

Christian Believer
United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

Orientation Meeting

WELCOME

GETTING ACQUAINTED

ABOUT CHRISTIAN BELIEVER

Readings Book

Readings Time Chart

Scripture & Doctrine

What *is* doctrine?

Mystery & Doctrine

Christians live in the larger world --- at some point we must be able to say what we believe and why we believe it.

Preparing Lessons

- Think long term
- Think discipline
- Think commitment
- Think accountability
- Think faithfulness

Note Taking

- Identify key terms or phrases
- List main ideas in reading
- Indicate points of difficulty or questions
- Write a sentence that summarizes the main idea(s)
- Prepare a statement of the doctrine based on week's readings

Language of Faith – Word and Symbol

Interpreting the message behind the symbols

Study Resources - some suggestions

- Study Bible (required)
- Bible Dictionary
- Hymnal
- The Book of Common Prayer
- *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* by Donald K. McKim
- *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christ Church* (Oxford University Press)

CLOSING: JOYS AND CONCERNS ; PRAYER

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LESSON 1: BELIEVING AND UNDERSTANDING

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Opening Prayer: page 15 of the Study Manual

Scripture: *“But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”* -----John 20:31

Praise Song: **“Lord I Lift Your Name on High” - The Maranatha Singers**

Lord I lift Your name on high; Lord I love to sing Your praises,
I'm so glad You're in my life; I'm so glad You came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth, to show the way,
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky,
Lord I lift Your name on high.

Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Justo L. Gonzalez, director, Hispanic Theological Initiative, Emory University and host for *Christian Believer* segments. Listen for:

Ideas about belief:

Ideas about doctrine:

Discussion:

In what sense is it true that we are what we believe?

How do we decide on which beliefs to stake our lives as believers?

What is doctrine and how does it function?

What does doctrine have to do with life?

CONTENT OF FAITH

Form groups of 2-3 to discuss the Scripture and Readings for the week. Use the following questions as a guide for discussion:

What do we learn about believing?

What clues do we get from Scripture about the purpose or result of believing?

Where do we see evidence of doubt? Where do we see reassurance? What threatens faith?

I. Genesis 12:1-9; Exodus 3:1-17, Readings 1-2

II. Job 42:1-6; Habakkuk 3:10-19; Readings 3-5

III. Mark 9:14-29; John 20:24-31, Readings 6-7

IV. Hebrews 11:1-6; Matthew 13:1-23, Readings 8-9

V. Acts 17:16-34; Jude, Readings 10-12

LANGUAGE OF FAITH

Read the explanation for the symbol of the lamp on page 10 of the Study Manual. In the Book of Readings, review the “Message Behind the Symbols” on page 9: fish, open book, lamp, sun. Then read Mark 12:30.

Where do you see connections?

What is the message is spoken to you in the symbols on page 8 of the Readings Book?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS

“Beliefs become the set-of-sails that determine the direction of our lives and the destination.”

“To say ‘I believe in nothing’ will determine where life will go.”

“We are what we believe.”

Do find truths in these statements? Why or why not?

Read the definition of a creed on page 11 of the Study Manual. How do creeds function?

What place do creeds have in our believing?

How do creeds set direction for the Christian community?

BELIEVING AND LIVING

Read “Because we the church believe” on page 14 of the Study Manual.

Take a moment to review the creed you wrote on page 14 of the Study Manual. Reflect on the following idea: what difference will my believing make in me and in my work?

CLOSING WORDS SAID AND SUNG

Together, read the Apostles’ Creed on page 13 of the Readings in closing.

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LESSON 2: The Self-Revealing God

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Opening Prayer: Page 25

Scripture: *“Ever since the creation of the world his [God’s] eternal power and divine nature, invisible through they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.” ---Romans 1:20*

Praise Song: **“Love is Always There”** performed by Carolyn Arends

Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., Professor Emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary. Listen for

- What the doctrine of revelation tells us about God
- The two kinds of revelation and their characteristics
- How we understand special revelation and its claim that Jesus is Lord of all

CONTENT OF FAITH: Small group discussion of the daily Scripture and theological readings.

Did you find the concept of revelation a difficult doctrine? Why? Can you offer insights to one another?

Share questions, clarifications or wonderings about the readings.

LANGUAGE OF FAITH: Scripture word study of *reveal; revelation*. In pairs, discuss how these Scriptures support the ideas about the Self-Revealing God you gleaned from your readings this week. In what ways do these Scriptures connect with the symbols in the stained glass panel on page 8 of the Book of Readings?

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice of one calling:
In the desert prepare the way of the Lord,
Make straight in the wilderness, a highway for God
Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;
The rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.
And the glory of the Lord will be **revealed**,
And all mankind together will see it.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

- Amos 4:13 He who forms the mountains, creates the wind,
And **reveals** his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness
And treads the high placed of the earth---
The Lord God almighty is his name.
- Luke 2:32 *Jesus presented in the Temple:* “Simeon took him in his arms and praised
God, saying: Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant. For my
eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for
revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”
- Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is **revealed**, a righteousness that
is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”
- Romans 16:26 Now to him who is able to establish you in my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,
according to the **revelation** of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now **revealed** and
made known through the prophetic writings of God, so that all nations might believe and
obey him...
- Galatians 1:12 *Paul called by God:* “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not
something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I
received it by **revelation** from Jesus Christ.”
- Ephesians 3:3 *Paul:* “that is, the mystery made known to me by **revelation** as I have already written
briefly.”
- 1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when
his glory is **revealed**.

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS: Study Manual, page 25

1. What do you find most difficult to understand or accept about the idea of revelation?

2. If nature were the **only** revelation of God, how would your present doctrine of God and life-purpose be changed?

3. What has Jesus Christ revealed to you, personally, about God that you would never otherwise have understood or appreciated?

BELIEVING AND LIVING

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE God has chosen to engage in a wondrous self-disclosure, I will embrace this act of grace with passion and trust.

CLOSING WORDS

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LESSON 3: God's Book for God's People

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Opening Prayer

Praise Song: "Thy Word" by Amy Grant

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path
When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way
Still You're there right beside me, nothing I will fear
As long as You are near, please be near me to the end
I will not forget Your love for me and yet
My heart forever is wondering, Jesus be my guide
Hold me to Your side and I will love you to the end.

Read in unison 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Study Manual page 26)

Pass Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Donald K. McKim, Academic Dean and Professor of Theology, Memphis Theological Seminary. Listen for:

- How does the church view the Old and New Testaments?
- Identify four convictions of the church about the Bible
- How has the church used the Bible to develop the church's teachings or doctrines?
- What gives the Bible its authority for the Christian community for believers?

CONTENT OF FAITH: Small group discussion of the daily Scripture and theological readings.

Review the Church Teaching and Believing on page 29 of the Study Manual. Review the daily Scripture Readings. For each reading, note

- What attitudes toward Scripture are evident in the passages?
- How circumstances affect regard for the Scripture
- The ability of Scripture to instruct and guide

Have each group member choose one of the daily readings and tell how it contributed to a greater understanding of the doctrine of Scripture.

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

- Look at the symbol and words on page 26 of the Study Manual and its explanation on page 30.
- In small groups, discuss what each word or phrase conveys about Scripture.
- As a group, use those words and phrases to write a statement of doctrine of Scripture in two or three sentences.

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

- Using the questions on Page 35 of the Study Manual, discuss answers with the small group.

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

Because we the Church believe the Bible is the Word of God, I shall read it daily in order to fulfill its commands.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

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LESSON 4: The God of Beginnings

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Opening Prayer

Read Genesis 1:1-3

Praise Song: “How Great Thou Art” sung by Eoghan Healslip

O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder

Consider all the worlds thy hands have made

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder;

Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Refrain: Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee

How great Thou art; how great Thou art

And when I think that God His Son not sparing

Sent Him to die I scarce can take it in

There on the cross my burden gladly bearing

He bled and died to take away my sin.

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation

And take me home what joy shall fill my heart

Then I shall bow in humble adoration

And there proclaim my God how great Thou art.

Refrain

Pass Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Ted Peters, Professor of Systematic Theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

- What was new and/or surprising to you?
- How does the presenter’s idea of the Genesis account of creation and the eternal Word of God fit with the teaching that God continues to create?
- What is a keeper for you from the video?

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Questions to keep in mind during your discussion of the Scripture and theological readings for the week:

- How is God presented?
- How do the actions describe the God we saw in the reading this week?
- What is the picture you have of the Creator after your studies this week?

- What understanding of God the Creator does John 1:1-18 contribute to the doctrine of Creation?
- Share a thought that had impact on you from the Readings this week.

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

- Review the Language of Faith words on page 36. Which words have meaning for you? What words would you add to this list?
- Look at the symbols for the Creator God on page 36 of the Readings Book Work through the meaning of each symbol

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

The major creeds of the Christian faith begin their confession with statements of belief in God as Creator (review the Nicene and the Apostles' Creeds on pages 10-13 of the Readings Book).

- Share responses to questions on pages 44-45 in the Study Manual

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE God is the Creator of Heaven and earth, we understand ourselves as creatures wholly dependent on God.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

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LESSON 5: Giving a Name to God

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Opening Prayer

Read Exodus 3:14-15

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM..... This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Praise Song: "Open the Eyes of my Heart" by Paul Baloche

Open the eyes of my heart Lord, Open the eyes of my heart.
I want to see You, I want to see You.
Open the eyes of my heart Lord, Open the eyes of my heart.
I want to see You, I want to see You.
To see You high and lifted up, Shining in the light of Your glory
Pour out your power and love, as we sing holy holy holy holy.
Holy holy holy, holy holy holy,
Holy holy holy, I want to see you.

Pass Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Bishop Hoyt of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Fourth District
Listen for

- What issues about God have concerned people in various time periods?
- Where did the concept of Trinity come from?
- What was the key question to be resolved about Jesus? About the Holy Spirit?
- How is Jesus' divine and human nature to be understood?

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Questions to keep in mind during your discussion of the Scripture and Readings for this week:

- In what ways do each of the names identifying God convey about God?
- What is the relationship between a God who has a name and a God who is personal?
- What images and language do the theological writers use to express God's personal nature?
- What does God's name have to do with how we understand God and how we relate to God?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

The names and descriptions of God are part of our language of faith (Study Manual page 46).

- What names or descriptions would you add to this list? Why?
- The eye is used to symbolize the all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present God. In what ways do you find this symbol meaningful? Comforting? A personal connection?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

- What would the Christian faith lose if it had no doctrine of a personal God?
- What questions do you have from the Scriptures and readings this week?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE God is Person and therefore personal, and is known to us by name, I will address God with awe, with intimacy, and with glad humility.

- In what ways do you experience God as personal? (Study Manual page 55)

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

**“The God of Abraham praise.
All praised be His name
Who was and is, and is to be,
Always the same!
The one Eternal God,
Whose timelessness is clear;
The First, the Last: beyond all thought,
Throughout the year!”**

-----Daniel ben Judah, c1400

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LESSON 6: The God Who Is Involved

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Read Genesis 15:19-20

But Joseph said to them, "...Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today."

Opening Prayer and Song: "Here I Am Lord"

Close your eyes, place your hands palms up on the table, if you wish sing the refrain together:

Here I am Lord, is I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night
Here I am Lord, I will go Lord if You lead me,
I will hold Your people in my heart.

Pass Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Mary Knutsen, formerly Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary

Listen for

- What is the doctrine of providence?

- How are providence and creation interrelated?

- What is a keeper for you from the video?

CONTENT OF FAITH:

- Do you have a story to share of providence; a situation in your life that you called providence?

- How do you determine whether you call a situation or happening coincidence or providence?

- Review the theological readings. Share questions or particular insights you have from the readings.

- What examples of God's providence are present and operating in the Scripture passages?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

- Reflect on the symbol for God's providence on page 56 of the Study Manual. What meaning does it contain for you?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

- What questions or difficulties do you have about the concept of providence?
- How would the Christian understanding of life and of the world be different if the church had not doctrine of providence?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE God is involved in our world, we see ourselves as co-workers with God in fulfilling the divine purpose.

- Give examples of ways we are used as co-workers with God in fulfilling the divine purpose.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

How can we pray for one another?

Together, read the Prayer on page 65 of the Study Manual.

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LESSON 7: God Makes Covenant With Us

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Read 1 Corinthians 11:25

In the same way he [Jesus] took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

Opening Prayer and Song: *You Are Eternal* by Don Moen and the Integrity Worship Singers

You are eternal unchanging, your love forever will be unfailing

I can see you have a covenant with me

You are eternal; forever you will be my God

You are eternal unchanging, your thoughts and marvelous ways

Amazing to me! You will provide for every need

You are eternal; forever you will be my God

You will ever be the same

You are God who cannot change, and you have promised

You'll never forsake us; you have called us by your name

You are eternal unchanging and there is no shadow of turning with you, O it's true,

I have a covenant with you

You are eternal; forever you will be my God.

Forever you will be my God.

Pass Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: R. Kendall Soulen, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology,
Wesley Theological Seminary

Listen for

- The role of the covenant
- What sets God's covenant apart from an ordinary covenant?
- Mutuality required in covenant
- The meaning of the new covenant

Ideas to ponder:

What is the significance of the fact that the Bible emphasizes God's role as one who makes and keeps covenants?

What is the ripple effect of the mutuality required in covenant?

What does the new covenant mean? What does it not mean?

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Examine the weekly Scriptures from two perspectives:

- In what ways has God demonstrated humility, faithfulness, loyalty, steadfastness, righteousness, patience in his covenants with man?
- In a covenantal relationship, define man's obligations, responsibilities, benefits, consequences of violation?

From the daily reading notes,

- What insights did you glean for the understanding of God as covenant maker?
- Any hard-to-understand concepts?
What does the concept of "God's elected" mean?
How does Jesus function in the role of High Priest?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

Turn to the symbol on page 66 in the Study Manual: the rainbow and stars declare God's continuing and all inclusive covenant. The covenant with Noah was marked by the rainbow emphasizing deliverance and the trustworthiness of God. The arc of the rainbow, part of a circle, represents the everlasting God. The countless stars symbolize God's promises of a blessing to all people for all time through Abraham.

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

Page 74 – Study Manual:

How do you square the innate sense of individualism in our Western world with belief in covenant, which is so closely related to the idea of community?

How would you summarize your understanding of God as a covenant-making God?

If the cross is God's signature to the new covenant, what is our signature of acceptance?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE God is a covenant maker, I will consciously and intentionally accept God's covenant as a member of the community of faith.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

How can we pray for one another?

Closing Prayer

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LESSON 8: Created in God's Image

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Genesis 1:27

So God created humankind in his image, and in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Opening Prayer and Song:

Be Strong and Take Courage by the Integrity Singers

Chorus:

Be strong and take courage, do not fear or be dismayed
For the Lord will go before you, and His light will show the way
Be strong and take courage, do not fear or be dismayed
For the One who lives within you will be strong in you today

Why don't you give Him all of your fears, why don't you let Him dry all of your tears
He knows, He's been through pain before, and He knows all that you've been looking for

Chorus

Nothing can take you out of His hand, nothing can face you that you can't command
I know that always you will be in His love, in His power will be free

Chorus

Pass Joys and Concerns Journal

VIDEO

Presenter: Amy Oden, Bell Associate Professor of Church History, Oklahoma City University

Listen for

- How has the teaching that humans are made in the image of God been understood by Jews and Christians?
- If each person is made in God's image, in what ways does that give each person intrinsic value in daily relationships?
- What are misunderstandings of the teaching that humans are made in the image of God?
- How is God at work renewing the image of God in us?

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Examine the weekly readings for the following:

- Review notes from Readings 86, 87, 88 and 94: How do the writers shape your understanding of being created in the image of God? What questions do you have?

- In Readings 89, 92 and 93: how is the relationship of the image of God connected to the dignity and worth of all human beings?
- In the Genesis 1:27-2:7 passage, what pattern and purpose do you see in the creation of humans in God's image?
- In Romans 1:16-2:16, discuss your understanding of Paul's writing and what happened to the original pattern and purpose in the creation of humans in God's image? What is the basis of God's impartiality in judgment?
- On page 83 of the study manual, the writer says, "A theology entirely earthbound faces serious ethical problems because life doesn't always work out as fairly on this earth as it seems it should." How can we reconcile this idea with God's intentions for human beings?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

The symbol of faith on page 80 shows male, female and offspring: we are created male and female; we are made to relate to one another, to the world around us and to God. The message is this: God is not to be seen in the way we look but *in the way we relate*.

What new insights does this idea offer to you?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

How would the teaching of the Christian faith be diminished without the doctrine of the image of God?

Share your answer to the question on page 84 of the Study Manual: In what specific ways does the teaching that all persons are made in God's image shape your attitudes and understandings of those you relate to? Even yourself?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE human beings are made in God's image, and with a divine destiny, we will treat ourselves, other human beings, and all of creation as sacred creations.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

How can we pray for one another?

Closing Prayer

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LESSON 9: The Trouble We're In

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Psalm 51:3-5

I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,

So that you are justified in your sentence

And blameless when you pass judgment

Indeed I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.”

How can we pray for one another?

Opening Prayer

Song: *It is Well With My Soul* by 4HIM

When peace like a river attendeth my way / When sorrows like sea billows roll / Whatever my lot
Thou has taught me to say / It is well it is well with my soul / Though Satan should buffet though
trials should come / Let this blest assurance control / That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate /
And hath shed His own blood for my soul / It is well with my soul / It is well it is well with my soul
/ My sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought / my sin not in part but in whole / Is nailed to the cross
and I bear it no more / Praise the Lord praise the Lord O my soul / The Lord hast the day when my
faith shall be sight / The clouds be rolled back as a scroll/ The trump shall resound and the Lord
shall descend/ Even so it is well with my soul

VIDEO

Presenter: Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, Dean and Professor of Theology, Claremont School of Theology

Listen for

- Different definitions of sin
- How Jesus changed the understanding of sin
- Understanding personal and social dimensions of sin

CONTENT OF FAITH:

- How would you define sin?
- Does sin have new names today? What are they?
- In what ways do we inherit society's sinful values and structures?
- How would you respond to this statement: *All sin has social consequences*

- Review the Readings 97, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106: what new insights have you gained about sin through these theologians' point of view?

Reading 105 says*Where there is no freedom, there can be no love... Without freedom there would be no sin...* Do you see this as a contradiction? Why or why not?

- Ezekiel 18: Am I responsible for my own sins? How are we, as individuals and as a Christian community, responsible for the sins of our parents, our business, our community, our country?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

Look at the symbol for sin on page 86. Why is the thistle an appropriate image for sin?

In the list of words on page 86. Which words relate to the consequences of sin? Which are the answers to sin?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

Reflect and respond to this statement: *This is what the church says the Christian faith teaches about sin* _____.

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE sin is an affront to God and a deceiver of all that is good, we will with all energy avoid it and will with all seriousness repent of it when we are guilty.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

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LESSON 10: The Amazing Story of Grace

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Romans 5:20-21

But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

How can we pray for one another?

Opening Prayer

Amazing Grace by John Newton, sung by Darlene Zschech
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

VIDEO

Presenter: Theodore Runyon, Professor of Systematic Theology, Emeritus, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

Listen for

- The richness in the word *grace*
- Grace as God's self-communication
- God's grace expressed in Jesus
- The risk that accompanies grace

Why does God choose to extend grace to us?

Why should I want grace?

Is God's grace there regardless of what I do?

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Old Testament Scriptures for this week: what do these Scriptures have to say about grace? (You may want to refer to page 99 in the Study Manual “Grace in the Old Testament”)

New Testament Scriptures for this week: in what ways is the grace of God active in these passages? (Study Manual page 100 “Grace in the New Testament”)

Readings for this week: What is your understanding of

- The relationship of works and grace?
- Prevenient grace?
- The fruits of grace?
- The cost of grace?
- *Cheap grace* as discussed by Bonhoeffer in Reading 114?.

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

Grace: *gift of God, saving, free, prevenient, undeserved favor, sanctifying, sola gratia (by grace alone)*

Of these words, which most closely matches your personal definition, reflecting your own experience regarding God’s grace?

Is there been a time you were aware of God’s never-failing grace in your life, would you share your story?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

How is the church’s teaching on grace as *unmerited favor* at odds with some of the cultural values in our society?

What is it about grace --- if anything – that bothers you?

Would someone who has simply grown up in the faith have difficulty understanding the grandeur of grace? If so, how or why? What is a solution?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE in the grace of God, I will accept grace with gratitude, and I will seek to be a mediator of grace.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

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LESSON 11: God So Loved the World

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Luke 19:10

The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.

How can we pray for one another?

OPENING PRAYER

A Hymn From the Psalms (have one person read each scripture, one after the other in the form of a hymn; everyone read in unison John 3:16).

27:1	69:29	119:41
35:1-3	70:4	119:166
35:9	74:12	119:174
51:12	85:7	
61:1-2	98:2	John 3:16 (read together)
69:13	118:14	

VIDEO

Presenter: Ellen T. Charry, Margaret W. Harmon Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary.

Listen for

- Sin described as a flaw in human nature
- The universality of sin
- How Christians have understood the problem of sin
- Who or what has shaped both understandings of sin and forms of salvation

CONTENT OF FAITH:

How would you define salvation?

Review John Wesley's Reading 122 and Georgia Harkness' Reading 126. What new insights do these theologians give you about salvation?

Discuss the understanding of salvation from the Old Testament point of view and the New Testament point of view (see Study Manual pages 111-113).

Why should we conclude salvation is necessary?

Review the left column on page 109 of the Study Manual. What new insights do you have?
In what ways has your understanding been confirmed?

If salvation is necessary, by what logic is God involved?

In what ways do the Readings 119 and 120 help answer this question?

Why should God be interested in saving us from our distinctively human problem of sin?

Review Jesus' parables in John 3:1-15. How would you use these teachings to explain God's interest?

What does Paul have to say about this in Romans 5:6-21 and Hebrews 2?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

You read the several terms for salvation: **regeneration, adoption, conversion, justification, redemption, commitment**. Which is the most descriptive for you? Explain.

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

Review Karl Barth's Reading 125. Keep in mind, he spoke to prisoners, yet what message does he have for the universal audience?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE humans need salvation, and God has responded graciously to our need, therefore I accept God's salvation and recommend it to all.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

A COVENANT PRAYER IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
To thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

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United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

LESSON 12: Fully Human Fully Divine

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

Philippians 2:5-7

Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

How can we pray for one another?

OPENING PRAYER: Psalm 100 (read together)

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

Come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his,

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;

Give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;

His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Handel's Messiah: *For Unto Us A Child Is Born* – Mormon Tabernacle Choir
(based on Isaiah 9:6)

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

VIDEO

Presenter: William C. Placher, Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Wabash College.

Listen for

- The meaning of Incarnation
- What the issues were in the early debates about Jesus
- What the church means in its claim that Jesus Christ was God
- How the terms *Son* and *Word* were used to explain who Jesus was

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Who was He? Review your notes from the Scriptures and Readings for the week for the specific phrases, descriptions and titles given to explain just who Jesus was. Make a list, then discuss what is your understanding of who Jesus was?

How can He possibly matter to us still today nearly two thousand years after his life and death?

Try to some degree to imagine yourself reading the story of Jesus for the first time, with no background knowledge. How do you think it would strike you? What would you conclude the nature of Jesus to be?

Review the discussion of *Gnosticism, modalism, Arianism* on pages 123-124. Do you see any resemblance to contemporary religious philosophies?

How do we understand the doctrine that Jesus was both human and divine?

John of Damascus (Reading #137) writes “And therefore we hold that there has been a union of two perfect natures, one divine and one human; not with disorder or confusion, or intermixture....but by *synthesis*.....”

The dictionary defines *synthesis* as “the putting together of parts of elements so as to form a whole; a whole made up of parts or elements put together; the unified whole in which opposites (thesis and antithesis) are reconciled”

In what ways do you see *synthesis* at work in explaining the human and divine qualities of Jesus? What is the evolution of understanding with this doctrine beginning with the Disciples, then the New Testament writers and finally the Church as outlined on page 121-22 of the Study Manual?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

The fish, *ICHTHUS*, has been a universal symbol for Christ for centuries. Why? (see page 120 of the Study Manual).

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

- What does the doctrine of Incarnation affirm about Jesus?
- What questions do we still have?
- What to you is the importance of the church’s claim that Jesus was both human and divine?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine, I accept him as my Lord.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE Jesus Christ came to be the Savior of the world, I accept him as my Savior.

Christian Believer
United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

LESSON 13: The One Who Came to Save

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

You are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

How can we pray for one another?

PRAYER

SONG: *There is a Redeemer* by Keith Green

There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah Holy One
Jesus my Redeemer, name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah O for sinners slain
Thank you O my Father for giving us Your Son
And leaving us Your Spirit 'til the work on earth is done
When I stand in Glory I will see His face
And there I'll serve My King forever in that holy place.

VIDEO

Presenter: Ronald Goetz, Professor of Theology and Religion and Department Chair, Elmhurst College.

Listen for

- The meaning of the term *savior* in the Hebrew Scriptures and what Christians meant when they called Jesus "Savior"
- The disconnect between our claim that Jesus is the Savior of the world and our personal lifestyles and cultural situations
- Salvation as God's declaration of love
- The test of whether our salvation is of Jesus Christ

CONTENT OF FAITH:

What do we see or hear in the Scripture about a coming Savior?

- Read Isaiah 51:13-53:12. In what ways does this Scripture predict how Jesus will be accepted?
- Place yourself in early Christianity; what experiences would you have had to help you understand this Scripture?

Jesus was born with the specific assignment to die. How do we explain this; why did Jesus have to die?

- Review the Readings for this week. Did you find theological viewpoints which might help explain this question?

What is the relationship of his death to our salvation? How does his dying save me?

- Review this week's Scriptures and the Readings. What do you understand about God's plan for salvation through sacrifice of the Lamb?
- What is your understanding of why we need to be saved? And from what are we being saved?
- How does resurrection confirm Jesus' right to be Savior?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

The language of faith carries the essence of the faith's teaching. Look at the faith words on page 126 of the Study Manual. In what ways does this list of words explain why Jesus came with the specific assignment to die to save us from sin?

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

The previous lesson focused on the *person* of Jesus Christ – human and divine. This lesson focuses on the *work* of Jesus Christ—Savior. In what ways do these descriptors contribute to the understanding of who and what Jesus was and is? Can the person and the work be separated? Why or why not?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

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LESSON 14: Restored to Union With God

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. For on this day stonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord. ---Leviticus 16:29-30

How can we pray for one another?

PRAYER

SONG: *Create In Me*

Create in me a clean heart O God that I might serve you
Create in me a clean heart O God that I might be renewed.
So fill me, heal me, and bring me back to You
Create in me a clean heart O God that I might serve you.

VIDEO

Presenter: Leander E. Keck, Winkley Professor of Biblical Theology, Emeritus, The Divinity School, Yale University.

Listen for

- What Jesus' death as atonement means for our distorted relation to God
- Why many Christians have difficulty with this way of understand Jesus' death
- A description of the Old Testament ritual of atonement
- The role of blood in atonement
- How atonement came to be used as a way to understand Jesus' death

CONTENT OF FAITH:

Atonement. Is the concept too big for words? Our best human instinct knows we ought to be one with God. But we sin. We break that communion. Then the problem is to reestablish the relationship. What steps does God take to restore the relationship? What steps do we take?

Theories of Atonement: Any images prove inadequate and difficult to grasp. Something must again make us *at one* with God. Which of the several theories of atonement appeals most to you or best fits your understanding and why? Refer to Study Manual pages 141-44 and notes from daily Scripture and Readings for the week.

Redemption

Expiation

Moral example or moral influence

Substitution

Reconciliation

Wrath of God

Ransom

Christus victor (Christ's conquest of evil)

LANGUAGE OF FAITH:

Read the words or phrases at the top of page 136. What overall idea or feeling do these words convey?

What is the relationship between

- Lamb of God and the paschal lamb
- Day of Atonement, sins covered and mercy seat
- Sinful human condition, sacrificial death, blood, and cross

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

- What ideas are central to all of the theories of the Atonement?
- What mysteries of *Atonement* do you continue to struggle with?
- Why is the doctrine of *Atonement* necessary?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

Because we the church believe Christ has made us at one with God, I accept the divine love and will seek to extend it to others.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

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LESSON 15: Jesus Christ is Lord

OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

*If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that
God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ---Romans 10:9*

How can we pray for one another?

PRAYER

SONG: *Awesome God*

When He rolls up His sleeves, He ain't just puttin' on the ritz
Our God is an awesome God, there is thunder in His footsteps and lightening in his fits
Our God is an awesome God. And the Lord wasn't jokin' when He kicked 'em out of Eden
It wasn't for no reason that He shed His blood; His return is very close
And so you better be believin' that our God is an awesome God

Chorus:

Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above
With wisdom pow'r and love, Our God is an awesome God

When the sky is starless in the void of the night, our God is an awesome God
He spoke into the darkness and created the light, our God is an awesome God
The judgment and wrath he poured out on Sodom, the mercy and grace He gave us at the cross
I hope that we have not too quickly forgotten that our God is an awesome God. (Chorus)

VIDEO

Presenter: Kenneth Swanson, Dean and Rector, Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville, Tennessee

Listen for

- The roots of the title **Lord** in the name for God, **Yahweh**
- The difference between Jesus and his Father God
- The ways Jesus spoke of who he was and what his work was
- John's use of the term Word of God to refer to Jesus
- The meaning of Thomas's confession
- What faith has to do with confession "Jesus is Lord"

CONTENT OF FAITH:

- In the Old Testament Scriptures this week, Jacob and Job struggle in coming to terms with who the Lord really is. What does Thomas have to say in John's Gospel? Philip as he talks with the Ethiopian? Paul and Silas after their miraculous release from prison?
- What understanding did these Scriptures give you in answering the question "Who is the Lord?"
- What does Paul have to say about the relationship of Jesus as Lord and the way of salvation?
- Review the readings for this week. What ideas from these writers are important to you?
 - E. Stanley Jones - page 136
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer – page 137-38
 - Karl Barth – page 138
 - Edward Schillebeeckx – page 140How would you describe the Lordship of Christ?

LANGUAGE OF FAITH: What claims do these words or phrases have on us as believers:

- Renouncing other lords
- Submission
- Expression of belief
- Commitment
- Confession of faith

FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:

- In what ways does the church's teaching that Jesus is Lord make on the church itself – on its life and mission?
- How would the Christian faith be diminished if it had no teaching that Jesus is Lord?

BELIEVING AND LIVING:

Because we the church believe the proper human response to God's gift of grace is our confession of sin and of faith, I choose to make my full confession.

CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER