John 13:24,25), I picture John as Jesus' best friend. I think John was the first disciple to believe and insightfully understand Jesus' passion (John 20:8). Perhaps this was why God chose him to receive the revelation of the risen Christ.

Domitian was emperor when John was in his early 90s, and Domitian had enough of John's Christian influence and sent the elderly man to Patmos, an abrupt rock with little life to give and much to take.

Nothing in John's manner indicates that he was bitter; in fact, on the Sabbath, John was found worshipping. His harsh outward circumstances could not eradicate the light and love within him.

We see John transform through his 3-year encounter with Jesus as a disciple and his 60 years as a minister of the gospel into a man of love. After describing John as a "mystic, seer, poet," G. Campbell Morgan says of John, "John was a man who was ever looking for the invisible, and seeing it; listening for the inaudible, and hearing it; feeling after the intangible, and sensing it" (*The Great Physician*, pp.27,28). Indeed, John gets another encounter with the Risen One in Revelation 19:11-16. It's breath-taking and fierce; read it for yourself, and you, along with all those others in the Presence of the Lamb, may fall down prostrate.

John's imprisonment is occasion for revelation. In what way are you in harsh circumstances or "exiled" or "imprisoned"? Be encouraged by John: faithfully continue to worship the Lord, press into Him, and pray for eyes to see and ears to hear a new revelation of Jesus. Ask Him for a new revelation; ask Him, "What would You have me learn?"



Class Five: Philip's Encounter

Hello, Spirit and Surprise!

Culture encounters the Christ: How the Holy Spirit changes the world through the gospel, one disciple at a time

Summer Study premise: We are transformed when we encounter God, when we are with Jesus, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Table Time Together:

1. If you have travelled around other parts of the world, what is your perception of how other nations feel about Christianity? How about different states within the United States?
2. What are the first five things you think of when someone says "Holy Spirit"?
3. What are a few of your experiences with the Holy Spirit? Stay mindful of time so everyone may speak.

An Encounter from Scripture: Acts 8:1-8, 26-40

Philip's story

His context begins in Acts 7 during a time of persecution: Stephen calls out the Sanhedrin on being like their forefathers, *stiff-necked and always resisting the Holy Spirit*. Stephen is stoned to death by them even as he prays for their forgiveness.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. 4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Because of persecution, the gospel expands like an airbag being deployed: fast and fully. That means that the gospel crossed cultural lines, boundary lines, traditional lines and language lines. This will be a true test for the gospel and the people who carry it. Acts 11:19 says they traveled to Phoenicia (north, including Tyre and Sidon), Cyprus and Antioch (north, in Syria).

5 Philip went down [a different direction] to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

A single disciple migrated toward Samaria, where Jesus had captivated the ostracized and excluded Samaritans. Philip seemed to be created to cross cultural boundary lines. In Jesus' day Samaritans were blackballed by the Jews as descendants of traitorous half-breeds, but that didn't stop Jesus from stopping there intentionally. Philip carried the news of the cross and the Christ into that land and won the hearts and souls of the lost. The Spirit backed him up with deliverances and miraculous healings. Joy replaced injustice. The Holy Spirit's power confronted prejudice. Discrimination was discredited by the gospel. The open arms of grace enveloped them all in the great love of God. As Jesus alluded to the woman at the well (John 4), they became *worshippers in spirit and in truth*. And Philip got to have a front row seat!

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians" [similar to how we would say 'president']). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was

sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

God wants to communicate with people! He longs to save us! Look at what has already happened:

- ☀ God has confirmed Jesus as Messiah in Samaria through signs and miracles and the Holy Spirit has filled new disciples
- ☀ God has sent an angel to instruct Philip about where to go, but was general (often that’s how He works; keep about you a spirit of adventure when the Spirit of God moves you toward something or someone)
- ☀ The Holy Spirit has directed him with precision (when it’s time, He lets us know)

The Spirit has set up a situation in which He wants to pair an instructor with a student, a minister with a seeker, a teacher with a learner. Now He just needs Philip to cooperate.

Has the Holy Spirit ever done that with you? Has He set up a situation in which He wants you to do something specific for someone, and He needs you to hear Him and cooperate with Him? Were you like Philip, hearing instructions and simply *starting out*, not knowing the big picture? Much of the work of God seems to happen when we are *on our way*, doing the ordinary.

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

31 “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Win-win! First, Philip asks an excellent question we should all keep in mind: “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” What a great way to start a conversation.

Now many of us may have felt awkward in Philip’s situation. Trotting beside a chariot? What if Philip had gotten self-conscious and said, “Spirit, that’s ridiculous ... I’m not on a horse, but you want me to what?!? Run beside a chariot? Then what do You want me to do next? What’s going to happen? I’m not sure about this. I don’t think so. He’s Ethiopian, for goodness’ sake. What do I know about Ethiopia? I don’t know their culture. And he’s important! He’s royal or something! What in the world do I have in common with him?”

Calvin says it this way: “And if such a small sparkle of the knowledge of the law did so shine in him, what a shame were it for us to choke the perfect light of the gospel with unfaithful silence?”

Most of Ethiopia traces it’s God-fearing religion to the Queen of Sheba, but they trace their Christianity to this eunuch. The gospel often begins in a small way, just like bits of yeast in bread, and then steadily and firmly grows. From one person on a trade route road to the palace, this man had influence and his country shifted spiritually to Jesus. What if this worshipper had not had Philip’s explanation of the passage in Isaiah?

32 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” [Isaiah 53:7,8]

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

God paired together good inquiry with the good news and this man became a believer. Philip was ready to tell him all about Jesus, starting with the Old Testament. Do you think you could do that? If you had to start with this passage, what would you say? Would you, like Philip, have confidence that the gospel would transcend the cultural lines, the racial lines, and the traditional lines?

36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” **[37]** Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. **39** When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. **40** Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

This baptism was a drench-your-body, clean-your-soul type, fully into the water and filled with celebration. The eunuch had all the information he needed to get him started as a Christian, so the Holy Spirit was ready to move Philip out of that region and land him in another city, Azotus (now Ashdod, located between Gaza to the south and Joppa to the north). It was a city of ancient giants, the Anak, and was the area where Caleb settled (Joshua 11:22 with Joshua 14:11-13: “I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. “Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim *were* there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken.” So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance). Philip walked in the bold footsteps of Caleb.

The eunuch could not pay Philip for his teaching, but the deposit Philip made into this man’s heart increased and grew as a nation profited from the gospel of salvation.

Who else encountered the Holy Spirit in similar ways?

Peter at Cornelius’ house in Caesarea (Acts 10:39-48); Paul in his visions, soaring up to heavens and seeing things unspoken; and John in the Revelation. He encountered a whole host of spiritual beings and was led by the Holy Spirit to see the throne room, the worship of countless followers, the dramatic portrayal of Jesus’s birth, war in heaven and plagues on earth, the victory of Jesus, and finally the new heaven and the new earth.

But mostly, the Holy Spirit helps everyday Christ-followers *every day*. He is our peace, our substance, our hope, and our Best Friend. He convicts us of sin and frees us from it. He is the fire of the gospel, the power, the *dunamis*, the TNT. He is the One who tells us the truth, reminds us of all that Jesus said, and gives us the right words to say in the moment. He is the One who reminds us of Scripture, who floods our souls with God’s love, who sustains us in times of storm and battle, and holds us when we are wrecked. He gives us wise counsel, counsel by which we can live our lives, counsel we can stake our lives on.

We can offend Him. We can quench Him. We can oppose Him, and He can oppose us, in the Name of the Father and Son!

He can heal, restore, defend, empower, and bring anything and everything that is dead to life. You can’t pin Him down, you can’t shut Him up. You can’t delay Him, deplete Him or destroy Him. You can see His impact when you look with spiritual eyes; you can hear His voice with spiritual ears.

Let’s see what else we can understand about the Holy Spirit based on these Scriptures.

Table Time/Activity: Match the Scriptures with the references. Can you group these verses into themes and categories about the Holy Spirit? (These Scriptures are also listed on the back for your convenience.)

Matthew 3:11 ∞ Acts 2:38 ∞ 1 Corinthians 2:10 ∞ Ephesians 5:18 ∞ Romans 8:26 ∞ John 6:63 ∞ Galatians 5:16 ∞ John 14:26 ∞ Ephesians 4:30 ∞ Acts 1:8 ∞ Isaiah 11:2,3 ∞ Luke 10:21 ∞ Isaiah 42:1 ∞ Luke 12:12 ∞ John 15:26 ∞ Romans 14:17 ∞ Ephesians 1:13 ∞ Romans 8:14-17 ∞ Romans 8:5,6 ∞ Galatians 5:22,23,25 ∞ Mt 28:18,19 ∞ Romans 5:5 ∞ 1 Thessalonians 5:19 ∞ Jude 20,21 ∞ Isaiah 63:10

Verse	Scripture	Theme
	Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.	
	God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.	
	Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.	
	Do not get drunk on wine ... but be filled with the Spirit.	
	The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.	
	The Spirit helps us in our weakness.	
	Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.	
	Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So He turned and became their enemy and He himself fought against them.	
	Do not quench the Spirit.	
	He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.	
	You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.	
	The Spirit of the LORD will be upon Him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and He will delight in the fear of the LORD.	
	Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit.	
	Here is My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen One, in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on Him and He will bring justice to the nations.	
	But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.	
	The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.	

Verse	Scripture	Theme
	The Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—He will testify about Me.	
	For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.	
	When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.	
	But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.	
	Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.	
	The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I [Jesus] have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.	
	Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.	
	But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.	
	Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”	

Matthew 3:11 ∞ Acts 2:38 ∞ 1 Corinthians 2:10 ∞ Ephesians 5:18 ∞ Romans 8:26 ∞ John 6:63 ∞ Galatians 5:16 ∞ John 14:26 ∞ Ephesians 4:30 ∞ Acts 1:8 ∞ Isaiah 11:2,3 ∞ Luke 10:21 ∞ Isaiah 42:1 ∞ Luke 12:12 ∞ John 15:26 ∞ Romans 14:17 ∞ Ephesians 1:13 ∞ Romans 8:14-17 ∞ Romans 8:5,6 ∞ Galatians 5:22,23,25 ∞ Mt 28:18,19 ∞ Romans 5:5 ∞ 1 Thessalonians 5:19 ∞ Jude 20,21 ∞ Isaiah 63:10

Here's what we can be sure of about the Holy Spirit:

- ☀ He is part of the Trinity
- ☀ He has been given to us by God as our inner fire for life here on earth
- ☀ He feels deeply and He works deeply
- ☀ He helps us, teaches us the truth, advocates for us, and gives us the words we need
- ☀ He produces within us the characteristics of a genuine follower of Jesus
- ☀ He convinces us and assures us that we are part of the family of God
- ☀ **He is part mystery, part revelation ... we will NEVER be able to pin Him down in a list!!**

What else would you add to this list?

Summary of Summer Study

We've seen encounters with the Trinity transform people:

- ☀ **Job** was transformed by His encounter with God into a humble, prosperous man who not only knew *about* God but knew God for himself
- ☀ **Joshua** was transformed by his encounter with the pre-incarnate Christ as the Commander of the LORD'S armies, who didn't come to take sides, but rather, came to take over
- ☀ **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** were transformed by their encounter with the pre-incarnate Christ in the fiery furnace, forever faithful to the death
- ☀ **Mary Magdalene** was transformed by her encounter with Jesus, her beloved Deliverer, into a wholehearted, full-out disciple and sent one
- ☀ **Philip** was transported across boundaries of culture, race, nationality, even physicality through his encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Do you have a spirit of adventure when it comes to faith? It seems that God encounters His people in all kinds of circumstances: predicaments ... pondering moments ... tests ... joyful witnessing. Who knows how it will be with us?

In the Quiet

How have you encountered God in your afflictions, prayers, and blessings, like **Job**?

How have you, like **Joshua**, encountered your Commander, who didn't come to take sides, but rather, came to take over?

Like **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**, how are you encountering the Trinity in the fiery furnace of life and death?

In what ways are you being transformed by your beloved Deliverer, into a wholehearted, full-out disciple and sent one, as **Mary Magdalene** was?

In what ways are you encountering the Holy Spirit in your daily living, even like **Philip** taking the gospel across boundaries of culture, race, nationality?

What have you learned about the Trinity through the encounters we've studied this summer? What have you learned about yourself and your Christian walk?

Concluding Prayer and Goodbye to Encounters

Thank you for being a part of this study!

Write your take-aways from this study here:



May God make His face to shine upon you this day and forevermore.

Love, Suzanne