

GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

First United Methodist Church- Weekly Study Guide

“equipping people in becoming deeply committed Christians ”

Series: *Living as a Reflection: “A City on a Hill” (February 7-12)*

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. **Isaiah 58:6-10***

*“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:14-16***

Yesterday we began our sermon series, “Living as a Reflection.” In this series we will explore how our lives can and should be a reflection of the love we’ve found in Jesus Christ. It is easy to find purpose and hope in this life of deep commitment to Christ and feel like we’ve finally arrived. But the life of deep commitment is by its very nature a life that never settles and never becomes complacent. Instead we are called each day to stretch ourselves to be more like Jesus and, in turn, reflect His love onto the world around us.

This week we are going to spend our time thinking about this very mission and purpose. Contemplate how your are “letting your light shine.” Is your faithfulness spilling over onto those around you?

Monday- Read Matthew 5:14-16

We begin our GPS this week by reading Jesus’ words about our mission. Where are we going? Led by the Holy Spirit, we are moving into the world of God’s purposes, where the Holy Spirit bears fruit in our lives and energizes us to be light-bearers who shine for God. Jesus said we are to let our light shine for a specific purpose - so that people who see what we do will praise God. How does that understanding of our purpose shape the way you go about living your life? When people see you and your day-to-day actions, do they see evidence of God’s presence in your life? Do they see you using God’s gifts to be a blessing to others?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

Tuesday- Read Acts 1:6-8

The disciples asked the risen Jesus, “Lord, where are we going?” And Jesus replied by telling them they were going places they couldn’t even imagine - ultimately, to the whole world! Jesus’ followers eventually reached the whole world - but they began where they were, in Jerusalem. How are you, as one of God’s followers, involved in making our community (Giles County) a better place?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

Wednesday- Read Numbers 13:26 – 14:9

Moving into any future, even God’s future, means facing our fears. As Israel neared the Promised Land, Moses sent 12 men to scout what lay ahead. Ten focused on obstacles and problems, and were terrified; only Caleb and Joshua focused on God’s promise, and pleaded with people to keep moving forward. What problems or challenges do you think FUMC might encounter as we move into the future? How can our church plan wisely, prudently and carefully without falling prey to the kind of fear that could block God’s plans for our future? What about your own future - what fears are you facing? How can you develop the kind of faith that Caleb and Joshua showed?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

Thursday- Read Luke 13:18-21

In these two parables, Jesus speaks to our impatience - we want to see *big* results immediately. We have the benefit of 2000 years of history; we *know* the mustard seed grows, and that the yeast works. But sometimes we still need a reminder that God’s kingdom grows one life at a time. Jesus told a few people in Jerusalem (his “mustard seed”) that they would reach the whole world. How do these parables teach us the importance of faith and patience in letting our light shine? You may be facing a personal challenge that feels overwhelming, or an area of spiritual growth that seems too much to tackle. What do these parables say about the importance of “taking the next step,” making even small moves forward? Ask God to bless even small advances in your life.

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

Friday- Read Philippians 3:12-14

There’s only one way to get where we are going - and that’s to press on. Paul here expresses beautifully the spirit of God’s faithful servants: God is calling us forward, asking us to live each day like pilgrims on a journey to an eternal destination that we have not yet reached. How do you avoid becoming discouraged in the journey towards deep faith...thinking you’ll never get there? How do you avoid becoming complacent in the journey...thinking you’ve arrived?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

Saturday- Read I Corinthians 13

Today you will be reading the passage we will use in worship tomorrow. Pray that God will open your heart and prepare you for a powerful worship experience as we come together tomorrow as the body of Christ.

I invite you to pray the following prayer:

Dear God,

As I read this passage today help me do so with an open heart, sincerely listening for your voice in my life. Use this passage to prepare me for worship tomorrow. As I read it help me to set aside my own agenda and my own desires so that I may come to worship tomorrow prepared to be molded by you as I continue my journey to becoming a deeply committed disciple of yours. In Christ's name I pray, AMEN

Here at FUMC we believe part of becoming a Deeply Committed Christians is praying daily. If you find yourself struggling with what to say, we suggest you try praying Wesley's Covenant Prayer.

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. AMEN