



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**

Kingdom Work

Daily Scripture Readings for

April 18 - May 15

WEEK 1: GRACE

Monday, April 18 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

I hope that verse 10 reminds us of the truth of our situation: "...by the grace of God, I am what I am..." Paul had a special encounter with the Lord, if you remember. Traveling around, persecuting the church, and God knocks him down and blinds him on the road to Damascus. Light is certainly blinding when you have grown accustomed to darkness and evil. It took a supernatural appearance by Jesus for Paul to become who he is. "...by the grace of God, I am what I am..."

Maybe God didn't knock us down and blind us to get our attention, but there was a point where God found us where we were. Maybe you are like me. I was saved when I was 5. God got ahold of me early in my life, and has kept ahold of me my whole life. "...by the grace of God, I am what I am..."

Maybe you have a different experience with God. God didn't get ahold of you until later in life. Maybe there was a point where you completely hit rock bottom, and at the bottom of a pit which you dug, God found you and reached down his hand to pull you out of that deep darkness. "...by the grace of God, I am what I am..."

Praise God that he has found us! However, let us heed the words at the end of verse 10: "...and his grace toward me has not been in vain." We should be so thankful for what the Lord has done for us, we should devote our lives to service to him. We should be saying "God, you won't be sorry that you found me. I am going to remain with you and do good work." The good work we do is not of our own efforts, but it is "the grace of God that is with me."

What are you going to do this week with the grace which you have received? How are you going to live in your grace-filled freedom? "...by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain." Let that be your testimony as well.

Tuesday, April 19 - Ephesians 2:1-10

I think an alternate definition of grace can be found in Ephesians 2:4: “But God...” Those two words really are the story of your life and my life. It is in those two important words that our entire life changes. The famed 19th-20th century evangelist Billy Sunday is a good example of this. Sunday was an outfielder for several National League teams in the 1880s. He was never a bad person, but he was not a Christian. Sometime in 1886 or 1887, Sunday happened upon a street evangelist in Chicago. He became a Christian shortly after and his life was forever changed.

In 1891, Sunday was offered a \$3500 contract to play baseball but he turned it down instead to work at the Chicago YMCA for \$83 a month. From there, he began to be heavily involved in evangelism. He led revivals and other evangelistic efforts for the rest of his life. Billy Sunday thought he would be known as a baseball player, *but God* had other plans.

Ephesians 3:20 reminds us that God can do far more than we can ask or imagine. We may have plans for how our life is to go, *but God* can do far more with us than we think possible. The grace of God saves us and works through us as we live the Christian life and do Kingdom work. We may think we know what is necessary, *but God* is the one in control. May we let God take us from our own sin to a wonderful relationship with Him.

Wednesday, April 20 - James 5:7-20

James concludes his letter by giving the command to endure and pray. In both commands, he uses the example of rain. The farmer must wait patiently for the rain so that the crops can grow to maturity. So it is with us. We must wait patiently on the Lord. And while we wait, we pray. The prayers of God’s people are powerful. Elijah prayed for drought and there was drought. Elijah prayed for rain and there was rain. We must endure and we must pray.

There is an interesting tension with James using the same metaphor of rain. On one hand, you patiently wait for God to bless you in his timing. On the other hand, you fervently pray for God to supply what you need today. The task of the Christian is to do both at the same time. We bring our petitions to God, knowing God listens and has our best interest in mind. At the same time, we submit our desires to God's desires and patiently wait for his perfect timing. That balance illustrates the Christian life. We go before the throne of God with our petitions and then we submit to God's will. Let us pray in that way this morning. Let us intercede for one another and then humble ourselves to the will of God.

Thursday, April 21 - Hosea 3:1-5

Hosea's marital relationship is used as a living metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel. Israel has continued to remain unfaithful to the Lord, prostituting themselves to foreign gods. God knew that this would happen; that is why in Joshua, God tells them to get rid of all of the other nations in the land. They disobeyed that command and now they keep committing adultery against God. So now, even while they remain in relationship with God, there will be a period of days where Israel's throne is vacant. After this time of exile is over, God will raise up another king who will come from the line of David. The people will see this king and praise the Lord for what He has done.

We know that Jesus came as this king, but Israel did not follow him. We know that Jesus came so that grace could be extended to all people, but the Jewish people ignored him. Today, as the people of God, we must continue to be in awe of what the Lord has done. We must remain with the Lord and not run away to other idols and gods.

But even if we do, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God extends his grace to those who wander away. The Lord is a good shepherd who seeks out his wayward sheep. God continues to extend his hand to help even though we have continued to ignore Him. It is better to remain in Him, but it is

humbling to know that God still loves us even when we stray away. God seeks and saves the lost.

Friday, April 22 - Hosea 11:1-11

Why does God love us so much? Why does God give us grace upon grace upon grace? Because God is our parent and we are God's children. Picture what God is saying in these verses. I taught them how to walk. I bent down to them and fed them. I worked to create them and take care of them. I can't just quit loving them! I cannot come in wrath. I can only come in compassion. They will come back to me. I know they will. I will call for them and they will come. Then, I will return to their homes. God loves us, wants the best for us, and continues to give us grace because God is like a parent to his children. Always loving and never giving up.

While early in Hosea, the relationship between us and God is a marriage metaphor, this chapter uses the parenting metaphor. Both metaphors exemplify the type of love that God has for us. He's never going to give us up. He's never going to let us fail. He's never going to leave us alone.

In our own marriages and parent/child relationships, we have a glimpse of the magnitude of love that God gives us. We love our families unconditionally. We give them grace upon grace upon grace. We would even sacrifice our life so that our spouse or children could live. That's exactly what the God of the universe did for you and I. No matter how far we stray, God remains steadfast and immovable. God will always be there for us. God loves you. Hold on to Him, like a child grabs hold of her parent.

Saturday, April 23 - Deuteronomy 31:1-8

What a beautiful promise from the Lord in this passage. Through Moses, the Lord tells Joshua and the entire nation of Israel that even though Moses won't be with them, God will still lead them. How does it make you feel to know that, no matter what, you can know that God is with you?

Sunday, April 24 - Psalm 133

WEEK 2: UNITY

Monday, April 25 - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Generally speaking, I always enjoyed math class growing up. In fact, I took an extra calculus class my freshman year of college because I couldn't imagine not having math class. However, one aspect of math I never cared for was word problems. It was frustrating to have to figure out the problem and then solve it. One type of word problem in particular that never made sense to me went like this: If it takes Larry 1 hour to mow the yard, how long will it take Larry and his friend to do the same thing? The answer is supposed to be 30 minutes, but how can we actually know that it will take two people half the time to do the job? What if they socialize too much and it takes longer? What if they encourage one another and it actually goes faster? We can't know the answer to a problem like this.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 is not a math problem but a promise. Two is better than one and three is better than two. We can't know how much better, but we can be confident that we are stronger together than we are apart. And we are strongest when we are intertwined with God. This week, we are going to focus on the theme of unity in the church. We are going to remember how important it is that the church works together, instead of being only a collection of individuals. When the church is together, then the community can pick one another up. Can you commit to working together? The church is entering a time when it will be very

important to be united and not divided. Can you commit to working together? The church will be stronger for it.

Tuesday, April 26 - Philippians 2:1-5

Back in Philippians 1:27, Paul makes the request that everyone commits to unity whether he is present with them or absent. Living this way is a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Unity happens when everyone is of one mind. Being of one mind can only happen when God's will is our one mind. Unity can only happen when we submit ourselves under the Lordship of Christ. The key to all unity is in verses 3 and 4. We must constantly remind ourselves that we are not looking out for ourselves, but we are looking out for the interest of others. We remind ourselves that life is not about prideful individuality, but life is about humble servanthood to one another. If everyone looked out for the interests of others instead of being selfish, the universal church would be far more productive than it is now.

This instruction in Philippians would have been extremely counter-cultural for the people of Philippi. The Philippians were obsessed with pride and honor. It would have never occurred to people to not be selfish and prideful. That's just what you were supposed to do.

In today's world, it does not seem that much has changed. People are arrogant, conceited, selfish, and prideful. People always look for the solution which benefits them the most. People want to know what's in it for them. That is not who we are supposed to be. Christians are called to be different. Christians are called to be humble, like-minded, and peacemakers. We are supposed to follow the example of Jesus and let the same mind that was in him, be in us as well.

Wednesday, April 27 - Joel 1:1-20

For the next three Wednesdays, we will be looking at the short prophetic book of Joel. This week, we read chapter 1 and read about a past judgment which Israel received. Next week, we look at a present call to repentance. Then after that, we will look to the future, to see what God has in store for His people.

A plague of locusts has come as judgment against Israel. Joel 1 tells us of the destruction and repercussions of this terrible calamity. Verses 2-3 wonder if this is the worst thing that has ever happened in their lifetime. People will be telling of this event for generations to come. It has ruined everything. The crops are gone. The people will go hungry. The people will not have the crops to offer to God. The priests will suffer without the offerings. Joel makes it clear what this means in verse 15: the day of the Lord is near.

The day of the Lord is a theme throughout Joel. When you are the one facing judgment, the day of the Lord is not a welcome sight. When you are the one God is fighting for, the day of the Lord is salvation. By looking to the past this week, we can see the judgment which Israel was facing. We can learn from their mistakes and learn how to not face the wrath of God. I pray that you will join me this morning to first pray for our church and our community but also to study Joel.

Thursday, April 28 - 1 Corinthians 12:1-13

There is one Spirit which is in the one body of the church. The church must use the gifts which each member has been given in order to further the growth of the body. And each gift has equal worth for the furtherance of the body. Not all people are called to preach and teach. If everyone was a preacher or teacher, there would be no congregation to listen. Not all people are given gifts of fellowship and hospitality. If that were the case, there would be no one to serve.

Verse 7 hits the nail on the head. Each person is given a gift “for the common good.” If, somehow, your spiritual gift is causing discord in the community, you need to reevaluate what you are doing. Discord because of

spiritual gifts is what is happening in 1 Corinthians 12-14. There were some who were speaking in tongues who claimed to be holier and more important than the Christians who did not speak in tongues. Some were even going so far to claim that if you didn't speak in tongues, you weren't really a Christian. These people were not using their gifts for the common good.

How can you use your gifts for the common good? God has given you spiritual gifts to use within this body so that it can be healthy. Are you depriving the body of useful work? Socrates once called envy "the ulcer of the soul." Instead of having envy and pride in your heart, causing ulcers in this body, use your gift to the glory of God and the health of the body.

Friday, April 29 - 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

This...is...not...just...for...weddings! Did I say that slowly and loudly enough? This passage is clearly within the context of spiritual gifts and people who are speaking in tongues. They have no love for other Christians. Paul speaks directly to them saying, if you don't have love, then your words are just a noisy gong. If I don't know you love me, then those prophetic utterances you say in an angelic language just sounds like babble to me. That's the message of 1 Corinthians 13.

Verses 4-8 get to the heart of the matter about how we show love to one another. These are the verses which get read at every wedding. Admittedly, they are good reminders of how to love our spouse, but these words are about the church. To have unity in the body, the church needs to have this type of love for one another. Love that is patient and kind. Love that is without envy, boasting, arrogance, or rudeness. Love that is not selfish or irritable or resentful. Love that does not rejoice in others' pain, but rejoices in truth. Love that bears, believes, hopes, and endures. Can you have that type of love for one another? It does no good if you have the answers, but no one is listening to you because they don't think you care.

Saturday, April 30 - Colossians 1:24-29

Joe Nusz will be guest preaching tomorrow night and will get more opportunity to preach on Sunday nights in May. His topic tomorrow is “Complete in Christ.” In verse 28, Paul tells us “it is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom...” How well do you do in warning and teaching? How can you commit to doing more?

Sunday, May 1 - Psalm 134

WEEK 3: FAMILY OF GOD

Monday, May 2 - Ephesians 2:11-22

While Mother’s Day is coming on Sunday, these Scripture Readings are not just for the moms in our church. They are for everyone! So while there is some focus on mothers this week, there is more of a focus on the Family of God.

We have a new family when we submit to having God as our father. In our former way of life, before Christ, we focused on our own earthly tribes and nations. But as Christians, our focus is on being members of the household of God as Eph. 2:19 says. After Jake and Micah were baptized in the winter, they thought it was funny to call each other “brother.” They enjoyed calling their parents “brother and sister.” And while it is kinda funny for boys to think about that, it is also the truth. We are one family, built upon the foundation of previous generations of Christians. We have been called out of a previous life and brought into the family of God. As the song sings, “I’m so glad, I’m a part of the family of God!”

What does it mean for Christians to be the family of God? First and foremost, it means we submit to God as our parent and authority in life. But secondly, it means we treat each other like family. We take care of one another. We support one another. We help one another. We love one another. Which member of our family comes to mind who needs a word of encouragement? Give

that person a call, drop a note in the mail, send a text message, or go to see that person. Be the brother or sister that person needs today.

Tuesday, May 3 - Ephesians 5:21-6:4

If you want to be a godly family, this passage on husbands and wives, and fathers (parents) and children is the way to organize your family. But men, listen up. These are not instructions for keeping your wife and children in line. These are instructions *for you* to sacrifice yourself for your family. This passage starts in Ephesians 5:21 where we are to “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.” These words are not about keeping women submissive or children obedient, but these are words which call for mutual submission.

None of these instructions would have been new for wives and children. The submission and commitment men are to make according to this passage would have been radically progressive. To treat women and children as anything other than property would have been shocking. Treating the members of your family as human beings is what God calls us to do. It is truly a low bar to hurdle, but we trip on it all the time.

We are selfish people, looking out for only ourselves. We treat our children or grandchildren as if they are not individual people who are allowed to have bad days or opinions of their own. We treat our spouses as adversaries to spar with, instead of partners to submit to. We want our way, we want it now, and we don't care who we hurt.

God calls us to be something different in our relationships with each other. God calls us to submit to one another. God calls us to be like him, humble and selfless. Here is your charge for today: submit yourself to your family. Serve your family. Be like Christ to your family. And I pray that your family follows your example and submits to you as well.

Wednesday, May 4 - Joel 2:1-17

Last week, we looked to the past in Joel; today, we look to the present. The call in the present is to repent. "Return to me with all your heart" says the Lord in verse 12. Repent and maybe the Lord will relent because of his nature. Do not succumb to the judgment of the Lord; do not be overcome by a plague of locust devouring your life. But repent.

This is what we are called to do in the present. We repent of our sin. Otherwise, judgment will come on the day of the Lord. The picture is stark. Judgment is at the gates. It can come at any moment. That is why it is imperative that we tell the world about Christ. We must come together and pray for the world and then go out and tell the world about Christ. "Truly, the day of the Lord is great; terrible indeed - who can endure it?" Those who return to the Lord can endure it. Who can you share that message with today? Let's pray for them and you when we come together this morning.

Thursday, May 5 - Deuteronomy 32:10-14

Did you know that there are passages in the Old Testament which describe God with motherly characteristics to Israel? Over the next two days, we will look at two of these passages. In Deut. 32:10-14, we see God protecting Israel like a mother eagle protects her young. We see God feeding Israel with imagery such as "nursing [Israel] with honey." We see the Lord giving care to Israel like a mother gives care to her children.

The women (and men) who care for us did not learn this skill on their own. The caring attributes which we rely on from others come from being made in the image of God. It is God who first embraced those in need. It is God first who patiently fed the people when they screamed in the middle of the night wanting something to eat or drink. It is God first who lovingly took care of God's children. The instincts which we celebrate moms for having come straight from God.

Let's celebrate moms this weekend, but most importantly, let us worship the God who is the source of everything which makes a great mom. Thank God for a God who sustains, shields, cares for, and guards us "as the apple of his eye."

Friday, May 6 - Isaiah 66:5-13

"As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you..."

This passage in Isaiah uses motherhood as a metaphor in a couple different ways. Starting at the end in verse 13, we see God comforting his children in the same way a mother comforts her children. My son Micah has always loved his mother. There was a period of time when he was an infant that he would not sleep for long periods of time unless he was laying on his mama. LeeAnn was absolutely exhausted during this period of time, but there was nothing I could do to help. I was (and still am) "not the mama." I have a picture of LeeAnn and Micah sleeping on the couch when Micah is no more than one month old, both passed out exhausted. This is the picture I have in mind when I think of a mother comforting her child. She finds superhuman strength to do what is necessary to take care of her children. This is exactly what God does for his children as well.

But before verse 13, the motherhood metaphor is used for Jerusalem in verses 10-11. Jerusalem is supposed to care for the other nations like a mother would care for and feed her child. I think this message puts a great responsibility on the shoulders of God's current children. As God takes care of us, we must go and take care of others. As God is like a mother to us, comforting us, we are to be like mothers to our community, comforting them. A mother's love knows no bounds; this is how we should love our community as well.

Saturday, May 7- Proverbs 31:10-31

What are some of your favorite memories of your mom? Write 5 things down and thank God for her today.

Sunday, May 8 - Psalm 136

WEEK 4: JOY OF SERVICE

Monday, May 9 - Luke 9:57-62

Our Scripture Readings for today, tomorrow, Thursday, and Friday take us from a warning about the cost of discipleship to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The overall message is that being part of the Kingdom of God requires service, work, and commitment. These words in Luke 9:57-62 are harsh. There are three conversations Jesus has with three individuals who want to follow him. What I find important is that Jesus does not make any accommodations for those who want to follow. In fact, it seems like he is trying to persuade them not to follow him! Jesus tells the first person that he is homeless. Jesus tells the second person that the man can't go to his father's funeral. Jesus tells the third person the man can't go home to tell his family bye. Jesus tells them that anyone who wants to follow him cannot look back but only move forward.

We have a mission to execute as citizens of the Kingdom of God. That mission is to "go and proclaim the Kingdom of God." Jesus is going to explain the mission in more detail in tomorrow's reading. The point is that we cannot be looking backward but only forward. As individuals and as the church, we have a mission to execute until Jesus returns. It is going to be hard work; it is going to take commitment, but it is what we are called to do.

Tuesday, May 10 - Luke 10:1-12

As it relates to the mission of the church and the harvest in the community, I have continued to come back to an old phrase: "they don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." The instructions which Jesus gives the disciples, particularly in verse 4-9, help to show the townspeople how much

they care. Jesus is telling the seventy to rely on the townspeople for their provisions. But don't go house to house looking for the best food or most comfortable bed. If they find someone being hospitable, stay there for the duration of the visit. They are not trying to get the most out of people, but they are there to spread the message of Jesus. If they jump from house to house, they are ruining their witness to people because the townspeople don't think the workers care about them.

Churches must show the community how much they care before the community will be ready to listen to what the church knows. As College Heights goes into the community, how can this church show the community that it cares? Christians have the message of salvation for every person, but those people will not listen if we don't love them first. We must have compassion for others. We must make it clear that we are not witnessing for our benefit, but because we truly do care about others.

Wednesday, May 11 - Joel 2:18-3:21

"Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is the message found in Joel 2:32 and is the summary of what the Lord is doing in this third section of Joel. After judgment in the past and repentance in the present, God delivers his people in the future. There is a promise of deliverance in the immediate future and distant future. There is a promise of punishment for Israel's oppressors. The message is clear: God saves his people.

The message for all people who read Joel is clear: when we call upon the name of the Lord, he will fight for us and deliver us from our enemies. Even though most of us worry about the future, we shouldn't. We should remember that when we remain/abide in God, God takes care of the future. This is our hope which is grounded in reality.

Do not think that this deliverance is earned because of our work of repentance. You do not earn forgiveness by repentance. You are given

forgiveness because God “has pity on his people” as it says in Joel 2:18. God has compassion for us and gives us forgiveness freely. In order to receive forgiveness, we must face God and be in a posture to receive. That’s why repentance, turning to God, is necessary. We do not earn it, we do not deserve it, but God freely gives it to all who reach out to receive. Praise be to God that he protects us as his children and promises us a great future.

Thursday, May 12 - Luke 10:17-20

There is a joy that comes from serving the Lord. There is a joy from telling others about Jesus. Since we began doing weekly outreach on Saturdays, I have had the opportunity to go out on several occasions to knock on doors. I had one opportunity several weeks ago where I knocked on a door and visited with a person named Leah (not her real name). At first, when she opened the door, she was tense and uninterested in having people at her door on a Saturday morning. But then there was a moment about halfway through our short three minute conversation, where she relaxed. Her shoulders fell and her eyes stopped squinting. I saw at that moment a seed being planted. I saw Leah being open to returning to church after not being in fellowship with believers for some time. I hope that in the time that has elapsed since I am writing this and you are reading this, we all know Leah and her two children. But even if we don’t, it was my joy to see God planting a seed on that morning.

We are missing out on a great joy when we do not serve the Lord. It is fun to serve the Lord. It is invigorating to tell others about Jesus. But let us not mistake this joy for thinking this is about us. The seventy when they returned made this mistake. “...even the demons submit *to us*.” Jesus is excited at their excitement but he reminds them “...do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” As Christians, we have a great opportunity to do God’s work in this world. And it is a joy to do that work. However, instead of rejoicing in *our work*, rejoice that we get to join *God’s work*.

Instead of rejoicing in what we have accomplished, rejoice in what God accomplished for you and I while on the cross. There is joy that comes from serving God. Don't confuse that joy with pride.

Friday, May 13 - Luke 10:25-37

What can I say about the Parable of the Good Samaritan that you haven't heard before? Earlier this week, we skipped over Luke 10:13-16 where Jesus pronounces woes upon three Jewish cities: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. In that passage he also says that two Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon, would have repented long ago if they had heard the message these three other cities heard. Jesus' pronouncement is that the Gentiles would be doing a better job of understanding his message than the Jews are.

Compare that with what you know about the parable of the Good Samaritan. It's not the priest or the Levite, the good Jews, who attempt to help the unnamed and undescribed person lying in the ditch gravely hurt. They couldn't possibly defile themselves by getting their hands dirty in that way. No, it's not them, but it is the Samaritan, the mixed race, mixed religion person, who stops to render aid. In other words, Jesus is saying that the non-Jew is getting the message better than the Jews are.

What types of people would Jesus use if he told this parable today? Would it be the Pope or some megachurch pastor who walked by and did nothing? Would it be the deacon or Bible Study teacher who couldn't get their church clothes dirty? Would it be the church member who thought "well, what did they do to deserve that beating" who would turn up their nose at the hurt person?

Who would the hero be in his story if Jesus told it today? Who would be the good Samaritan? A man who is Muslim? An LGBTQ+ person who is an atheist? A woman who is pro-choice? Make no mistake: a Samaritan being the hero would have been just as big a shock to the original crowd as these three individuals are to you.

The message remains clear: go and show mercy like the Samaritan. This is what Christians are called to do no matter what. Let us not be called out like Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were for not hearing the commands of the Lord.

Saturday, May 14 - Romans 1:18-25

The topic for Sunday night will be “The Condition of the Sinner.” Romans 1:22-23 says that while claiming to be wise, the world exchanged the true God for pictures of animals. Idol worship has always been a problem for the world. What do we idol today?

Sunday, May 15 - Psalm 138