

**Due to the worship message being presented by a visiting speaker, there are no sermon notes for Sunday, September 30, 2018.**

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**Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of October 28, 2018**

**Day 29: Monday, October 29**

**Scripture: Matthew 18:1-4**

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then he called a little child over to sit among the disciples, and said, "I assure you that if you don't turn your lives around and become like this little child, you will definitely not enter the kingdom of heaven. Those who humble themselves like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

**Prayer:**

Loving God, I marvel at the faith of a child. There seem to be no gray areas in their lives when it comes to trust in you. Time and time again I find myself relying on my knowledge, my skill, or the information I possess, instead of on my faith. Help me to become like a child, and see the caterpillars among all the leaves of the forest, or hope for the rainbow at the end of the storm. Help me to put my hand in yours, walk with you in the face of cares, and carry you in the midst of need and hurt. Help me recapture the mystery that I must have had when I was a child, for to such faith belongs the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Make me, like a child, dwell in your kingdom. Amen.

**Reflection/Action:**

Is childlike trust a part of my faith? Am I able to trust and be Jesus' disciple?

**Day 30: Tuesday, October 30**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16**

You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

**Prayer:**

God of power and light, what a magnificent day! Full of your loving, full of your living, full of your Spirit. Why is it, Lord, that much of the time I am prone to look at the worst things in life? Help me to find my hope in you. Help me each day to put hope in my life through prayer, reading the scriptures, and encountering your Son Jesus. In Jesus there is hope for change in our lives. In Jesus there is hope for love in our lives. In Jesus there is hope for life in our lives. Amen.

**Reflection/Action:**

Thank you for completing these 30 days of prayer. What have you heard? How have you felt God's presence? What can you continue to do that will help your faith to grow to its greatest possible maturity?

**Wednesday, October 31**

**Scripture: Acts 2:41-43, 46-47, 5:12-14**

Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day.

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles.

Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. They would come together regularly at Solomon's Porch. No one from outside the church dared to join them, even though the people spoke highly of them. Indeed, more and more believers in the Lord, large numbers of both men and women, were added to the church.

**Observation:** In one day, the early Christian community in Jerusalem went from about 120 members (Acts 1:15) to roughly 3,120 members! What made that first Christian church so appealing? They certainly had an awesome truth to proclaim (“the apostles’ teaching”), a strong connection with God (“prayer”), and caring hearts (“demonstrated God’s goodness”). But it’s easy to skip over one aspect of their spiritual life so meaningful that Luke named it twice. They “shared meals” (verse 42) and “shared food with gladness and simplicity” (verse 46).

**Application:** In what ways has relating to others more deeply than you can in a couple of minutes after worship helped you to grow spiritually? How have you seen others grow in Christ through such times? What appeals to you about the bondedness pictured in this passage?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I’m tempted to think, “It’s just a meal.” Remind me of all the times you reached people’s hearts as you ate with them, and help me to value that more highly. Amen.

**Thursday, November 1**

**Scripture: Romans 12:9-18**

Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home. Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them. Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying. Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart. Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good. If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people.

**Observation:** The apostle Paul provided a portrait of what a Christian life should look like in this passage. Paul had never been to Rome (Romans 15:22-24), but he was aware from friends who had been there that Jewish and Gentile Christians had tensions about parts of the faith, even as they faced Roman enemies all around them. Paul offered advice on how best to interact with each other, and with people hostile to Christian faith.

**Application:** How can we best live out the love of others that Paul described in this passage? How can we live at peace with all people today, at a time when many political and social voices try to polarize us, and set us against one another? How have you fallen short of Paul's counsel? How have you lived up to the wisdom he offered?

**Prayer:** God, open me to your Word. Bless my enemies. Humble me in all aspects of my life. Give me your wisdom and love, so that I may follow your commands to love others and live in peace with them. Amen.

## **Friday, November 2**

### **Scripture: Hebrews 10:22-25**

Therefore, let's draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water. Let's hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable. And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

**Observation:** As Acts 2 reported, the very first Christians in Jerusalem formed a congregation that met regularly, shared life, and supported one another. As the gospel spread, Christians in other places also formed congregations, often more than one in each city. They knew they were part of something bigger than just their local congregation. But they also knew that they belonged, grew and served together in those local churches.

**Application:** Think about the depth and quality of the connection you have with other people in your church. Is anyone on your "2 a.m. call list" if you faced a serious problem? Are you on anyone else's list? That kind of connection never happens overnight; building trust takes time and shared experiences. How can you let the Holy Spirit deepen your friendships now, so that you are there to uphold one another through any of life's storms? (If you are not currently meeting with a small group, contact [kpohl@messiahchurch.org](mailto:kpohl@messiahchurch.org) to inquire about a group.)

**Prayer:** Lord God, thank you for connecting me to your family. Help me to "spark" love and good deeds in others, and to be receptive to your sparks as they arrive in my life. Amen.

## **Saturday, November 3**

### **Scripture: Romans 14:13-19**

So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister. I know and I'm convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is wrong to eat in itself. But if someone thinks something is wrong to eat, it becomes wrong for that person. If your brother or sister is upset by your food, you are no longer walking in love. Don't let your food destroy someone for whom Christ died. And don't let something you consider to be good be criticized as wrong. God's kingdom isn't about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever serves Christ this way pleases God and gets human approval. So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.

**Observation:** We sometimes think "church" means a big building. Paul's letter went to a group of smaller "house churches" in Rome (Romans 16:5, 10, 15). Paul wrote to Roman Christians

about disputes over food choices, urging “the strong” to care about and encourage “the weak,” rather than mocking or discouraging them. They didn’t always agree on how best to live their faith. We can differ on the details, Paul said. The central command is to love. Life in God’s Kingdom is about “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

**Application:** Paul wrote that as Christians focus their spiritual walk on “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,” they are able to stop sniping at one another. How easy or hard do you find it to lay aside a value system built on “being right” to live a life that seeks to lift up others? What helps you see whatever good things you have as gifts meant to bless others, not just to cling to for your own sake?

**Prayer:** Lord God, only you are wise enough to judge the thoughts and intentions of each person’s heart. Help me release the urge to judge others, and instead seek to live with all people in your peace and love. Amen.