

LifeGroup Study

Date: June 18, 2023

Text: Deut. 11:18-21,26-28; Matthew 7:21-29

Theme: Alignment...with the God of the Word

Belong

Many of us are blessed with relationships built on strong, sound, and enduring foundations; those wonderful relationships grounded deeply in love, integrity, and trust. These relationships allow us to weather any storm from the joy and excitement of marriage and children to the tragedy of severe illness and the many situations and stresses we endure. Deeply grounded relationships are built on foundations strengthened with forgiveness and grace. As relationships grow they are established on either strong or rocky foundations. We are called into a relationship with God that is grounded in the Word of God; the scriptures. It is the strong foundation on which all other relationships are built. God calls us to build a deep and strong foundation on the love of Jesus Christ which is revealed to us in the Word of God. Jesus Christ is God's living Word for us today and every day.

Prayer... Jesus, by the power of your Holy Spirit, align our lives to all that you have revealed in your Word. Guide our reading, discussions, and to help us build and strengthen our foundation of faith. Open our hearts to the joy only you can give. Let us know you as you teach us to love you. Guide us and direct us so that we can graciously do your good works that flow freely from our hearts. Teach us how to build our foundation on the truth of your love revealed in your Word. Amen.

Beleive

The Book of Deuteronomy helps us understand the relationship between God and Israel, God's chosen people. Deuteronomy is the final chapter of Israel's wilderness wandering as God teaches God's children of the need to love and obey God. Soon God's people will be in the Promised Land where it will become increasingly difficult for them to remember God and the fact that all they have is due to God's grace, a timeless lesson.

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-21.

Throughout the Old Testament, God teaches us of our need for Jesus due to the inherent weakness of humanity.

- How does this passage relate to us as Christians?
- What do we do to ensure we do not forget our God and the blessings God bestows on us in our everyday lives?

Read Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

God knows that few humans have the strength to meet God's divine requirements; God teaches the Nation of Israel the importance of obedience. The Mosaic Covenant is in place to protect the

people of Israel, God is telling God's people that God will bless them when they love God and curse them when they disobey God; the covenant God holds with them is conditional.

- How do we understand a God who curses God's people? Why does God punish them?
- Discuss the commonalities between a parent and their child and God's response to the behaviors of God's people.
- How does Jesus change divine blessings and curses in our lives as Christians?

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

Jesus is concluding his Sermon on the Mount (if you are not familiar with the Sermon on the Mount, please read Matthew 5-7). Only Jesus can see within our hearts. Only Jesus is able to mend a broken heart.

- How has the Holy Spirit touched your life, opening your heart to love Jesus?
- How can you help others mend their aching hearts with the love of Jesus?

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

- Is the foundation of your life aligned with the solid rock of God's Word?
- What can you do to strengthen the foundation of your faith?

Become

When we say we are in a relationship with God that is unconditional, can we do whatever we please? No! Are we somehow excused from following God's commandments? No. God's unconditional love leads us to respond in love for God and one another and that changes how we live every moment of life. How do we build a strong foundation in the love of Jesus Christ as revealed to us in God's Word? We begin in prayer and confess our need for God to forgive us. We immerse ourselves in God's Word. We read it, discuss it, and live it. We seek to live our life in response to God's good news in the Word. Will we stumble? Yes, we will! We are broken people living in a broken creation. Sin is always trying to tempt us and pull us off our rock. However, we can build a strong foundation on the truth of God's Word; the living Word of Jesus Christ.

Prayer... Jesus, we pray that you would align our hearts and lives in this new relationship as we grow deeper in love with you and one another. Open our hearts so we can sense you working within us to build a foundation grounded in your Word. Make us your faithful disciples. Teach us how to love you and one another more deeply. Show us how responding in love is living in obedience to your commands. Amen.



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

Devotionals: Daily Walk on the Rock

Date: June 18, 2023

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Day 1: Monday —The Measure of God's Love

To begin, let's consider the measure of God's love for us as we read John 3:16; Romans 5:8; and 1 John 4:9-10,19. Now ponder Jesus' triumphant words from the cross: "It is finished." Jesus finished/accomplished the work of salvation; we cannot add to it. Like the prodigal son (*Luke 15:11-32*), we can only run into the arms of our loving heavenly Father, who longs for us to be in relationship with him, dwell in his presence, and feast at his table. Do you view God's Word as an abundant feast that is set before us? Through the Word, God feeds our hungry spirits and shares his heart of love. Thank God for his abiding love and life-giving word (*1 Peter 1:23*).

Day 2: Tuesday—God's Love Letter When you hold your Bible, what do you see: something inscrutable, a treasure, a book of rules, a love letter? Pray you will view Scripture as a treasure, God's love letter to you. When you read words like obey or do or do not, do you respond with a rebellious spirit or with the sure knowledge that these instructions or limits are rooted in ineffable love? Do you trust that the One who created you knows best what will bring real joy and fulfillment? Cradling these thoughts in your heart, read Deuteronomy 11:18-21,26-28; Psalm 19:7-9; and Matthew 7:21-29.

Day 3: Wednesday —"Ancient Words, Ever True"

Begin by praying DeShazo's lyrics: "Holy words, long preserved, for our walk in this world; they resound with God's own heart, O let the ancient words impart...we have come with open hearts..." (*2001, Integrity's Hosanna! Music*). Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21,26-28. These words were originally spoken to the nation Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land; as such, some promises/warnings are for the nation. But the exhortation to allow God's words to permeate our hearts is for all time. Read Psalm 63:1-8; 119:9-16,18,32,43-48,105,111; Jeremiah 31:31-34; and Ezekiel 36:26-27. Dwell in the Word, so the Word can live and abide in you.

Day 4: Thursday —The Solid Rock of God's Word

Our Gospel text is the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount; to hear Jesus' words in context, read Matthew 5-7. In Jesus' teaching immediately preceding our theme text, Jesus warns of false prophets and tells the people they can recognize false (or good) prophets by the fruit of their lives. Read Matthew 7:21-29. Jesus

speaks using images his listeners will understand; the people know that homes built on sand are vulnerable during flash floods. What characterizes someone who builds his/her life on a solid rock foundation (*7:24-27*)? Is the foundation of your life grounded in God's Word? Pray the Spirit will teach you as you ponder Jesus' words today and in the next days.

Day 5: Friday —Is Our Commitment to Jesus Authentic?

Read Matthew 7:15-29. We are to discern and avoid false teachers (*7:15-20*), but the verses that follow don't give us license to judge how others are doing in their faith walks; instead, they challenge each of us to build our lives on the foundation of the Word. But this isn't works righteousness! Ponder the truths of Day 1 again. If we trust God's love, how will we respond? How authentic is our commitment to the One who died for us? Read Mark 12:29-31; John 6:28-29; 8:31-32; 10:27-28; 14:23; 15:9-11; and 1 John 1:5-2:2. It's not about perfection; it's about the inclination or alignment of our hearts! Tell Jesus you want to be a true and authentic follower who loves him.

Day 6: Saturday —Hearts Shaped by Love and for Love

We don't love and obey in our own strength; our hearts are shaped by God's love, cleansed in Jesus' blood, and transformed for loving obedience by the Spirit, who dwells within us. Ponder this as you reflect on Hebrews 10:5-7,14-17. Do we trust God's love and believe that such love and grace demand nothing of us that is not for our benefit and joy? Consider Barclay's words (*The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 1, 1975 Westminster Press, pgs. 289-290*): "There is only one proof of love, and that is obedience. There is no point in saying that we love a person, and then doing things which break that person's heart." Pray your life will bear testimony to the love God has put in your heart.

Day 7: Sunday —"How Deep the Father's Love for Us"

As you read and reflect on Deuteronomy 11:18-21,26-28 and Matthew 7:21-29, ask yourself the question, "Is the foundation of my life aligned with the solid rock of God's Word?" Embrace the Bible as God's love letter. Yield to God's love. Meditate on John 4:10,13-14, 6:29 and on John 4:34 with Philippians 2:5-11. Praise God using the words of Townend's lyrics: "How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure." (*1995 Thankyou Music*). Now make Philippians 1:9-11 your prayer.

