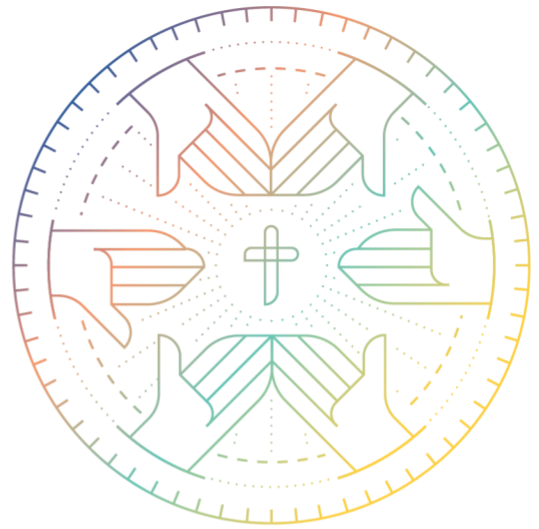


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MEETING AGENDA

ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

If you had to choose, which one would you choose? 1) Camping 2) Glamping* 3) Hyatt Regency.
Anyone have a funny camping story to share?

* Glamping is camping plus glamour, or luxury camping. In other words, upscale camping that doesn't include tents, sleeping bags and camp stoves.

INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

What stood out to you from this week's sermon?

Have you ever found yourself in a self-created cycle of repeating the same mistakes? Know someone who was caught in that cycle? What was that like for you/them?

INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

Read Judges 6:1-6. How would you describe the different layers of hardship that the Israelites were enduring because of the Midianites? For example, one layer is that the Israelites were forced from their homes and living in caves in the mountains to escape the threat of the Midianites.

HOST Guidance: Other layers might be the Israelites were short on food, they were overrun by enemies, they could not enjoy or benefit from their own hard work and the produce of the land, they doubted and questioned God, they were demoralized and leaderless, they were hopeless, they cried out for deliverance.

Read Judges 6:12-13. Clearly, Gideon equated hardship with abandonment. David said that we often make the same mistake. In drawing this conclusion from Israel's hardship, what factors are clearly being overlooked by Gideon?

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HOST Guidance: Gideon makes no mention of the evil Israel had done in God's sight. They had feared other gods (6:10). There were still altars of Baal and Asherah poles (6:26).

Read Romans 8:35-39. Working together with your group, make a list of at least 10 things we learn from this passage about ourselves, God and hardships.

HOST Guidance: 1) God did not spare even his own Son from suffering 2) Jesus is interceding for us 3) no hardship can separate us from God 4) even Jesus' hardship in death turned out to be victory 5) we are conquerors in the face of hardships 6) our victory is through Jesus, who loves us 7) the love of God is found in Jesus 8) nothing can separate us from God's love 9) we can be confident in our victory 10) sometimes our difficult experiences in life can make no sense 11) God freely gives exactly what we need, even in the face of hardship.

APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

Have you ever put a fleece before God? How did that work out for you? Have you known someone who did?

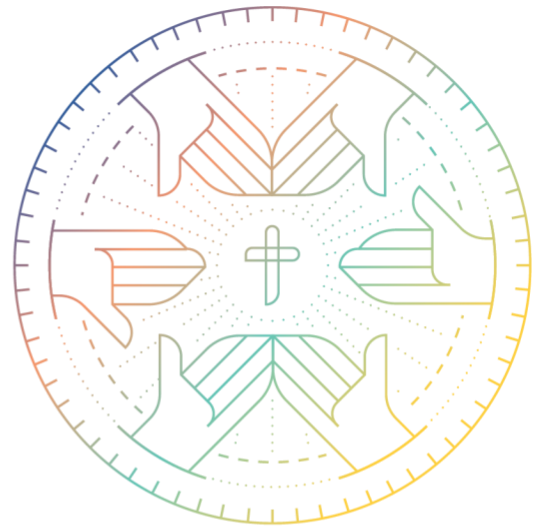
What are you trusting God to do that only he can do? Does it encourage you that if all we have to depend on is God, then we are right where God wants us? Share your thoughts with the group.

David said that the difference between regret and repentance is the difference between feeling bad but still stuck in the cycle, and feeling bad leading to healing and breaking the cycle. Repentance leads to new freedom and brings healing and inward change. Regret simply leads to repeating the same mistakes.

- What can we be sure we are practicing biblical repentance?
- Is there anything happening in your life that needs repentance?
- How would you counsel a friend who is struggling with regret, but needs to be encouraged toward repentance?

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PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for promising us that in spite of the hardships we face, you are always with us and you will never leave us. Even when we run out of ideas or strength, when we are trusting you, we are in a good place. You love us and use hardships to shape our character in ways that are only known to you. We love you back and, like Gideon, we trust you to do than we can ever imagine. Amen.