



40 DAYS *of* Renewal



MeadowBrook
CHURCH

life
group

*Life together for the
Kingdom of God*

40 Days of Renewal is an intentional period of time to pursue lasting renewal in Christ in every aspect of our lives. We have seen firsthand how God has brought about his renewal in people's marriages, families, health, and spiritual walk during the 40 Days of Renewal. We are expecting God to bring about year-round renewal that will begin in the hearts of our people as we engage in 40 Days of Renewal in 2019.

40 Days of Renewal is simply a time where we break from the rhythms of this world—the way we spend our time, the way we eat, the way we are entertained, all of it—and pursue a season of intentional engagement in the things of God by reading the Bible, praying consistently, praising God throughout the day, and fasting.

This Life Group curriculum is meant to move us to pursue lasting renewal together. We were never meant to go about this Christian life alone. Personal devotion to the Lord is vital. Without it, there is no hope of lasting renewal. However, God designed us to live and pursue him in community for one another. The key to maintaining personal devotion to the Lord is being a part of a church that helps you to pursue lasting renewal. Life Groups are meant to be where this community of believers finds its expression within MeadowBrook. My hope is that the picture we see in Acts 2:42 is true of each of our Life Groups during 40 Days of Renewal and long after this season comes to a close.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42 ESV)

The Rhythms of 40 Days of Renewal

Read, Pray, Praise 3X a Day: 7AM, 12 PM, 7 PM (Text "MBRENEWAL" to 33222)

Sunday Morning Worship: 8:00 AM and 10:45 AM

Life Group: 9:30 AM

Wednesday Prayer: 6 AM and Noon in the Conference Center on Rainbow Dr.

Wednesday Night Bible Study—Proverbs: 6 PM in the Worship Center

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 6, 2019

The Way of Lasting Renewal

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, what are ways you can pursue lasting renewal in Christ these 40 Days and throughout 2019?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 1

(Additional Passages: Josh. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Phil. 4:8; Gal. 2:20; 5:16-26; Rom. 8:1-11)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Don't live influenced by the counsel of this world. Walk in the counsel of Christ.
- Don't think in the way sinners think. Think noble things.
- Don't sit in the seat of those who work against you. Let those who influence you be those who are pursuing Christ.
- Delight in the word of God. Find your joy in holiness.
- Meditate on God's word. Memorize Psalm 1:1-3 and review it regularly during these 40 Days.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that desperately needs to repent and turn to the Lord so they can stand acquitted in the judgement?

Pray through Psalm 1 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others you are praying for.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the joy and life you experience in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 1 this week together as a family. Highlight the importance of God's word, and talk through the punishment that results when one does not live by it. Then point them to the good news of the gospel and Spirit-empowered living. Tell them about the life and joy that results from living according to this gospel and how you have experienced that life and joy.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

(Psalm 1:1 ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 6, 2019

The Way of Lasting Renewal

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 1 is classified as a wisdom psalm which “give attention to the importance of living one’s life in accordance with the Torah, a practical wisdom that produces a pious and productive life.”¹ In this Psalm, the Psalmist uses contrasting parallelism (the wicked and the righteous), intensification (walk, stand, sit), and simile (he is like a tree) in order to emphasize the blessing of walking in righteousness and the worthlessness of wickedness. He defines the way of life for the righteous, describes the abundant life of the righteous, and foretells the eternal life of the righteous, all in contrast to the joyless, worthless, sinful lives of the wicked that end in judgment.

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **The righteous live joyfully according to the Word of God, meditating on it day and night.**

A righteous person is a happy person. The psalmist writes that a righteous man is “blessed.” The English language does not completely capture the meaning of “blessed” in the original language. In the Hebrew, “blessed” is a word that “refers to the joyful condition of those who are right with God and the pleasure and satisfaction that is derived from that... stressing the fullness of joy.”² Holiness and happiness are not enemies, but as the 17th century theologian, Thomas Brooks aptly said, “Holiness differs nothing from happiness but in name.”³ The happiness of the Lord is much different than how the world defines happiness. The substantial happiness of God results from holiness and delighting in the Law of the Lord. The world’s happiness is fleeting, always slipping through our hands like water. God’s happiness is an eternal happiness.

The unstated contrast is the unhappiness resulting from a wicked way of life, described through the intensifying description in verse 1. Each verb, noun, and person intensifies. First, the righteous do not walk under the influence of the ungodly surrounding culture. They are not influenced by counsel of those who have no idea of who God is. Today this happens through a variety of mediums, primarily media. We live in a culture that does not know God or his ways. When we walk in the natural stream of the culture, we find ourselves walking in the counsel of the wicked. Next, the righteous person does not stand in the way of sinners or live with knowledge of God, yet continues to live in sin. These people have knowledge of God, but no desire to follow him. They want all of the Savior but none of the Lord. They want all the grace but none of the discipline. They mock the cross of Christ with their lives and deliberately walk in habitual sin. If we think that we can live however we want to in light of the gospel, we are deceiving ourselves. Read Romans 6. Read Hebrews 6. These passages do not teach we can lose salvation, but they warn those who think that they can embrace both sin and the cross. This is impossible and such people remain dead in their sins. Lastly, the righteous man does not sit in the seat of scoffers. Read what Irenaeus, an early church father who contended for the faith, wrote about the scoffer and how the righteous should respond:

“the [scoffers] are those who pervert not only themselves, but others also, by evil and twisted teaching, since ‘[seat]’ is a symbol of school; and such are all heretics (false teachers), they sit in the [seat of scoffers] and corrupt those who receive the poison of their teaching. Therefore, lest we suffer any such thing, we must keep the rule of faith (the right beliefs of the gospel) unswervingly, and perform the commandments of God, believing in God and fearing him, for he is Lord, and loving him for he is Father. Action, then, comes by faith, as ‘if you are not firm in faith,’ Isaiah says, ‘you will not be firm at all.’”⁴

¹ Allen P. Ross. *A Commentary on the Psalms*. Vol. 1 (1-41). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011, 141.

² *Ibid*, 185.

³ Thomas Brooks. *The Crown and Glory of Christianity: Or, Holiness, The Only Way To Happiness*. 1662.

⁴ Irenaeus. *On The Apostolic Preaching*, [2].

False teachers abound today, and they have influenced each of us. We must be on guard against those who would corrupt the gospel message. They are actively working against us to corrupt us. We must take the truth of God's word seriously, and test the scriptural validity of every teaching we experience. *Which of these: walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of scoffers, do we see most evident in our context? Don't just look to others. Examine your life.*

- **This righteous way of life results in abundant life.**

The joyful man who delights in keeping the Law of the Lord (general term for all of known Scripture) and meditating on it day and night is described very favorably by the Psalmist. He "prosperes in all that he does," which "primarily refers here, not to immediate material prosperity," as some scoffers would have you believe, "but to spiritual success in one's life through applying and adhering to the 'law of the Lord.'"⁵ Three things characterize this joyful man:

1. **He is planted by the source of life.**

The righteous person never forgets the source of Living Water. Jesus is the vine; we are but branches. Apart from the flowing streams of his life in us, we can do nothing.

2. **He repeatedly bears fruit.**

The righteous person bears fruit. He reveals the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) and the fruit of multiplied disciples. If the fruit of the Spirit is not being revealed in our lives or we cannot point to a disciple we are currently making, ***something is dangerously wrong.***

3. **He does not wither.**

When we are delighting in the word of the Lord and living by its every word, "one would expect to find the spiritual life alive and flourishing."⁶

- **The way of the righteous ends in eternal life. The way of the wicked ends in eternal judgment.**

Every way is destined for judgment. After death, some will be separated into eternal life and some into eternal punishment. Our only hope is that the Lord knows us and that he has an intimate relationship with us. Thanks be to God for providing everything we need by his glorious grace! Now we who were wicked can know the Living God by having faith in his Son Jesus, the Righteous One! He is our only hope for eternal life. No one is righteous except for Him. All are born as children of wrath, and whoever does not believe in him stands condemned already.

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

Only one has lived perfectly the way of righteousness, and his name is Jesus. Not once did he walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers. He always delighted in the Law of the Lord and meditated on his Word day and night so that he was careful to do according to all that was written in it (Josh. 1:8). He alone is righteous. He prospered in all that he did, in that he was successful to carry perfectly all that God willed for him to do. We are all like the wicked. Yet while we were still wicked, Christ died for us. So that if we turn from our sins and place our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, he gives us his life and his righteousness. At that moment of Salvation, we were crucified with Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In that moment we were eternally united with Christ. Now we are in him, and he lives in us through the Spirit, so that we can now live by faith and walk in wisdom.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

(See "Apply" section on lesson guide)

⁵ Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham. *The Moody Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute.* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014, 759.

⁶ Ross, 191.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 13, 2019

The Vapor of Life: Don't Waste It

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, what are ways that you discovered the importance of renewing your time? What are some things that worked well for you?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 90

(Additional Passages: Josh. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Phil. 4:8; Gal. 2:20; 5:16-26; Rom. 8:1-11)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Repent and believe in the gospel if you have never come to terms with your sinfulness in light of God's holiness.
- Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray. We can do nothing in this life apart from Christ. Depend on him for everything. Ask him specifically to teach you to number your days, satisfy you in Christ, and establish the works of your hands.
- Make the best use of your time.
- Find your satisfaction and security in Christ, not in this world.
- Engage in lasting kingdom work.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that desperately needs to repent and turn to the Lord so they can stand acquitted in the judgement?

Pray through Psalm 90 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others for whom you are praying. Pay particular attention to the petitions made in vv. 12-17.

- Teach us to number our days.
- Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love.
- Let your glorious power be shown to our children.
- Establish the works of our hands.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the joy and life you experience in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 90 this week together as a family. Highlight God's holiness. Talk about the reality of sin and what it does. Talk about how God is our only hope in this world and the next.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
(Psalm 1:2 ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 13, 2019

The Vapor of Life: Don't Waste It

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 90 is classified as a communal lament with some wisdom aspects to it. Communal laments generally begin by addressing God and then moving to the lament portion of the psalm. After the lament, the group confesses trust in the Lord, makes petitions, and then promises praise.⁷ In this psalm, Moses' "lament is written from their intense awareness of mortality and sin."⁸ Through the use of parallelism and simile Moses focuses on the everlasting nature of God, his holy wrath and the fleeting nature of human life on earth. Psalm 90 employs most of these general characteristics of the communal lament but differs in two key ways. First, Moses uses rhetorical question in v. 11 in place of a group confession of trust as an invitation to the reader to respond appropriately to their sin and realize God's anger over it. Instead of confessing trust corporately, the rhetorical question invites the group to make that confession in their hearts and respond with Moses in the following petitions. Secondly, Psalm 90 lacks the promise of praise that generally closes communal lament psalms (see Ps. 79:13). Their requests reveal their hope and promise of praise—their entire life. Recognizing their inability, they are praying for "God to be compassionate and show them how to use their time wisely and thereby find joy and a productive life" according to the will of God.⁹ They are seeking to offer God a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1).

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **God, our dwelling place, is eternally powerful and terrifyingly holy.**

Moses begins by praising God for being their refuge, their dwelling place. He is their home. For a people who are wandering in the wilderness, being led by a pillar of cloud and fire, this hits home. Moses knows that God is their dwelling place. When Israel gets into the promise land, over time, they forget this truth. They are sent into exile where they again learn that God, not land or home, is their dwelling place. We would do well to remind ourselves of this same truth. Our refuge, our home is with the Lord. We do not put our hope in temporary wealth or security, because in a moment it can all be taken away. Our hope is secure because God is our dwelling place. He is God; we are not. He was there before creation and will be here long after this world passes away. He is the everlasting God. All three members of the Trinity have no beginning and no end. The triune God is eternal. Each was involved in the creation of this world, and each is involved in its sustainment. He is the Great I AM who stands outside of time's decaying influence.

His Holiness is terrifying. To sin against him is to incur everlasting wrath and torment, and all of us have sinned and fall short of his glorious standard. Moses makes explicit connections between sin and death, with many of his phrases alluding back to the curse God pronounced in Genesis 3. The wages of sin is death, and after one dies, they must face judgment. The author of Hebrews rightly says that it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Read Jonathan Edwards description of the wrath of God:

"God is not like man, though many men believe him to be. The wrath of God burns against them, his damnation of them doesn't slumber. The pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is right now white-hot, ready to receive them. The flames rage and glow as we speak. The glistening sword is sharpened and held over them, and the pit has opened its mouth under them."

God's holiness is both revealed in his terrifying wrath to the one who does not have faith in Jesus and in his marvelous grace to those who do have faith. We must understand his holiness to understand the grace he extends to us and the refuge he provides for us.

⁷ Ross, Vol. 1, 115.

⁸ Ross, Vol. 3, 24.

⁹ Ross, Vol. 3, 41.

- **We are frail and transient, under the curse of sin.**

Time will eventually catch up with us. It is part of the curse of sin. Unless the Lord returns first, we will all die and return to the dust. Our spirit goes to be with the Lord, waiting to be united with the resurrected body he has promised us. Now we live in awareness of our weakness and the curse of sin. Our life is short, like a vapor or a dream- here one moment gone the next. Unfortunately, most waste their life, never engaging in anything genuinely productive. Their life is full of toil, trouble, death, sickness, sin, heartache, untapped potential, and unfulfilled dreams. Then they die. That is the curse of sin. That is what sin produces—futility, despair, and death. Moses and the people of Israel are lamenting their sin, acknowledging the reality of it and its effects, then coming to God in repentance.

- **Our only hope for life, joy, and productivity in this world is God.**

The righteous have considered the power of God's anger and his impending wrath toward their sin. In fear and trembling they have repented of their sins and come to God in faith, asking him to extend his mercy and grace. Here Moses wants people to get the picture of how big God is so they can honestly see themselves in light of his holiness and might. One cannot come to Christ in humility until one understands the grandeur of God's holiness compared to their unholiness. He is our only hope for eternal life. There is no other way. We must come to grips with our unrighteousness and come humbly to the only one who can make us righteous.

Those who have grasped God's holiness and come to him also recognize their frailty, and they cast themselves repeatedly on the only one who can reverse the curse of sin in their lives—God. God commands us to make the best use of our time (Eph. 5:15-17), rejoice always (1 Thess. 5:17), and engage in eternal work (1 Cor. 3:10-15). The beauty of our God is that he provides what he demands. He alone can teach us to number our days; He alone can satisfy us with his steadfast love; He alone can establish the works of our hands. We desperately need him in all things. Moses moves the people to understand this truth. God is our home, and he is the only hope we have for eternal life, joy, and productivity.

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

God is holy and does not let sin go unpunished. Sin must be resolved, and God resolved it on the cross and in the resurrection. Now we must, like the people of Israel, come to terms with our weakness in light of God's holiness, repent of our sins, and believe in him. This faith leads to a lifetime of dependence on Christ for him to teach us how to renew our time, for him to satisfy us, and for him to establish the works of our hands. This life is now lived by faith in Christ, who lives in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

- Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray. We can do nothing in this life apart from Christ. Depend on him for everything. Ask him specifically to teach you to number your days, satisfy you in Christ, and establish the works of your hands.
- Number your days. Reflect on death. Reflect on your life. Is it being wasted? Make every effort to make the best use of your time.
- Find your security and satisfaction in Christ. Are you seeking satisfaction and refuge in things other than Christ? Everything else will fail you. Christ will not. From everlasting to everlasting, he is God.
- Engage in kingdom work in faith God will establish your work. For some God is not establishing the work of your hands because you are only engaging in work that is temporary. Engage in the eternal work of evangelism and making disciples, of showing compassion and love to the needy, and of building up the church. Don't waste your life doing work with hay and straw. Engage in work that will stand the test of fire. Have faith! Rely on God to establish your work; and be obedient to do the work. "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." –William Carey

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 20, 2019

Responding to God with Your Whole Life

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, what are ways that you discovered the importance of renewing your body? What are some things that worked well for you?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 139

(Additional Passages: 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10, 6:14-18; 1 Cor. 6:1-20; Eph. 1:11-14; Gen. 1:26-27)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Practice holiness and intentionality in our relationships.
- Pursue holiness in every aspect of our lives.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that desperately needs to repent and turn to the Lord so they can stand acquitted in the judgement?

Pray through Psalm 139 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others for whom you are praying. Ask God to search you and know your heart. Ask him to reveal any grievous way in you. Write them down. Repent. And ask him to lead you in the way everlasting.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the joy and life that you experience in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 139 this week together as a family. Highlight God's bigness. Talk about how he knows everything, he is everywhere, and he is in complete control. Let them feel both the coolness and the weight of that. Then point them to Jesus.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:3 ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 20, 2019

Responding to God with Your Whole Life

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 139 is one of the more popular and studied Psalms in the entire psalter. There is debate over the form and occasion of the psalm, but very clearly the psalm contains many poetic elements that draw the reader, listener, and singer (remember these were songs that were sung) to reflect on and respond to profound theological truths of God.¹⁰ In this psalm, David moves us to consider the grandeur of who God is through intentional reflection on his omniscience (all-knowing), omnipresence (ever-present, everywhere), and his omnipotent sovereignty (his reign and control over all of creation). David devotes six verses each of these for those theological truths, and he uses contrasting ideas to make a unified notion of capturing the pervasive scope of God's omniscience and omnipresence (sit down and rise up, behind and before, Heaven and Sheol, etc.). With his form and word pictures, David wants us to understand in his first three sections that God intimately knows us, is always with us, and is sovereign over us. David then uses the last six verses to emphasize the response of loyalty to God through faith, which results in holiness in relationships, thoughts, and actions. David bookends his psalm with the ideas of God searching and knowing his creation. This should stimulate his creation to respond by submitting to God's sovereign purposes by inviting him to examine their entire life and to know his heart. "Our dignity is not in overturning his sovereignty, but in freely submitting to it."¹¹

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **God intimately knows us.**

Many worldly religions view God as this unknowable, impersonal deity or force, who does not care about the mundane details of life. Our God is not like that. He takes notice every time we so much as sit down and stand up. He is intimately involved in our lives. He knows everything about us. He knows more about us than we know about ourselves. Our God is intensely personal, and he is good. David, a man of faith, was not intimidated by this knowledge, and though he admits it surpassed his understanding, he finds rest in it. David knows that God's hand is upon him and that God is hemming him in before and behind. While he may not understand everything, he trusts God's knowledge of his situation, which is a more difficult one and is higher than his own knowledge. What David sees is the small picture, God sees the whole. This astounds David and puts him at ease. We too, as people of faith, should rest in the knowledge of God even when we can't see the whole picture. Our body may be in great anguish and pain, but we can know for sure that God is at work for his glory and our good.

- **God is always with us.**

In times of darkness, it may seem that God is no longer with us, however David reminds us that no matter where we go God is with us. This promise is repeated by Christ himself at the end of Matthew when he tells his disciples, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). In our moment of greatest darkness, those who have faith in Jesus can take solace in this truth, for even the darkness is not dark to God.

- **God is sovereign over us.**

Lastly, David draws our attention to God's sovereignty over individuals from their beginning to their end. Here are a couple of points that help us frame the way God views our bodies.

- **Our bodies have value because God formed us.**

Birth is both a natural occurrence and a divine work. The gift of life is such a precious gift— for it is God who forms us in his image and gives us life. This truth is so foundational (and amplified when one considers that for believers the body is also the Temple of the Holy Spirit), yet seldom applied in both our lives and in

¹⁰ Ross, *Vol. 3*, 835.

¹¹ Williams, *Vol. 2*, 476.

our culture. If we only understood this truth... Racism would cease. Abortion would cease. Eating disorders would cease (both ones that result from an excess intake and not enough). Pornography would no longer be viewed. Affairs would no longer occur. Healthy eating, exercise, and sleeping patterns would be established. Self-loathing would cease. Suicide would cease. Murder, sexual assaults, oppression, slavery, genocide, all would be no more.

From the common to the extreme, our failure to love our neighbor as ourselves is a failure to love God. We are to believe him when his Word says we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We all struggle here, in one degree or another, and will continue to struggle until we receive our new heavenly bodies in the resurrection. We are empowered to live this truth by faith in Christ and the power of his Spirit. God made us. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, as is everyone who walks this earth. Live by faith in that truth.

- **Our current bodies are temporary bodies because of sin.**

Unless Christ returns first, we will die. Our heart will stop beating, and we will cease to exist in our current state. In Christ, we do not experience the bitterness of death, instead we will one day be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Why this talk about death? Thinking upon our death draws us to reflect on the curse of sin and the destruction sin brings. Thinking upon our death moves us to be urgent in our mission and reminds us that this world is not our home. This body is not our home. We will receive a new body, glorified flesh and blood, to live in forever. We are to store up treasures there, not here. And when our bodies begin to fail us—and they will—we can trust that God is good, that God is with us, that he is sovereign over everything, and we are nearing home.

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

If God knows the intimate details of our lives even better than we do and sovereignly reigns over us, then we have no hope to stand before him in judgment if it were not for the blood of Jesus Christ. He is the only one whom God has searched and known and found in him no grievous way. We need his righteousness. Our righteousness cannot stand under the searching of Almighty God. We need his resurrection. His wrath would utterly consume us, consigning us to suffer eternal torment without him. We must come to him in faith and by grace receive his righteousness. An eternal virtue that will cover us for eternity. We need him to lead us in the way everlasting.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

The last set of 6 verses reveal our response to God's omniscience, omnipresence, and sovereignty.

- **Practice holiness and intentionality in our relationships.**

One may recoil at David's strong language in this verse, but hatred, in this instance, carries more of the meaning of rejection rather than intense loathing. David is loyal to God, while his enemies oppose God. This idea is repeated in the New Testament when Paul urges believers not to be unequally yoked to nonbelievers (2nd Cor. 6:14).¹² This refers to more than just marriage. It includes any deep relationship we may have with another. This does not mean that we do not pursue the lost, instead it calls us to intentionality in seeking Godly counsel, Godly business relationships, and Godly friendships. We dishonor God with our body when we engage in unholy relationships. Inevitably, deep, unintentional relationships with enemies of God lead to sin.

- **Pursue holiness in every aspect of our lives.**

David's plea communicates to God a desire to put to death any aspect of his life that would destroy a deeper intimacy with God. If our eating habits, sleep patterns, and exercise routines (or lack thereof) are keeping us from a deeper intimacy with God, they must be changed. This also applies to sexual immorality. We must avoid sexual immorality at all costs. Any sexual sin, digital or otherwise, defiles the body, dishonors God, and harms the church. Sin never affects just you. Pursue holiness.

¹² Ross, Vol. 3, 832.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 27, 2019

Living in the Care of the Good Shepherd

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, what are ways you discovered the importance of renewing your outlook regarding the sin in your lives? List things that worked well for you.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 23

(Additional Passages: Rom. 6:6-14, Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 11:24-26; Prov. 12:1; 1 Jo. 1:8-9)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Trust in the Lord, and experience cleansing from sin.
- Feed on his word personally and corporately, and experience lasting satisfaction.
- Follow him down the paths of righteousness and experience peace.
- Submit to his discipline, and experience the benefits of his secure protection.
- Hope in his promise, rest in his faithfulness and experience joy.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do you know that needs the cleansing from sin, a cleansing only received after receiving Christ as Savior? Pray for them.

Pray through Psalm 23 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others for whom you are praying. Praise God for how he has revealed himself. Ask God to do any one of the things he promises to do through this Psalm, humbly submitting yourself to his Lordship.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the joy and life you experience in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 23 this week together as a family. Highlight one aspect of God as shepherd and what this aspect. Talk about what our response to that character trait of God should be.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

(Psalm 1:4 ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Jan. 27, 2019

Living in the Care of the Good Shepherd

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 23, perhaps the most beloved psalm in the psalter, paints a beautiful picture of God's relationship with his people. Rich in metaphorical and picturesque language, David depicts the Lord as our Shepherd and Banquet Host, using word pictures to communicate deep truths about who God is. His concrete expression takes these profound spiritual truths and gives them color and makes them tangible. While he does emphasize the comfort received from the Lord, his primary emphasis seems to be a righteousness that results from following the Good Shepherd, or in other words, the victory over sin one experiences when one follows the Good Shepherd. Psalm 23 then is best described as “a meditation on all that the Lord does for the one who trusts in him.”¹³ This definitely includes comfort, however it most definitely focuses on the peace and joy of righteousness that results in the lives of those who trust in God.

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **The Lord provides us with good food—his Word.**

A good shepherd makes his sheep eat good grass. The Lord likewise draws repeated emphasis throughout the Scriptures to the importance of God's Word in the life of the believer. His Spirit who lives within us continually brings us back to the Word. Our sermons, songs, and Life Group lessons are centered on the Word. We need the Word. To live the Christian life without a steady diet of God's Word, *both in personal and corporate settings*, would be as foolish as without ever eating and expecting to live 80 years. It is simply impossible. God clearly communicated the power in and importance of His Word from the beginning of time. His Word created the universe and all that was in it. He led his rebellious people in the wilderness for 40 years so they might learn “man does not live on bread alone, but man lives by *every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord*” (Deut. 8:3b, italics added). God's Word is vital to living in victory over sin.

- **The Lord cleanses us and restores us.**

Read commentator Allen Ross' insights into vv. 2b-3a: “The sheep are not taken to a rushing stream, but to still, calm lagoons. Flocks in the ancient Near East were watered at least once a day, usually around noon; but this leading was not limited to finding water to drink. It included finding a place for cleansing and refreshment. Here the placid waters could wash the wounds and cleanse soiled spots. Throughout the Old Testament tempestuous waters speak of distress (cf. Isa. 43:2; 28:2; 2 Sam. 5:20), but calm waters for washing represent spiritual cleansing (cf. Lev. 11:32; 16:4; 17:15; Num. 19:7; Exo. 30:18). The point is that the Lord cleanses people from sin and provides spiritual refreshment and renewal, away from the chaos of life.”¹⁴

As vital as God's Word is to experiencing victory over sin, one is hopeless unless the blood of Christ has cleansed him or her. God's Word is imparted not in human wisdom but by the power of the Spirit to those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2). One must come by faith to Christ before one must consider obeying the commands of righteousness. God's Word convicts the non-believer of their sin and leads them to the point of surrender and cleansing.

- **The Lord guides us down paths of righteousness.**

After God cleanses us, he guides us in continual righteousness. Why would he save us from the perils of sin so we might continue to walk in the same sin? Genuine believers understand the dangers of sin and grow in their hatred of sin. True disciples possess the Holy Spirit and yield to the guiding work of Christ as they follow him down the paths of righteousness. This is empowered obedience received by grace through faith in Christ. Our faith in Christ produces a love for Him that results in our obedience to Christ, all for the glory of Christ. Our declared and practiced righteousness is a gift from God for his name's sake. He gets the glory.

¹³ Ross, Vol. 1, 555.

¹⁴ Ibid., 562.

- **The Lord protects us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death—this world.**

Our lives are not without danger. This world is full of enemies working against us, including our own sinful nature. Those in Christ can rest assured in his protection, and that in the end, God will bring us home safely into his house. But in this life, we may stray, which is why the rod and staff comfort us. God protects us, but he protects by disciplining us. The discipline of the Lord is not pleasant. It is the opposite, but it's better than no discipline. The Lord's discipline is evidence we are beloved sons of God. We are reminded that, "for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Heb. 12:11).

- **The Lord rewards his people with a grand banquet—Heaven.**

This life we live by faith in God's power is not in vain. We have a great reward prepared before us. Looking to the reward of the eternal pleasure of forever dwelling in God's house helps us to say no to the fleeting pleasures of sin in the present (Heb. 11:24-26). This secure hope allows us to confidently say with David, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6).

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

Jesus as the Good Shepherd offered his body and blood as the sacrifice for our sins and rose from the grave three days later in total victory. As we eat of the bread of life by coming to Jesus in faith and turn from the junk food of our sins, he cleanses us from all unrighteousness and allows us to share in his victory over sin. We now live by faith, empowered by the Spirit, and follow him down the paths of righteousness looking for our reward. Jesus will return. He is now preparing a place for us and has left us his Spirit as a down payment for the great banquet that awaits us. In Christ, our cup overflows.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

- **Trust in the Lord, and experience cleansing from sin.** If you have never come to Jesus deeply aware of your filthiness in sin and asked him in faith to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, turn from your sins and come to him in faith today. Don't put it off.
- **Feed on his word personally and corporately, and experience lasting satisfaction.** The pastures of this world provide only junk food. Engaging in Bible intake individually and corporately will feed you with the food that truly satisfies. You need both individual and corporate involvement. Neither is optional; God uses both for your sanctification and the protection of sound doctrine within the church.
- **Follow him down the paths of righteousness, and experience peace.** Sin is destructive. The wages of sin is death. Sin seeks to destroy. Sin seeks to steal. Sin seeks to kill. There is no peace in the pathway of sin. If you are living in sin or sin is being revealed to you, do not delay—repent! Let your faith in the promises of God produce a love for God that results in wholehearted obedience. Righteousness yields life and peace.
- **Submit to his discipline, and experience the benefits of his secure protection.** If you are experiencing the discipline of the Lord, don't be the foolish mule who refuses to be led. Humbly submit to his discipline and allow the Spirit and the body of Christ to correct you where you have strayed. "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid" (Prov. 12:1 ESV).
- **Hope in his promise, rest in his faithfulness and experience joy.** Look to the cross. Look to the reward. Know that God's love never fails and that his covenant faithfulness will follow you all the days of your life and that there is a great reward waiting to be revealed. Let this firm hope and this incredible joy motivate you as you seek to live victoriously over the sin in your life.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 3, 2019

Living Set Apart

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, what are ways you discovered the importance of renewing your outlook regarding living set apart from the world? List some things that worked well for you.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 27

(Additional Passages: Jn. 17, Heb. 10:14; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; 1 Pet. 1; 2 Cor. 5:17)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Let your faith in Christ drive everything you do.
- Wait on the Lord.
- Be strong and take courage.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do you know that needs the cleansing from sin, a cleansing only received after receiving Christ as Savior? Pray for them.

Pray through Psalm 27 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others for whom you are praying. Praise God as our light, our salvation, and our stronghold. Ask him to give you an undying passion for him and ask that he would teach you the way of life that is revealed in his word.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the light and salvation you experience in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 27 this week together as a family. Focus in on verse 4 and talk about David's passion for knowing God and how that is meant to be lived out in our lives.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
(Psalm 1:5 ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 3, 2019

Living Set Apart

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 27 is a lament psalm that contains a lengthy introduction where David expresses his sure confidence in the Lord.¹⁵ David's metaphors, parallelism, and use of rhetorical questions reveal he is one who confidently trusts in the Lord. Read Ross' insights into the literary significance of the metaphors and rhetorical devices in v. 1:

"[This psalm] uses two figures: 'light' and 'salvation.' The metaphor of light signifies the joy of life, the perfection of holiness, and the illumination of the way of truth. Light dispels darkness, and darkness represents evil, confusion, gloom, and despair, often because of war (Isa. 8:20-9:2) ... The second line uses the metaphor of 'stronghold' comparing the Lord to a place of safety and protection—the Lord securely protects the psalmist's life. All this being true, there is no one that the psalmist (or we) should fear, as the rhetorical questions assert."¹⁶

This confident trust in the Lord, emphasized by the literary structure of the Psalm, moves David to live set apart from the wickedness surrounding him in his passion, his hope, and his desires.

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **One who confidently trusts the Lord is set apart by their unrelenting passion to know God.**

Believers are set apart from the world in many ways, but the primary way is their unrelenting passion to know God and enjoy God's presence. The Westminster Catechism famously stated the chief end of man is to know God and enjoy him forever. This passion to know God and enjoy God flows naturally from the gospel. The good news of Scripture is that God has revealed himself to his sinful creation in the person of Jesus Christ and his Word. The word of the gospel introduces us to Jesus as the eternal God-man, begotten, not created. He is the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord who made a way to the Father through his obedient life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection. It is through our faith in him that we enter into proper relationship with God that results in eternal life. The good news tells us we can know and enjoy God. The escape from eternal punishment is good news too, but it falls desperately short of the supreme value of being able to know God. This gospel-driven passion for the knowledge of God drives everything we do. Knowing him is our chief desire, and from that knowledge comes a love for God that sets us apart.

Even in Old Testament times, David looked ahead to the Messiah who God had promised would come from his line. He had a singular purpose in life—to dwell in the house of the Lord *all* the days of his life. There he would gaze upon God's beauty and inquire in his temple. (Ask questions with the intent of growing in deeper knowledge). David was driven by his passion to know and enjoy God, therefore he was set apart. *What are some of the driving passions we see in our culture today? i.e. what drives most people? What passions direct the course of your life? Are the passions that direct the course of our life distinct from the passions of the world?*

- **One who confidently trusts the Lord is set apart by that which they find hope and security.**

David was confident in the protection and security of the Lord. He hoped in the Lord, nothing else. Throughout his life David often experienced great opposition—Goliath, Saul, and Abimelech are three enemies that come to mind. Those experiences helped David to learn that God alone can provide security. God had the power and ability to protect David, and David believed that. He'd seen those who had put their hope and security in their strength, wealth, and ability fall into destruction. He knew God alone could provide certain security, and as a result, David hoped in him and could experience joy in the midst of opposition because he knew the Lord was with him.

¹⁵ Ross. Vol. 1, 624.

¹⁶ Ibid, 626.

Believers today are drawn by the world to put their hope and security in worldly things—wealth, strength, health, education, retirement plans, the continuation of government in the United States, etc. Nothing about those things is inherently wrong or evil, in fact having those aspects in your life demonstrates wisdom. The problem occurs when we look to those things for security to the neglect of the one who is sovereign over all of them. None of those things have any power in and of themselves to add anything to our lives. The people of the world find their security in worldly things, revealed by the great anxiety and outcry that happens when things seem to be failing in one of those areas. As believers, we must put our hope and security in Christ regardless of our circumstances. He is our hope, and in him we have an unwavering peace that sets us apart from those caught up in the worldly chaos. This world is passing away, along with all that is in it. We must look to the one who has always been and is and will always be.

- **One who confidently trusts the Lord is set apart by their desire to walk in obedience to God's way.**

As mentioned earlier, one who knows God begins to love God. This expresses itself in obedience to God's way of life and commands. David deeply desired to live in a way that followed God's ways. He prayed for it. He wanted God to teach him his way.

We live set apart by our desire to pursue righteousness and reveal God's love to the world. However, our culture is full of 'teachers' seeking to lead us into the world's way of disobedience. We must cut ties with those influencers who, in our culture, seek to influence us through the media we consume. We must pray to God, study God's word, and put ourselves under good, doctrinal teachers who will faithfully teach the Bible so that we can learn and remain walking in the way of the Lord.

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

⁵ *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

⁶ *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:5-6 ESV)*

Jesus is our light. In fact, he is the light of the world. He is our salvation. He is our stronghold. Once we are in Christ, all any evildoer can do is kill us—and then we go to be with the Lord! God has graciously shone into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and we have the sure hope of one day seeing our Lord face to face in Heaven. Jesus has caused us to be born into a living hope and a secure inheritance that is being kept for us. And he did all of this for us because he loved us and he endured the cross and the punishment of sin so we might be set apart from the world, and so we are.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

- **Let your faith in Christ drive everything you do.** Anything that does not come from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23), and if we are not firm in our faith, we are not firm at all (Isa. 7:9). We have been crucified with Christ, and we now live by faith in him while we are in our unglorified bodies. Faith is much more than just what "saves us." Faith is how we operate. Everything we do, we do trusting the promises of God revealed in Scripture. Every action we make must flow from our belief in the revealed truths found in God's Word. Anything that does not come from faith is sin.
- **Wait on the Lord.** This faith then is revealed in active waiting. Active waiting is not laziness or idleness. William Carey captured the idea of waiting on the Lord when he said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." When we wait on the Lord, we walk in faith in the things we know we are called to do, trusting that the Lord will supply everything we need to carry out his will.
- **Be strong and take courage.** Waiting on the Lord in the midst of opposition and apparent failure can be terrifying. However, we are not to fear man who can only destroy our body; rather, we are to fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28). So we strengthen ourselves in the power of Christ and take courage, knowing the Lord is with us, that he is good, and that he is God.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 10, 2019

Using Temporary Wealth in an Eternal Way

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, list ways that you discovered the importance of renewing your outlook regarding money. What are some things that worked well for you?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 112

(Additional Passages: Ps. 111; 1 Tim. 6:6-19; Prov. 13:22, 22:7; Lk. 12:31-33; Matt. 6:24-34)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- View your money biblically.
- Conduct your business in righteousness.
- Live generously.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do you know that needs the cleansing from sin, a cleansing only received after receiving Christ as Savior? Pray for them.

Pray through Psalm 112 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others for whom you are praying. Praise God for the money he has entrusted to you and ask for his wisdom in how to use it best.

Make a point to track your spending this week. See where your money is being spent, and respond in prayer. Repent if need be. Ask for wisdom in how to best use your money for the kingdom of God this month.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the untold spiritual wealth that is to be found in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 112 this week together as a family. Talk about money and the dangers of the love of money. Talk about how God wants us to use his money and how you do that in your household.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

(Psalm 1:6 ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 10, 2019

Using Temporary Wealth in an Eternal Way

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 112 is a wisdom psalm that deals with the practical results of fearing the Lord and delighting in his commandments. Again we see the righteous contrasted with the wicked in that the righteous endures forever while the wicked perish. One theme that rises in this psalm is money and the way the righteous use the money with which God has blessed them. It does not denounce money as wicked in and of itself but sets up practical guidelines for God's covenant people to deal with the temporary wealth God has entrusted them in a way that endures forever. The psalm also employs an acrostic, beginning each line with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet for the purpose of aiding the people in remembering and applying this psalm.¹⁷ (An acrostic is a literary tool to help one remember what has been written.)

An example would be the acrostic A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) which we use to help us remember how to pray.) The psalmist wanted to write about the practical application of the fear of the Lord in one's life in a way that would ensure the people remembered it and applied it. He did not want his instruction to go unnoticed.

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **Fearing the Lord and delighting in his commands often results in material blessing.**

This principle is generally true for those who by God's grace have been brought from death into life. Because of the Spirit working within them, they begin to view money the way which the Bible at many points encourages them. This is why the psalmist does not shy away from saying wealth and riches are in the house of the righteous, but he makes clear that it is his righteousness, not the wealth, that endures forever. Since Psalm 112 was written as an acrostic, here is an acrostic that guides one through 4 principles found in God's word that can set us F.R.E.E. from the many entrapments surrounding money.

- **Focus your money on Kingdom purposes.** (Luke 12:31-34)
"God increases our yield so that by giving we can prove our yield is not our God. God does not prosper a man's business so that man can move from a Buick to a BMW. God prospers a business so hundreds of unreached peoples can be reached with the gospel. He prospers a business so that 20 percent of the world's population can move a step back from the precipice of starvation."¹⁸ When we begin to view money in this way, the materialistic urges driving much of the spending in our culture are held in check by our desire to discontinue spending on things that don't benefit the Kingdom of God. When that happens, one naturally sees a decrease in one's spending and an increase in one's reserves now designated for the Kingdom of God.
- **Realize the gain of godly contentment.** (1 Tim. 6:6)
"The problem is not with earning a lot. The problem is the constant accumulation of luxuries that are soon felt to be needs. If you want to be a conduit for God's grace, you don't have to be lined with gold. Copper will do."¹⁹ When one learns contentment in Christ, one begins to walk in freedom. Lack of contentment enslaves us to transient things, on the contrary Christ has set us free from the bondage of materialism. Materialism results in frivolous spending and, frequently, the accumulation of debt. The gain that comes with godly contentment is both spiritual and physical.
- **Evade (bad) debt as much as possible.** (Prov. 22:7)
In very few cases, entering into debt is a good thing. A mortgage on a house would be one of those things since the money you pay in you expect to build equity. However, the overwhelming majority of the time debt is something we must avoid, simply because debt

¹⁷ Ross, Vol. 3, 375.

¹⁸ Piper, *Brothers, We are not Professionals*. 201.

¹⁹ Ibid, 205.

inhibits generous living and results in a whole host of problems such as anxiety and strife within one's household. Refusing to enter into debt and choosing to live within your means may give less of an appearance of wealth, but you will possess more wealth, in the end, if you invest generously into kingdom purposes.

For biblical and practical counsel as to how to get out of debt visit:

<https://www.daveramsey.com/> or <https://www.crown.org/>.

- **Envision your money's impact outliving you.** (Prov. 13:22)

When we only see the short game, we live foolishly. God intends for us to think eternally in the way we use our money. Even when we have to devote time to managing the temporary, we should also think about the long game. It is a good thing when a parent can support their kids, grandkids, and the ministries of their church through the money they've saved and through their inheritance. This requires sacrifice today so others can be blessed tomorrow. Money can increase, but not for luxurious living. It is for others.

To be very clear, I believe that when these principles are applied, one generally sees an increase in wealth. The increase is for the greater joy of giving all to Lord and his ministry, not our temporary prosperity. It is good to remind ourselves that Jesus had no place to lay his head during his ministry and yet he lived more wisely than anyone has ever lived. Paul also lived in poverty, spending much of his life in and out of prison for his faith. Our reward is in Heaven, and any wealth given to us here is meant to be used in a way that accumulates treasure there, not here. God has entrusted each of us with resources, some more than others. The issue is not in the amount, but the issue is being a faithful steward of God. *Take inventory of your spending and ask yourself, 'Am I a faithful steward of God in how I spend the resources He has entrusted to me?'*

- **The fear of the Lord moves us to conduct our businesses with generosity and justice.**

Those who fear the Lord are concerned more about generosity towards others rather than merely increasing profit. This does not mean they conduct business in a way that is unprofitable. They don't take advantage of people, instead they are generous with them. In addition to this attitude, one conducts his business with justice. One pays taxes as they should, not trying to cheat the system and conceal earnings, but honorably handling the money in their business. One does right by the customer, not cutting corners or doing shoddy work, but justly providing a service that glorifies God and serves the customer.

- **The fear of the Lord moves us to give generously and cheerfully.**

Giving is an act of worship. Of course, God calls us to give to his church and the needy in this world, but giving is much more than mere duty. Giving is a joy. It is an opportunity to let go of temporary wealth (wealth that we can't keep anyway) to participate in God's eternal ministry and storing up treasure in Heaven. We carry out this glorious act of worship with great generosity and joy.

¹⁷ *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* ¹⁸ *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,* ¹⁹ *thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.* (1 Timothy 6:17-19 ESV)

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

As in all wisdom literature, Christ is the one who fulfills this charge of wisdom and the one who enables us to live out this wisdom. There is grace upon grace for our failures with regards to our money. Christ bore the punishment for our shortcomings on the cross. His grace not only saves us but transforms us. The Spirit empowers us so we can put to death our sinful approaches to money and let Christ's perfect wisdom be revealed in our lives in the way we handle the money he has so graciously given us. If you have failed in this area, recognize and grieve over your sin, repent and turn to Jesus in faith asking for forgiveness. Let his Spirit transform you and set you free from the bondage of money-related sin in your life.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ? (See the first page)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 17, 2019

The Glory of the Lord and Human Relationships

CONNECT

As we reflect on Randy's sermon last week, list ways that you discovered the importance of renewing your outlook regarding relationships? What are some things that worked well for you?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 96

(Additional Passages: Matt. 4:19-20, 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Jn. 15:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:20; Col. 1:28-29)

- What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?
- What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing? (God, man, redemption, righteousness, etc.)
- How does this psalm orient us to Christ and the gospel?
- How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Tell of God's salvation from day to day.
 - Share the gospel among the nations.
 - Make Jesus central in your gospel sharing.
 - Highlight the Lordship of Jesus in your gospel sharing and walk through what that means.
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PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do you know that needs the cleansing from sin, a cleansing only received after receiving Christ as Savior? Pray for them.

Pray through Psalm 96 as you think through your life, your family's life, and the lives of others for whom you are praying. Worship the Lord in your prayers. Ascribe to him the glory due his name. Praise him as Creator. Praise him as King. Praise him as Judge. Tremble before him in the splendor of his holiness.

Pray that God's justice and righteousness would be revealed in our world today.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Declare God's glory among those in your circles this week. Tell of his salvation that you have experienced in Christ.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week:

For the Family: Read Psalm 96 this week together as a family. Talk about money and the dangers of the love of money. Talk about how God wants us to use his money and how you do that in your household.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

The entirety of Psalm 1.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 17, 2019

The Glory of the Lord and Human Relationships

What is the Psalmist drawing our attention to through his poetic devices?

Psalm 96 is an enthronement psalm that highlights the sovereignty and reign of the Lord in light of the reality of the end-times. The psalmist employs parallelism that intensifies themes (“Oh sing to the Lord a new song // sing to the Lord, all the earth!”), contrasts themes (For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols// but the Lord made the heavens.), and explains themes (before the Lord, for he comes// for he comes to judge the earth// He will judge the world in righteousness//and the peoples in his faithfulness—line 2 explains line 1, lines 3 and 4 explain line 2). The parallelism used in Psalm 96 emphasizes the glory of the Lord revealed in who he is and what he does, the responsibility of God's people to declare his glory among the nations, and the coming judgment of the Lord.

What is the Psalmist teaching us about what he is emphasizing?

- **God is glorious in who he is and what he does, and His glory is ultimate.**

“The psalmist proclaims ancient truths that the Lord is the Creator, the King, and the coming Judge, and after his coming there will be righteousness on earth. Therefore, his greatness, displayed in his saving power should be praised in all the earth.”²⁰ God's glory is the visible manifestation of his uniqueness, and God's holiness is revealed in him being Creator, King, and Judge. He is absolutely distinct. All other gods are worthless idols made by human hands or minds. The Lord reveals his worth in who he is. His glorious works clearly show his glorious character. His creation testifies to his glory. The signs and wonders he performed while he was on earth continue to testify to the glory of his Lordship. His coming judgment will be visible for all the world to see, and every knee will bow and tongue confess him to be Lord upon that glorious display of his glory. This world was created through Jesus for Jesus. His glory being known, enjoyed, and proclaimed is the ultimate reason for our existence in this world. He is ultimate, not us.

- **God's people are motivated primarily by a love for God's glory.**

Since God's glory is ultimate, his glory is revealed to be the primary motivator for our lives and proclamation. Psalm 96 is essentially a song praising the Lord and sending out others to invite the nations of the earth to praise him as well. We cannot help but notice the motivation. A desire to see God worshipped is the primary motivator, not compassion for the nations—though that is certainly not to be neglected. The psalmist is more concerned with the fact that the Lord is not receiving the glory due his name. The psalmist can't stand the thought that people are worshipping worthless idols, when the Lord, who is great and greatly to be praised, is not being glorified. He wants them to become true worshippers of the Living God, not primarily because it leads them to a place of eternal damnation, but because their love for the Lord is so great. Their love for God motivates them to love others. When compassion for others, rather than a passion for God's glory, becomes our ultimate motivator, two things could happen. We burn out, because our human compassion is not as lasting a source of love as the love for the one who can make us soar on wings like eagles. If burnout does not occur, we could compromise God's standard of holiness in the name of human compassion. Neither route is desirable. Our love for others must flow from our love for God. The irony is that when a love for God motivates us and we urge others to make God ultimate, we are showing others the highest possible compassion. Therefore, we must always let our love for God and his glory—our worship—drive our mission and compassion. Worship will continue for all eternity. Missions, however, will come to an end one day.

For further reading on this idea and global missions, pick up *Let the Nations Be Glad!* By John Piper.

²⁰ Ross, Vol. 3, 134.

- **God will return to judge the earth in righteousness and faithfulness.**

It is evident both in this psalm and in all of Scripture the Lord will return to judge the earth. This is incredible news for those who have faith in Jesus Christ because we know our sin has been dealt with by God on the cross. We have received Christ's righteousness as our own. The Lord promises us this in his Word, and we can trust him to be faithful to his promises. His Spirit testifies within us who believe that we are sons of God and saved from judgment. Apart from Christ, Jesus' return is a terrifying thing because the Lord judges in righteousness. The guilty will not go unpunished, and those who do have faith in Christ will experience an eternity of torment and pain, cut off from God. This is the reality facing this world. Our love for God's glory moves us to be compassionate for our fellow man and warn them of the impending judgment. We invite them to place their faith in Christ so they too might be able to spend eternity in their glorified bodies worshipping Jesus in his glorious presence.

How does the psalm orient us to Christ and the Gospel?

Who Jesus is and what he did is the salvation we are to tell from day to day. These are the marvelous works we are to declare among all the peoples. Jesus created the earth, reigns over his creation, and will return to judge the world. Consigning those who have faith unto eternal life and those who reject him unto eternal damnation.

How can we apply this psalm to our pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ?

- **Tell of God's salvation from day to day.**

As people saved by God, our hearts should be overflowing in our daily lives with joy and proclamations of the gospel. If you are not telling of the salvation you have experienced, the people around you will not come to conclusions about Jesus on their own. We must take the time to explain who he is and what he does, understanding that our culture is deeply confused about God. Our goal is not to get someone to speak the same Christian language we speak and do the same Christian things we do, but to make sure people know God as he is revealed in the Bible and his salvation. This takes work, but it is a glorious work God lets us do.

- **Share the gospel among the nations.**

Sharing the gospels with those in our circles is great, but also find ways to seek out those from other cultures who may be entrenched in false religion and share the gospel with them. God has called us to make disciples of all nations, not just our own. Seek out those cross-cultural relationships and introduce them to Jesus. (There are more in Gadsden than you might think).

- **Make Jesus central in your gospel sharing.**

Justification, forgiveness, a transformed way of living, and eternal life are all great benefits, however none of these are central in our witnessing. Jesus must be central in our witnessing. He draws us to Him because He is central in our life.

- **Highlight the Lordship of Jesus in your gospel sharing and walk through what that means.**

Make sure people know that to come to Jesus in faith is to come to him as both Savior *and* Lord. When someone enters into a relationship with Jesus, they submit to his Lordship and begin to live by faith under his commands. We do not fulfill the great commission when we lead someone to Christ—that is just the beginning! We are to disciple them and teach them the truths about God, man, Jesus, and salvation. We are to encourage them to be baptized (immersed in water) publically in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (p.s. It is hard to baptize someone in the name of the Trinity if they don't know what the Trinity is. Take time to explain the truths about the nature of God and Christ. Make sure you have an accurate understanding so you can teach the new believer with clarity. Ask them tough questions, and listen to their questions. Define every term. (You will protect them from false teachings down the road). Then teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded them to do. Walk them through what it looks like to put to death sin, to put on Christ, to fulfill their household duties, etc. Lastly, remember and tell them that Jesus is with you always every step of the way.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – Feb. 24, 2019

Prayer

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42 ESV)

Life Groups are modeled after the early Jerusalem church that consisted of 3000 members who “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” These church members exhibited this type of continual devotion, indicated by the syntax structure in the original language that could not have occurred each day with all 3000 members, but rather in the form of small groups.^{21,22} Small groups of believers committed to one another in the context of a larger church played a significant role in the purity and the growth of the church. They were able to do that because they demonstrated exceptional effort and deep commitment regarding the truth and to each other, both relationally and spiritually.²³ They were committed to the truth of God’s Word, the relational unity of the church, and the ministry of praying together for the advancement of the Kingdom and the spiritual well-being of one another. Today, as a Life Group, we are going to devote ourselves to prayer. We will praise God in prayer for the renewal he brought about during 40 Days of Renewal. We will ask God to continue to bring about his renewal in our church and community throughout the year. Lastly, we will pray for one another.

Praising the Lord through Prayer

Method: Conversational Praying

God has worked in mighty ways over the past 40 Days and will continue to do so. Take time together as a Life Group to have a time of conversational prayer lifting high the name of our Lord and thanking him for the renewal he brought about. Close with the teacher reading Ephesians 3:20-21 as closing prayer of worship.

(Explanation of Method: Conversational prayer is when a group gathers together and prays a sentence at a time. The prayers are not meant to be long prayers but rather short statements that express a prayer.

Example: **Person 1:** Lord, you are good, and all that you do is good. **Person 2:** Lord, at your hands, are pleasures forevermore. **Person 3:** Lord thank you for restoring me to the joy of my salvation. **Person 2:** Lord, you are the Great Restorer. **Person 1:** There is nothing that your grace and power cannot restore...)

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV)

Effecting the Ministry of the Church through Prayer

Method: Representative Prayer and Group Affirmation

“From its earliest days, the church has always been at its best when its people have knelt together. It is very important for us to work in the church so that it can prosper. It’s imperative that we give so that the needs of the church can be met. That being said, our work and our money can never do for the church what the power of God alone can do. The power of God never comes upon the church as it does when the church prays.”²⁴ So, how does the Bible instruct us to pray for the ministry of the church?

²¹The present participle “devoted” (προσκαρτεροῦντες, P-A-P-Pl-N-M) coupled with the customary imperfect form of the verb “to be” (ἦσαν, Im-A-I-3-Pl) emphasizes the strict and continual nature of the devotion.

²² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 548.

²³ Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1678.

²⁴ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1996), 168.

Pray for the effective ministry of the gospel and boldness to proclaim it.

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, (2 Thessalonians 3:1 ESV)

To that end, (praying at all times in the Spirit), keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:18b-20 ESV)

Pray for the holiness and unity of our church.

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11 ESV)

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21 ESV)

Pray for Pastor Randy and the rest of our pastoral team and lay shepherds.

You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. (2 Corinthians 1:11 ESV)

- Pray for their personal spiritual devotion to the Lord.
- Pray for their families.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment as they lead the church as under-shepherds.
- Pray specifically for Randy's preaching that it would be anointed by God to convict sinners and woo them into the Kingdom of God.

(Explanation of Method: Have one person for each topic pray representatively for the entire group, and let the individuals in the group respond with Amen (Amen means "so be it") and "Yes, Lord" or other phrases of affirmation when led to by the Spirit. *Teacher note: I would set up this section in advance and encourage people to spend time writing out a prayer for their part.*)

Interceding for One Another through Prayer

Method: Praying with Two or Three Others

Take time to take up prayer requests and then break up in groups to pray over a selection of them. (Idea: pass out index cards at the beginning of the Life Group hour and give people time to write down their prayer requests. More prayer requests will be shared and more time will be able to be devoted to prayer. We would not want to spend so much of our time sharing prayer requests that we neglect praying!)

I encourage you to pray for more than illnesses. Share prayer requests of lost people in your life with whom you are working towards sharing the gospel. Share prayer requests that deal with your own spiritual development. Keep them appropriate, but also know that if we can't feel comfortable to pray together in this way as a Life Group, either our group is too large and we need to multiply or we need to grow in our devotion to one another.