



FIRST BAPTIST ARLINGTON

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TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

It's summer! What a great time of year! We have just emerged from the Spring of the year - days marked by graduations, rites of passage, promotions to the next grade, end of year parties, Mother's Day celebrations - and all that the Spring of the year represents. Now we move to the new rhythms of summer. Vacations. Family activities. Rangers' games! Rest and Relaxation!

This can be a great time of year for spiritual renewal and growth. It can also be a great time of year for evangelism and witness. Often in the summer, we find ourselves spending time outside of our normal patterns of life. This affords us the opportunity to engage in conversations with new people in different settings than perhaps what is normal for us. What a great opportunity! Let's ask God to cultivate an **evangelistic sensitivity** in our individual lives and in our church! This is a great time to invite new friends to church and church activities.

Here at First Baptist Arlington, we are going to be using the Gospel of Mark to enable us to focus on the power, beauty, and magnetism of the Good News of the Gospel! Each Sunday morning, we will focus on a passage from Mark's Gospel that highlights a facet of the Good News. Each week, in this devotional guide, we will have both a Narrative Reading and a Together in Word passage from Mark. The Narrative Readings will lead us through the entire Gospel. The Together in Word passages will offer us all an opportunity to dive more deeply into various truths related to the power of the Good News.



Dennis R. Wiles

- Dennis R. Wiles

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 1:1-22

Together in Word: Mark 1:1-8

Mark begins his work by declaring that the life and work of Jesus Christ is good news! He connects the story of Jesus to the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah. He also includes a brief testimony about the ministry of John the Baptist. In other words, the good news is new news rooted in old news! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's great plan of redemption that has been in place since the Garden of Eden. God has been redeeming and rescuing human beings for as long as human beings have existed! That is good news!

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to explain the meaning of the word "gospel." It's one of those words we hear so regularly that we forget its powerful meaning. The word means "good news" and comes from the battlefield. The Romans would use it to announce victory in combat. How cool is that? When you explain that to your child, ask them, "Why do you think Mark and the other New Testament writers would use that term to describe the story of Jesus?" It means victory over sin, over forces of darkness, over alternative kings and kingdoms, and especially over death. Jesus's story is victory! For parents of teenagers, it's a good opportunity to have a frank conversation with your child. Consider asking, "Is there something in your life that you need Jesus's victory over?" Lead them in a simple prayer, "Jesus, I need your victory over _____." The gospel is victory!

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- We could paraphrase Mark 1:15 as “Change your life and believe the good news!” What are the ways that you need to change your life since you know that God’s kingdom is near? Make a note in your journal or notes app, and share it with a friend for accountability.
- We believe that baptism is part of following Jesus the Anointed One in obedience, and at our church we follow Jesus’ example of being submerged in water. If you haven’t been baptized by immersion, we’d like to invite you to prayerfully consider following Jesus’ example by being baptized like He was.
- Jesus ate with people that made the religious people of his day uncomfortable and angry. What would it look like for you to follow Jesus’ example? Who are the lost people in your life who need the Good News of the Kingdom of God? Make dinner, lunch, or coffee plans with those people, and find a natural way to talk about how Jesus gives you hope.
- Evangelism can feel overwhelming if you think of it in win/lose, success/failure terms. Rico Tice encourages Jesus followers to “chat their faith.” He writes, “Knowing Jesus is an integral, important part of your life, so it can and should be part of what you chat about; not always in formal ‘now-I-am-sharing-the-gospel-with-you’ ways, but as part of conversations about what we did at the weekend, how we’re dealing with an issue at home or work, why we’re really busy at the moment, and so on. By raising an aspect of your faith in conversation – even if that conversation moves on to other subjects – you have shown the person you’re speaking to that Christian faith is relevant to real life, that it’s important to your life, and that you’re open to them asking you about it. It’s so easy to talk about everything but Christ. So aim to chat your faith in low-key, natural ways.”

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 2:23-4:41

Together in Word: Mark 2:23-3:6

In our focal passage for the week, Jesus encounters two different groups of folks who have questions about His actions on the Sabbath. Obviously, the Sabbath was a holy day to the Jews in the first century. However, Jesus was inaugurating a new era through His ministry. He challenged His followers to give thought to why God had instituted rituals and rhythms in the first place. He led His followers to place human needs above legalism and ritualistic rigidity. If we are not careful, we can empty our own rituals of meaning as well.

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week for a heart check. We all fall victim to the madness of a busy culture. Our kids often get the brunt end of that busyness, too. A simple Google search will lead you to several studies on the rise of anxiety in teens and young adults. From creation, however, God's plan for humanity was rest and rhythm. Jesus teaches us that he created the Sabbath for our benefit, not His. The health of you and your family is directly connected to our keeping the Sabbath. Consider having a conversation with your family this week about busyness. Here are some questions to consider: What are some things we love in our weekly rhythm? What could we do without? What's necessary? What would we gain by eliminating a few things? A 'yes' to one thing means a 'no' to another. Are we saying 'yes' to the right things? How can we Sabbath as a family?

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Sabbath is a period of rest, and it was made to serve us, not the other way around! Sabbath isn't just a day off from your job. It's a day of rest and worship. Set aside a day for rest and worship this week. Avoid running errands, mindlessly scrolling on your phone, or leaving the TV on all day. Spend time delighting in the world that God has made and spend that time in gratitude to God. What brings you and/or your family delight and joy? Making pancakes? Spending time in your garden? Taking a family walk?
- Are there places where your heart is stubborn and resists the work of God in the world? What things in your life might cause Jesus to look around in anger and distress? Ask God to change your heart and to bring you in line with the work that He is doing in the world.
- A wise person once said hurry and love are a lot like oil and water; they don't mix. Where are you constantly rushing around in your life? How is this limiting your ability to love your neighbor? This week, intentionally slow yourself down – this may look like waking up earlier to have extra minutes, choosing the longest check-out line, or driving the speed limit.
- When practicing evangelism, it can be helpful to ask a 'pain-line question.' This is a question that draws on what you know about a person: interests, circumstances, etc. This question is meant to move a conversation into a place where you can talk about Jesus. This is risky, because you might be met with anger. For example, you might ask a neighbor who experiences chronic neck pain, "What if your neck never gets better?" You're hoping for a conversation about the difference between happiness and joy – which is hope-filled and based on Christ instead of our circumstances. Or ask a neighbor who loves their lawn, "What do you think is behind all the beauty in the world?" When you ask a question like this, you don't know how the other person will respond, but it gives an opportunity for a natural conversation to open up, and for you to discover what is going on with them spiritually.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 5

Together in Word: Mark 5:21-43

This week we read about two miracles performed by Jesus. A desperate father and a desperate woman both needed the healing touch of Jesus. The power of Jesus was on display as he healed the woman and raised the daughter of the desperate man from the dead! It is a new day, indeed! Jesus was establishing the Kingdom of God as He provided glimpses of life in this new kingdom. Not everything is repaired, restored, renewed . . . yet! But we are living today in the reality of the “now and not yet.” We too have evidences of the power of Jesus breaking into the darkness of our world. Take some time this week to reflect on how the power of Jesus is on display in your world. Ask Him in faith to continue to reveal Himself to you and others.

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to talk to your child about trust. Have you ever done a trust fall before? It can be a scary exercise. You had better hope that the person you are falling on is strong. As parents, we want to be strong for our kids. We want to catch them every time they fall. Our parental instinct is to protect them from everything bad, but we can't. Despite our best efforts, we can't protect them from bad friends, bad grades, or bad drivers. We're just not strong enough. But Jesus is. In His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated power over all things, even death. This week, lead your child in a conversation about learning to rely on Jesus more than anything – more than money, intelligence, education, hard work, others, and even ourselves. Only Jesus is strong enough to hold us up when we fall. He's got all the power we need.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- We live in a world where hope can be hard to find. Like the woman afflicted by bleeding or a dad with a dying daughter, the people around us are in desperate need of the hope that Jesus provides. How have you experienced hope in Jesus? Learn to tell a story of the hope that Jesus gives you and share it with someone in need of the hope we find in Jesus.
- Sit down with a pen and paper this week. Prayerfully ask God to show you people in your life who need to hear the Good News. As people come to your mind, write down their names. Spend time praying for these people this week, and ask God to help you pay attention for opportunities to talk about Jesus with these people.
- Ask someone else in our church to commit to praying for you this week as you look for opportunities to share about Jesus with people in your life. As a part of this, ask this person to pray out loud for you while you are together. Ask them to pray that God will help you be aware of how the Holy Spirit is calling you into sharing the Good News, to pray that you will have ears to hear what God is doing in people's lives, and that God will give you words to say.
- Jesus told the man to stay home and tell his friends what the Lord had done for him (Mark 5:19). Sometimes Jesus isn't calling us to a new place to share the Gospel, but wants us to talk about what the Lord has done for us and the mercy we've been shown in the places where we live, work, study, and play. Who are your friends in these places, and what would it look like to have a conversation about what Jesus has done for you with them?

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 6

Together in Word: Mark 6:1-13

This week's text reveals the calling and the challenges associated with fishing for people. In our first story, Jesus was in Nazareth (His hometown) sharing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. However, many people were just not open to hearing this message. In our next story, Jesus sent His disciples out to share the Good News and they had tremendous success. In these two stories we see both the calling to bear witness to Jesus and the challenges associated with this call. Not everyone will be receptive! However, the call to go into our respective places of influence and give testimony about Jesus is still placed on our lives as followers of Jesus. How is God using you today as a witness to the Good News?

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this week is a good time to talk to your kids about one of the most misunderstood parts of discipleship. The call to salvation is the call to ministry. When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, the call was not a decision for Heaven or Hell. It was the call to evangelism, ministry, and mission. The earlier we help our children understand this, the better disciples we will make. This may mean your family needs to engage in some acts of service together. This year, we've provided ideas on how to live the word of God. Do one this week. Consider reading Mark 6:1-13 with your family and highlighting the connection between salvation and ministry. For parents of older children, deep dive into the Old Testament. When God called Abraham's family, He called them with a mission in mind (Gen. 12:1-3). For parents of teenagers, challenge them to make their faith public. Is there someone at school they need to share the gospel with?

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Do you think of yourself as someone fishing for people? In our culture, we think of fishing as an individualistic pursuit, but in Jesus' time, it was a vocation done by groups of people who maintained and threw nets together. Who are the other followers of Jesus in the places where you live, work, study, or play, and how could you join together to fish for people together in that place? Set up a meal or coffee time to pray and dream with those people about how you could reach people.
- What does sharing the Good News of Jesus cost you? What could happen in your life if it goes wrong? There are certainly real fears and real challenges to talking about Jesus with people. Spend time this week asking God to help you have courage to face challenges and overcome fears related to sharing the Good News.
- Who are the people in your life who you don't think are open to the Good News? Spend time praying for those people this week. Pray that God will help them become receptive to Jesus, and that the right people (maybe even yourself!) will be ready and willing to share about Jesus when opportunities arise.
- Who brought you to faith in Jesus? Spend time thanking God for that person (or those people) this week.



TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 7:1-9:1

Together in Word: Mark 8:31-37

Our text this week is about a man who was deaf and mute. The people begged Jesus to “place his hand on him.” In other words, they were hoping for a miracle. Jesus took him aside privately, away from the man. He touched his deaf ears and his mute tongue. Miraculously, he was healed! This man represents those who suffer with physical maladies - as well as those who are spiritually deaf and mute. Jesus brings compassion and healing both physically and spiritually. We trust Him as the Great Physician as well as the Savior of the world. We are his emissaries in this world. We are to be agents of both physical and spiritual compassion. How is God using you to meet the physical and spiritual needs of others?

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to talk about the social implications of the gospel. The good news about Jesus is not philosophy. It has real consequences for the here and now, not only the future. Jesus’s ministry is physical. He’s a “hands-on” savior. As his followers, we’re called to be hands-on, too. Consider reading James 2:14-19 with your family and help to consider how the gospel you proclaim is making someone’s life better now. Our children and teenagers must experience a gospel that makes a difference in the world as they see it. Otherwise, they won’t take it seriously. So do something this week with your family that doesn’t make sense. Invite your odd neighbors over for dinner. Give something away to help someone else. Make your children say, “Why would you do that?” And then say, “Because the gospel is real.”

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- How can you meet someone else's physical needs this week? Consider volunteering at Mission Arlington, passing out water bottles during the 4th of July Parade, or by beginning to serve with the Taste Project.
- Who do you say Jesus is? How would you explain this to someone who doesn't know much about church or think much about religion? When it comes to sharing about Jesus, here are some basic things to remember: Identity: Jesus is God's anointed one, a human AND God, our king. Mission: Jesus came to die to take our punishment and remove our guilt so that we can be part of his eternal kingdom, now and beyond death, enjoying life with him forever. Call: Jesus calls us to follow him as our King. This is hard, but infinitely and eternally worth it.
- Any time that you go somewhere new this week, ask God, "What are you doing here, and how can I join?" Look for ways that God is inviting you to join what He's doing in people's lives as you go to the grocery store, the public pool, or to your job.
- Consider making a designated gift to our church's Dorcas fund, which helps us take care of material needs for people in our church.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 9:2-10:52

Together in Word: Mark 10:17-31

This week we will reflect together on the story of the Rich Young Ruler. This young man came to Jesus seeking eternal life. This is a noble quest, and he was right in bringing this desire before Jesus. However, Jesus offered him the opportunity to find the answer to his desire - but the young man just could not do it. The seed was sown by Jesus – but the soil was not prepared! Sometimes we can also miss out on great opportunities with Jesus, but we are not ready to receive His invitation. Even as Christians, we must continue to keep our “soil” ready to receive His invitations. As you reflect on this story this week, are there impediments in your life that hinder your obedience to Jesus? If so, what are you going to do?

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this week is a good time to talk to your child about the cost of discipleship. Reinforce this truth with them – **the call to discipleship is the call to change**. The call to follow Jesus is more than filling out some religious checklist. “Read the Bible. Check. Pray daily. Check.” This is where the rich young ruler gets it wrong in Mark 10:17-31. He believes the religious checklist is all he needs to do. But Jesus reveals that discipleship is also about inner transformation. A changed heart is what Jesus wants. Consider reading Micah 6:6-8 with your child. What does the prophet learn about following God? Then, lead them to discuss what needs to change in their heart to follow Jesus fully. Consider sharing when you had to remove some things from your heart to pursue Jesus.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Are you receptive to opportunities to follow Jesus more deeply? Spend time praying each day this week that you will be more receptive to following Jesus through awareness of and obedience to the Holy Spirit.
- The Good News is good seed. Pray through the people you spend your time with and the places you go. Ask God to help you see where God is calling you to sow the Good News, and begin to talk about Jesus in the spaces and relationships.
- Ask God to help you recognize people who are receptive to hearing about Jesus. When you enter into conversations with others, try to remember that the Holy Spirit is available to you as a partner in that conversation.
- If you're not sure how to strike up conversations about Jesus, try asking people if they'd like to look at the Bible with you, and read through Scripture together. You don't have to be an expert, you just have to be willing.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 11-12

Together in Word: Mark 11:1-17

This week our attention will be given to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and His authoritative acts on Holy Monday. He was received into Jerusalem on Sunday and hailed as King. On Monday, He cursed the fig tree and demonstrated His authority over the Temple. Even though the people in Jerusalem that week did not really understand the full import of these actions, Jesus was proclaiming His authority as Messiah, Son of God, and King of Kings! The fig tree represented the fruitless efforts of the legalism of many Jewish leaders. The cleansing of the Temple was actually a prophetic act that signaled the end of the Temple Era and the further establishment of The Age to Come. Just as Jesus had authority over demons and Gentiles, He had ultimate authority over Judaism and its symbols. He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life!

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to discuss maturity with our children. How do we know we are maturing into greater Christlikeness? The answer is fruitfulness. This week, reinforce what it means to be a Psalm 1 person, an image Dr. Wiles often talks about. A Psalm 1 person knows who they are. Their roots run deep, keeping them tethered to God and community. A Psalm 1 person is growing. Their trunk is strong as they continue to pray, read scripture, and engage in worship. Lastly, a Psalm 1 person is fruitful. They provide shade for others around them. This is what drives Jesus to curse the fig tree in Mark 11, a symbol of the fruitless Judaism He witnessed in Israel. Consider talking to your child about their circle of friends. Have they ever considered that God may have them in their life for a reason? How can they start to move from fig to fruit?

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Find a way to bless (give a gift, provide an act of service, or a message of encouragement) three people in your life: someone from our church, someone who isn't part of our church, and someone from either category.
- Share a meal with three people this week: someone from our church, someone who isn't part of our church, and someone from either category.
- Write some notes in your journal or in the notes app on your phone. Ask: how do I see God sending me to share the Good News of Jesus with people around me? What is happening as I try to pay attention to how God is leading me and follow through in obedience?
- Invite someone you know who has stopped coming to church to join you for worship. If you think they'd like the service you don't normally go to more, invite them to that service instead, and join them there!

TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 13-14

Together in Word: Mark 14:12-31

This week we reflect together on the celebration of the Passover on the final night of the earthly life of Jesus. It was at this meal that He reinterpreted the Passover celebration and established what we know today as The Lord's Supper. The unleavened bread now represents the very body of our Lord, and the fruit of the vine symbolizes His blood. His sacrifice for us has made it possible for us to be forgiven, cleansed, and transformed! Transformation is a journey and a process. Even disciples like Simon Peter were on this journey! We will all struggle along the way - Jesus is faithful to continue to lead, empower, and cleanse. This week is an opportune time to reflect on your own journey of transformation. How is God at work within you during this season of your life? Where is He at work within you?

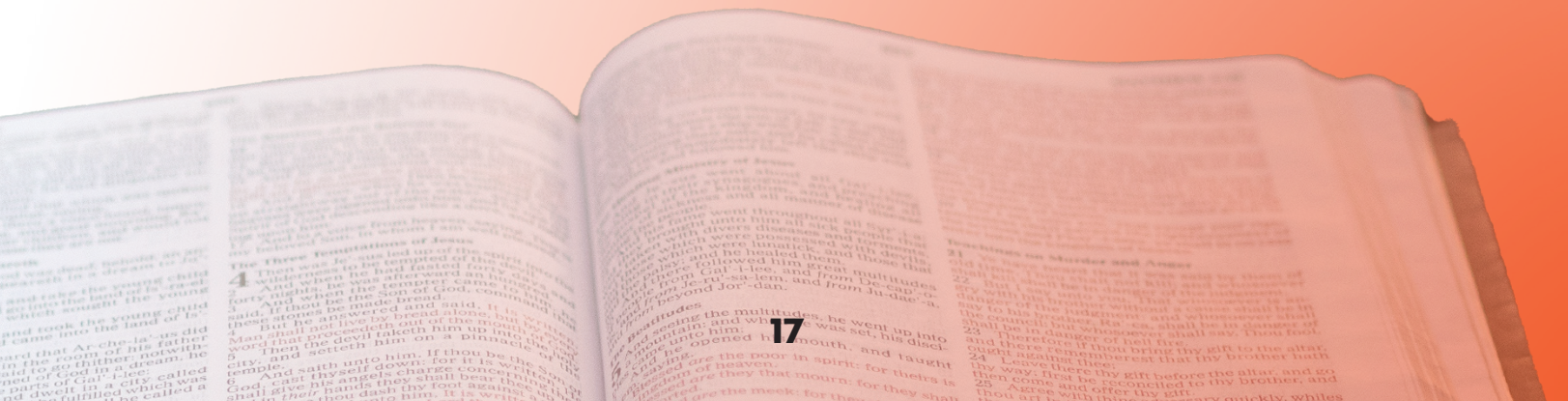
Parent Spotlight

Parents, the Lord's Supper is a beautiful opportunity to share or reinforce the gospel with your child. The act of taking something called body and blood can be confusing. Remind them that it doesn't literally become Jesus's body and blood but is a powerful symbol of His sacrifice. The bread represents His broken body, and the wine represents His spilled blood. The real mystery is why He would do this. The answer is, for you. That's who Jesus is. He is for us, pro nobis, the Latin fathers would say. And when you give your life to Him, He becomes your support. He sits at the right hand of God, intervening on your behalf. Remind those who have already accepted the gospel of how solemn the Lord's Supper is. Don't allow your child or teenager to carelessly take the Lord's Supper. Ask them to sit with you when we take the Lord's Supper. Never let them lose the mystery and horror of God becoming flesh to die for us so that we may live.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Jesus is calling all of us into a way of life that points to him in word and in deed. As we think about the ways that Jesus changes us, journal about two areas you'd like to grow more deeply in following Jesus. Share these areas with a friend who can hold you accountable.
- Have you had a conversation with someone about Jesus yet this summer? If not, work on having a conversation about Jesus with someone this week.
- Spend time praying each day this week that God will raise up people to share the Good News of Jesus with others, and that God will prepare your heart to share Jesus with others as well.
- If you're not sure how to start a spiritual conversation with someone, or you don't feel like other attempts have gone well, simply ask someone this week, "What's your story?" As you listen, pray for openings for spiritual topics. Be curious, not judgmental as you listen.



TOGETHER IN WORD:

NARRATIVE: MARK 15:1-16:8

Together in Word: Mark 15:33-16:8

We conclude our journey together in Mark by focusing on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Here in this text, we encounter the sacrificial obedience of Jesus through His death on the cross, the holy devotion of Joseph of Arimathea and the women disciples, and the glorious power of God displayed through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus is certainly our example of holy devotion! He lived the perfect life and offered Himself up for our sins. People like Joseph, Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and Salome - all are examples to us as well. They stayed close to Jesus in His suffering and death. The tremendous power and glory of The Jesus Way is on display through the resurrection! When we choose to follow Jesus, we are called to a life of holiness and sacrifice - but this is also the path that leads to eternal life! Take some time this week to thank God for the example of Jesus! Thank Him for the examples of devotion that you have witnessed in the lives of people you know who have inspired you! Take some time to commit yourself to a life of holy devotion as a follower of The Jesus Way.

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to talk to your child about the reason Jesus had to die. Kids and adolescents sometimes struggle with this fact. Did Jesus have to die? Could God have saved us another way? The answer is maybe not, but we can't be certain. What we do know is that God chooses to identify with His creation. Even in the Old Testament, God "tabernacles" with Israel. The Bible Project explains it this way: "By choosing to be with us, God is also choosing to experience death. In that sense, Jesus dies because we die." For God to save us, He had to embrace the fullness of the curse of sin, of which death is the ultimate expression. As you read the ending of Mark's gospel, take some time to explain this theological mystery to your kids. Help them to see that it was something God chose because of His love for us. For older kids and teenagers, consider turning to another mystery, one Paul expresses in Romans. "For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Rom. 6:5)."

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- It's worth asking yourself this week, "Am I available for the work God has for me to do?" Are you available to go and share the Good News of Jesus? Do you have space in your life for conversation, curiosity, and openness towards others?
- Jesus isn't just asking us to follow Him inside the walls of the church, but he's calling us to follow Him out into the world and into being His ambassadors for the Kingdom of God. As our church gears up for August, where is Jesus asking you to follow Him into the world? Make a note in your journal or notes app of where you think Jesus is leading you into ministry outside the walls of the church.
- Who are some of the people who inspire you to be a better follower of Jesus? If those people are still living, write them a note of gratitude and encouragement, thanking them for their example and the ways in which they challenge you and inspire you to follow Jesus more closely.
- What's one practical step you can take to increase your availability for conversations with other people so that you have more room to share the Good News of Jesus? Choosing the slowest check-out line? Putting your phone away in waiting rooms and public spaces? Take one step to make yourself more available and attentive for conversation today.

SUMMER MINISTRY EVENTS



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ADULTS

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