

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 4

The Suburban Connection

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“Ask God for More of God” Lessons for a Better Prayer Life By Matt Smethurst

If you had to choose five adjectives to describe God, would *holy* appear on the list? I trust so. *Righteous* probably would too. No doubt *merciful* or *loving* would be a shoo-in. But what about this divine descriptor: *happy*? Would that make your list?

It may sound somewhat strange, but God is happy. Happier than the happiest person you've ever known. Even before there was time, he was happy – infinitely happy within a triangle of love. From all eternity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (one God in three persons) delighted to share the joy of divinity with one another.

So why did the triune God create the universe? Did he need something to complete him? No. Creation was an overflow of joy – not a filling up, but a spilling out. In extravagant generosity, the persons of the Trinity decided to share their boundless gladness with the work of their hands. You were made to be happy in a happy God. And all of this has everything to do with your prayer life.

Few people have taught me more about prayer than Tim Keller. He himself taught eloquently on the subject for decades before (at least in his estimation) he truly learned to pray. In a wide-ranging interview not long before his death, Keller was asked, “Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently in ministry?” “Absolutely,” Keller replied. “I should have prayed more.”

In many ways, Keller's *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* records experientially what he had long affirmed theologically. What happened is worth quoting at length:

In the second half of my adult life, I discovered prayer. I had to. In the fall of 1999, I taught a Bible study course on the Psalms. It became clear to me that I was barely scratching the surface of what the Bible commanded and promised regarding prayer. Then came the dark weeks in New York after 9/11, when our whole city sank into a kind of corporate clinical depression, even as it rallied. For my family the shadow was intensified as my wife, Kathy struggled with the effects of Crohn's disease. Finally, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. At one point during all this, my wife urged me to do something with her we had never been able to muster the self-discipline to do regularly. She asked me to pray with her every night. Every night. She used an illustration that crystallized her feelings very well. As we remember it she said something like this:

Continued on next page...



Save the Date!

Food Pantry

February 6th & 20th

1:30 – 3:00 pm

Men's Breakfast

February 3rd & 17th

8:00 am in
Fellowship Hall

OCC Workday

February 19th

10:00 am

"Imagine you were diagnosed with such a lethal condition that the doctor told you that you would die within hours unless you took a particular medicine – a pill every night before going to sleep. Imagine that you were told that you could never miss it or you would die. Would you forget? Would you not get around to it some nights? No – it would be so crucial that you wouldn't forget; you would never miss. Well, if we don't pray together to God, we're not going to make it because of all we are facing. I'm certainly not. We **have** to pray; we can't let it just slip our minds."

For both of us the penny dropped; we realized the seriousness of the issue, and we admitted that anything that was truly a nonnegotiable necessity was something we could do. (9-10)

Tim and Kathy maintained this unbroken streak night after night for more than twenty years – all the way through until the end of his life. But it wasn't just a nightly discipline that changed him. He also began reading and studying, searching for help:

Kathy's jolting challenge, along with my own growing conviction that I just didn't **get** prayer, led me into a search. I wanted a far better personal prayer life. I began to read widely and experiment in prayer. As I looked around, I quickly came to see that I was not alone. (10)

Spoiler alert: his quest ultimately led to deeper engagement with, and fresh appreciation for, his own theological heritage. From Augustine in the fifth century all the way to Martyn Lloyd-Jones in the twentieth, Keller realized anew he didn't have to choose between robust theology and vibrant experience. His own tradition featured both. "I was not being called to leave behind my theology and launch out to look for 'something more,' for experience. Rather I was meant to ask the Holy Spirit to help me experience my theology" (16-17).

Keller has enriched my own experience of God by helping me to meditate on his Word, marvel at my adoption, adore him for his character, and step into divine joy.

1. Meditate Your Way to Delight

Can you relate to the disconnect between theology and experience? I sure can. God is the most glorious and satisfying person in the universe – I know this, I preach this, I write articles about this – and yet, before the splendor of his majesty, my heart can feel like a block of ice. The reason is often quite simple: I haven't slowed down enough to really warm my heart – to thaw it – before the fire of God's Word. I merely glance over a passage and get on with my day.

That doesn't work. We must slow down and linger over the words of life. Biblical meditation is the music of prayer and involves a kind of two-step dance: first, Keller says, we think a truth **out**, and then we think it **in** until its ideas become "big" and "sweet," moving and affecting – until the reality of God is sensed upon the heart (162).

This doesn't mean we are chasing an experience; it means we are pursuing a living God. Above all, prayer isn't merely "a way to get things from God but a way to get more of God himself" (21). This is staggering. Despite our distracted, fidgety, wandering defiance, he beckons us in and – wonder of wonders – offers us himself. And this is precisely what we need, since hearts wired for intimacy were made to be swept up into the life of the Trinity (John 17:21; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 1:3). As Keller explains, "We can see why a triune God would call us to converse with him, to know and relate to him. It is because he wants to share the joy he has. Prayer is our way of entering into the happiness of God himself" (68).

2. Remember Why He Listens

Another Key to unlocking joy in prayer is to marvel at the doctrine of adoption – the glorious truth that God not only acquits believers in heaven's courtroom but also welcome us, as it were, into the living room.

Pondering this familial bond, and the intimacy it secures, has unparalleled power to nurture joy in drowsy hearts. The seventeenth-century minister Thomas Goodwin once recounted seeing a man and his young son walking along. Suddenly the father stooped, lifted up his boy, and said, "I love you." The boy hugged his dad and said, "I love you too." Then the father put him down and they kept walking. Now, here's the question: was the child more legally a son in his father's arms than when he was on the street? Of course not. But through the embrace, he vibrantly experienced his sonship. This is what prayer offers us. The most ordinary believer in the world has access to "the most intimate and unbreakable relationship" with the Lord of the world. Just imagine, Keller says, what it takes to visit the president of the United States. Only those who merit his time and attention are granted entry. You must have credentials, accomplishments, and perhaps a power base of your own – unless, of course, you're one of his children. That detail changes everything. Likewise, in prayer, we lean experientially – not just theologically – into the Father's loving embrace (70). Or as Keller put in a sermon, in one of the most lovely images I've ever contemplated: The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 a.m. for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access.

3. Begin Your Prayers with Adoration

The pages of Scripture brim with summons to boldly approach our Father and lay our requests at his feet (Matthew 7:7-8; Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 4:16; James 4:2). Danger arises, though, when adoration become a mere afterthought – which reveals more about our self-absorbed hearts that we may care to acknowledge.

Continued...see **Prayer**

AWANA Ministry

HOW TO WELCOME IN 2024 AWANA STYLE!

1. Give out awards on the first night back from the Holiday. Who doesn't like getting an award for hard work?
2. Have a pizza dinner after getting an award. Some of those slices were as big as my hand!
3. Watch a movie while sitting in the comfort of your own "car" at the indoor drive-in.
4. Munch on yummy snacks while watching said movie.
5. Becoming a super sleuth using word & picture clues to figure out a specific Biblical event.
6. Understanding the complicated connection of the Trinity and how it works in our lives using an apple, a triangle, and a braid.

February AWANA Calendar

February 4th – Bible Drill Night: Test the knowledge of book sequence & verse/reference

February 11th – Romans Road Night: Learn what the Romans Road is and how it applies to us.

February 18th – Scripture Shirt Night: If you have a shirt with a verse on it – wear it!

February 25th – Dot the Leader Night: For every verse learned & repeated, put a sticker on a leader!



Seniors Ministry

In January, we enjoyed a message by Pastor Todd on the accessibility of Christ. Matthew 11:28 reveals him as gentle and lowly inviting the heavy laden to himself. He showed this again by riding a donkey on Palm Sunday. Jesus has a posture of open arms, even to children at a public meeting. In Matthew 8, he not only healed the leper but openly touches him, a warm expression that the leper would never have expected. Highest praise is always due Him.

The food and fellowship were great. Keep those side dishes coming (some of the desserts were works of art).

In February we will have roasted chicken legs. Our speaker will be Joe Harvey.

Larry Thomas

Date to remember:

February 15th – Regular Monthly Meeting @ 11:00 am



SCC Church Staff



Rev. C. Todd Haynes
Senior Pastor



MISSION: WHY DO WE EXIST?

To glorify God, by making disciples of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

VISION: WHAT WILL THAT LOOK LIKE?

A growing faith in God
A growing love for God
A growing love for others

ACTION: HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN?

Drawing near to God
Pursuing community
Reaching our world

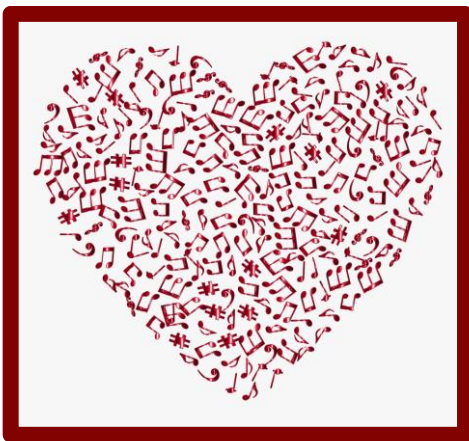
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We want to hear from you! Contact us at newsletter@sccvb.org

Saturday Morning Men's Breakfast & Bible Study

The Saturday Morning Men's Prayer Breakfast and Bible Study will meet in February on the 3rd and the 17th. As usual, the study will feature a chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and word by word, comprehensive study. **The Men's Prayer Breakfast and Bible Study is an outstanding opportunity for the study of God's Word, prayer, and fellowship for men of all ages; church members and non-members.** The homemade breakfast consists of eggs (scramble and fried), sausage, corned beef hash, pancakes, waffles, biscuits, grits, sausage gravy, fruit, orange juice, and coffee. Come and enjoy good fellowship, and the Good News found in God's Word. It all begins at 8:00 AM and concludes around 9:30, or so.

Music Notes



Thanks to everyone who is volunteering to serve on the audio-visual team. It is so wonderful to see the results of a servant's heart. The new team has met and has started training. If you have an interest in learning this skill too, please let me know.

Anyone who has the gift of music, there is space for you in the choir Tuesdays at 7 pm and the handbell choir that meets Sundays at 5 pm. We are beginning work on Easter music and would love to have you participate. Music is our gift from God and our song is our gift to Him. See you in church. Lynn

Operation Christmas Child Corner

We've had our first workday of 2024! There were 9 workers present and we worked on several projects. You can join in on the 3rd Monday of each month if you're crafty from 10-12. You also can create things at home if you'd like. Sewing, crocheting, knitting are good ways to fill our shoebox gifts with handmade items that show the love of God.

As you're out and about, keep your eyes open for sales on needed items such as washcloths, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, socks, gloves and out of season toys. The Christmas sales are almost gone, but Valentines Day and Easter are coming. The stores over order and will mark the prices down quickly.

We filled 1020 shoebox gifts last year giving each one of those children the opportunity to hear of Christ's salvation. Our goal this year is to reach as many children with God's love as possible. Please pray for the kids and those who make the ministry function. Lynn Cooke



Food Pantry Ministry



Have you ever wondered what goes on to make our Food Pantry Ministry a success? Well, let me explain. Prayer is number one. We would not be successful without prayer! Prayer for the ministry and prayer for those who come! Secondly, on a regular basis, our church family has **sacrificially** given to help provide the staples to fill the bags we give to our Food Pantry families. This giving is either monetary or by dropping off donated items listed in our church bulletin. Even fresh produce and bread are given every first and third Tuesdays for our Food Pantry families.

Amie Mitchell has been a faithful leader for several years! Her caring heart is always seen when she speaks with all those who come. This is essential for all who enter our doors to feel welcome as Christ has welcomed us. Marsha Utley has also filled in with the same care when Amie hasn't been able to be there.

All items must be inspected, organized, and sorted in the Food Pantry closet. Gloria Livingston faithfully comes weekly to do this. Lorene and Marsha also help and pack the bags with care.

Amie has other volunteers who come. DeeDee O'Brien is faithful in helping to collect all the forms and organize the documentation we require. Of course, all these ladies jump in and help wherever there is a need on the days of the Food Pantry. Their servants' hearts are not unnoticed!

We would like to thank our entire church family for their generosity in providing the needed cereal for the Food Pantry. Amie was jumping up and down when the cereal shelf was restocked. Cereal is one of the basic staples provided in the Food Pantry bag that is needed by our guests. God is so good! ^{wh}

Derrick and Chandra – Coffee and Conversation



We were all excited about Derrick and Chandra being with us a few weeks ago! Derrick's message on anxiety helped us to better trust in the Lord during the difficulties of life. Praise God they were able to find housing while they were here. God answered our prayers! We cannot wait for their arrival in May. Please continue to pray for them as transition to Virginia Beach!



If you would like to send Derrick and Chandra encouraging cards until their move, please contact Wendy Haynes for their contact information.

Belong Women's Ministry

I ran across an article the other day as I was praying about what our next Belong Bible study should be. Women struggle with a lot of emotions, laundry, meals, laundry, house cleaning, laundry, different sport practices, laundry (you can tell what I did the most when my children were at home 😊) – the list could go on and on. One thing that we all have in common is the need for authentic friendships. I thought I would share with you what I learned from reading this particular article on friendship by Kelly Needham.

4 Purposes of Godly Friendships

1. FRIENDS HELP US FULLY ENJOY GOD Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. (Ephesians 5:18-19)

Things are best enjoyed in community. Your favorite movie is good when you watch it alone. It's even better with friends. A great meal is enjoyable. But it's even more satisfying when you share it with friends. We're wired to share our joys with others. The best experiences in life are the ones we try to drag our friends into: "You have to see this movie!" "You have to come with me to this restaurant!"

Of all the things we have to enjoy, God is the greatest! We were created to enjoy Him and center our lives around Him! And we enjoy God most fully with other people. Friends help us enjoy God by enjoying Him with us.

2. FRIENDS EXPOSE SIN THAT KEEPS US FROM GOD Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. (Galatians 6:1)

Sin deceives us. It darkens our understanding and makes us fools. So much so that we can be walking in sin and convinced that God is pleased with us. This is why we desperately need friends who are willing to point out our sin. We need friends to help us see our blind spots. We need friends to speak truth in love (See Ephesians 4:15).

Good friends tell you the truth about yourself. These friends are a means of grace. But an uncomfortable grace, for sure. Who enjoys being told they're wrong? Who enjoys being caught in sin? No one. But on this earth we will struggle with sin. And if we welcome this uncomfortable grace, it will lead us into abundant life, into freedom, and into deeper joy in God.

This is a function of community that few people want. We'd much rather have friends who always tell us what we want to hear, show us the false grace of excusing sin, and give us false hope that we can grow closer to God without repentance. But because sin is a poison to our soul and a thief of joy in God, this is a function of community we cannot afford to forsake.

3. FRIENDS ENCOURAGE US TO OBEY GOD Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. (Hebrews 10:24)

While it's true we need friends to help us see our disobedience, we also need them to spur us toward obedience. Without the cheerleading of Christian friends, we can become lazy and stagnant, not just by doing wrong things, but also by not doing the right things.

Encouragement is giving someone a bigger vision of why her obedience matters in the Kingdom. It is the affirmation that her obedience honors God, and it is the push to keep doing it. Whatever form it takes, encouragement motivates someone to continue running the specific race marked out for her.

Belong continued . . .



Belong continued. . .

4. FRIENDS BRING US TO GOD Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16) As God's chosen people . . . Bear with each other and forgive one another. (Colossians 3:12-13)

Walking with God in a sin-stained world with our sin-ridden flesh with a hell-bent enemy is too hard to do alone. Alone, we are susceptible to believing the lies of the enemy. Alone, we buckle under the weight of our sin. Alone, we are discouraged and weary in fighting sin. We need the ministry of other believers to bring us to God when we are too weak.

Here are just a few ways friends can bring us to God:

Confession and Prayer - James commands us to confess our sins to other people and have them pray for us so we can be healed ([5:16](#)). When we confess to others, we experience the gracious embrace of God through a friend who reminds us we are already forgiven through the life and death of Jesus.

Burden Bearing - Bearing each other's burdens means sharing the load. That may mean regularly listening and praying for a friend who's in a hard season or helping in practical ways. We are called to enter into one another's suffering and speak truth about who God is and who we are.

Intercession - [Mark 2:3-5](#) is a great visual of intercession. What the paralytic man couldn't do for himself, his friends did for him: they brought him to Jesus. Through intercessory prayer, we can bring our friends to God, asking Him to do greater things in their lives than they would have the boldness to pray for themselves.

FRIENDSHIP FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. (I Corinthians 10:31)

Like everything else, the purpose of our friendships should be about God. Let's stop making God a servant of our friendships, and let's allow our friendships to serve Him and His Kingdom. We need the help of Christian friends to honor and glorify the Lord as we should.

Wendy's thoughts: I don't know about you, but this caused me to evaluate how I am being a friend. Am I helping someone fully enjoy God, am I holding my friends accountable and are my friends doing the same, am I encouraging my friends to obey God, am I being a conduit to bring my friends to God? Wow! My prayer is that we will all be godly friends – friends for the glory of God!

Coming in May: Equip Women's Conference



Information coming soon!

Prayer continued . . .

Reflecting on the parable of the prodigal sons (Luke 15:11-32), Keller warns against an “elder-brother spirit” that robs our ability to enjoy the assurance of fatherly love. How might we detect if we’re succumbing to this danger?

Perhaps the clearest symptom of this lack of assurance is a dry prayer life. Though elder brothers may be diligent in prayer, there is no wonder, awe, intimacy, or delight in their conversations with God. . . . Elder brothers may be disciplined in observing regular times of prayer, but their prayers are almost wholly taken up with the recitation of needs and petitions, not spontaneous, joyful praise. (The Prodigal God, 72-73)

Though unsettling to admit, difficult things in life move us to petition far more readily than happy things move us to praise. One of the most practical “next steps” for your prayer life, then, is simply this: spend some unhurried time reveling in who God is. If you begin there – contemplating his character, gazing at his glory, praising him for his promises – then your heart will be ready to bring requests to his throne.

4. Pray to Get God Himself

God never promises to give believers all good things on our terms. What he promises, rather, is to work all things – even the bad – for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). And when we don’t receive a good thing we want, we can rest in the knowledge that we already have the best thing. We have him. As Keller puts it, in God we have the headwaters of all we truly desire – even if a tributary of our joy goes dry.

And yet, God wants us to ask things of him. To protect us from pride and self-sufficiency, he rarely gives us what we want apart from prayer. But through prayer, our Father withholds nothing good from his children (Matthew 7:11). God delights to give himself in his gifts. Keller concludes:

Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things he has for us. Indeed, prayer makes it safe for God to give us many of the things we most desire. It is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. (18)

The ability to converse with the King of the universe isn’t just an honor – It’s the glorious union of two disparate truths: awe before an infinite being and intimacy with a personal friend. Because we’re made to know a triune God – a merry, generous, hospitable community of persons – prayer is the furthest thing from a sterile concept or boring duty. It’s an invitation into unimaginable joy.

*Matt Smethurst is lead pastor of River City Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia; editor at The Gospel Coalition; and author of several books, including *Before You Share Your Faith: Five Ways to Be Evangelism Ready*.

*Timothy James Keller (September 23, 1950 – May 19, 2023) was an American Calvinist pastor, preacher, theologian, and Christian apologist. He was the chairman and co-founder of Redeemer City to City, which trains pastors for service around the world. He was also the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City and the author of *The New York Times* bestselling books *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (2008), *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (2014), and *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (2008).

Prayer

Ambassador Youth Ministry

Pastor Todd and Wendy took the teens to Joe and Maria Gewerth's home for an authentic Italian lasagna dinner on Sunday, January 7th. There were many who went for second and third helpings. To top it all off, Maria baked homemade bread! That was a hit with everyone! We also played a game while there while Joe and Maria watched! On the way back to the church, Pastor Todd stopped the van for ice cream for anyone who wanted some. We would like to thank Joe and Maria for their hospitality and willingness to have the youth group every year.



February Calendar:

February 4th - "Heart to Heart"

February 11th - NO AYM

February 18th - Surprise Extended AYM
Be on the lookout for information!

February 25th - Mac & Cheese Night

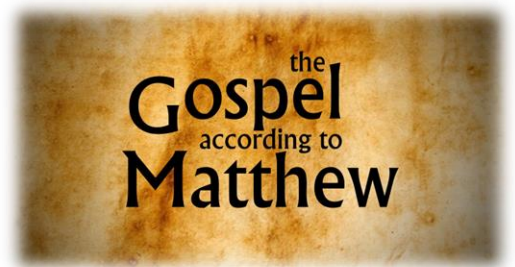


The Discovery Class

Sunday Mornings – Fellowship Hall A – 9:00

Beginning February 3rd, the Discovery Class will walk through the life of Jesus in a careful study of the book of Matthew. Nowhere in Scripture is the beauty of Christ more supremely demonstrated than in the Gospel. The King of Heaven, the image of the invisible God and the radiance of His Glory, emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, so that we might enter into His joy. Join us for teaching, discussion, and fellowship as we humbly learn to follow Him more closely and love Him more truly.

Chris Tyler



Church Doctrinal Statement

1. We believe in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as verbally inspired of God inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of the supreme and final authority in faith and life. **(2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 24:35)**
2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **(Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:13-17 and 28:19; John 1:1-3 and 14:25-26)**
3. We believe that in His incarnation, Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary, and is truly God and truly man. **(Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13)**
4. We believe that man was originally created in the image of God as a sinless being. By voluntary transgression, he fell from that sinless state by rejecting God's word and submitting to the deception of Satan. As a result, all mankind are now sinners by nature and by conduct and thereby incur not only physical death, but also that spiritual death, which is separation from God and are justly under His condemnation. **(Genesis 1:26-27, 2:16-17 and 3:6-7; Psalm 51:5; Romans 1:18-23, 3:9-18, 23 and 5:12-19)**
5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, that He arose victorious from the grave on the third day, that He ascended into heaven, and that His present life there for us is as High Priest and Advocate. **(Isaiah 53; Matthew 28:6; John 3:16; Acts 1:9; Romans 3:24-25; 1)**
6. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. **(John 5:24, 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10, 8:1 and 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:2; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24)**
7. We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood and thereby become children of God. True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin and pursue Christ and obedience to Him. **(John 1: 12-13 and 3:3, 5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; Luke 13:3, 5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3; 1 John 2:3)**
8. We believe that God has instituted marriage as the union of one man and one woman as husband and wife in a covenant commitment for a lifetime. **(Genesis 2:15-25; Matthew 19:3-9)**
9. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. **(John 5:24, 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10, 8:1 and 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24)**
10. We believe that God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth which is our blessed hope; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. **(John 5:28-29; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Titus 2:13; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20: 11-15)**

Come To The Wedding Feast

by Chris Tyler

Our Savior Christ Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the **gospel** (2 Timothy 1:10). These were the Holy Spirit's inspired words through Paul's letter to Timothy, his child in the faith. Luke in Acts 4:12 says of this Jesus that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." In the light of these truths, **the Discovery Sunday School Class is embarking this month on a study of the Gospel of Matthew. We would like you to join us.**

This past week, I read the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22. Here, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. The king in his joy wanted everyone to come and sent his servants to call all those who were invited. They wouldn't come. He sent other servants out to the people describing the banquet that was prepared. "Come to the wedding feast," pleaded the servants. Still no takers. They had things to do, fields to tend, their own businesses to run. In light of this gracious honor, their plans seemed like wood, hay, and stubble.



It struck me in reading this parable that often in our busy-ness, anxieties, or worldly thirsts, we forget who we are following and where He is leading us. We spend so much time, money, and labor for that which is not bread and that which does not satisfy (Isaiah 55:2). Remember that we are on our way to a wedding feast! The King of Heaven is preparing a table for us. Do we value His invitation? It was freely given but purchased with the blood of the Son. "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Revelations 19:9).

Christian, you have been invited to and chosen for a life lived in the presence of the great King. To partake of His table (1 Corinthians 10:21), His promise (Ephesians 3:6), His grace (Philippians 1:9), His glory (1 Peter 5:1), His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and, last but not least, the fullness of His **joy** (John 15:11). We ought to live like we're on our way to a wedding feast. Because we are.

I also invite you to join us as we feast upon the Word of God through our study in Matthew. From genealogy to Great Commission! In this Gospel, the King of Heaven gives us the very keys to His kingdom. Let us treasure the invitation together.

You're Invited

Sunday School

Hide *God's Word*
in your heart.



Jim Fry has been faithfully serving in our Sunday school program since June of 2021. When he joined, it was still during Covid restrictions but that did not stop him. He joined his daughter, Nancy, to teach the middle school class. They started by teaching a survey of the Bible so the students would have knowledge about how the Bible is organized and what it contains.

Every week Jim presented the background information for the section of Scripture they will be studying. God has given him an attention to detail and lots of facts which help the students to understand what they are learning. Sometimes Jim asked the class to put themselves into the story and imagine

how they would react. Sometimes he gave information about how children were viewed and treated in Bible times. All of the knowledge God has given him is passed on to his class in hopes of the students connecting with what they are learning. He also answered the kids' questions about why these stories are in the Bible. Each week he carried with him his favorite book of maps. Each map showed how the land was divided and what it was called in Bible times. And each map has an overlay to show how the land looks today. Jim would often use the maps to help teach the kids. To date, he and Nancy have taught from Genesis through the beginning of Acts.

The first year Jim taught, he and Nancy made sure that Bibles were purchased for each of their students. All new students coming into the class are also presented with Bibles.

One of Jim's biggest blessings was to hear one of the children say, "That verse is on page 683." and everyone turned to that page in their Bibles and follow along. Another rewarding experience was when the students remember former lessons and used that knowledge to answer questions about their current week's study.

Jim thinks our middle schoolers are thinkers. He also understands that middle school is a special time in the lives of these children. He understands that they are completing the younger stages of life and nearing adulthood. They are moving from being told the Bible is true, to believing for themselves it's true. Nancy has helped him to better understand how a middle schooler thinks, and he sees this in real time every week. Jim has learned that children today are very different from any other time in history. And different is not always bad.

It is a running joke in the middle school class that the answer to every question is either Jesus or Joshua. Jim's favorite Bible character is Joshua. He immensely enjoyed teaching that book of the Bible.

If you ask Jim, he would say we are very blessed to have the middle school children in our church. They know and understand a lot of things. He has thoroughly enjoyed teaching this class. A quote from *The King and I* came to his mind while talking about his experience. "If I become a teacher, by my students I'll be taught." As a Sunday school teacher Jim has learned so much. We pray that God will bless him in the next ministry he is called to. Thank you for your faithful service to Suburban's Sunday school program!

Laura Tyler

— END OF YEAR —

GIVING STATEMENTS

Your 2023 giving statements were made available after the church services on January 21 & 28, 2024. If you did not receive your statement on one of those Sundays, they were mailed to the address we have on file. To update your address, phone number, or email address, please notify the church office. Also, if you would like to give to Suburban Christian Church, you may do so by placing your offering in the offering plate on Sunday mornings, through your postal service, or through our website: **sccvb.org**.

Children's Church

Our journey in our new Children's Church curriculum (*The Biggest Story* by Kevin DeYoung) has begun! We have learned that Genesis was written in Hebrew and is one of the oldest books in the Bible. The Old Testament has 4 different parts. The first part is called the Pentateuch (which means 5 books) – the first 5 books of the Old Testament which Moses wrote. In our first stop, we also learned that God created everything out of nothing, even man. Because of sin, we aren't very good mirrors. We don't reflect God very well. But "the Word" (John 1:1) came as "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). He perfectly showed what God is like, and he made a way for our broken mirrors to be repaired so that we could again do the job God created us to do. God provided a way for us to have a fresh start. Jesus was on a rescue mission and a Snake Crusher!

Our journey will continue through Genesis over the next few months: Birth of Cain and Able, Noah's Ark (not as big as the Titanic), the Tower of Babel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph. All of these lessons have a Gospel Connection! It's true that the Bible is one book, about one way, to the One God.

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Children's Church February Schedule



Date	Lead	Assistant	Service Helper
2/4/24	Lois Ritger	TBA	Samara Saucedo
2/11/24	Susan Cofer	Bill Cofer	TBA
2/18/24	Sammy Saucedo	Andrew Saucedo	Donovan Saucedo
2/25/24	Susan Haynes	Jeff Haynes	Elena Tyler



Nursery News

If you would like to join the nursery ministry by helping one Sunday per month – during Sunday School or Worship service, please contact Stacie Raymer (757-589-5731; sraymer@odu.edu). Young teenage helpers are also welcomed to help.

February Nursery Schedule

Date	Sunday School 9:00 am	Worship 10:15 am	Worship Helper
2/4/24	Melissa Tucker Betty Owens	Stacie Raymer Barbara Skarupa	Will Schnurr
2/11/24	Melissa Tucker Betty Owens	Jeff Herring Marybeth Wallace	Nathaniel Schnurr
2/18/24	Melissa Tucker	Nancy Herbst Chris Bulaski	Nyssa Rakes
2/25/24	Melissa Tucker	Laura Tyler Teresa Birk	Stephanie Roby

Just for... **Suburban
Kids**

Directions: Look up the following verse and fill in the blanks.

This is my _____,
that you _____ one
_____ as _____ have
_____ you.

John 15:12

Did you know that

your heart beats about **100,000 times in ONE DAY**, it pumps about **1 MILLION BARRELS OF BLOOD** during an average lifetime, it does the **MOST PHYSICAL WORK of ANY MUSCLE** in the body, and that a woman's **HEART BEATS FASTER** than a man's heart?

WOW! God is amazing! That's why it's really important to keep our hearts healthy. Start each day with a **grateful** and **healthy** heart.

