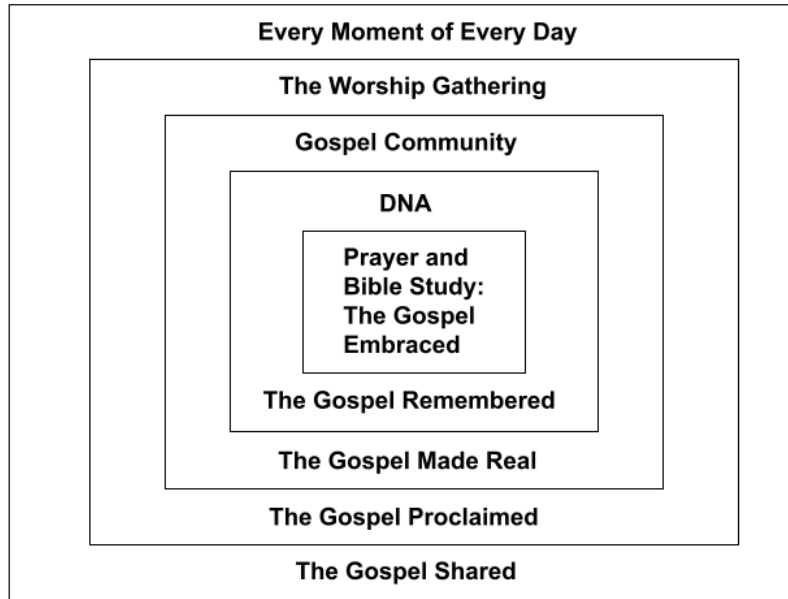


# Small Things: The What and Why of Immanuel Rhythms



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# Foreword: Let's Get On With It<sup>1</sup>

Think about a song you know by heart.

Did you know it by heart after the first time you heard it? The second? The third? The tenth?

Only after hearing it over and over *and over* again—and perhaps belting it out alongside friends at a concert or bar, and probably after getting the words wrong more than a few times—did you commit it to memory. Maybe you weren't even trying to. Repetition did it.

Now think about your skills.

Do you play an instrument or a sport? Do you cook, draw, or paint? Do you speak a second (or third, or fourth) language? Do you excel at video games?

How did you acquire those skills? How good were you the first time you picked up a guitar or a golf club? Would you have gotten a job at a Michelin-starred restaurant after your first attempt to scramble eggs or bake a cake? Could you read *Don Quixote* in the original Spanish or *Les Misérables* in the original French after a single lesson on Duolingo? Did you save the princess the first time you played *Super Mario Brothers*?

But now you make it look easy. You didn't wake up one morning knowing guitar chords, how to hit a pitching wedge, when to take a cake out of the oven, how to conjugate Spanish verbs, or where to find the Warp Zone. You developed these skills through repetition, habit, and practice.

Spiritual rhythms are like that. They're hard and probably a bit awkward at first; however, repetition makes them more and more a part of who you are and eventually, you do them without thinking about them. What seems like a chore becomes a habit and maybe even a joy.

The Bible tells us to be faithful in small things so we can be trusted with much.<sup>2</sup> Over the next several weeks, we are going to practice patience and work on our habits. Importantly, these habits and rhythms are not the *causes* of our righteousness. They are the *effects* of Christ's righteousness imputed to us. The gospel rhythms we are studying are not duties but privileges. "Gospel" means *good news*, and the good news is that we're invited to take part in the work God is doing to restore his good creation. This is what you're being "equipped" *for*.

Every week for the next seven weeks, we are going to study a different aspect of Immanuel Church's spiritual rhythms and practices. Each week, we will see how our rhythms connect to the sermon series on 1 and 2 Samuel we just finished and the sermon series on Luke we just started. We will have a few questions for reflection and discussion, and we encourage you to do a bit of journaling about these before and after we come together. The Bible exhorts us to "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."<sup>3</sup> We can also speak to God with these: as Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "In the Psalter we learn to pray on the basis of Christ's prayer. The Psalter is the great school of prayer."<sup>4</sup> Each week also includes a Psalm as well as the text of and a link to a recording of a

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, copyright 2001 by Crossway.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 16:10-14

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 5:18b-19.

<sup>4</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, HarperOne, 1954, p. 47.

hymn that speaks to that week's subject. May they quench the thirst and satisfy the hunger you didn't know you had.

All of this, we hope, speaks to the gospel's glorious unity. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was also the God of King David. *Everything* that happened in all their lives pointed to Jesus Christ's incarnation, death, burial, and glorious resurrection. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs join our voices and testimonies to the voices and testimonies of the saints throughout the last two millennia.

What, then, should we do with all this new equipment? Go back to the gospel proclaimed so vividly in the Christmas holiday just behind and the Easter holiday just ahead. In Luke 2:10-11, an angel of the Lord announced *to a bunch of shepherds*—unimportant among even the least important, and ranking in first-century dignity ahead, perhaps, of only lepers, tax collectors, and women—"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

"Savior"? From *what?* To what? Jesus Christ saved us from our sins. Practically, he saved us from the crushing burden we put on ourselves of feeling like we have to impress God and *earn* his favor with our words and deeds. In the Sermon on the Mount, he calls us *blessed* and promised us the kingdom of heaven, comfort, the earth, satisfaction, mercy—and that we shall see God and be called sons of God.<sup>5</sup> On the cross, he declared "It is *finished*."<sup>6</sup> At his empty tomb, he told *women* "Greetings!" and "Do not be afraid" and charged them, "go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee."<sup>7</sup> On a mountain in Galilee, he told us to "make disciples of all nations" and promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."<sup>8</sup> To the apostle who had denied him three times, he said "follow me."<sup>9</sup> To exiled John on the island of Patmos, he promises "I am coming soon."<sup>10</sup>

So what do we do with these commands, blessings, and glorious promises? Here is the German pastor, theologian, martyr, and failed Hitler assassination conspirator Dietrich Bonhoeffer writing about the Sermon on the Mount:

"Humanly speaking, we could understand and interpret the Sermon on the Mount in a thousand different ways. Jesus knows only one possibility: simple surrender and obedience, not interpreting it or applying it, but doing and obeying it. That is the only way to hear his word. But again he does not mean that it is to be discussed as an ideal, he really means us to get on with it."<sup>11</sup>

Daunting? Maybe, but Jesus promises us that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.<sup>12</sup> So let's get on with it.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:1-11

<sup>6</sup> John 19:30

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 28:9-10

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

<sup>9</sup> John 21:19

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 22:7

<sup>11</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Touchstone, 1959, pp. 196-197.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 11:30

# Week 1

## Prayer and Scripture: Conversation With God

*FYI: Listen to Austin Baker's January 29 sermon "We Delight in God's Word."<sup>13</sup>*

Why should we pray? When we pray, we unite our hearts with God's will. We express who we are to God and reconstitute our hearts with God's truth. We read the Bible for the same reasons. Bodily, we are what we eat. Mentally and spiritually, we are what we read and watch. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks, and in conversation with God through prayer and Bible study, we condition our hearts to speak good words and God's truth. Lest you think this to be of anything less than supreme importance, note that Jesus Christ himself—*who was literally God*—devoted himself to prayer and study. How much more, then, do we need them?

If we're honest with ourselves, we do it badly, faithlessly, ungratefully—and prayerlessly. One of the prayers in the Puritan collection *The Valley of Vision* confesses to "prayerless prayer, praiseless praises." Now think about times when you have recited the Lord's Prayer, perhaps before taking the football field or basketball court. Were you *praying*? Or was it fundamentally no different from trying to summon a protector with the *expecto patronum* spell from Harry Potter?

Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa, a Methodist Bishop who was Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Rhodesia from mid-1979 through early 1980, devotes the first seven and a half pages of a chapter titled "Instruments and Means of Evangelism" to prayer, exhorting us to pray for our lost family members, the needy, for holiness, and for our enemies.<sup>14</sup> Does God always give us what we claim to want? No. Muzorewa writes, "I think it is spiritual immaturity to expect God to always grant us what we ask for because, most of the time, we do not even know what we really need in order to live a meaningful life."<sup>15</sup> Too often, he reminds us, our requests to God are like a baby crying out and reaching for a razor blade or a sharp knife.

It is important to pray patiently. Our timing is not perfect, but God's is. Here again is Muzorewa:

"To some prayers, God's answer is 'wait'. Many people stop praying when they don't get what they requested from God. The general thinking and expectations by most people is that for a prayer to be considered answered, it should always be 'Yes' and the answer must come promptly. They want instant gratification. If they don't get it then they stop praying. Is this not similar to throwing a tantrum?"<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, and is it any different from how we "read" the Bible? The Bible is a document absolutely unlike any other, and we do it the greatest disrespect when we treat it like a collection of

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<sup>13</sup> <https://apple.co/3Rik2il>

<sup>14</sup> Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa, *Evangelism that Decolonizes the Soul: Partnership with Christ*, Wipf & Stock, 2005, pp. 58-66.

<sup>15</sup> Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa, *Evangelism that Decolonizes the Soul: Partnership with Christ*, Wipf & Stock, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa, *Evangelism that Decolonizes the Soul: Partnership with Christ*, Wipf & Stock, 2005, p. 66.

inspirational sayings and stories that will guide us to happy lives and healthy marriages God has promised us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes it this way:

“Holy Scripture is more than a watch word. It is also more than ‘light for today.’ It is God’s revealed Word for all men, for all times. Holy Scripture does not consist of individual passages; it is a unit and is intended to be used as such.”<sup>17</sup>

If you’re in a bookstore and you see the Bible in a section labeled “inspirational,” you know that it is being seriously underestimated—maybe even almost as much as we’ve underestimated Bibles we have carried and maybe even read once or twice but have not loved, studied, and feasted upon.

We should let prayer and the word shape us, form us, and knit us together. What we take in determines who we are, and then, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Scripture is God’s good word and our good food, and temptation loses its power as we nourish ourselves on the word and prayer.

## Prayer: Talking to God

**We Hear God’s Call** (1 Samuel 3:4-10)

*Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down. Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

**We Heed God’s Command** (Luke 10:1-2)

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

**Jesus Tells Us How to Pray** (Luke 11:1-4)

*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”*

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<sup>17</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, HarperOne, 1954, pp. 50-51.

## **Reading Scripture: “Hearing” from God**

God’s **Way** is **Perfect** (2 Samuel 22:31)

*This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the LORD proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*

God’s **Word** is **Planted** (Luke 8:15)

*As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.*

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***Where are the “volume” knobs in your world?***

***How can you turn them down so you can listen prayerfully?***

***Are you actively seeking to “hear” what God has to say through scripture, or are you just checking a box?***

***What is the difference between praying and trying to cast spells? What are you doing?***

## Psalm 86, on Prayer

1. *Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.*
2. *Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.*
3. *Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.*
4. *Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*
5. *For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.*
6. *Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.*
7. *In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.*
8. *There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.*
9. *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.*
10. *For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.*
11. *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*
12. *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.*
13. *For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*
14. *O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.*
15. *But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*
16. *Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.*
17. *Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.*

## Psalm 19, on God's Word

1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*
2. *Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.*
3. *There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.*
4. *Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end are the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,*
5. *Which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.*
6. *Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.*
7. *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making the wise simple;*
8. *The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;*
9. *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.*
10. *More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*
11. *Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*
12. *Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.*
13. *Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.*
14. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*



## **Hymn: What a Friend We Have in Jesus<sup>18</sup>**

*What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!*

*Are we weak and heavy laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In his arms he'll take and shield thee;  
Thou wilt find a solace there.*

Joseph Mendicott Scriven (1855)

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<sup>18</sup> You can find it on YouTube here: <https://bit.ly/3RNLNWG>

## Week 2

### Sabbath and Holy Rest

There are few things *harder* for ambitious, driven, and well-meaning people to do than *rest*. There are few things *easier* for ambitious, driven, and well-meaning people to do than to keep every moment of every day filled with some task, obligation, or good thing—but “Remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy” is one of the Ten Commandments. God himself rested on the seventh day of creation. Jesus rested in the gospels. *Rest* is important in the scriptures, and it is important to keep in mind that for almost all of history, just about everyone was on the brink of starvation, many children did not make it out of childhood, and life expectancy at birth was under 40. If they could rest, we can rest.

Remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy is not a set of rules about how you treat Sundays in order to stay in God’s good graces. We can spend an eternity debating which actions count as “rest” and which are disqualified as “work.” Think for a moment, though, about what you’re after when you engage in such legalistic hair-splitting (no need to feel uniquely singled out here—we all do this from time to time). Is it about enjoying God’s goodness and giving him glory? Doubtful. Is it about justifying yourself, condemning others, and giving yourself glory because of your own righteousness? That’s probably a lot closer to the truth. Slavishly *avoiding* work on a particular day of the week is just as self-righteous and faithless as slavishly *doing* it.

When we forsake rest in order to be constantly doing, doing, *doing* out of the fear of what happens if we stop to be alone with God or our own thoughts for a few moments, we often create trouble for ourselves. Overall, evidence on the effects of sleep deprivation and its similarity to intoxication is mixed, but sleep deprivation produced cognitive impairment similar to—or worse than—intoxication in a 2020 study of drivers’ performance, and much to my horror, “(c)offee did not produce an improvement when sleep deprived, and instead, performance deteriorated”.<sup>19</sup> Would you do good work drunk? Do you do good work sleep deprived? Both questions have the same answer. How much work do you do fixing things you messed up because you were tired?

More than anything, Sabbath is an attitude. We don’t need to be frantic. We don’t need to be busy. God has accomplished everything for us in Christ. This means we have the privilege of stewardship—using our time, talent, and treasure for God’s glory and our good. Frantic busyness is faithlessness: when we embrace Sabbath rest, we testify to ourselves and to others that our faith is in Christ and not ourselves.

### Embracing Sabbath Rest

God **Looks** at the **Soul** (1 Samuel 16:7)

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<sup>19</sup> Lowrie, Joanna and Helen Brownlow. 2020. The impact of sleep deprivation and alcohol on driving: a comparative study. *BMC Public Health* 20, Article number 980. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09095-5>.

*But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”*

Jesus is **Lord** of the **Sabbath** (Luke 6:5)

*And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”*

## **Practicing Sabbath Discernment**

We Sit before the Lord (2 Samuel 7:18-29)

*Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them<sup>[a]</sup> great and awesome things by driving out before your people,<sup>[b]</sup> whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God. **25** And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,’ and the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house.’ Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.”*

Jesus Healed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:15-16)

*Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”*

**For Reflection and Discussion:**

**What activities are getting in the way of Sabbath rest?**

**How can Jesus’s example guide your priorities with respect to Sabbath rest?**

## **Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd**

1. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*
2. *He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*
3. *He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*
4. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*
5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*
6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

## Hymn: Near to the Heart of God<sup>20</sup>

*There is a place of quiet rest,  
Near to the heart of God;  
A place where sin cannot molest,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*O Jesus, blest Redeemer,  
Sent from the heart of God;  
Hold us, who wait before Thee,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of comfort sweet,  
Near to the heart of God;  
A place where we our Saviour meet,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*O Jesus, blest Redeemer,  
Sent from the heart of God;  
Hold us, who wait before Thee,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of full release,  
Near to the heart of God;  
A place where all is joy and peace,  
Near to the heart of God.*

Cleland Boyd McAfee, 1903

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<sup>20</sup> On YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3tFCYX6>

## Week 3

### Silence and Solitude

If you go to a Birmingham Bulls hockey game or Birmingham Legion soccer game, there's a pretty good chance someone else from Immanuel Church is there, too. Spectator sports are fun family entertainment—and while they're not cheap, they're usually affordable. In the minor leagues, anyway.

They are also incredibly, almost exhaustingly, noisy. Every moment is filled with frantic activity as if no one in the audience can bear to be alone with his own thoughts for more than a split second.

And make no mistake, noise is everywhere we turn. The streets are noisy. The stores are noisy. Everywhere you turn during the holiday season, it seems like literal walls of visually overwhelming sights and figurative walls of auditorily overwhelming sounds are constantly reminding you to BE MERRY AND BRIGHT.

Sometimes, it feels like we are surrounded by noise every second of every day. Silence and solitude are important rhythms. First, God speaks into our silence, and it's hard to hear him when a world full of not-God is screaming in each ear. Second, Jesus withdrew for silence and solitude. His was the original "quiet time."

Think back to the last time you were up early enough that there wasn't any street noise yet. How did the quiet make you feel? How were your blood pressure and pulse? Probably lower than after the rest of the world woke up.

The noise of day-to-day life is a good example of too much of a good thing. Sensory assaults are fine for hockey games, Christmas trips to the mall, and visits to Disney World, but they are no way to live. Jesus embraced silence and solitude. We should, too.

God Speaks In Our Silence (1 Samuel 3:1-10)

*Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."*

Jesus Withdrew to Pray (Luke 5:16)

*But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***Why did Jesus seek silence and solitude?***

***Why don't you?***

## Psalm 62: My Soul Waits for God Alone

1. *For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.*
2. *He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.*
3. *How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?*
4. *They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. Selah.*
5. *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.*
6. *He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*
7. *On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.*
8. *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.*
9. *Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.*
10. *Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them.*
11. *Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God,*
12. *And that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.*



## **Hymn: Be Still My Soul<sup>21</sup>**

*Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heav'nly Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know  
His voice who ruled them when he dwelt below.*

*Be still, my soul; when dearest friends depart,  
And all is darkened in the veil of tears,  
Then shall thou better know his love, his heart,  
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and their fears.  
Be still, my soul; thy Jesus can repay  
From His own fullness all He takes away.*

*Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on  
When we shall be forever with the Lord,  
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,  
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

Kathrina von Schlegel, 1855

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<sup>21</sup> On YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3tGjaCV>

## Week 4

### Fasting & Feasting

If you are an average American, you have a problem that would have been utterly unfamiliar to almost everyone else who has ever lived: you could stand to lose a few pounds. Our lives are filled with first-world problems: our bodies are cluttered with fat because we eat too much. Our closets are cluttered with *stuff* because we buy too much. Our calendars are cluttered with commitments because we say “yes” to too much. Altogether, these are accumulations of *good* things that distract us from *great* things.

We are called to *fasting* and *feasting*. *Fasting* is obedient abstention from good things. You *can* fast from food, but you *cannot* fast from drugs. You *can* fast from video games. You *cannot* fast from pornography. Fasting reminds us of our need for Christ and of the hunger that only he can satisfy—and, perhaps, helps us realize that we’ve made mistakes about what is actually “good” (“That show I like has a lot of sex and nudity, but it isn’t actually *porn*...”).

*Feasting* is joyful, celebratory indulgence in good things. God made a good world, and he wants us to enjoy it. This means sometimes enjoying great food and great company in great abundance. Just like fasting, *feasting* is an act of worship.

### Fasting Brings Clarity

The Israelites Fasted (1 Samuel 7:6)

*So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.*

Jesus Fasted in the Wilderness (Luke 4:1-2)

*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.*

### Feasting Celebrates Christ and Community

The Israelites Feasted (2 Samuel 6:14-15)

*And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn.*

Jesus Calls us to a Great Feast (Luke 14:15-24)

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant<sup>[a]</sup> to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to

make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***How does fasting turn us to Christ?***

***How do we celebrate God's goodness by feasting?***

***What are your excuses for declining the invitation to the feast?***

## Psalm 143: My Soul Thirsts For You

1. *Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!*
2. *Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.*
3. *For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead.*
4. *Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled.*
5. *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.*
6. ***I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.***
7. *Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.*
8. *Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*

## Psalm 36: How Precious Is Your Steadfast Love

1. *Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.*
2. *For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.*
3. *The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good.*
4. *He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil.*
5. *Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.*
6. *Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD.*
7. *How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*
8. ***They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.***
9. *For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.*
10. *Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart!*
11. *Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.*
12. *There the evildoers lie fallen; they are thrust down, unable to rise.*

## **Hymn: Come to the Feast<sup>22</sup>**

*“All things are ready,” come to the feast!  
Come, for the table now is spread;  
Ye famishing, you weary, come,  
And thou shalt be richly fed.*

*Hear the invitation,  
Come, “whosoever will;”  
Praise God for full salvation  
For “whosoever will.”*

*“All things are ready,” come to the feast!  
Come, for the door is open wide!  
A place of honor is reserved  
For you at the Master’s side.*

*Hear the invitation,  
Come, “whosoever will;”  
Praise God for full salvation  
For “whosoever will.”*

*“All things are ready,” come to the feast!  
Come, while He waits to welcome thee;  
Delay not while this day is thine,  
Tomorrow may never be.*

*Hear the invitation,  
Come, “whosoever will;”  
Praise God for full salvation  
For “whosoever will.”*

*“All things are ready,” come to the feast!  
Leave ev’ry care and worldly strife;  
Come, feast upon the love of God,  
And drink everlasting life.*

*Hear the invitation,  
Come, “whosoever will;”  
Praise God for full salvation  
For “whosoever will.”*

Charles H. Gabriel (1956-1932)

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<sup>22</sup> On YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3NQMwW1>

# Week 5

## Confession

When we *confess*, we testify to who we are, what we have done, and what we believe. Confessing our sins to God and one another shines gospel light on the dark corners of our souls. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, and illuminating our sins means we address them before they fester and metastasize.

Confession also testifies to what we believe. Sin separates us from God, but Christ's work on the cross means that the separation *is no more*. Furthermore, when we confess, we testify that we believe in the one with the power and authority to forgive.

Confession is important for our vertical relationship with God. It is also important for our horizontal relationships with one another. If you're human, someone has hurt you at some point or another and then did nothing to seek forgiveness or reconciliation. For a few days after the offense, maybe things were just *weird*, and while some of the weirdness has worn off, your relationship is a little different because of lingering residue.

Maybe you're carrying baggage from a time you were offended. Maybe you're carrying baggage from a time when you did the offending. Christ has dealt with the eternal consequences through his work on the cross. We reaffirm this to God, ourselves, and others through the discipline of confession, and part of the privilege of taking part in God's work of restoration is that we get to take part in repairing relationships among people who bear his image and whom he called *very good*.

Difficult? Yes, but so are a lot of video games. Unlike a lot of video games, however, difficult confession heals wounds and helps set to rights the world God created.

## Confession Repairs Our Relationship With God

David Confessed His Sin (2 Samuel 12:13)

*David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."*

The Prodigal Son Returns (Luke 15:17-20)

*"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***How did David's confession repair his relationship with God?***

***How did the Prodigal Son's confession repair his relationship with his father?***

*How does confession change our relationship with God?*

## **Confession Repairs Our Relationship With One Another**

Saul Recognized David's Righteousness (1 Samuel 24:17-19)

*He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.*

Jesus Tells Us to Forgive One Another (Luke 17:3-4)

*Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying 'I repent,' you must forgive him."*

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***How are your relationships with your Gospel Community?***

***Which relationships do you need to repair right now?***



## **Psalm 51: Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God**

1. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
2. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
4. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
5. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
6. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
9. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
10. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
11. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
12. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
13. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.
14. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
15. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
16. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
18. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;
19. Then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

## **Hymn: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing<sup>23</sup>**

*Come, thou Fount of every blessing;  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
Sung by flaming tongues above;  
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,  
Mount of thy redeeming love!*

*Here I raise mine Ebenezer;  
Hither by thy help I'm come;  
And I hope, by thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed his precious blood.*

*O to grace, how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love,  
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it;  
Seal it for thy courts above.*

Robert Robinson, 1758

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<sup>23</sup> On YouTube: <https://bit.ly/47mj1Cx>

## Week 6

# Gospel Community and DNA

*FYI: Listen to Austin Baker's January 22, 2023 Sermon "We Delight in One Another" [here](#).*

Flourishing requires *community* and *accountability*. Gospel Communities and DNA groups are not just something to do if you want to do them. They are the very essence of the church life and are how we are "living to make the real Jesus known in Birmingham and beyond." Gospel Communities are not administrative elements of Immanuel Church. They are the church's constitutive elements. In Gospel community, we walk through life together and remind ourselves and one another of the gospel's glorious truth: while we are not sufficient, Christ is—and that is all we need. Gospel Community meetings are opportunities for celebration and cooperation: we celebrate the gospel together, and we cooperate with one another in the work of ministry.

DNA groups are gender-specific sub-groups within gospel communities that dedicate themselves to Discipleship, Nourishment, and Accountability. In DNA, we remind one another of the gospel and good theology more specifically (and perhaps less comfortably). If meeting with your DNA group is a trip to the gym, then the people in your DNA group are your workout partners. As with everything else, the pattern is set out in scripture—and what looks very new is actually very old. Christ's work is prefigured in the Old Testament, accomplished in the New Testament, and consummated in the New Jerusalem. We're invited to the party, and for now, we have the privilege of cooperating in God's work of restoration.

That work of restoration begins where we have the most influence: ourselves, our families, and our communities. In his letter to the Romans, Paul exhorted the people in the church to "present [their] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [their] spiritual worship."<sup>24</sup> Paul describes what happens in Gospel community in the next verse: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The accountability we practice in DNA is essential. Borrowing from the English Bible scholar F.F. Bruce, our ethical actions are expressions of gratitude toward a good God, and renewing our minds requires that we be honest with ourselves and one another about whether our thoughts and actions express gratitude toward God and love for his creation—or contempt.<sup>25</sup>

Make no mistake: Gospel community is *hard*. And it isn't something we build. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes it this way: "Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Romans 12:1

<sup>25</sup> Hear Austin Baker's Sermon "Physical Acts of Spiritual Worship," July 16, 2023, online: <https://podcasts.apple.com/za/podcast/physical-acts-of-spiritual-worship/id985494464?i=1000621411542>.

<sup>26</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, HarperOne, 1954, p. 30.

## **Community Realized: DNA and Gospel Community**

Jonathan and David's Friendship (1 Samuel 18:1-4)

*As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.*

Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

*Now as they went on their way, Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.<sup>[b]</sup> Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

## **Community Reinforced: Personal Rhythms to Gospel Community**

Israel Was Told to Fear the Lord (1 Samuel 12:24)

*Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.*

We Are Jesus's True Family (Luke 8:21)

*But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."*

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***How does Gospel Community strengthen you?***

***How do your personal choices affect your involvement in Gospel Community?***

***How do these exhortations encourage us to pursue Gospel Community?***

## **Psalm 133: When Brothers Dwell in Unity**

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1. *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!*
2. *It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!*
3. *It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.*

## Hymn: Blest Be the Tie That Binds<sup>27</sup>

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.

Before our Maker's throne  
We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
Our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes,  
Each other's burdens bear,  
And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,  
It gives us keenest pain,  
But we shall still be joined in heart,  
And hope to meet again.

The glorious hope revives  
Our courage on the way:  
In perfect friendship we shall live  
In God's eternal day.

John Fawcett, 1772

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<sup>27</sup> On YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3NO1FY5>

# Week 7

## Worship

*FYI: Listen to Codie Gibbons' July 7, 2023 sermon "Gathered Worship."*<sup>28</sup>

*"I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!" Psalms 34:1-3*

Why do we sing in gathered worship?<sup>29</sup> Singing is more important than it might at first appear. People learn things through repetition, and the songs we sing give us the vocabulary we need to respond to God's revealed word. Singing contributes to each worship gathering's three goals. **First**, we exalt God. He is the object of our worship, and it is good and right that this is so. God is the ultimate good, and worship is our proper response. **Second**, we edify believers who sing truth and who hear truth sung. **Third**, we educate seekers by proclaiming that they have found what they seek, even if they do not know they are seeking it: when we sing *There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins/and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains*, we are proclaiming to the seeker that they need to seek no more, for they have *found*.

The worship gathering is just that: a *gathering*. It is more than a collection of individuals on their own walks with their personal Lord and Savior. It is the united body of Christ's corporate expression. Scholars have written that what we call "The Lord's Prayer" would be better understood as "The Disciples' Prayer"--i.e., as the prayer that uniquely binds them together in a community of worship and intercession."<sup>30</sup> Further, they argue that the use of *us*--"give *us* each day our daily bread", "forgive *us* our sins", "lead *us* not into temptation"--"emphasizes that the petitions of 'The Disciples' Prayer' are not primarily for the individual but for the entire community of believers."<sup>31</sup>

## The Joy of Worship

David Danced Before the Lord (2 Samuel 6:14)

*And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod.*

Mary Worshipped God (Luke 1:46-55)

*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he*

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<sup>28</sup> <https://bit.ly/3tEiLRv>

<sup>29</sup> Based on the sermon "Gathered Worship" by Codie Gibbons, Immanuel Church, July 9, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> ESV Study Bible, note to Luke 11:1, p. 1977.

<sup>31</sup> ESV Study Bible, note to Luke 11:4, p. 1978.

*has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”*

## **Growth in Corporate Worship**

David Sang a Song of Praise (2 Samuel 22)

*And David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. “For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. “In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears. “Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew; he was seen on the wings of the wind. He made darkness around him his canopy, thick clouds, a gathering of water. Out of the brightness before him coals of fire flamed forth. The LORD thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. And he sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning, and routed them. Then the channels of the sea were seen; the foundations of the world were laid bare, at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. “He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a broad place he rescued me, because he delighted in me. “The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his rules were before me, and from his statutes I did not turn aside. I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt. And the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight. “With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; with the purified you deal purely, and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down. For you are my lamp, O LORD, and my God lightens my darkness. For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. “For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? This God is my strong refuge and has made my way blameless. He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your gentleness made me great. You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip; I pursued my enemies and destroyed them, and did not turn back until they were consumed. I consumed them; I thrust*



*them through, so that they did not rise; they fell under my feet. For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me. You made my enemies turn their backs to me, those who hated me, and I destroyed them. They looked, but there was none to save; they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them. I beat them fine as the dust of the earth; I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets. "You delivered me from strife with my people; you kept me as the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. Foreigners came cringing to me; as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me. Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses. "The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation, the God who gave me vengeance and brought down peoples under me, who brought me out from my enemies; you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from men of violence. "For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing praises to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever."*

Jesus Taught Us to Pray Corporately (Luke 11:1-4):

*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"*

The Disciples Were Continually in the Temple Praising God (Luke 24:52-53)

*And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.*

## **The Church Testifies**

"True worship is to be so personally and hopelessly in love with God, that the idea of a transfer of affection never even remotely exists." A.W. Tozer

***For Reflection and Discussion:***

***What does it mean to "worship" outside of the worship gathering?***

***Why does "corporate worship" matter?***

***Why isn't it sufficient to just listen to a podcast?***

## Psalm 145: Great is the LORD

A Song of Praise. Of David.

1. *I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.*
2. *Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.*
3. *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.*
4. *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.*
5. *On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*
6. *They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.*
7. *They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*
8. *The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*
9. *The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.*
10. *All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you!*
11. *They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,*
12. *To make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*
13. *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. [The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works]*
14. *The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.*
15. *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.*
16. *You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*
17. *The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.*
18. *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*
19. *He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.*
20. *The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.*
21. *My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

## **Hymn: Brethren, We Have Met To Worship<sup>32</sup>**

*Brethren, we have met to worship  
And adore the Lord our God;  
Will you pray with all your power,  
While we try to preach the Word?  
All is vain unless the Spirit  
Of the Holy One Comes down;  
Brethren, pray, and holy manna  
Will be showered all around.*

*Brethren, see poor sinners 'round you  
Slumb'ring on the brink of woe;  
Death is coming, hell is moving,  
Can you bear to let them go?  
See our fathers and our mothers,  
And our children sinking down;  
Brethren, pray and holy manna  
Will be showered all around.*

*Sisters, will you join and help us?  
Moses' sister aided him;  
Will you help the trembling mourners  
Who are struggling hard with sin?  
Tell them all about the Savior,  
Tell them that He will be found;  
Sisters, pray, and holy manna  
Will be showered all around.*

*Let us love our God supremely,  
Let us love each other, too;  
Let us love and pray for sinners,  
Till our God makes all things new.  
Then He'll call us home to heaven,  
At His table we'll sit down;  
Christ will gird himself, and serve us  
With sweet manna all around.*

George Atkins, 1819

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<sup>32</sup> On YouTube: <https://bit.ly/47iYDID>