



grow. pray. study.

July 28, 2019 *The risky investment of human relationships*

Scripture: *Matthew 13:3-9*

He said many things to them in parables: “A farmer went out to scatter seed. As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path, and birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn’t deep. But when the sun came up, it scorched the plants, and they dried up because they had no roots. Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked them. Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit, in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one. Everyone who has ears should pay attention.”

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Lighting up our world

MONDAY 7.29.19 Matthew 5:13-16

One key long-term goal for Resurrection is to “connect new and younger people...while effectively reaching non-religious people” * (cf. [Deuteronomy 6:4-7](#)). Jesus described his followers as “salt” and “light” for the world. Salt both preserves food and enhances its flavor. Light pierces the darkness, giving clear sight to those who have missed God’s path and revealing all the beauty of God’s world. God still calls the church—calls all of us—to be salt and light for our world.

- Jesus said, “A city on top of a hill can’t be hidden.” He wanted people to see his followers’ actions and like what they see. But he said we let our light shine, not so people will praise us but so people who see what we do will praise God. Corporate PR campaigns aimed only at fame, money or market share often alienate idealistic young people. If our God-given aim is to lead people to praise God, how must that shape the ways we seek to call attention to our church’s actions?
- On a more personal level, who has added flavor and light to your life? What has their example taught you about ways to live as a channel for God’s power to make life better? Who do you know to whose life you could add light and seasoning? Ask God to guide you to those people. Choose one specific step you can take to be God’s “salt and light,” a channel for God’s life-giving love, for them this week.

Prayer: Lord God, someone said that you called me to be “the salt” of the earth, not “the vinegar.” Keep me growing into a person who adds light and flavor to life wherever I go. Amen.

* Quoted from The Church of the Resurrection’s “Closing the Gap” goals. [Click here](#) (build.cor.org/) to view the web site listing the church’s entire vision and goals between now and 2030.

All creation, all generations praising God

TUESDAY 7.30.19 Psalm 148:1-6, 11-13

The sacred poetry of Psalm 148 showed God calling all of us, of all ages, to join in praising God with energetic, extravagant worship. Israel resisted worshiping the sun, moon or other forces of nature like many of their neighboring peoples. This psalm saw sun and moon, bright stars, highest heaven, even the waters

that descended from the sky as offering praise to God along with human beings. It was an expansive, inclusive vision of what worship can mean!

- Scholar John Goldingay said Christians, especially in Europe and North America, often limit our worship. He wrote, “We do not easily think of worship being offered by sun and moon, . . . fruit trees, or cattle. We think of worship as something that essentially involves minds and hearts. The Psalms certainly assume that mind and heart come into it, but they allow for other truths about worship.” * When, if ever, have you experienced worship that involved a higher level of bodily and emotional response than is usual in many “proper” church settings?
- Goldingay also shed light on a familiar word. “Praise Yah’ comes at either end of each psalm from 146 to 150; it is commonly rendered as ‘Hallelujah.’ This particular Hebrew word for praise, *halal*, suggests ululating, going “Lalalala” . . . the psalm reminds us that there are many entities in the heavens and on the earth that are more interested in resisting God than in praising him, but it has a vision of them all being drawn into praise. Consider the very majesty of God.” * When you say, sing or hear “Hallelujah,” make a mental note to consider “the very majesty of God.”

Prayer: Living Lord, I want to join all creation in praising you, freely and joyfully, for all the days of my life. Amen.

* Both quotations from John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 2: Psalms 73–150*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014, p. 224.

In Jesus, the future became present

WEDNESDAY 7.31.19 Joel 2:27-32, Acts 2:14-24

The prophet Joel saw a ruinous locust plague as God’s judgment on a nation gone morally astray (cf. [Joel 2:1-2](#)). But, like most prophets, he did not see judgment as God’s final word. He promised that God would restore the land and pour out renewed spiritual vision on its people, old and young alike. The apostle Peter, fearless after meeting the risen Christ, quoted Joel 2 to explain the Holy Spirit’s descent on the day of Pentecost. Joel and Peter said God’s Spirit was for old and young, male and female, even slaves. In other words, God has a purpose for every person’s life—including yours.

- Have you ever thought that you are too old or too young for God to do much of anything with your life? Do other factors (e.g. gender, education, health, financial status) also make you feel the Holy Spirit ought to find someone other than you to work through? How do Joel and Peter’s all-inclusive words call you to be alert to what God wants to do through you?
- Peter quoted some of the scary-sounding images from Joel’s prophecy: “wonders in the heavens,” “blood and fire and smoke.” But he ended the quotation at the point he wanted to stress: “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How can that confidence make earth’s problems less scary and troubling to you? In what way(s) can you “call on the name of the Lord” today?

Prayer: Lord God, you kept your prophetic promise on Pentecost. In the end you always keep your promises. I claim your promise today and call on the name of the Lord for my salvation. Amen.

God’s determination to grow the kingdom

THURSDAY 8.1.19 Matthew 13:3-9

If you’ve ever tried to grow a garden, you know that any gardener or farmer must adjust to the reality that not every seed grows. That was even more true in the hand-tilled fields of Palestine in Jesus’ day, with the seed tossed out by hand. In this story, Jesus used that reality to show that, like a wise farmer, God was willing to deal with the disappointment of seed that didn’t grow in order to reap the strong harvest of lives changed for the better.

- When Jesus explained this story to his disciples, he said the good soil stood for “those who hear [the word about the kingdom] and understand, and bear fruit and produce” (Matthew 13:23). How did you first hear the word about Jesus and his kingdom? In what ways have you deepened your appreciation of it? What kind of a crop is God producing in your life?
- Jesus was a master at taking everyday people’s ordinary activities—fishermen or farmers—and using them to teach big ideas about his kingdom, his grace and forgiveness. What person or persons played the biggest role in planting the seed of God’s message in your life? As you look back, is there anything you wish they had done differently in the “planting”? In what ways do your gifts, talents and temperament best equip you to “sow the seed” into other lives?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said, “A farmer went out to scatter seed.” Your story never hinted that the farmer felt like giving up. Help me to always be ready to scatter the story of your love into the lives of others. Amen.

God’s energizing purpose for all generations

FRIDAY 8.2.19 Ephesians 3:10-21

God has big plans for our world! God’s mission is to restore our broken world to its intended total wholeness (cf. [Revelation 21:1-5](#)). According to Ephesians 3, God’s plan is to use God’s people, working together in and through the church, as the main vehicle to accomplish this big, important mission. God intends to show his wisdom and glory through the church. As we grasp that, God’s mission should appeal to idealists and dreamers young and old.

- Reflect on verse 20: “Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask for or imagine by his power at work within us.” Do you believe that—that God really can do far more than we can ask or imagine? If not, what holds you back from that belief? What God-sized hopes, hurts, dreams and challenges can you identify, trusting that God can work in and through them to change the world?
- In Greek, “the many different varieties” in verse 10 was one word— *polupoikilos*. It meant “many colored,” as though Paul was picturing God’s grace and wisdom as a kind of cosmic rainbow. In what ways have God’s grace and wisdom added color and beauty to your life? How can you help your church reflect that beauty to all who come in contact with us?

Prayer: Great God, I know you have big plans for the world. I know you plan to use your church to accomplish your plans. Help me be faithful to you as part of your church and join in your work in the world. Amen.

Jesus’ ministry from first to last

SATURDAY 8.3.19 Luke 4:16-21, Luke 19:1-10

In Christ’s early public ministry, he confidently read from Isaiah 61, written centuries earlier. Then he stunned his hometown audience by boldly saying, in effect, “This text about God’s anointed one was about me.” Later, on his way to Jerusalem and a waiting cross, Jesus was even more eager to reach Zacchaeus than the short, tree-climbing tax collector was to see him. He ignored people’s grumbling by very publicly inviting himself to a meal at the house of one of the town’s most despised “sinners.” He told the upset crowd (many of whom Zacchaeus had probably cheated) that he “came to seek and save the lost.”

- Jesus quoted from (and adapted) Isaiah 61:1-3 in the synagogue in Nazareth to define his mission. “To preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” has a nice poetic ring. What can you do each day to live into the meaning of those words in life’s gritty, unpoetic realities?
- Jesus said he “came to seek and save the lost.” Scholar William Barclay wrote, “In the New Testament ‘lost’ does not mean damned or doomed. It just means in the wrong place....A man is lost when he has

wandered away from God; and he is found when once again he takes his rightful place as an obedient child in the...family of his Father." * In what ways has God "found" you, and moved you to your rightful place in God's family? When have you been able to help God find someone else?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for coming "to seek and save the lost," including me. Help me to join you in doing that great, world-changing work. Amen.

Family Activity: As children, youth and many adults head back to school soon, commit to greeting God with joy and gratitude every morning! Encourage each family member to begin each day saying these words to God: "Yes!" and "Thank you!" Let your family know that by saying "Yes" to God, we are saying "Yes" to the gift of a new day, the opportunity to serve others, the privilege to grow in faith and a willingness for our hearts and minds to be shaped by the Holy Spirit. When we say, "Thank you!" we are giving praise and glory to God and celebrating all of God's many blessings! Begin each precious day as a family with "Yes!" and "Thank you!" and celebrate each day as a gift from God.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke* (Revised Edition). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, page 257.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

- To Bob Henson and family following the death of Mark Henson (Son), 6/19/2019
- To Austin Wyble and family following the death of William E. Wyble (Father), 7/5/2019
- To Gretchen Harrison and family following the death of Elinor "Ann" Grace (Mother), 7/11/2019
- To Kerri Renz and family following the death of James Bromlow (Father), 7/11/2019
- To Nila Cleaves and family following the death of Loreta Mae Collier Giberson (Mother), 7/12/2019
- To Connie Reeder and family following the death of Ray Hinkly (Father), 7/12/2019
- To Gary Blasi and family following the death of LeRoy Blasi (Father), 7/15/2019
- To Heather Schoneman and family following the death of Greg Stultz (Father), 7/15/2019
- To Bill Cody and family following the death of Joan Cody Farmer (Sister), 7/16/2019
- To Chuck Rau and family following the death of Glenna Marie Rau (Mother), 7/17/2019
- To Denise Bade and family following the death of Carolyn Marie Stover (Mother), 7/19/2019