

SEP 12 THRU OCT 17

WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMS  
**BROKEN**



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## Discussion questions for week 1: Helping While Hurting

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. The past few months of the pandemic have been up and down. Just a few months ago it looked like we were leaving it all behind, while now things feel very different. Share how you are feeling about all this right now. What are you struggling with? In what ways are you hopeful? What do you feel can be restored from our past? In what ways do you think our future will be different?
3. The story about Jesus' arrest is narrated in all four gospels. Do a careful reading of each account in the following passages:
  - Matthew 26:47-56
  - Mark 14:43-52
  - Luke 22:47-53
  - John 18:1-14

What are the similarities between the stories? What points do you think the authors are trying to make through these?

What are the differences or unique aspects about each story? What points do you think the authors are trying to make through these?

How does each story specifically challenge you?

4. In the account in Luke, why do you think Jesus heals the ear of the High Priest's servant? In the account in John, why do you think the author specifically names the servant and specifies Peter as the bearer of the sword?
5. Read Mark 14:27-31 and Mark 14:66-72. What does each passage reveal about Peter for good and for bad? In what ways do you personally identify with Peter's character positively and negatively?
6. The speaker on Sunday suggested that Peter was overly focused on his outward behavior and less self-aware of his inner life. How do you relate to this balance? In what ways do you need to address inner issues in your life ("taking time to address the roots of your anxieties and pain")? In what ways do you need to address your outward actions and behaviors ("making the world a better place")?
7. After the above personal reflection, spend some time as a group sharing your thoughts and feelings and then pray for one another.

**Practice for the week: *Meditation on love, acceptance and forgiveness***

Take some opportunities this week for quiet reflection on the scripture overleaf:

*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"*

*"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

*Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"*

*He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."*

*The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"*

*Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep... "*

**John 21: 15-17**

After reading, take some time to reflect on your inner struggles. This might be a sense of weariness, anxiety or hopelessness. Or maybe you feel you have fallen short or failed in some way and feel in need of forgiveness. Imagine yourself as Peter and respond to Jesus' questions. Surrender to the love, acceptance and forgiveness of Jesus. Let it soothe your pain and allow it to dissolve any sense of guilt or shame as you receive the complete divine acceptance he embodies.

Then follow his call to respond with the same love and acceptance for others. Who are your sheep? How can you care for them? How might God be prompting you to serve as a "wounded healer" in your neighborhood, family, workplace or at church?

## Discussion questions for week 2: Listening to Ourselves and Others

1. Was there anything that caught your attention or resonated with you from the message on Sunday? Was there anything that did not sit well with you?
2. Psychologist David Benner wrote, "Most people think they already are good listeners. They may have learned to be reasonably attentive when others speak and assume that this is all that is involved. However, what they are often listening to is their own thoughts about what they are hearing."
  - Have you found this to be true?
  - What do you think prevents you from being a better listener?
3. The story about Jesus' encounter with a woman from Syrian Phoenicia is recorded in Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28. Read both accounts, and then discuss the following:
  - How does this story make you feel?
  - What is Jesus' initial response to the woman?
  - Why do you think he responds this way?
4. The speaker on Sunday suggested that various interpretations were helpful in understanding what was happening:
  - Jesus used the woman's faith to teach his disciples in a memorable way
  - Jesus provided an opportunity for the woman to restore her honor
  - Jesus listened and learnedWhich of these interpretations do you find most helpful, and why?
5. How does the idea of Jesus listening and learning from other people make you feel? Why do you feel that way?
6. The speaker on Sunday referenced the ongoing, eternal conversation of God (see, for example, John 11:41-42, John 5:19, John 16:13). Read Galatians 4:6. What does this verse tell us about our role in God's conversation?
7. Spend some thinking about a situation in your life where you want to hear the Voice of God, or a relationship where you want to do a better job of listening. Share briefly with the group, and then pray for one another.

### Practices for the week: *Listening to God, to Others, and to Ourselves*

Try to make time this week to do each of the three following exercises.

#### **1. Listening to God—Imaginative Prayer Exercise**

Invite God to speak to you. Then slowly read and experience this imaginative prayer.

*You are sitting on a stool in a small room. It's dimly lit, with only a soft glow coming from a light overhead. What are you thinking? How do you feel?*

*You look up, and you notice there's a door in front of you. It opens, and there, standing in the doorway, is Jesus. What does he look like?*

*He comes into the room and greets you. How does he greet you?*

*You notice that he's holding something in his hands. It's a gift. He lifts the gift gently in your direction and you're meant to take it. What is it? Are you willing to take it?*

*Then, he bends down and comes close to your ear. He whispers something to you that he's been wanting to say to you for a long time. What does he say?*

## **2. Listening to Others—Practicing Active Listening**

Ask God to bring into your day someone to whom you can give the gift of listening well. As you listen:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Be non-judgmental and listen in order to learn
- Keep asking yourself W.A.I.T. (Why Am I Talking?)
- Communicate your attention through eye contact, smiling/nodding, reflecting back what is said
- Be patient—don't interrupt or rush to fill any periods of silence

## **3. Listening to Ourselves—The Welcoming Prayer**

You can also listen to a recorded version of this prayer online here: <https://youtu.be/BEbppfloxA>

*Step 1: Awareness.* Sit quietly and notice how you are feeling. Focus and sink into your emotion. Go toward it rather than suppress or resist it. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in until you really experience a connection to the feeling. You may feel it in your body, and it can help to place your hand there as a way of connecting with the emotion more deeply.

*Step 2: Welcome.* Welcome this emotion as a friend that is going to help you discover something about yourself rather than as an enemy to be defeated. Don't judge yourself, but simply accept how you are feeling right now. Name the emotion and say, "Welcome... fear/anger/worry/sorrow etc." Repeat it, and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense of owning and accepting it in this moment. Then allow yourself to honestly discern where this emotion is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more normal and basic human needs:

- Safety and security
- Esteem and affection
- Power and control

*Step 3: Let Go.* When you have allowed yourself to name and accept the feeling, let it go by saying, "God, I give you my fear/anger/worry/sorrow, etc." Consciously let go of

- Your demand for safety and security.
- Your demand for esteem and affection.
- Your demand for power and control.

Sit quietly and invite God's loving, affirming and totally accepting presence.

## Discussion questions for week 3: Making Time for Community

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. Share how the pandemic has affected your relationships. Do you feel closer to anyone or more distant? How do you feel about this? What would you like to change?
3. Read Matthew 9:9-13. Describe a time when you have felt like Matthew (an outsider in need of acceptance). Describe a time when you have treated someone like Matthew (gone out of your way to include someone). How do these parts of your own story affect how you live now? Has anything been lost over time? Is there anything you would like to restore?
4. In the gospels of Mark and Luke, the character in the above story is called Levi rather than Matthew. The speaker on Sunday suggested this might indicate that Jesus gives Levi (signifying "taker") a new name: Matthew (signifying "giver"). What are some labels you or others have used for yourself? Do they feel negative or positive to you? Share a time when someone has described or treated you in a positive way that you did not see about yourself. How might this affect how you see others?
5. Read Mark 3: 31-35. In what ways can our families be a source of healthy inclusion? In what ways can families become exclusive? How might Jesus be challenging or redefining family here, and what does that mean for your own life?
6. In Matthew 14: 13-14 we see the tension Jesus experienced between getting time to himself and being there for others. How does your own sense of well-being impact your relationships?
7. In the message on Sunday, we explored the four questions below as way of seeking balance in our relational lives. Take some personal time to reflect on each of them and ask honestly where you need to make more time for community:
  - **Who is my family?** Are there neighbors, co-workers, or other acquaintances to whom you need to intentionally reach out and include in your community?
  - **Where is my center?** Are you living out of a healthy center of loving communion with God?
  - **Am I kind to myself?** Do you treat yourself as a friend so that you can love others unconditionally too?
  - **Who are my friends?** Have you let any close and treasured relationship wane?
8. After the above personal reflection, spend some time as a group sharing your thoughts and feelings, and then pray for one another.

### Practice for the week: *Making Time for Community*

In Mark 3: 31-35 we read how Jesus sees "whoever does God's will" as his family. In other words, seeking God and being intentional about our lives is our common family trait with Jesus. So this week let's follow through and endeavor to "do God's will" in making time for community.

- Return to your reflections on the four questions above and determine in which one area you most need to make more time.
- Then decide what action you need to take and intentionally work this into your schedule. Be realistic and aim for change that you know could be sustainable.
- Then define the specific next step you need to take and when.
- Finally, choose a close friend or someone with whom you discussed the above questions, and share how you are planning to make time for community.

## Discussion questions for week 4: Rethinking Service

1. What stood out to you from the message on Sunday? Was there anything that seemed particularly timely for you? Was there anything you disagreed with?
2. Share about a time you served others, and felt that you also benefited in some way. What motivated you to serve? Had you expected a positive impact on yourself?
3. Read Mark 10:35-45. In what ways can it be healthy to want to be “great”? In what ways can it be unhealthy? What comes to mind when you read Jesus’ words: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all”?
4. Read John 13:1-17, and discuss the following questions:
  - If you were one of the disciples having supper that night, and you saw that there was no one to wash everyone’s feet, what would you have done?
  - How would you have responded if Jesus knelt down beside you to wash your feet?
  - Why do you think Peter reacted the way he did?
  - How do you imagine Judas felt when Jesus washed his feet? How do you imagine Jesus felt?
5. The speaker on Sunday suggested that serving is part of self-care for the following reasons:
  - We are created to serve
  - Serving can draw us closer to God
  - Serving can be liberatingDo you agree that serving is part of self-care? Why or why not? Which of the reasons above resonates with you (if any)?
6. In what ways do you serve currently? Are there ways of serving that you used to engage in and would like to resume? Are there new ways you would like to serve?
7. Read Matthew 11:28-29. We often think of rest as being still. How might these verses challenge that view? Spend some time praying for one another to find rest—even in the midst of serving.

### Practice for the week: *Small steps to becoming a servant*

Try to find small ways each day this week to exercise servanthood—allow people to go ahead of you in line, smile (even when you are wearing a mask, it shows in your eyes!), hold the door for people, be willing to listen to others, find small ways to help, etc.

Pray and ask God to give you joy and peace in these small acts of service.

## Discussion questions for week 5: Wounded Healers Part 1 - Jacob

1. In the current series we have been exploring how we need to take care of ourselves while also looking out for the needs of others. Where have you felt most challenged—with the former or the latter? What kind of changes are you making as a result?
2. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
3. As you reflect on the story of Jacob as a whole, in what ways do you identify with him? In what ways do you feel distance or tension with him?
4. Read Genesis 25:27-34 and Genesis 27:1-41. Given that this is a story about the “Founding Fathers” of two nations (Israel and Edom) which of Jacob and Esau would you prefer as your leader, and why?
5. Read Genesis 33:1-12. What changes in character do you note in both Jacob and Esau? Given what you heard in the message on Sunday what would be your own explanation for these changes?
6. Jacob (meaning “grasper” or “manipulator”) has his name changed to Israel (meaning one who “struggles” or “wrestles” with God). In what ways do you feel you have been or are struggling with God? What has been the outcome of those struggles?
7. The speaker on Sunday suggested that it’s through our struggles that we grow, and offered 4 ways in which we struggle:
  - Suffering
  - Failure
  - Conflict
  - Feedback from othersTake some personal time to reflect on your own experience of each of these. How have they been positively transformative? How have they been damaging? What do you think have been the major factors in determining whether there have been negative or positive outcomes?
8. After the above personal reflection, spend some time as a group sharing your thoughts and feelings and then pray for one another.

### Practice for the week: *Contemplative Reading of Scripture (Lectio Divina)*

This week take some time to read part of Jacob’s story in a contemplative way called *Lectio Divina* (“sacred reading”). The passage is printed below. Read it through four times in the following way:

**Read** the passage twice through, slowly and gently. Let the words flow over you. Savor each phrase, believing that God is present and has something for you. No need to search, simply listen for a word or phrase that somehow speaks to you or touches you. It might attract or even disturb you. Spend some time in silence with the word or phrase, just resting in it and allowing it to sink into your heart. Then read the passage slowly again.

**Reflect** or meditate on the word or phrase that stood out. How might it be speaking to you or challenging you? Allow memories, thoughts or situations evoked by the word to rise up gently. Allow God to reveal to you how the word or phrase applies to your life. Ask, "What meaning does this have for me here and now? What does God want me to know or to see?" Spend time in silence, reflecting on the phrase and allowing it to interact with your life. Now read the passage again.

**Respond** to God. Open your heart to God and openly and honestly share how you feel about your experience with the passage. These may be questions or doubts, or prayers of thanksgiving, petition, confession, lament, or praise.

**Rest** in God's presence. Allow your prayers to gently fade away. Let go of your thoughts and move into a time of simply resting in God's presence. Open your mind, heart and soul to the fullness of God's love and peace. Rest.

### **Genesis 32:22–30 (NIV)**

That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

## Discussion questions for week 6: Wounded Healers Part 2 - Moses

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. As you reflect on the story of Moses, in what ways do you identify with him? In what ways do you feel distance or tension with him?
3. Can you describe a time or situation when a strength of yours actually worked out to be a weakness? Can you describe an instance where a weakness turned out to be a strength?
4. Read Exodus 1:6-22 and Exodus 2:1-10. How are women portrayed in these passage verses men? How is vulnerability depicted versus power? Given that these passages are part of a narrative describing God's intentions to bring healing to humanity, what do they say about the nature of God? What do they say about the nature of humanity?
5. Read Exodus 2:11-22. In what ways is Moses courageous? In what ways is he fearful? What do you perceive to be Moses' posture to injustice?
6. The speaker on Sunday suggested that Moses' experience at the "burning bush" (Exodus 3:9-14) describes a way in which our weaknesses and brokenness can lead to greater union with God resulting in paradoxical strength:
  - "Who AM I?" (v 11)—a crisis of being for human identity
  - "I AM who I AM" (v 14)—God is defined as Being itself
  - "I AM (will be) with you" (v 12)—the divine partnership with humanityHow do you relate to this personally?
  - In what ways does your own sense of frailty and vulnerability open you up to the possibility of a deeper experience of union with God?
  - In what ways is this deeper experience of God relevant to you in everyday life?
7. The following are just a few ways in which we can engage with vulnerability and weakness in our lives to find strength. Take some personal time to reflect on each of them (and any others that seem apparent to you) and determine ways in which you could be more embracing and accepting of weakness.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being yourself</li><li>• Being open</li><li>• Saying sorry</li><li>• Saying thank you</li><li>• Initiating love</li><li>• Risking failure</li><li>• Standing up to wrong</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engaging in conflict</li><li>• Being nonviolent</li><li>• Letting go of control</li><li>• Giving away power</li><li>• Giving away credit</li><li>• Resisting the urge to prove ourselves</li></ul>
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8. After the above personal reflection, spend some time as a group sharing your thoughts and feelings and then pray for one another.

### **Practice for the week: The Welcoming Prayer**

Many of our emotional reactions to personal weakness cause us to withdraw from it, deny or try to overcome it. The Welcoming Prayer is a prayer practice that helps us let go of these unhealthy responses while helping us to embrace more of God's love instead of fear. Take some time this week to reflect on an area (or areas) in your own life where you feel a sense of weakness or inadequacy and practice this prayer.

#### **Step 1: Awareness**

Sit quietly and notice how you are feeling. Focus and sink into your emotion. Go toward it rather than suppress or resist it. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in until you really experience a connection to the feeling. You may feel it in your body, and it can help to place your hand there as a way of connecting with the emotion more deeply.

#### **Step 2: Welcome**

Welcome this emotion as a friend that is going to help you discover something about yourself rather than as an enemy to be defeated. Don't judge yourself but simply accept how you are feeling right now. Name the emotion and say, "Welcome... fear/anger/worry/sorrow etc.". Repeat it and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense of owning and accepting it in this moment. Then allow yourself to honestly discern where this emotion is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more normal and basic human needs:

- Safety and security.
- Esteem and affection.
- Power and control.

#### **Step 3: Let Go**

When you have allowed yourself to name and accept the feeling, let it go by saying, "God, I give you my fear/anger/worry/sorrow etc." Consciously let go of:

- Your demand for safety and security.
- Your demand for esteem and affection.
- Your demand for power and control.

Sit quietly and invite God's loving, affirming and totally accepting presence.