



FOR THE LIFE OF THE
WORLD

Letters to the Exiles

FIELD GUIDE

*Key points, Small Group
Outlines, and Message
Outlines for 7 or 14 weeks*

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USING THIS MATERIAL

Each week contains three sections: Key Ideas (1 page), a Small Group Outline (2 pages), and a Message Outline (1 page) with pre-written sermon notes and verse references. The 7-week material devotes one week to each episode, and the 14-week material devotes two weeks to each episode.

7 WEEK MATERIAL



Week 1 of 7: Living as Exiles	2
Week 2 of 7: Blessing as a Family	6
Week 3 of 7: Seeking God through Work	10
Week 4 of 7: Flourishing with Order	14
Week 5 of 7: Wisdom is Action.	18
Week 6 of 7: Wonder Transforms Us	22
Week 7 of 7: Present Hope of a Future Kingdom	26

14 WEEK MATERIAL

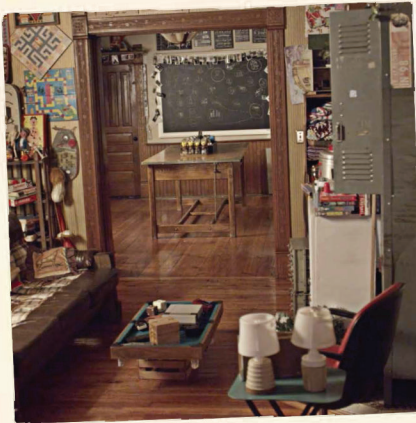


Week 1 of 14: What is Our Salvation For?	31
Week 2 of 14: God's Stewardship: Oikonomia.	35
Week 3 of 14: Designed to be a Gift.	39
Week 4 of 14: Abundance to Overflowing	43
Week 5 of 14: Work as Calling	47
Week 6 of 14: Seeking God in Work.	51
Week 7 of 14: Cultivated Order	55
Week 8 of 14: The Blessing of Hospitality	59
Week 9 of 14: The Way of Wisdom.	63
Week 10 of 14: Wisdom Serves.	67
Week 11 of 14: The Wonder of God's Beauty.	71
Week 12 of 14: The Wonder of God's Mercy	75
Week 13 of 14: Living in God's Kingdom	79
Week 14 of 14: Present Hope of a Future Kingdom.	83

FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

Letters to the Exiles

7 WEEK MATERIAL



Week 1 of 7

CORRESPONDING EPISODE
ep 1: Exiles

7

Living as Exiles

Key Idea: Our salvation is a call to live as exiles as we bless the world.

Key Verse: ⁷ *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,* ⁸ *which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight* ⁹ *making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ* ¹⁰ *as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.* **Ephesians 1:7-10**

Key Passage:

⁴ *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:* ⁵ *Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.* ⁶ *Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.* ⁷ *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.* **Jeremiah 29:4-7**

Notes:

SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

How important is the giving and receiving of gifts to you? What feelings arise in you at the topic of gift-giving?

REVIEW

Watch Episode #1: Exile

Read the key idea, verse, and passage. What insights did you take away from this week's scripture and message?

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

Do you feel we are living in a time of exile? Why or why not?

In what ways have you seen Christians or yourself take the posture of Fortification, Domination, or Accommodation in dealing with culture? Why do you think these are common responses?

Within your family, job, or church, is there something that you are investing in where you might not see the fruit of it in this lifetime? The video referred to this as the "hard work of exile".

From God's perspective, how are you uniquely shaped to be the right person in the right place at the right time for God's purposes? What would be missing in God's economy (oikonomia) without you?

Compare and contrast the practical implications of seeking God's agenda for the world (his oikonomia) verses seeking our agenda for the world (our oikonomia)? Is your life mostly about God's agenda or my agenda, and how do you know?

How do you think our community sees our church? Where do you see us blessing our city, individually or as a church?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: We seek you Lord with the desire to be with you, hear you, and follow you.

Journal: Read Jeremiah 29:7 aloud and reflect on what God might be showing you by responding to the following questions:

- What do I seek most from God, what is the spiritual longing of my heart?
- In what circumstances can I embrace the posture of blessing this week?
- Whom can I seek to bless this week?
- What is my prayer for myself, as I seek to know and trust God's purposes?

Share: What was this experience like for you? What did you discover?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

After listening to each other, close by praying for the needs that have been shared among the group.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning pray that God will fill you to the full, and give you eyes to see where you can be a blessing. Go through your day knowing your true nature as an exile.

In the evening go over your day and take note of all the places you saw God at work, and where you made a difference as an exile.

At the end of the week look at your notes. Is there any change from day 1 to day 6?

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. In our salvation we are called to live as exiles.

Jer 29:4 – ...to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile...

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia... 1 Peter 1:1

There are three typical postures the church takes toward culture: fortification, domination, and accommodation. These approaches are often adopted out of fear rather than love. Instead of embracing the long view—seeking the welfare of the inhabitants of the land we’re in—churches hide from, fight, or blend into the surrounding culture.

2. As exiles, we bless the world.

Jer 29:5-9 – Seek the peace and prosperity of the city...

And we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure. 1 Corinthians 4:12

3. Oikonomia: God’s big plan to bless all of creation.

Eph 1:9-10 – ...making known to us... a plan (oikonomia) ... to unite all things to him.

Oikonomia refers to the way a system works or a management style; what we could call an economy. God has made all of creation according to his oikonomia; where all things display his glory.

4. God has designed us to work in smaller “economies” that point back to his blessing.

Jer 29:5-6 – ...build houses... plant gardens... take wives

We have families, jobs, and roles we are given. We inhabit communities with governing bodies, charities, schools, and institutions. In each of these “economies,” God has appointed us and equipped us to bless.

I became a minister according to the stewardship (oikonomia) from God that was given to me... Colossians 1:25a

Our lives can glorify God as our economies point toward His economy of grace and blessing.

Blessing as a Family

Key Idea: God's design for the family is to be a gift we offer back to God for the life of the world.

Key Verse: *I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.* **Genesis 12:2**

Key Passage:

¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." ³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you." **Genesis 17:1-7**

Notes:

SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What television family (real or fictional) is your favorite? What makes them great?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 2: Love

Read the key verse, key idea, and key passage. Reflecting on this week's scripture and message, what is a new or important idea that stood out to you?

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

If your family had a business card, what kinds of things would you want to be on it?

How is compost similar to family? How is that the same or different from how you think of your family on a day to day basis? How does the compost analogy engage with your thoughts on relationships?

What would you say is God's purpose for your family? How would a commitment to "loving, encouraging, blessing" change some of the habits in your family?

What is one experience that you have had (or witnessed) in a marriage that has given you reason to praise God? How do your good or bad experiences of marriage (parents, family, friends, your own) relate to how you understand God's faithfulness?

What is a family (biological or otherwise) that inspires you? How does their relationship show God's abundance and overflow of love? What do they do that makes them different?

How do you see God's generosity toward you or your family in your daily routines?

Why is it often difficult to generously share the things that God has so generously shared with us?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Reflect:

- What are some Christian families or marriages that remind you of God's love and faithfulness?
- How have those relationships been a "loving, encouraging, blessing" in ordinary ways?
- How do those relationships reflect an uncommon generosity of time, spiritual gifts or financial resources given for the life of the world?

Read: John 15:9-17 out loud.

Journal:

- Think of a few times God has specifically shown you generous love.
- Out of God's great love, we love. Think of someone in your life that you can love, encourage and bless this week.
- What are specific ways that God's abundance of love can overflow from your family to this person or people?

Share: some ways you and your family can love this person or people.

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Pray that our families and marriages would be a demonstration of God's love and faithfulness to each other.

Pray that we would see our families and marriages go beyond ourselves to love, encourage and bless those around us.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Pray each morning that you would see where God wants to bless your neighborhood and see it flourish. Look for any people and places God might be calling you to serve.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. God redeems the whole world through a family.

Gen 17:7 – I will establish my covenant between me and you ... to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God takes an elderly, childless couple living in a foreign land and makes a promise to them. This promise is the beginning of God's mission to redeem people and make them whole. This promise is the answer to the curse in the garden. And it all starts with a family.

2. God redeems the whole world through love and faithfulness.

Gen 12:2 – I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you...

In his calling and promise to Abram, God shows overwhelming love and faithfulness to him and the generations after him. We see the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9

3. God redeems us to be a blessing to the whole world.

Gen 12:2 – ...so that you will be a blessing.

God's plan for Abram's family is his plan for our families also. Our families are to be a gift for the life of the world by being loving, encouraging, and a blessing to the people around us.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11

4. Our blessing to the world is marked by generosity.

Gen 12:2 – ...I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

God's love moves him toward generosity.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3:16-17

Seeking God through Work

Key Idea: God's plan for our work is to seek him through it.

Key Verse: ²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,* ²⁴ *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* **Colossians 3:23-24**

Key Passage:

¹⁴ *For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.* ¹⁵ *To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.* ¹⁶ *He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.* ¹⁷ *So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.* ¹⁸ *But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.* ¹⁹ *Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.* ²⁰ *And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.'* ²¹ *His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'* ²² *And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.'* ²³ *His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'* ²⁴ *He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,* ²⁵ *so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.'* ²⁶ *But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'* ²⁷ *Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.* ²⁸ *So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.* ²⁹ *For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.* **Matthew 25:14-29**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What did you dream of becoming as a young person? What did you not want to become?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 3: Creative Service

Read the key passage (Matthew 25:14-29) aloud.

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

How does Matthew 25:14-29 add to your understanding of what work is or is not?

Share a word or phrase that expresses what you learned about work from this week's message or video. Briefly explain.

How does self-centered work (rather than God-centered, God-glorifying work) affect the culture? What does this have to do with our understanding of salvation?

How can your spiritual gifts, abilities, and hardships all be significant gifts in our creative service for the life of the world?

If we describe work as whatever you put your energy towards, in the context of our daily labor, how does Matthew 25:14-20 reframe your understanding of our work?

What changes for you when you see your gifts put to good use? What is the impact if people are unable to see their work as seeking God's righteousness?

In what ways do justice and virtue inform the way you view the daily use of your gifts and the gifts of others?

How does this understanding of your work challenge the common understanding of the American Dream?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: Ask God to show you how he has gifted you for his glory and for the life of the world.

Journal: Write out all of the gifts that God has given you to use for his glory and for the life of the world.

- They might be skills, talents, or strengths.
- They might be specific experiences or insights.

Share:

- Which of these gifts are especially valuable to you? Why?
- Are there any gifts that you are not currently using? Why?

Journal:

- Write down five individuals or groups affected by your work.
- Write down how the excellence of your work has affected these people, positively or negatively.
- Write down how your decisions concerning justice and virtue in your work have affected these people, positively or negatively.

Share:

- Talk about how one person or group has been affected by your work.
- Discuss one change you could make to seek God's righteousness through your work.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning this week, dedicate your work as a way to seek God's righteousness and love others. At night, reflect on the ways your work accomplished those things. Thank God for trusting you to contribute your work to his plans for the life of the world.

PRAY – *as a benediction*

Read Philippians 2:3-4 aloud.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. God gives us our work according to his plan and our ability.

Matt 25:15 – *To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability...*

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them... Romans 12:6a

God calls each of us differently to accomplish our work in different ways. In our unique vocation, we work with God to discover how he wants us to use them in everyday situations at work, home, and church.

2. God has given us our work as a way to seek His righteousness.

Matt 25:23 – *...Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your master.*

Matt 25:25 – *...so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground...*

Working for God in fear shows a deep misunderstanding of God's calling. God has called us to use our gifts in faith and to share in his joy, and seek him in it.

3. Seeking God's righteousness through our work means we do it as an act of worship.

Col 3:23 – *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord...*

Seeking God's righteousness in our work runs along two main avenues. First, it means doing our work as an offering to God. So, we work hard, finish tasks, pursue excellence, and all without complaint. This also allows us to see value in others' work.

4. Seeking God's righteousness through our work means we pursue justice and virtue in our work.

Col 3:23 – *...and not for men.*

Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate... Amos 5:15

The second avenue of seeking God's righteousness at work relates to how our jobs interact with justice and virtue. Our business decisions should consider things like fairness, keeping our word, and adding value to the local economy.

Our business decisions should not lead us to "trample on the poor" (Amos 5:11), "take a bribe" or "turn aside the needy" (Amos 5:12). In these considerations we also seek God's righteousness in our work.

Flourishing with Order

Key Idea: God uses order and justice to help people flourish.

Key Verse: *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* **Micah 6:8**

Key Passages:

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. **Romans 13:1-7**

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' **Matthew 25:34-40**

Notes:

 **Week 4 of 7** **7**
CORRESPONDING EPISODE
ep 4: Order

SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

Growing up, who were the people with whom you were not supposed to associate? What part of the city were you told not to go? What would happen if you had done either?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 4: Order

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

How does God use the institutions in your life (marriage, family, church, government) to help you flourish? How does it help other people flourish?

Where do you see areas of injustice or disorder in our surrounding community? What would it take to address those issues?

Within your job or school, are there areas of disorder or injustice that prevent human flourishing?

What would the nightly news point out as the barriers to human flourishing in your surrounding community?

What might be some personal reservations that prevent you from giving food or drink to someone who needs it?

What are some physical or sociological barriers that keep you away from those in need?

How do you typically respond when someone who is homeless / destitute poor asks you for money or food? Have you ever had a bad experience in this scenario? A good experience?

On a scale of 1-10, how hospitable are you? Why did you rate yourself at that number?

How would your life change if you had a stranger living in your home for three weeks? Think about the emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational effects it would have.

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: Psalm 4:1

Pray: Spend 1-2 minutes in quiet prayer, asking God to speak to you and listening to what God has to say to you.

Journal:

- Think back to the last time you interacted with someone who was hungry, thirsty, in need, sick, or in prison. Describe in detail how you responded.
- How would you have handled it differently if you had the same opportunity today?
- If the roles were reversed, how would you want the other person to react?
- How do you picture God responding when you come to him in need?
- Describe how it felt when God met one of your needs in mercy.
- In what part of your life are you currently feeling desperate to experience God's mercy?

Group Sharing:

- Reflecting on this exercise, what did you hear, see, or feel?
- What is God inviting you to look at in yourself?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Discuss your joys and challenges. Commit to praying for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

From the daily news, pray about your concern for suffering and injustice in the world. Ask God to show you ways to participate in making things right by offering your influence, time, spiritual gifts, and financial resources. Pay attention to the responsiveness of your heart as Jesus invites you to seek the good, protection, gain, and fair treatment of those around you.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. God establishes order for the flourishing of the world.

Rom 13:1,4 – *be subject to the governing authorities... for he is God's servant for your good...*

God uses institutions of all kinds - families, churches, governments - to create paths for human flourishing.

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. 1 Corinthians 14:33a

Order and peace help people thrive in almost every way, and every human institution should work toward these goals.

2. God calls us to remove barriers and cultivate the conditions for flourishing.

Micah 6:8 – *do justice... love kindness, and... walk humbly with your God*

Our calling as disciples is not simply getting people into a church building. God commands us to work toward justice and kindness in all areas of our lives.

The miracles of Jesus are a primary example of removing physical barriers to flourishing (healing illnesses, for example). Likewise, the teachings of Jesus illustrate how the removal of mental barriers (see John 8:32) and even social barriers (cleansing the temple in Matt 21:12-13, for example) is necessary for human flourishing.

3. Hospitality is helping human flourishing on a personal level.

Matt 25:35 – *For I was hungry and you gave me food...*

Jesus commands his disciples to show mercy through hospitality. This is how true disciples will show themselves.

4. Hospitality is establishing justice on a personal scale.

Matt 25:40 – *...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*

Jesus personalizes justice by showing that he pays attention to how we treat those who cannot fend for themselves - the hungry, the foreigner, the naked, the sick.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

By putting himself in the person being helped, Jesus shows us that serving those in need is a way we can love God directly.

Wisdom is Action

Key Idea: Knowledge is wisdom when we walk in obedience.

Key Verse: ²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **Matthew 7:24-25**

Key Passage:

¹ O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

² Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹ O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! **Psalms 8:1-9**

Notes:

SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What is your approach to learning a new skill? Do you start by asking a lot of questions, or do you start by trying it out on your own?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 5: Wisdom

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What stood out to you in the video? What is your response to the idea that knowledge becomes wisdom when it remembers the Creator?

What are some ways you see God's "fingerprints" in creation every day? In what ways do they point back to God?

In what ways can wisdom show us who we are? What are some attitudes that can prevent wisdom from showing us who we really are?

Read Proverbs 14:15-16. How does this wisdom tell us about ourselves or about God?

What do you think about the idea that wisdom helps us be more, serve more, know and love God more? Give examples.

What is God's desire for the use of our knowledge? How can prideful or self-centered knowledge work against God's purposes?

In what ways do each of the following help us grow in our relationship with Christ?

- The written Word (Scripture)
- The living Word (Jesus)
- Creation
- Corporate worship

Which has had the greatest impact on your personal transformation to love and serve like Jesus?

continued on next page

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-4 slowly, focusing on the things we have been given.

Journal:

- Write out a prayer of thanks to God for these things, citing examples of them in your own life.

Read: 2 Peter 1:5-8 slowly.

Journal:

- Write out (or circle) each step listed in these verses.
- Underline one step you can see evidence of in your life.
- Underline one step that you can begin putting into practice this week.

Group Debrief:

- Share what this experience of being with Jesus was like for you.
- What are the words you think Jesus is inviting you to put into practice this week?
- How will this help you love and serve Jesus?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges. Pray for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

This week, read Matthew 5-7. Begin each day reading a small section of Jesus' teaching. Ask God to empower you to put Jesus' words into practice transforming your attitudes and actions. Each evening re-read the passage. Reflecting on your day, in what way did you see your attitudes and actions transformed to align with Jesus' teaching? What did you learn that you want to put into practice tomorrow? Ask God for a teachable spirit and a humble heart to love and serve like Jesus.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Wisdom tells us who God is.

Ps 8:1 – ...You have set your glory above the heavens...

Wisdom is more than knowledge. Wisdom sees all of creation and finds God's "fingerprints" all over it.

*For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made... **Romans 1:20***

2. Wisdom tells us who we are.

Ps 8:4 – ...what is man that you are mindful of him...

When we know God, we can see ourselves in light of his greatness. Wisdom shows us how glorious it is for God to care for us.

*"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?" **Job 38:4-5***

3. We see and hear wisdom in God's Word.

Matt 7:24 – Everyone then who hears these words of mine...

Wisdom always begins and ends with God, so we must position ourselves as people willing to listen to God's Word.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. **Proverbs 9:10***

4. Wisdom means acting on what we know.

Matt 7:24 – ...hears these words of mine and does them ...will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Wisdom without action is void of meaning.

*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **James 3:13***

Lives that exhibit God's wisdom become fortified in God's power.

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness ... For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful. **2 Peter 1:3, 8***

Wonder Transforms Us

Key Idea: Living in awe of God's beauty transforms us.

Key Verse: *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* **Romans 5:8**

Key Passage:

¹ Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. ² O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. ³ When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. ⁴ Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple! ⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ⁶ the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; ⁷ who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, ⁸ so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. ⁹ You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. ¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. ¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. ¹² The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, ¹³ the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Psalms 65

Notes:

SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

How do you typically respond to artistic expression and creative works of art? To what style of art are you most often attracted?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 6: Wonder

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What beauty is shown in the boy's adventure in the video?

How can self-centeredness blind us to the mysterious wonder and awe of God?

Give examples of how a church, a person or a family can become overly focused on fulfilling their own desires.

What resonates with you about doing something “totally useless”? What about it might be uncomfortable?

How often do you spend time doing something that isn't necessarily productive?

What are things you do, or places you go, to stop, pay attention and appreciate beauty?

What is a place or time that you felt a great sense of awe?

In what ways do you experience wonder and awe at God's mercy towards you during regular worship services?

Have you experienced a time when you were overwhelmed by God's mercy and spontaneously prayed or worshipped in the moment?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: Look over Philippians 2:1-11 slowly.

Journal:

- Focus on some words that stand out to you from these verses, and make two columns to write them in. In one column, write the words that rob you of awe and wonder. In the other column, write the words that inspire you with a sense of awe and wonder.
- Based on these verses, write three goals that reflect your desire to live with a greater experience of wonder and awe.

Group Debrief:

- What do you sense Jesus is inviting you to discover about him?
- When you consider all you do, what would you have to let go of to spend time simply enjoying the wonder and beauty of God?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges. Pray for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Begin each day by reading Philippians 2:1-11. Ask God to empower you to put Jesus' words into practice transforming your attitudes and actions. Each evening, reflect on the ways you saw your attitudes and actions transformed. What did you notice that you want to put into practice tomorrow? Ask God for a heart of humility.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. We are drawn to God's beauty.

Psalm 65:2, 5 – ...to you shall all flesh come... O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas...

God's beauty is his mysterious character and his magnificent actions.

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. Psalm 27:4

“God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divine beauty.” – Jonathan Edwards

2. Living in awe of God's beauty draws us into worship.

Psalm 65:6-8 – ...the one who... established the mountains... stills the roaring of the seas... makes the going out of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

When we worship God, our focus shifts and we are able to behold God's beauty and majesty afresh.

Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. Job 37:14

3. In worship we recognize God's lavish love toward us.

Psalm 65:3, 5 – When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions... by awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness...

The weight of God's lavish love crushes us, turning our pride into humility and our selfishness into gratitude.

4. Recognizing Jesus' gratuitous act of sacrifice transforms us.

Rom 5:8 – ...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Worship moves us from God's beauty to his faithfulness, and from his faithfulness to our gratitude.

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10

Present Hope of a Future Kingdom

Key Idea: The church lives out God's Kingdom out for the life of the world.

Key Verse: *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.* **1 John 3:2**

Key Passages:

¹⁵For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. **2 Corinthians 4:13-18**

⁵"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread, ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen." **Matthew 6:5-13**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

As a child, what were some of the “rote” prayers you were taught? For example, “Now I lay me down to sleep...”

REVIEW

Watch Episode 7: Church

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

Read Mark 6:5-13 aloud.

What problems could arise when praying a set prayer like the one in Mark 6:9-13?

What could be some advantages to praying a set prayer?

What are some of the things that keep you from praying more?

What are some triggers in your life that help you remember to pray?

Which part of the Lord’s Prayer stands out to you? Why?

What is the meaning of “prolepsis”? How is the acorn a good illustration of prolepsis?

What are some ways you could see a church living in the present hope of a future Kingdom (prolepsis)?

Read through the verses that describe the church: Eph 2:19, 1 Peter 2:10, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Cor 12:27, Eph 5:25b-27). Which description of the church resonates most with your experience or perception? Describe a time when you saw this description in action.

Which description of the church seems the most out of place to you?

What are some ways we put our hope in the transient “things that are seen” instead of the eternal “things that are unseen” (2 Cor 4:18)?

continued on next page

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read:

- As a group or in pairs, read verse 9 of the Lord's Prayer.

Pray (all together or in pairs):

- In response to verse 9, offer prayers of awe and wonder, giving honor and adoration to our Father who is in heaven.

Repeat this process with verse 10, again with verses 11-12, and again with verse 13, praying each time. Here are prompts for each section:

- In response to verse 10, pray for God's purposes in your life and in the world around you by welcoming God's rule in your life and in the world. Express your desire for God's purposes to become your own.
- In response to verses 11-12, pray for your needs and the needs of others and for the wisdom to see his abundance. Ask for God's protection and generosity to those who have wronged us, and forgiveness for the wrong we have done to others.
- In response to verse 13, express your desire to submit to the reign of God, the control of God, and the worship of God. Commit your gifts to God's purposes, offering all that you are and all that is yours back to the Lord.

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges.

Commit to praying for one another throughout the week.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

This week find ways to pray the Lord's Prayer in creative ways as a daily spiritual practice:

- Stop 3 times a day, close your eyes and say the Lord's Prayer slowly.
- Morning and evening, pray the Lord's Prayer aloud.
- Write the Lord's Prayer out in your own words.
- Develop your own creative way to pray the Lord's Prayer.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Our church lives in prolepsis, the present hope of a future Kingdom.

2 Cor 4:18 – ...we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen...

We use the term “prolepsis” to describe how God’s Kingdom is a future we can live in right now.

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

2. Our church’s prolepsis shapes how we see our mission.

2 Cor 4:15 – ...so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

The church is made up of exiles on a mission to “extend grace” to those around them. This colors every part of our lives – family (love), work and school (creative service), our community (order), education (wisdom), and art (wonder).

The church is the body of Christ given for the life of the world, living in the present hope for a future kingdom.

3. In our prolepsis, the Lord’s Prayer directs our actions, not just our words.

Matt 6:5, 9-13 – ...when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites... Pray then like this...

- Our Father in heaven [9] // We are family living in exile...
- hallowed be your name [9] // in awe of God.
- Your kingdom come [10] // We desire God’s purposes...
- your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven [10] // right here, right now;
- Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors [11-12] // trusting God to provide for us,
- And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [13] // and protect us,
- For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen [13] // as we offer our gifts back to him.

FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

Letters to the Exiles

14 WEEK MATERIAL

Week: 14 of 14
CORRESPONDING EPISODE
ep 14: Church



What is Our Salvation For?

Key Idea: Our salvation is for the life of the world.

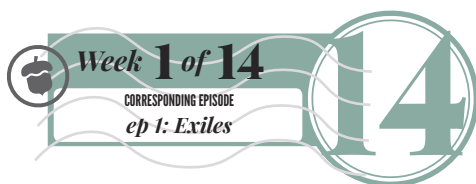
Key Verse: *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*
Jeremiah 29:7

Key Passages:

⁴“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

¹⁰“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.” **Jeremiah 29:4-7; 10-14**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – help people get comfortable

If there are new people in the group, have everyone take a moment to introduce themselves.

What is something that almost always draws your focus or attention toward God?

REVIEW

Watch Episode #1: Exile

Read the key verse, key idea, and key passage. Reflecting on this week's scripture and message, what is a new or important idea that stood out to you?

DISCUSS – talk through the content to gain understanding

Do you feel we are living in a time of exile? Why or why not?

In what ways have you seen Christians or yourself take the posture of Fortification, Domination, or Accommodation in dealing with culture? Why do you think these are common responses?

What is challenging about embracing the alternative posture of “blessing the world as agents of salvation”? What would change for you if you embraced this new perspective?

How could someone begin seeking the good of the city? (vv. 7, 12)?

Within your family, job, or church, is there something that you are investing in where you might not see the fruit of it in this lifetime? *The video referred to this as the “hard work of exile”.*

How is the perspective of doing the “hard work of exile” counter-cultural?

What questions is Jeremiah answering for the exiles? How does the prophecy of Jeremiah give them hope? How is Jesus an encouragement for his disciples in their context of cultural exile? What hope or new perspective does this give you in your context?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: We seek you Lord with the desire to be with you, hear you, and follow you.

Journal: Read Jeremiah 29:7 aloud and reflect on what God might be showing you by responding to the following questions:

- What do I seek most from God, what is the spiritual longing of my heart?
- In what circumstances can I embrace the posture of blessing this week?
- Whom can I seek to bless this week?
- What is my prayer for myself, as I seek to know and trust God's purposes?

Share: What was this experience like for you? What did you discover?

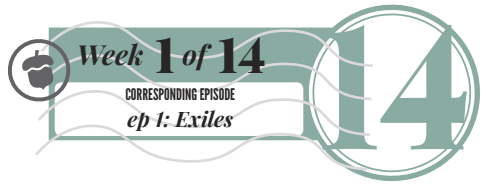
PRAY – *share requests with one another*

What do you need from God that would keep your focus on being a blessing this week?

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Continue to ponder these questions as you take time to read Jeremiah 29:4-7 every day. Talk with God about what's in your heart.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Salvation means engaging our world as an exile.

Jer 29:4 – ...to all those I carried into exile...

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia... 1 Peter 1:1

There are three typical postures the church takes toward culture: fortification, domination, and accommodation. These approaches are often adopted out of fear rather than love. Instead of embracing the long view—seeking the welfare of the inhabitants of the land we're in—churches hide from, fight, or blend into the surrounding culture.

2. Blessing the world as agents of salvation in exile.

Jer 29:5-9 – Seek the peace and prosperity of the city...

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Romans 12:14

And we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure. 1 Corinthians 4:12

3. Trusting God's promises while we do the hard work in exile.

Jer 29:10-14 – I will come to you and fulfill my good promise...For I know the plans I have for you...

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. Hebrews 11:1,13

God's Stewardship: Oikonomia

Key Idea: In exile, we bless the world as God's stewards.

Key Verse: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

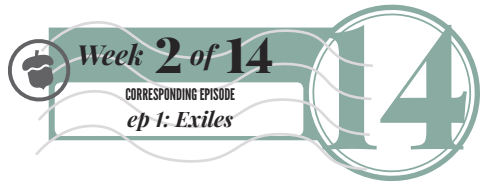
Key Passage:

*⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. **Ephesians 1:7-10***

*¹³"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. **Matthew 5:13-16***

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

How important is the giving and receiving of gifts to you? What feelings arise in you at the topic of gift-giving?

REVIEW

Watch Episode #1: Exile

Read the key idea, verse, and passage. What insights did you take away from this week's scripture and message?

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

From God's perspective, how are you uniquely shaped to be the right person in the right place at the right time for God's purposes? What would be missing in God's economy (oikonomia) without you?

Compare and contrast the practical implications of seeking God's agenda for the world (his oikonomia) verses seeking our agenda for the world (our oikonomia)? Is your life mostly about God's agenda or my agenda, and how do you know?

Read Matthew 5:12–16 aloud. How does Matthew 5 reframe our understanding of success?

How is a Chinese lantern a good metaphor for our lives, our work, or our gifts? In the video it said, we were being "filled with fire and let go as a heavenward offering." Does this resonate with you?

Read Philippians 2:14–15. What responsibility do we have as a community of faith? How can it be difficult to engage in a positive or non-critical posture within the church? How does that bless the world? How does it connect with our identity as light and salt?

How do you think our community sees our church? Where do you see us blessing our city, individually or as a church?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: Sit quietly in Christ's presence. Focus your attention on Jesus at the center of your thoughts.

Read: Divide into groups of 2 or 3 and have someone read Luke 19:1–10 aloud.

Share in Groups: Respond to the following questions in your group of 2-3 people.

- What is the most dramatic moment in this story for you?
- What impact does Zacchaeus have on the city?
- How might the people of the town respond to Zacchaeus?
- What might Jesus be saying to you through this story?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

After listening to each other, close by praying for the needs that have been shared among the group.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning pray that God will fill you to the full, and give you eyes to see where you can be a blessing. Go through your day knowing your true nature is light and salt wherever you are.

In the evening go over your day and take note of all the places you saw God at work, and where you made a difference as salt and light.

At the end of the week look at your notes. Is there any change from day 1 to day 6?

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. In salvation we are given a new role.

Eph 1:7 – In him we have redemption... making known to us

*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. **1 Corinthians 15:22***

2. Oikonomia: God’s big plan for all of creation.

Eph 1:9-10 – ...making known to us... a plan (oikonomia) ... to unite all things to him.

Oikonomia refers to the way a system works or a management style; what we could call an *economy*.

God has made all of creation according to his *oikonomia* - where all things will display his glory.

3. Our economy: where God has designed us to work in the nitty gritty.

Matt 5:16 – ...so they may see your good works...

*I became a minister according to the stewardship (oikonomia) from God that was given to me... **Colossians 1:25a***

We all have families, jobs, and roles we are given. And we all inhabit communities with governing bodies, charities, schools, and institutions. In each of these “economies,” God has appointed us and equipped us to do good work.

4. Our economies point people toward God’s Oikonomia

Matt 5:16 – ...let your light shine before others...

*¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. **Philippians 2:14-15***

Our lives can glorify God as our economies point toward His Economy of Grace.

Designed to be a Gift

Key Idea: God's design for the family is to be a gift we offer back to God for the life of the world.

Key Verse: *I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.* **Genesis 12:2**

Key Passage:

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ²that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."
³Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you." **Genesis 17:1-7**

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

In our society, what are some factors that make the topic of *family* so complicated or multi-layered?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 2: Love

Read the key verse, key idea, and key passage. Reflecting on this week's scripture and message, what is a new or important idea that stood out to you?

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

Read Genesis 12:1-5 aloud. What stands out to you from this week's scripture or message?

How does family reflect the true nature of God?

What would you say is God's purpose for your family? How would a commitment to "loving, encouraging, blessing" change some of the habits in your family?

How would that same commitment change your marriage, your parenting, your paid or unpaid work, your significant relationships?

Read 1 John 4:7-14. How does this impact your understanding of God's covenant of love? How is a covenant different than a contract, and why does that reflect God's love differently?

How is the abundance of God's generosity shown in his relationship with us?

What is one experience that you have had (or witnessed) in a marriage that has given you reason to praise God? How do your good or bad experiences of marriage (parents, family, friends, your own) relate to how you understand God's faithfulness?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Reflect: What is God saying to you about a commitment to “loving, encouraging, and blessing”?

Journal: Write a prayer that expresses your desires or concerns in making this commitment.

Share:

- What are some Christian families or marriages that remind you of God’s love and faithfulness?
- How have those relationships been a “loving, encouraging, blessing” in ordinary ways?
- How do those relationships reflect an uncommon generosity of time, spiritual gifts or financial resources given for the life of the world?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Pray that our families and marriages would be a demonstration of God’s love and faithfulness to each other.

Pray that we would see our families and marriages go beyond ourselves to love, encourage and bless those around us.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. God redeems the whole world through a family.

Gen 17:7 – I will establish my covenant between me and you ... to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God takes an elderly, childless couple living in a foreign land and makes a promise to them. This promise is the beginning of God's mission to redeem people and make them whole. This promise is the answer to the curse in the garden. And it all starts with a family.

2. God redeems the whole world through a promise.

Gen 17:7 – I will establish my covenant between me and you ...

Our families begin and operate in the same way. We make a promise to be faithful, and this allows us to love one another and build trust within our family.

3. God redeems the whole world through love and faithfulness.

Gen 12:2 – I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you...

In his calling and promise to Abram, God shows overwhelming love and faithfulness to him and the generations after him. We see the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9

4. God's plan to redeem the world through love and faithfulness is our blueprint.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11

God's plan for Abram's family is his plan for our families also. Our families are to be a gift for the life of the world by being loving, encouraging, and a blessing to the people around us.

Abundance to Overflowing

Key Idea: Being created in God's image means loving each other, and being generous with our love to everyone.

Key Verse: *¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **John 3:16-17***

Key Passage:

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

*²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. **Genesis 1:26-30***

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What television family (real or fictional) is your favorite? What makes them great?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 2: Love

Read the key verse, key idea, and key passage. Reflecting on this week's scripture and message, what is a new or important idea that stood out to you?

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

Does anything change in your understanding of the family's mission to love, encourage and bless after you examined Jesus' family?

If your family had a business card, what kinds of things would you want to be on it?

How is compost similar to family? How is that the same or different from how you think of your family on a day to day basis? How does the compost analogy engage with your thoughts on relationships?

What is a family (biological or otherwise) that inspires you? How does their relationship show God's abundance and overflow of love? What do they do that makes them different?

How do you see God's generosity toward you or your family in your daily routines?

Besides money or family, name something you have only by God's generosity toward you.

Why is it often difficult to generously share the things that God has so generously shared with us?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Reflect:

- Read John 15:9-17 once slowly out loud, and once as individuals on their own.
- Spend time in reflection on how, specifically in your life, God has shown you generous love.
- Out of God's great love, we love. Think of someone in your life that you can love, encourage and bless this week.
- What are specific ways that God's abundance of love can overflow from your family to this person or people?

Share:

- Share some ways you and your family can love this person or people.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Pray each morning that you would see where God wants to bless your neighborhood and see it flourish. Look for any people and places God might be calling you to serve.

PRAY – *as a benediction*

Read Psalm 145:3-7 aloud.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. As image bearers we are made for relationship.

Gen 1:27 – ...male and female he created them...

We not only see this illustrated within the family, but also within our church family as we follow Jesus.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **John 13:34***

2. As image bearers we are made for abundance.

Gen 1:28 – ...Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...

In God's design, our love for each other can actually produce new generations of people.

In our relationship with God, his grace and love are overflowing.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

3. This abundance always overflows into generosity.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave...

God's love moves him toward generosity.

God is generous in his relationships as he calls people to himself to bless them. God is also generous in meeting the needs of others.

4. The life of every Christian should reflect God's generosity.

John 3:17 – ... not ... to condemn the world, but ... that the world might be saved ...

Being created in God's image doesn't stop with simply loving those who love us. God's generosity toward us fuels our generosity toward anyone.

Work as Calling

Key Idea: We display our calling as gift givers in our everyday work for the life of the world.

Key Verse: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:10

Key Passage:

¹⁴For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?' ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. **Matthew 25:14-29**



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What was the daily labor of your grandparents? Do you think they viewed their work differently than we do? If so, how?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 3: Creative Service

Read the key passage (Matthew 25:14-29) aloud.

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What does Matthew 25:14-29 add to your understanding of what work is or is not?

If everyday work is a gift for others, how does this impact the way we do our work?

Share a word or phrase that expresses what you learned about work from this week's message or video. Briefly explain.

How does this week's scripture, sermon, and video challenge your understanding of work? What about our cultural understanding of work?

How does self-centered work (rather than God-centered, God-glorifying work) affect the culture? What does this have to do with our understanding of salvation?

What fears get in the way of using our gifts freely for the good of the world? If we were truly not afraid or hesitant, what would it look like?

How can your spiritual gifts, abilities, and hardships all be significant gifts in our creative service for the life of the world?

If we describe work as whatever you put your energy towards, in the context of our daily labor, how does Matthew 25:14-20 reframe your understanding of our work?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: Ask God to show you how he has gifted you for his glory and for the life of the world.

We have all received gifts from the people in our lives, not just material gifts, but other gifts that make a life-long impact. This practice will help you identify gifts you have received and consider how you might “re-gift” them to others.

Journal: Write out all of the gifts that God has given you to use for his glory and for the life of the world.

- They might be skills, talents, or strengths.
- They might be specific experiences or insights.
- They might be opportunities where you have more time than others.

Share:

- Which of these gifts are especially valuable to you? Why?
- Are there any gifts that you are not currently using? Why?

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Make a list of people in your life that you desire to bless. From this list, consider what gift from your life you would want to pass on to each of them. Daily ask God to shape you in Christ’s image so that you have good gifts to offer for the good of others.

PRAY – *as a benediction*

Read Philippians 2:3-4 aloud.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Everyday work is a calling given to us by God.

Eph 2:10 – ...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand...

The term 'vocation' is rooted in the word 'voice,' reflecting the fact that God is the one who has called us to our everyday work and careers.

2. God gives us our work according to his plan and our ability.

Matt 25:15 – To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability..

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them... Romans 12:6a

God calls each of us differently to accomplish our everyday work in different ways. In our unique vocation, we work with God to discover how he wants us to use them in everyday situations at work, home, and church.

3. Because we know the Gift Giver, we use our gifts with faith, not fear.

Matt 25:23 – ...Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your master.

Matt 25:25 – ...so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground...

Working for God in fear shows a deep misunderstanding of God's calling. God has called us to use our gifts in faith and to share in his joy.

²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,*

²⁴ *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23-24*

In our work, we can rest in the confidence of receiving an eternal inheritance from him.

Seeking God in Work

Key Idea: In our everyday work we seek God's righteousness in our relationships and our community.

Key Verse: ⁵ *Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.* ⁶ *Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.* ⁷ *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.* **Jeremiah 29:5-7**

Key Passage:

¹⁰ *They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth.* ¹¹ *Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.* ¹² *For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins— you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.* ¹³ *Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.* ¹⁴ *Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.* ¹⁵ *Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.* **Amos 5:10-15**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What did you dream of becoming as a young person? What did you not want to become?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 3: Creative Service

Read the key passage (Amos 5:10-15) aloud.

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What did you hear or see from the scripture, message, and video that inspires you to discover or affirm the work you do, whether at home, school, or the office?

What changes for you when you see your gifts put to good use? What is the impact if people are unable to see their work as seeking God's righteousness?

In what ways do justice and virtue inform the way you view the daily use of your gifts and the gifts of others?

What are some of our attitudes or behaviors that work against God's desire for justice and virtue in our work? What would help us align our desires with God's desires?

How does this understanding of your work challenge the common understanding of the American Dream?

The primary question of this message series is "What is our salvation actually for?" How does your perspective on work - whether at home, school, or the office - influence your answer to that question?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: Ask God to show you new ways to seek his righteousness through your work.

Journal:

- Write down five individuals or groups affected by your work.
- Write down how the excellence of your work has affected these people, positively or negatively.
- Write down how your decisions concerning justice and virtue in your work have affected these people, positively or negatively.

Have the group pair off for a time of sharing.

Share (in pairs):

- Talk about how one person or group has been affected by your work.
- Discuss one change you could make to seek God's righteousness through your work.

Group debrief: How was time of sharing insightful or helpful to you?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

In your pairs, pray for your partner's ability to seek God's righteousness in whatever task their work requires.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning this week, dedicate your work as a way to seek God's righteousness and love others. At night, reflect on the ways your work accomplished those things. Thank God for trusting you to contribute your work to his plans for the life of the world.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Our everyday work connects us to the community around us.

Jer 29:5-7 – Build houses... plant gardens...seek the welfare of the city ...pray to the Lord on its behalf.

Our work is not for our benefit only, but for the blessing to spill over into the benefit of everyone with whom we come in contact.

Our work is a calling to love others, not just a paycheck.

2. Seeking God’s righteousness through our everyday work means we do our work as an act of worship.

Seeking God’s righteousness in our work runs along two main avenues. First, it means doing our work as an offering to God.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. Col 3:23

So, we work hard, finish tasks, pursue excellence, and all without complaint. This also allows us to see value in others’ work.

3. Seeking God’s righteousness through our everyday work means we pursue justice and virtue in our work.

Amos 5:15 – Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate...

The second avenue of seeking God’s righteousness at work relates to how our jobs interact with justice and virtue. Our business decisions should consider things like fairness, keeping our word, and adding value to the local economy.

Our business decisions should not lead us to “trample on the poor” (5:11), “take a bribe” or “turn aside the needy” (5:12). In these considerations we also seek God’s righteousness in our work.

Cultivated Order

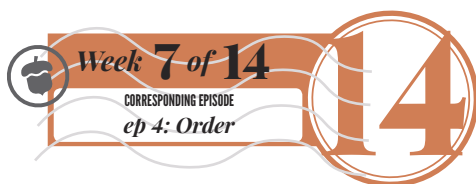
Key Idea: We cultivate God-given order to pave the way for people to flourish.

Key Verse: *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* **Micah 6:8**

Key Passage:

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. **Romans 13:1-7**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What were some of your favorite team games to play as a child? What were some of the rules involved? Were some of the rules more important than others?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 4: Order

Read the key passage (Romans 13:1-7) aloud.

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What contrasts or conflicts do you see in the key passage (Romans 13:1-7)?

How does God use the institutions in your life (marriage, family, church, government) to help you flourish? How does it help other people flourish?

Where do you see areas of injustice or disorder in our surrounding community? What would it take to address those issues?

What connections do you see between your everyday work and the encouragement toward justice and kindness in Micah 6:8?

What barriers to experiencing God does Jesus accuse the people of creating in Matthew 21:12-13? What do you learn from Jesus' reaction?

Within your everyday work, are there areas of disorder or injustice that prevent human flourishing?

What would the nightly news point out as the barriers to human flourishing in your surrounding community?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Reflect:

- Read Micah 6:8.
- What gifts could you contribute to restoring order to what is broken?
- How can you take practical steps toward protecting the vulnerable within your spheres of influence?

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

From the daily news, pray about your concern for suffering and injustice in the world. Ask God to show you ways to participate in making things right by offering your influence, time, spiritual gifts, and financial resources. Pay attention to the responsiveness of your heart as Jesus invites you to seek the good, protection, gain, and fair treatment of those around you.

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share your prayer requests. Ask God to reveal his heart for justice in your circumstance.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. God establishes order for the flourishing of the world.

Rom 13:1,4 – *be subject to the governing authorities... for he is God's servant for your good...*

God uses institutions of all kinds - families, churches, governments - to create paths for human flourishing.

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. 1 Cor 14:33a

Order and peace help people thrive in almost every way, and every human institution should work toward these goals.

2. The brokenness of our world results in injustice and disorder.

Rom 1:21 – *For although they knew God, they did not honor him... but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

The effects of our sin are not just spiritual. It hurts us mentally, emotionally, and even physically (as it ultimately results in death).

Also, our sin affects more than ourselves. It spills over into our families, relationships, and business dealings. Injustice and disorder are the natural result of unchecked sin in a society.

3. God calls us to remove barriers and cultivate the conditions for flourishing in every area of creation.

Micah 6:8 – *do justice... love kindness, and... walk humbly with your God*

Our calling as disciples is not simply getting people into a church building. God commands us to work toward justice and kindness in all areas of our lives.

The miracles of Jesus are a primary example of removing physical barriers to flourishing (healing illnesses, for example).

Likewise, the teachings of Jesus illustrate how the removal of mental barriers (see John 8:32) and even social barriers (cleansing the temple in Matt 21:12-13, for example) is necessary for human flourishing.

The Blessing of Hospitality

Key Idea: Working for justice and showing kindness in our world begins with hospitality as a basic discipline.

Key Verse: *And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'* **Matthew 25:40**

Key Passage:

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' **Matthew 25:34-40**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

Growing up, who were the people with whom you were not supposed to associate? What part of the city were you told not to go? What would happen if you had done either?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 4: Order

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

Read Matthew 25:35-36 aloud.

What might be some personal reservations that prevent you from giving food or drink to someone who needs it?

What are some physical or sociological barriers that keep you away from those in need?

How do you typically respond when someone who is homeless / destitute poor asks you for money or food? Have you ever had a bad experience in this scenario? A good experience?

On a scale of 1-10, how hospitable are you? Why did you rate yourself at that number?

How would your life change if you had a stranger living in your home for three weeks? Think about the emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational effects it would have.

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: Psalm 4:1

Pray: Spend 1-2 minutes in quiet prayer, asking God to speak to you and listening to what God has to say to you.

Journal:

- Think back to the last time you interacted with someone who was hungry, thirsty, in need, sick, or in prison. Describe in detail how you responded.
- How would you have handled it differently if you had the same opportunity today?
- If the roles were reversed, how would you want the other person to react?
- How do you picture God responding when you come to him in need?
- Describe how it felt when God met one of your needs in mercy.
- In what part of your life are you currently feeling desperate to experience God's mercy?

Group Sharing: Reflecting on this exercise, what did you hear, see, or feel? What is God inviting you to look at in yourself?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Discuss your joys and challenges. Commit to praying for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning, read Ephesians 2:10. Believe that God has made you to be the right person in the right place to do his work today. Trust God to give you eyes to see and the willingness to respond to his invitations. At night, share with God what you saw in the people and places during your day. In your journal, write down three things you saw that reflected God's love today.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Hospitality means we give others what we have as a blessing.

Matt 25:35 – *For I was hungry and you gave me food...*

Jesus commands his disciples to show mercy through hospitality. This is how true disciples will show themselves.

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Romans 12:13

2. Hospitality is simply justice on a personal scale.

Matt 25:40 – *...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers...*

Jesus personalizes justice by showing that he pays attention to how we treat those who cannot fend for themselves - the hungry, the foreigner, the naked, the sick.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

3. Hospitality is giving to others what God has given to us.

Matt 25:40 – *...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*

By putting himself in the person being helped, Jesus shows us that serving others is a way we can love God directly.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Although we can never repay God for his generous kindness to us. God has made it so that we can express our gratitude by loving the unloved and defending the unprotected.

The Way of Wisdom

Key Idea: Knowledge becomes wisdom when it points to Jesus.

Key Verse: ¹ O Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

² *Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.*

³ *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **Psalm 8:1-3***

Key Passage:

¹ *O Lord, you have searched me and known me!*

² *You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

³ *You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

⁴ *Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.*

⁵ *You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it. **Psalm 139:1-6***

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What words would you use to describe someone who is “fully alive”?
How would someone who is “fully alive” handle pressure or frustration?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 5: Wisdom

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What stood out to you in the video? What is your response to the idea that knowledge becomes wisdom when it remembers the Creator?

What are some ways you see God’s “fingerprints” in creation every day? In what ways do they point back to God?

In what ways can wisdom show us who we are? What are some attitudes that can prevent wisdom from showing us who we really are?

Read the Key Passage (Psalm 139:1-6) aloud.

What does the Psalmist say about God’s knowledge of who you are, where you are, and why you are here? Read Ephesians 2:10. In what way is Paul’s conclusion similar?

Read Proverbs 14:15-16. How does this wisdom tell us about ourselves or about God? How do these verses illustrate the abundant life?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

We will use all of Psalm 139 as a guide to speak to God using three prayers: Search me, Know me, Lead me.

Pray: Ask God to focus your mind and heart as you pray.

- Read **Psalm 139:23-24**: *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*
- “Search me.” Invite God’s close gaze on your life. Allow his light to shine into whatever area of your heart God is prompting you to open to him.
- Sit for a moment in silence with God.
- “Know me.” Reflect on the past week and the condition of your heart. How have your words and actions revealed your heart? Are you aware of any wicked or hurtful way in your life? How is that affecting you?
- Pause for a moment to reflect.
- “Lead me.” David returned to God again and again for guidance. Where do you need wisdom? Is God inviting you to return to him for guidance? Do you sense God calling you to do something or become something? Is there a difficult step God is leading you to take?
- Write down your own thoughts expressed as a prayer in your journal.

Group Sharing: What did you observe happening in yourself during this time of reflection and solitude? How would you summarize your experience of opening yourself to God in this way?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges. Pray for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning, think of someone who is on your heart and pray Psalm 139 by inserting his/her name, replacing the words me, my, or I. At the end of the day, read Psalm 139, inserting your name for the words me, my, or I. Spend time in solitude with God using the three prayers: Search me, Know me, Lead me. What is God saying to you (journal your thoughts)?

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Wisdom tells us who God is.

Ps 8:1 – You have set your glory above the heavens...

Wisdom is more than knowledge. Wisdom sees all of creation and finds God's "fingerprints" all over it.

*For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made... **Romans 1:20***

2. Wisdom tells us who we are.

Ps 139:1-6 – ...you have searched me and known me! ... when I sit down ... and are acquainted with all my ways...

When we know God, we can see ourselves in light of his greatness. Wisdom shows us how glorious it is for God to care for us.

*"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?" **Job 38:4-5***

3. Wisdom points the way to living the abundant life in Jesus.

John 10:10 – ...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Wisdom appeals to us because it displays the abundant life.

*The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless. **Proverbs 14:15-16***

A wise life by itself will not make someone follow Jesus. However, a wise life can lead to the discovery of Jesus, who is the True Wisdom of God.

*And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, **1 Corinthians 1:30***

Wisdom Serves

Key Idea: Wisdom moves us to serve others in love.

Key Verse: ²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **Matthew 7:24-25**

Key Passage:

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Peter 1:3-8**

Notes:



SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

What is your approach to learning a new skill? Do you start by asking a lot of questions, or do you start by trying it out on your own?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 5: Wisdom

Read the key passage (Romans 13:1-7) aloud.

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What do you think about the idea that wisdom helps us be more, serve more, know and love God more? Give examples.

What things do you want to remember about wisdom?

What is God's desire for the use of our knowledge? How can prideful or self-centered knowledge work against God's purposes?

Name a few people in your life whose individual gifts you could help nurture.

What elements or attitudes could hinder unique gifts from blossoming? In what places or situations do you experience these attitudes?

In what ways do each of the following help us grow in our relationship with Christ?

- The written Word (Scripture)
- The living Word (Jesus)
- Creation
- Corporate worship

Which has had the greatest impact on your personal transformation to love and serve like Jesus?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-4 slowly, focusing on the things we have been given.

Journal:

- Write out a prayer of thanks to God for these things, citing examples of them in your own life.

Read: 2 Peter 1:5-8 slowly.

Journal:

- Write out (or circle) each step listed in these verses.
- Underline one step you can see evidence of in your life.
- Underline one step that you can begin putting into practice this week.

Group Debrief: Share what this experience of being with Jesus was like for you. What are the words you think Jesus is inviting you to put into practice this week? How will this help you love and serve Jesus?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges. Pray for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

This week, read Matthew 5-7. Begin each day reading a small section of Jesus' teaching. Ask God to empower you to put Jesus' words into practice transforming your attitudes and actions. Each evening re-read the passage. Reflecting on your day, in what way did you see your attitudes and actions transformed to align with Jesus' teaching? What did you learn that you want to put into practice tomorrow? Ask God for a teachable spirit and a humble heart to love and serve like Jesus.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Wisdom begins with hearing the Word.

Matt 7:24 – *Everyone then who hears these words of mine...*

Wisdom always begins and ends with God, so we must position ourselves as people willing to listen to God's Word.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. **Proverbs 9:10***

2. Wisdom means doing what we know.

Matt 7:24 – *...hears these words of mine and does them...*

Wisdom apart from action is void of meaning.

*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **James 3:13***

3. Acting in wisdom builds a foundation of loving service.

Matt 7:24 – *...will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

Lives that exhibit God's wisdom become fortified in God's power.

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness ... For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful. **2 Peter 1:3, 8***

This kind of life results in serving others in God's love.

The Wonder of God's Beauty

Key Idea: Living in awe of God's beauty transforms us.

Key Verse: *One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. Psalm 27:4*

Key Passage:

¹ Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. ² O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. ³ When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. ⁴ Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple! ⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ⁶ the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; ⁷ who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, ⁸ so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. ⁹ You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. ¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. ¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. ¹² The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, ¹³ the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy. **Psalm 65**

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

When you think of beauty what is the first thing that comes to mind?
What makes something beautiful?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 6: Wonder

Read the Key Verse (Psalm 27:4) aloud. What do you want to remember from this week's verse or video?

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

How can self-centeredness blind us to the mysterious wonder and awe of God?

Give examples of how a church, a person or a family can become overly focused on fulfilling their own desires.

What beauty is shown in the boy's adventure in the video?

What resonates with you about doing something "totally useless"? What about it might be uncomfortable?

How often do you spend time doing something that isn't necessarily productive?

How does God speak to you personally through the beauty of creation?

What are things you do, or places you go, to stop, pay attention and appreciate beauty?

How does beauty help us reach beyond practicality, or pragmatism to worship God? How easy or difficult is it for you to stop, see and appreciate beauty? What is one barrier that keeps you focused on the pragmatic?

What is a place or time that you felt a great sense of awe?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: Look over Philippians 2:1-11 slowly.

Journal:

- Focus on some words that stand out to you from these verses, and make two columns to write them in. In one column, write the words that rob you of awe and wonder. In the other column, write the words that inspire you with a sense of awe and wonder.
- Based on these verses, write three goals that reflect your desire to live with a greater experience of wonder and awe.

Group Debrief: What do you sense Jesus is inviting you to discover about him? When you consider all you do, what would you have to let go of to spend time simply enjoying the wonder and beauty of God?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges. Pray for one another.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Begin each day by reading Philippians 2:1-11. Ask God to empower you to put Jesus' words into practice transforming your attitudes and actions. Each evening, reflect on the ways you saw your attitudes and actions transformed. What did you notice that you want to put into practice tomorrow? Ask God for a heart of humility.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. We are drawn to God's beauty.

Psalm 27:4 – ...to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple...

God's beauty is his mysterious character and his magnificent actions.

You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. Psalm 40:5

"God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divine beauty." – Jonathan Edwards

2. Pure pragmatism blinds us to the wonder of God's beauty.

Psalm 65:6-8 – ...the one who... established the mountains... stills the roaring of the seas... makes the going out of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

In our everyday occurrences, God's majestic beauty is evident. Our pragmatism only considers how useful something is to us, missing the value of something we consider "impractical," like a flower or a sunrise.

3. Living in awe of God's beauty moves our minds and hearts into worship.

Psalm 65:3, 5 – When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions... by awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness...

When we worship God, our focus shifts and we are able to behold God's beauty and majesty afresh.

Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. Job 37:14

The Wonder of God's Mercy

Key Idea: Living in awe of God's mercy transforms us.

Key Verse: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* **Romans 5:8**

Key Passage:

³And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that?" ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." **Mark 14:1-9**

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

How do you typically respond to artistic expression and creative works of art? To what style of art are you most often attracted?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 6: Wonder

Read the Key Verse (Romans 5:8) aloud.

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

In what ways do you experience wonder and awe at God's mercy towards you during regular worship services?

How do others see God's mercy at work in your life?

How have you seen God's mercy at work in someone else's life?

Name a time when have you seen difficult situations turn out for good in your life.

Have you experienced a time when you were overwhelmed by God's mercy and spontaneously prayed or worshipped in the moment?

Do you ever get the sense that you missed an opportunity to see God's mercy at work (like the disciples in Mark 14)?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read: Psalm 34:1-8. Before you read, ask God to speak to you through his Word.

Journal:

- Write an encouragement or promise from Psalm 34:1-8 that has your name on it.
- Write out one story of God's mercy that you often share with others.
- Make an outline of your own psalm of praise. How would you begin your psalm? Write down the first verse.

Group Praise: Share your big story or the first verse of your Psalm.

Group Debrief: In what way did this spiritual practice help you or challenge you?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Spend time praising God for who he is and how you have tasted and seen his presence today.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

Each morning: Read Romans 5:8 and Mark 14:1-9. Ask God to help you behold Christ's extravagant love for you now and throughout your day. Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower you to demonstrate the gospel story of Christ's extravagant love to those your life touches today. Each evening reflect: How have you seen God's lavish love demonstrated today? What barriers kept you from beholding and receiving Christ's love? What is different in life when you can embrace God beholding you and you beholding God?

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Behold God's lavish demonstration of love.

Rom 5:8 – *God shows his love for us...*

The weight of God's lavish love crushes us into humility and gratitude.

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us ... Ephesians 2:4

2. Behold a woman's extravagant gesture of worship.

Mark 14:6 – *...She has done a beautiful thing to me.*

The disciples miss the act of worship. By breaking open an expensive flask of pure nard, this woman shows how much more valuable Jesus is to her.

Jesus does not miss the act of worship. He commends her to an everlasting legacy.

The woman had beheld Jesus' glory.

3. Behold Jesus' gratuitous act of sacrifice.

Rom 5:8 – *...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Although it had not yet happened, this woman's act of worship demonstrated God's love toward us - breaking open his Son for us. Jesus, by becoming the willing vessel, deserves all praise and honor.

Living in God's Kingdom

Key Idea: The church is a family living God's Kingdom out for the life of the world.

Key Verse: *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*

Ephesians 2:19

Key Passage:

⁵“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread, ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.” **Matthew 6:5-13**

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

As a child, what were some of the “rote” prayers you were taught? For example, “Now I lay me down to sleep...”

REVIEW

Watch Episode 7: Church

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

Read through the verses that describe the church: Eph 2:19, 1 Peter 2:10, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Cor 12:27, Eph 5:25b-27). Which description of the church resonates most with your experience or perception? Describe a time when you saw this description in action.

Which description of the church seems the most out of place to you?

Read the Key Idea and Mark 6:5-13 aloud.

What problems could arise when praying a set prayer like the one in Mark 6:9-13?

What could be some advantages to praying a set prayer?

What are some of the things that keep you from praying more?

What are some triggers in your life that help you remember to pray?

Which part of the Lord's Prayer stands out to you? Why?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Read:

- As a group or in pairs, read verse 9 of the Lord's Prayer.

Pray (all together or in pairs):

- In response to verse 9, offer prayers of awe and wonder, giving honor and adoration to our Father who is in heaven.

Repeat this process with verse 10, again with verses 11-12, and again with verse 13, praying each time. Here are prompts for each section:

- In response to verse 10, pray for God's purposes in your life and in the world around you by welcoming God's rule in your life and in the world. Express your desire for God's purposes to become your own.
- In response to verses 11-12, pray for your needs and the needs of others and for the wisdom to see his abundance. Ask for God's protection and generosity to those who have wronged us, and forgiveness for the wrong we have done to others.
- In response to verse 13, express your desire to submit to the reign of God, the control of God, and the worship of God. Commit your gifts to God's purposes, offering all that you are and all that is yours back to the Lord.

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Share current joys, hopes, or challenges.

Commit to praying for one another throughout the week.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

This week find ways to pray the Lord's Prayer in creative ways as a daily spiritual practice:

- Stop 3 times a day, close your eyes and say the Lord's Prayer slowly.
- Morning and evening, pray the Lord's Prayer aloud.
- Write the Lord's Prayer out in your own words.
- Develop your own creative way to pray the Lord's Prayer.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Within Scripture, we receive many coinciding pictures of the church.

Family: *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*
Ephesians 2:19

People: *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*
1 Peter 2:10

Priesthood: *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* **1 Peter 2:5**

Body: *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*
1 Corinthians 12:27

Bride of Christ: ^{25b}...*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶*that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷*so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* **Ephesians 5:25b-27**

2. The Lord's Prayer directs us to be and do, not just to say.

Matt 6:5, 9-13 – *...when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites... Pray then like this...*

- *Our Father in heaven [9] // We are family living in exile...*
- *hallowed be your name [9] // in awe of God.*
- *Your kingdom come [10] // We desire God's purposes...*
- *your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven [10] // right here, right now;*
- *Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors [11-12] // trusting God to provide for us,*
- *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [13] // and protect us,*
- *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen [13] // as we offer our gifts back to him.*

Present Hope of a Future Kingdom

Key Idea: The present hope of a future Kingdom shapes our identity as a church.

Key Verse: *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **Romans 8:18***

Key Passage:

¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. **2 Corinthians 4:13-18**

Notes:





SMALL GROUP OUTLINE

CONNECT – *help people get comfortable*

How have some of your hopes and dreams matured in the last 5-10 (or more) years?

REVIEW

Watch Episode 7: Church

DISCUSS – *talk through the content to gain understanding*

What is the meaning of “prolepsis”? How is the acorn a good illustration of prolepsis?

What are some ways you could see a church living in the present hope of a future Kingdom (prolepsis)?

Read the Key Verse (Romans 8:18) aloud.

What might be some “present sufferings” you or your church are experiencing right now?

What are our responsibilities as followers of Jesus until the Kingdom is fully realized?

How does this relate to our church right now?

What are some ways we put our hope in the transient “things that are seen” instead of the eternal “things that are unseen” (2 Cor 4:18)?

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – *taking time to listen to God and respond*

Pray: Thank you Jesus, that you are present in this moment with us, help us to be present with you.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:15-18 aloud.

Reflection: In light of verse 16, consider some of the things you have lost this year.

- Have you lost any significant relationships this year?
- Have you experienced the death of any hopes or dreams for your future?

Reflection: In light of verse 17, consider some of the things God has given you in Jesus.

- Have you overcome any major obstacles this year?
- What are one or two ways you have grown spiritually this year?

PRAY – *share requests with one another*

Pray through Romans 8:18 as an encouragement to continue to suffer well.

Pray for one another throughout the week.

CHALLENGE – *live it out in the coming week*

In the morning of each weekday, choose one of the five categories (**love**, **creative service**, **order**, **wisdom**, and **wonder**) where you will choose to live as an exile. In the evening of each weekday, journal how you were able (or unable) to live as an exile that day.

MESSAGE OUTLINE



1. Our church lives in the present hope of a future Kingdom.

2 Cor 4:18 – ...we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen...

We use the term “prolepsis” to describe how God’s Kingdom is a future we can live in right now.

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

2. Our church’s prolepsis shapes how we see hardship.

2 Cor 4:16 – ...So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18

3. Our church’s prolepsis shapes how we see our mission.

2 Cor 4:15 – ...so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

The church is made up of **exiles** on a mission to bless (or “extend grace” to) those around them. This colors every part of our lives:

- **Love** – our biological and faith families are schools of love, teaching people to bless those around them.
- **Creative Service** – we each have gifts to serve where God has placed us, taking part in the vast collaboration of meeting each other’s needs.
- **Order** – we establish justice for the good of everyone, with love and hospitality as its foundation.
- **Wisdom** – knowledge that points to Jesus is wisdom, and wisdom is used to see into creation, create abundance, and serve others.
- **Wonder** – living in awe of God’s creation and mercy keeps us from self-centeredness, and connects us emotionally to what God is doing in and around us.

The **church** is the body of Christ given for the life of the world, living in the present hope for a future kingdom.

