



First United Methodist Church of Hanford
Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.



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GPS GUIDE Grow, Pray, Serve Guide for Weekly Reflection

(adapted from United Methodist Church of the Resurrection resources: sharechurch.com)

November 10, 2024 *Why Do We Need Jesus?*

Scripture: John 1:1-5 and 12 (NRSV)

Jesus: Light, Life, and Love Divine

MONDAY 11.11.24 John 1:9-18, 3:16-17

People often compare John's prologue to an epic musical or opera overture, previewing all the major themes. John called Jesus "the true light" who came into our world, offering everyone the chance to become God's children. John, and all those who welcomed Jesus, discovered a life-changing relationship with God. Jesus didn't come to condemn but to rescue and transform everyone who believes in him. In Jesus, John said, we can find our true identity as God's children. • John wrote the prologue to his gospel as poetry, not prose. Scholar and pastor Eugene Peterson

paraphrased the powerful poetry of verse 12 as "But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves." * In what ways have you discovered your "child-of-God self" since you began following Jesus? How have those discoveries deepened and enriched your life?

- Jesus offers everyone "the right to become children of God." This was revolutionary—suggesting that our relationship with God isn't based on our religious achievements, family heritage, or social status, but on receiving Jesus with trust. What influences have encouraged you to respond to Jesus' light? What, if anything, holds you back from fully embracing your identity as God's beloved child?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in my darkest times I feel unworthy of your love. Give me "eyes to see" and "ears

to hear” how much you love and value me as I reflect on my need for your saving mission. Amen.

* * Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message* Numbered Edition Hardback. Navpress. Kindle Edition.

Jesus: the Risen King we need

TUESDAY 11.12.24 Matthew 2:1-2, Acts 2:22-24, 32-36

These passages show Jesus as the promised king who drew seekers from afar **and** the risen Lord whose resurrection proved his divine authority. The magi realized even the infant Jesus' royal status. To Pentecost crowds in Jerusalem (just 50 days after Passover, when Jesus died on the cross), the apostle Peter starkly laid out the facts: “You had Jesus killed... God raised him up!” Peter’s sermon also invites you to recognize and respond to Jesus as the divine king who defeated even death. • The Greek word *magoi* usually meant students of the stars. They were likely from modern Iran, though “from the east” was not specific. Israel was a minor Roman province. No one would expect non-Hebrews to travel far to see, much less worship, a “king of the Jews.” But the magi traveled a great distance hoping to find someone worth honoring. What steps are you willing to take to draw closer to Jesus? What “stars” (signs or guidance) might God use to direct your spiritual journey? • Some of those in Jerusalem on Pentecost (not all) had likely screamed “Crucify him!” as soldiers beat and bloodied Jesus. They couldn’t go back 50 days and undo those scenes. But if they faced the truth of what they had done, they could choose a different life direction. How does Peter’s call speak to you about ways, aware or unaware, in which your attitudes or actions have hurt others? How does Jesus’ resurrection give you the confidence to lovingly call others to change?

Prayer: King Jesus, I need you to open my eyes, my mind and my heart. Help me see the ways in which division and hatred wound your heart and blight the lives of your children, including mine. Amen.

Jesus: First, Last, and Everything Between

WEDNESDAY 11.13.24 Colossians 1:15-20

Paul painted a stunning portrait of Jesus as the perfect image of God, the creator and sustainer of everything that exists, and the one who brings peace through his death on the cross. From the smallest particle to the largest galaxy, from the beginning of time to its end, Paul proclaimed Jesus as the one who creates, sustains, and redeems all things. This cosmic view of Jesus expressed one reason we need him—he holds all things together.

- Paul described Jesus as “the image of the invisible God,” showing us exactly what God is like. “The more they get to know, and know about, Jesus Christ, the more they will understand who the true God is and what he’s done; who they are as a result; and what it means to live in and for him.” * When you look at Jesus, what is one specific way could you better reflect God's character today through your words or actions?
- Many scholars say these verses are the lyrics to an early Christian hymn in honor of Jesus. Rector

Dick Lucas wrote, "If [Colossians 1:15-20] was a spiritual song along the lines of [Colossians 3:16](#), it would make the teaching hymns of even a Charles Wesley appear lightweight." ** Read slowly and seriously through these verses, noting all the qualities and actions of Jesus they name. Which of them mean the most to you? Which of them would you like to understand better?

Prayer: Lord God, you are so much grander and greater than I am—yet you want me to know you. Thank you for coming in Jesus to show me a clear image of what you are like. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 149). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

** Dick Lucas, *The Message of Colossians and Philemon: Fullness and Freedom*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980, p. 46.

God's Final Word in Jesus

THURSDAY 11.14.24 Hebrews 1:1-4

The book of Hebrews opened with a compelling contrast: God spoke in various ways in the past, but Jesus was God's ultimate message to humanity. "Some may have been tempted to reduce Jesus' divine status to the status of a mere angel to better accommodate their synagogue critics.... Jesus, however, is greater than angels ([Hebrews 2:5–18](#))."

* Why do people need Jesus? In Jesus, we meet God's clearest, most complete self-revelation, who cleans us from sin and reveals God's glory. • Scholar

N. T. Wright summed up Hebrews 1:1-4: "God had for a long time been sending advance sketches of himself to his people, but now he's given us his exact portrait. With this idea... the writer invites us to look at the whole sweep of biblical history and see it coming to a climax in Jesus."

** Why is it vital to know Jesus as the climax of the "whole sweep of biblical history"? How can focusing on Jesus' life, teachings, and actions help clarify God's message for your life today?

- Jesus "maintains everything with his powerful message" while also carrying out "the cleansing of people from their sins." In other words, Jesus the cosmic ruler of the universe is also the personal Savior you can trust to forgive and cleanse you. What specific area of your life feels most in need of Jesus' maintaining power or cleansing touch right now?

Prayer: God, you have always wanted your human children not just to know about you, but to **know** you. Thank you for coming in Jesus to give me the clearest picture of your powerful, loving, and forgiving heart. Amen.

* Zondervan, NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 10715). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** Wright, N. T., *Hebrews for Everyone* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 3). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus' Love Changes Everything

FRIDAY 11.15.24 Romans 1:2-6, 5:1-10

Paul told Roman Christians that "The resurrection of Jesus is God's act—through the power of the... Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 1:19-20](#))—of demonstrating that Jesus is, in fact, God's Son, the promised Christ, and Lord." * This wasn't ancient history, then or now. Paul said while we were still enemies,

God reached out in love through Jesus. Why do people need Jesus? Because his love changes everything about our relationship with God.

- Paul wrote that "while we were still sinners Christ died for us." That meant that God's love acts first, before we do anything. Methodist theology calls this God's "prevenient grace." This reverses the way most relationships work, where you have to **earn or deserve** love. When, if ever, have you had the experience of someone loving you unconditionally? How might trusting and accepting God's unconditional love help you show that kind of love to others?
- Paul said trouble produces endurance, character, and ultimately hope. Rather than seeing problems as purely negative, he found benefits even in life's challenges through his relationship with Jesus. What current challenge(s) feel overwhelming and discouraging to you? How might viewing it through Paul's lens of developing endurance and character change your perspective?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the ultimate source of grace, endurance, character, and ultimately character and peace. Help me to embrace what you offer in my heart, mind, and soul today. Amen.

* Michael J. Gorman, study note on Romans 1:4 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 277 NT.

Everything We Need in Jesus

SATURDAY 11.16.24 2 Peter 1:3-8, 3:17-18

Peter wrote this letter to encourage Christians facing challenging times in a hostile Roman Empire. "Faithful readers are promised a share in God's promises concerning the present and the future. The faithful have been given everything they need to live whole and complete lives." * This summarized concisely why people need Jesus—through Jesus, God provides **everything necessary** for a meaningful, righteous life. Peter outlined how this works: God's power and promises enable us to grow, step by step, from basic faith through moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, and caring for others, reaching toward mature love. The letter concluded by urging readers to keep growing in Jesus' grace and knowledge. Christian growth isn't passive or automatic—it requires our active participation. But Jesus gives us all we need for the journey. • Peter declared confidently that God has already given us everything we need for a life of honesty, kindness and decency through Jesus. Yet many of us (maybe you?) feel we're missing something essential. What makes you feel incomplete or insufficient? How might viewing your life in the light of Peter's teaching—that Jesus provides everything you truly need—give you renewed energy and hope? Peter described spiritual growth as a step-by-step process, moving from faith through various God-given qualities to reach mature love. He encouraged your active participation in this growth journey. Looking at his list of developing qualities (verses 5-7), which of the qualities he listed seems most challenging for you right now? What practical steps, combined with prayer and trust in God's presence with you, could help you grow there?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, remind me that I need to continue growing in this life. Pour your Spirit into my heart, leading me on from one positive step of growth to the next. Amen.

* Rebecca Skaggs, study note on 2 Peter 1:3 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 471 NT.