

Northway Christian Church

Beyond Sunday

A Worship Guide for Energy, Engagement and Enduring Change

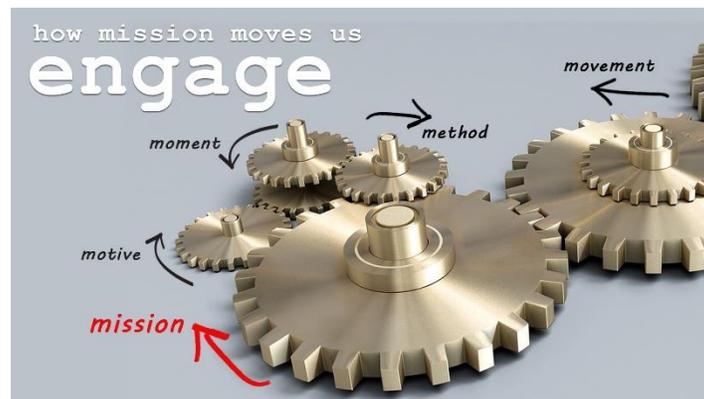
Worship Series: Engage

Use this guide as a tool each week to reflect more deeply upon our worship in the days beyond Sunday. Paul's letter to the Ephesians enriches this worship series as we discover its offerings today. In worship and beyond we are seeking to enhance our understanding and exploration of the lectionary text.

Our hope is that this study will deepen your wondering and aid you in your walk with Christ.

The weekly lenses we will utilize for extra layers of engagement in this worship series are the concepts of moment, motive, mission, method and movement.

Light your Christ Candle and say the opening prayer each day, then focus on the text for the current week. May this guide bless your journey and lead you to engage more fully with the mission of Christ.



Light your Christ Candle

Be reminded Christ is with us; Christ is in our midst.

Pray

Dear God, we come seeking you and desiring to deepen our faith in formation through our study of scripture. As we move into and through this worship series, guide us to experience more of you, more of your peace, more of your presence, more

of your desire for us. Help us to hear your voice as we read your word. Open us to what you would have us discover along the way. Make us new, renewing us day-by-day. Hear our prayers as we lift those who are both near and far, those who you have laid upon our hearts and brought to our minds. We place our faith in and rest our hope on you - knowing Christ is with us, Christ is in our midst. Amen.

Reflection Beyond Sunday:

Week of July 25, 2021

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21 (A Prayer for the Readers)

Moment

This week in worship and beyond we are focusing on this present *moment*. Take a moment to read this week's text. In the passage, the Apostle Paul is offering a prayer for those reading his letter. As you read this scripture, hear his words covering you, note that in his closing he extends his prayer to "all generations," (Eph. 3:21). Paul speaks powerful words over us all, asking that we would be strengthened with power through God's Spirit and that Christ would be with us in our faith. He then turns to love, so that we would know the expansiveness of God's love and that we would be rooted and grounded in this love. And Paul shares that God is able to do more than we can ever ask or imagine.

What in this moment, right now do you desire from God? Take a few moments to listen to your heart and listen for the still small voice we traditionally attribute to God or the Holy Spirit. What might you need in this now and present moment that only God can offer to you? Is it strength or assurance of some kind? Perhaps you need the gift of a rooting and grounding kind of love that is deeper, wider, higher, and further reaching than anything we could ever know? Could you benefit from an experiential sense of God's loving presence in this moment? Take a moment and breathe in the goodness of God, release anything that is heavy on your heart or mind and welcome the love of Christ into your inner being. Offer Paul's prayer on your own behalf and upon those in your life. Stay in this space for some time, linger as you are able. Throughout the day return to this place, welcoming the present of God into your present moment. Breathe in God's goodness and release the peace of Christ to the world around you, as you move on through your day, moment-by-moment.

Week of August 1, 2021

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16 (Unity in the Body of Christ)

Motive

This week we are considering the aspect of *motive* and how it drives our missional efforts. Why do you do what you do? Understanding your true motive is a key to understanding the things that compel and propel us forward - or hold us back. Being in the moment and paying attention to what is happening internally can help us notice what we are feeling and sensing. Recognizing what we are experiencing in the now can be a threshold of discovery. If we are at ease, filled with the peace of Christ, our motives are not being driven by flight, fight, freeze or fawn reactions. While these reactions are meant to drive us toward a greater sense of security or protection, being in reactive modes can cloud our judgement and have us acting on adrenaline.

Instinctual action is important in an emergency, and it can be taxing to stay in for long stretches or when encountered repeatedly due to over-burdened lifestyles. When we slow down and notice what is moving us, we can make better choices about how we respond in the moment and re-think how to position ourselves going forward.

In Ephesians, the writer is encouraging us to live another way, by being motivated to build up the community and body of Christ by acting on our gifts. Paul explains that the God-given gifts within each of us are meant to be used to build up our community in unity and with faith. He “[begs us] to lead a life worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called,” (Eph 4:1). How might you do that? How can you be intentional in your actions today, to work toward your calling? What has Christ equipped you to do in this moment, and are you motivated to build up the body of believers here at Northway, or in the world beyond us? If you are not sure what is uniquely yours to do, start with prayer and ask God to show you a need you can fill. Then do what you know to do, show up and pay attention wherever your day take you. Look for God at work in the world and find ways to cooperate in those efforts. Scripture tells us when we seek God, we will find our heart’s desire. Look for ways to build up the body of Christ and God will show you a need you can fill.

Week of August 8, 2021

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:2 (Rules for the New Life)

Mission

This week in worship and beyond we are looking at engaging in *missions*. The lectionary text offers guidance on how we are to live our lives in Christ. The text

begins with how not to behave and concludes with direction for our call as Christians. The writer says we are to be “imitators of God,” and to “live in love,” (Eph. 5:1-2). Paul describes what it looks like to live missionally. We will be known by our actions in the world we encounter daily, by living in love. This is a “fragrant offering...to God,” (5:2). At Northway we recognize that we make offerings to God through our time, our talents, and our treasures in support of the mission of Christ. What does being an imitator of Christ mean to you? What can you do today, to live in such a way? As you show up and pay attention, where do you see God at work in the world or where is God calling you to be? Perhaps there is missional work underway you can participate in, or maybe there is an opportunity to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving,” (4:32). Consider your everyday acts of daily life as a means of missions this week. Pay attention and see if you can spot God at work in the world with and through you. Begin each day this week reading this passage to be reminded of the life Paul invites us to.

Week of August 15, 2021

Scripture: Ephesians 5:15-20 (Rules for the New Life)

Method

This week we are considering the “how” of what we do with *method*. Living like Christ requires regular practice. We do not typically wake up one day – different, though that can happen, when God wills it. We have heard stories of dramatic conversions and we also know the parable of the seeds. “Good soil” requires cultivation. Developing a method of living as an imitator of Christ according to Paul is “being filled with the Spirit...singing and making melody to the Lord in your heart, giving thanks to God,” (Eph. 5:19-20). What does Paul mean to sing and make a melody in your heart? Is this something you have experienced? Have you felt your heart sing? Another word for this is joy. Living a joy-filled, grateful life takes practice. Actively bringing your heart and mind back to gratitude in place of grumbling, choosing to think of all that is true, noble, right, and praiseworthy, (Phil. 4:8).

We are urged to “give thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything,” (Eph. 5:20). See if you can make a practice of living with joy this week. Set your mind on Christ and notice when your thoughts wander to things that are not praiseworthy, then gently redirect your thoughts to something you are grateful for in your life at this moment. Some folks find setting a timer on their phone helpful to periodically remind them to return to the present. This may be a method you could use to check your thinking and re-direct your thoughts to God. See if you can get your heart to

sing this week. Gratitude can provide a wonderful melody to move you through your day. As you employ these methods make note of what you discover, and what you can continue beyond this week.

Week of August 22, 2021

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20 (The Whole Armor of God)

Movement

We are concluding this worship series with *movement*. During this series, we spent time in the present moment, explored our motives, sought out our mission and practiced with methods. Engaging in this work enables us to gain traction and movement into Christ-centered missions. As we seek to persevere in our efforts to be imitators of Christ, we will need to clothe ourselves in the armor of God. Paul shares this metaphor of armor piece-by-piece to help us understand how to ready ourselves to stand against that which tries to come against us. Paul warns that we will encounter struggles and he desires that we recognize the spiritual aspects of the challenges we face. He shows us how to withstand these powers and forces by being fully girded and “ready to proclaim the gospel of peace,” (Eph. 6:15).

Have you encountered these spiritual forces? Perhaps a better question is are you aware of when you have encountered them? Paul wants us to recognize that the battle is not against other people, when we find barriers to our efforts in missions. He directs us to “pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication...To that end keep alert,” (6:18). Have you heard the saying credited to Abraham Tucker in 1768 “fore-warned is fore-armed?” Paul is giving us this warning, so that we will be prepared for whatever comes. We ready ourselves with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the knowledge of salvation, and the word of God. When we clothe ourselves with these implements of armor we are prepared to stand and withstand whatever may come.

Paul asked his community to lift him in prayer so that he could speak and act with boldness. Pray for our community to have this same boldness to make known the mystery of the Gospel to those we encounter, be they people who are seeking Christ in worship at Northway or any in need of the mission of the gospel beyond our doors to the ends of the earth. This week pray each day, taking up these pieces of armor. Recognize which piece you need, as you come into resistance when you are walking out your faith and living like Christ in the world. Make taking on these articles a daily practice so that you may be ready to face all that comes. Christ has promised us we

are not alone in this journey, we are to be yoked with him and led by the Spirit; he has provided us with all that we need for the road ahead. May you continue this work to engage with the mission you are called to. You were made for such a time as this, and only you can fill the role God designed you for. Arm yourself so that you can maintain steady movement forward, day-after-day, expanding the kin-dom of God, fulfilling the great commission.