

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Connections, the Pathways to God

Life is busy, full, uncertain, and stressful. Some seasons are so overwhelming that we are left feeling tired, fragmented, disconnected, with little energy left to give toward our own spiritual lives. In these wild times, how can we breathe deeply and feel rejuvenated? How can we become more aware of the presence of God that is, supposedly, always with us? Join us as we revisit practices that help us remain connected to God and to one another; the tried-and-true practices of the faith that keep us tethered and grounded during chaotic times.

Message description

Are you feeling exhausted and disconnected? Social psychologists say it may be because our surge capacity is depleted and needs to be renewed. We can do that by offering ourselves grace, recognizing grief, looking for activities that fulfill us, and focusing on maintaining important relationships. The church is positioned in such a way to offer these very things to replenish our souls and help us reconnect to God and one another through creative practices of tradition, worship, prayer, and friendship. Sometimes it is good to remember that we are not alone, but that the church exists all over the world united by the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Today we pause to celebrate where the church is growing and thriving and that there really is one faith, one hope, one baptism, and one lord of all.

Key Scriptures

Matthew 16:12-30, Revelation 7:9-12

Special Events coming up:

- October 10, OUTDOOR WORSHIP in the back lot at 10am *Bring your own bag chair!
- October 17, Prayer Walk at Beckley Creek park at 12pm
- October 24, phone a friend throughout the week!
- October 30, REVAPALOOZA live music, chili cook-off, pumpkin painting, and games! 3-5pm
- October 31, All Saints Celebration at 10am

Additional sources for independent study:

- *The Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper
- *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton
- *The Common Rule* by Justin Earley
- *Overflow* by Lovett Weems and Tom Berlin
- <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/how-to-foster-spiritual-disciplines-in-the-church>
- John Wesley sermon on "The Means of Grace" - <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-16-the-means-of-grace/>

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. How are you doing right now? As John Wesley says, how is it with your soul? Have you heard of the phrase "surge capacity" before? Did the definition from Sunday resonate with you?
2. What are some things that help you connect to God and others when you are feeling untethered spiritually?
3. What event are you most excited about for this series?
4. Have you ever attended a church in a different country? What did you appreciate about their service or traditions?

Going Deeper:

While the Kingdom of God is not yet fully here, what we know about the Kingdom we get from scripture. Visions of a future where there is justice, equity, and peace. Glimpses from parables that begin, "The Kingdom of God is like..." that show a place where everyone belongs and there is enough to go around.

1. What is your favorite parable on the Kingdom of God? What does it reveal about the character of God and God's Kingdom? Consider reading multiple parables to share favorites.
2. Where in scripture do we see the global reach of the Kingdom or mission of Jesus? (For a brief overview, read: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/pro-life/united-by-love-how-diversity-reflects-the-kingdom-of-god/>)
3. How should this inform how we do ministry and outreach in our local church? And what value should we place on honoring diversity in our community?

Read Matthew 16:13-20 again.

1. What is the significance of the location of this conversation with Jesus in Caesarea Philippi?
2. What is "the rock" upon which Jesus is building the church?
3. What are the "keys to the kingdom" that Jesus promises to Peter and/or the disciples? What do you think that means?
4. What do you think Jesus means by binding and loosening in verse 19? [*Binding and loosing is originally a Jewish Mishnaic phrase also mentioned in the New Testament, as well as in the Targum. In usage, to bind and to loose simply means to forbid by an indisputable authority and to permit by an indisputable authority. One example of this is Isaiah 58:5-6 which relates proper fasting to loosing the chains of injustice.*] To read more, check out <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Binding-Loosing>.

Family-Related Questions:

- What are some things you can do to expose your kids to the global nature of the church?
- How can you raise awareness or broaden your kids' perspective of what it means to be a part of the universal church, one part of many? How can Revolution help you do that?
- What plans are you making to bring the whole family to one of our special events this series?