



the **ONE** Journey

# WELCOME!

## HOW TO DO THE JOURNEY

The ONE JOURNEY is a five-week experience exploring our ONE JOURNEY of faith and what it means to undertake the journey of discipleship and identity to which Christ calls each of us.

**Each week follows the same three-part rhythm:**

### GO TO WORSHIP ON THE WEEKEND

Each Journey week begins here. In worship you will be introduced to a theme, provoked by art, video and music, encouraged by preaching, and join others in giving praise to God. It's important. Be there!

### GO TO YOUR JOURNEY GROUP

In this fun and relational environment, you will share what you're learning, dig deeper into scripture and conversation, and strengthen relationships.

### DO YOUR CHALLENGE

At the end of each Journey Group, you will receive a challenge to embrace your faith in the coming week. Do the challenge during the week and record what happens in the guide. You will also see some family challenges and social media prompts (if that's your thing) to consider doing as a way to engage more fully as a community.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |                                     |         |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------|
| ● | Ground Rules .....                  | page 4  |
| ● | Introduction .....                  | page 5  |
| ● | Week 1 .....                        | page 7  |
|   | Our journey begins in love!         |         |
| ● | Week 2 .....                        | page 15 |
|   | Temptations along the way: APPETITE |         |
| ● | Week 3 .....                        | page 23 |
|   | Temptations along the way: AMBITION |         |
| ● | Week 4 .....                        | page 32 |
|   | Temptations along the way: APPROVAL |         |
| ● | Week 5 .....                        | page 43 |
|   | The journey lasts a lifetime!       |         |

# GROUND RULES

Over the next few weeks, your Journey Group will be encouraged to get pretty vulnerable with each other, so it's probably a good idea for everyone to be on the same page.

First of all, know that your host is simply a fellow learner, not a Bible expert or professional guru. While your host can be your contact for finding more information, the discussion and learning in the group is everyone's responsibility.

Secondly, to help keep the group experience a safe, healthy way to grow, here are some ground rules:

1. **Be a great listener.**  
Make eye contact. Don't interrupt.
2. **Be real.**  
Honesty is the best policy.  
Be your authentic self and trust each other.
3. **Keep it confidential.**  
Gossip is lame.
4. **Share examples, not advice.**  
Better to hear, "Oh, I experienced something like that once..." versus "Listen, here's what you need to do."
5. **Show up.**  
Honor the commitment you made to the group.
6. **Unplug.**  
This is a great opportunity to be present with others.  
Don't let phones be a distraction.

# INTRODUCTION

**\*Read this section before your group meets for the first time.**

We can so easily forget that God is writing a story: a unique, original story for each one of our lives.

We get so bogged down in the details of the day--the humdrum, the bill paying, the boss pleasing, the coming and the going. We can forget that God is up to something remarkable in each of our lives with no exceptions.

What if we viewed our lives as one extended journey with Jesus, where each and every day is marked by new possibilities, adventure, and meaning beyond measure?

*"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.'*

*As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him." (Mark 1:14-20)*

I have always found this passage about the calling of the first disciples fascinating.

Countless people have marveled over the centuries at the quick response of Simon, Andrew, James and John. They dropped what they were doing to follow Jesus. I can't help but wonder if they simply understood that there was more to life than simply making it through each day. I can't help but wonder if they, in

the depth of their being, were longing for something more. Regardless of their initial motivation for dropping their nets and leaving their boats, the disciples were embarking on a journey of a lifetime! A journey filled with wonders, signs of God's glory, and deep abiding hope, but also marked by confusion, temptation, and at times disappointment.

Our journey with Jesus is no different. There are ups and downs, twists and turns, distractions and discoveries along the way, but through it all God is inviting us into a story that is ultimately marked by the triumph of life & love. It's a story God continues to write in our lives and in the world. It's a journey of faith towards embracing our identity as children of God.

Welcome to the ONE JOURNEY. Over the next few weeks, we will explore our faith through the lens of discipleship as a life-long journey of embracing our true identity. Along the way, we will also shed light on three common temptations that have the potential to distract us from our true identity and ultimate purpose.

Here is a roadmap of where we are headed:

Week 1: Our Journey begins in love!

Week 2: Temptations along the way: APPETITE

Week 3: Temptations along the way: AMBITION

Week 4: Temptations along the way: APPROVAL

Week 5: The Journey lasts a lifetime!

I'm excited to welcome you as a fellow traveler on this journey, and together, I'm certain we'll discover God anew in exciting ways.

Lorne Hlad

Pastor, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church



# week ONE



We are invited into the  
journey of a lifetime!

week  
one  
scripture

*Luke 3:21-22* Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

sermon notes/observations:



## WEEK ONE JOURNEY GROUP EXPERIENCE

EVERYTHING BELOW IS FOR YOUR JOURNEY GROUP TO READ AND DO TOGETHER. HOST, BEGIN READING:

1 Hi everyone! Welcome to week one of our journey group. This journey group is where we'll process much of the ONE JOURNEY. You can expect this group time to be filled with lots of conversation, questions, scripture reading and prayer. Each week we will also be given a challenge to embrace the theme for the week. The goal of this time is to grow together and build relationships as we more fully uncover our identity as children of God. The group time won't always feel perfect; it might take a little getting used to or someone might talk too much or there could be awkward silences. But, in the end, we're certain it'll be a good time. So, to start this thing off right, let's go around the group, and everyone share your name and a memory from your favorite vacation or trip you've taken. Also, share one thing you hope to get out of your journey experience this year.

2 Hopefully by now everyone has had a chance to read the introduction to the journey in the beginning of this field guide. Did everyone have a chance to read the intro? (If not, everyone take a few moments to look it over!)

NEW READER:

3 In the beginning of each Mission Impossible movie, Tom Cruise's character, Ethan Hunt, is contacted by a mysterious voice that says, "Your mission, should you choose to accept it... is to infiltrate the



Kremlin...or...recover the stolen package...or...disarm the deadly bomb.” Usually in these scenes Mr. Hunt is only given a few seconds to accept or decline the mission before the message self-destructs. In these short scenes, the audience is given the context for how the rest of the story will unfold, but we also know that many unexpected twists and turns will come as well.

**When Jesus calls the first disciples, what is “the mission, should Simon and Andrew choose to accept it?” (Look over the intro for a hint!)**

**What do you think Jesus is telling us about his ministry and how the rest of the story will unfold in this scene?**

4 At first glance “I will make you fish for people” is a fairly vague statement, but if we look at the rest of the gospels, we begin to find clarity about the journey into which Jesus invited each of the disciples and now invites each of us.



Someone grab a Bible and read **Luke 4:16-19**

Someone else look up **Luke 9:1-6**

AFTER THE PASSAGE IS READ, SOMEONE ELSE CONTINUE READING:

5 In these passages, Jesus clearly communicates the vision and purpose of his mission and the important role the disciples will play. In short, the ministry of Jesus will be about restoring a broken world, healing the wounds of injustice, and bringing good news of life, love, and freedom to all people. Jesus comes to fulfill the long awaited prophecies and promises of God.

As followers of Jesus who look toward the future that God promises to bring about, we are also reminded of our calling to actively work towards this vision of grace & peace, trusting that our efforts are a foretaste of what’s to come. Just as Jesus trusted his original disciples to enter towns and villages with his message of healing and hope, he also trusts us!



It might be helpful to think of our discipleship as a coin. On one side of the coin, discipleship is a lifelong process of learning to imitate Jesus. When we think of discipleship in this regard we tend to focus on our actions, attitudes, and behaviors. It's this part of discipleship that stresses the importance of living & loving like Jesus.

**When you think of living & loving like Jesus, what comes to mind?**

**Can you think of a time when you were challenged to live & love like Jesus more fully?**


NEW READER:

**6** As important as it is to “do” discipleship, we will burn out if we don’t flip the coin over and examine the other side. This aspect of our discipleship is the source from which all of our living & loving flows. This side of the coin is focused not on our doing, but on our being. This aspect of our discipleship speaks directly to the heart of our true identity.

With this in mind, the journey of discipleship could be described as a *repeated process of returning to the truth about who we really are*. So who are YOU?

CONTINUE WITH THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY:

**7** Spend a few moments reflecting on your own identity. Write your answers down below:



When other people think about you, what do you think comes to mind?  
What are some words that other people might use to describe you?

Over the years, how has your understanding of your identity shifted?  
What caused those shifts?

When you meet someone new, how do you introduce yourself?

AFTER THE ACTIVITY, CONTINUE READING:

**8** Spend some time sharing what you wrote down or reflected upon, and if people have them, share a story or two. **How do you understand your identity?**

NEW READER

**9** Over the course of our lives we begin to think of our identity in relationship to our vocations, our interests, our appearance, our location and even our socio-economic status. While each of these things describes parts of who we are, they in themselves are not our core identity.

Accomplishments, failures, history, friends, and relationships are powerful forces that help to shape and form our understanding of ourselves, but we must keep in mind that there is more to each of us than our biggest mistake or our greatest victory.

As Christians, our core identity is something that is given to us, not something that is earned or manufactured.

Our fundamental identity is that of beloved children of God.

10 As Christians, our journey of faith begins and ends with unconditional love and grace.

*"...for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)*

What are the "identities" in our modern world that people cling to, that can get in the way of people being able to see God in one another?

How do these competing 'identities' affect our relationships with each other?

HOST, BRING US HOME:

11 When baptisms occur in worship, the liturgy speaks of our true identity as children of God:

*God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the sacrament of baptism. By water and the Word God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world.*

God's love is never something we earn or achieve; it is the very foundation of our being. We are God's children. God gives our identity to us as a gift in our baptism and it is from the place of belonging and love that we begin the journey of discipleship.

What does it mean to you to be called a child of God?

How does your identity as a child of God influence the ways you interact with others?

How does your identity as a child of God impact other aspects of your identity (mother, son, athlete, etc.)?

Over the next three weeks we will look more closely at Jesus' journey through the desert immediately following his baptism. It's a journey filled with temptations that each seek to distract Jesus from his true identity and mission.

Together, we will explore how these same forces are at work in our lives seeking to distract us from our true mission.

#### PRAYER

**12** Someone can pray their own prayer, or you can use this one.

*We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your children new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life. Sustain us with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. **Amen.***



Turn the page  
for this week's challenges!



# CHALLENGE: Unconditional Love



## INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

This week your challenge is to simply find a way to express unconditional or undeserved love to someone else. For example, do a random act of kindness, go out of your way to extend a compliment or kind word to someone else, or come up with your own idea!

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

This week, try the Unconditional Love Challenge with your entire family.

Pick a member of your family this week and write them a handwritten note expressing your love to them. Try to communicate your love in a way that is not directly tied to their behavior or actions. Simply say or show them you love them because they have inherent worth!

# week TWO



Temptations along the way:

## APPETITE

week  
two  
scripture

*Luke 4:1-4* Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

sermon notes/observations:



## WEEK TWO JOURNEY GROUP EXPERIENCE

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 Welcome back, everyone. Before we jump into our discussion, we've got another icebreaker. What is one of your favorite guilty pleasures?

NEW READER

2 Let's debrief our Challenges from last week. Did anything stand out to you or surprise you from last week's challenge? Did anyone do the family challenge? Anyone can start, but make sure everyone shares.

KEEP READING.

3 The last time we met, we talked about how our journey of faith begins in baptism, a sign and means of God's unconditional love and grace. We also spent some time reflecting on our need to be reminded that our true identity is found in being children of God, but how it's often easy for us to take on other dominant identities related to our work and achievements.

For the next three sessions we will focus on the role of temptation in our Christian journey. Before we dig any deeper into this week's session, let's get the conversation going. **When you hear the word *temptation*, what thoughts immediately come to mind?**

NEW READER - MOVE ONE TO THE RIGHT.

4 It's amazing how one little word like temptation can conjure up so many different reactions. Depending on our circumstances, life experience, or current mood, a word like *temptation* can bring up



different ideas. The thought of temptation can conjure up images as strong as evil or as simple as something that is enticing. The reality is that we ALL face temptations on a daily basis.

For the purpose of this journey we will define temptation in the following way:

TEMPTATION = *A force that seeks to distract or lead you astray from your true purpose and mission and entices you into sin.*

SIN = *Activities, thoughts, behaviors that 'miss the mark' from God's vision for our lives, that disrupts our relationship to God and neighbor.*

Greek: amartia (ah-mart-ee-ah) is literally “to miss the target”—what happens when an arrow goes astray!

Hebrew: Hebrew has many words for sin, but one of the most common is chait (pronounced like the name “Kate”), which also means to miss a target, or make a mistake. Another is avon (ah-vone), which means to willingly go against God's desires in order to make personal gain.

TAKE SOME TIME TO DO THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

5 Though we often use the word temptation in broad, sweeping terms to describe a variety of experiences, the reality is that we all experience temptation in very specific ways. Spend a few moments reflecting on your own struggle with temptations. What is most difficult for you in the struggle against temptation? Record your thoughts here:



AFTER THE ACTIVITY, CONTINUE READING:

**6 Would anyone like to share your writings or reflections?**

WHEN PEOPLE ARE DONE SHARING, READ ALOUD.

**7** If we were to filter all of our common temptations, they could most likely fall into one of three categories.

**Temptations of Appetite**

The seductive lie: I am what I have

The seductive fear: lack/scarcity

How it plays out: greed, gluttony, desire, never satisfied, excess, etc,

**Temptations of Ambition**

The seductive lie: I am what I achieve

The seductive fear: failure

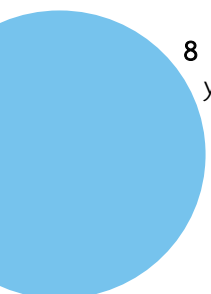
How it plays out: workaholism, pride, selfish ambition, neglect of family/friends

**Temptations of Approval**

The seductive lie: I am who likes me

The seductive fear: rejection

How it plays out: people pleasing, lack of conviction, being ungrounded, low self-esteem



**8** Take a few moments to consider your reflection above. Can you place your struggle with temptations into these categories?

Do new thoughts come to mind? Write them down below:

## CASE STUDY: Jesus in the Desert.

**9** For the rest of this week we will focus on temptations of the appetite.

As it turns out, even Jesus was tempted! Immediately after his baptism, The Holy Spirit leads Jesus on a journey through the wilderness for forty days.

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. (Luke 4:1-2)*

The author of Luke's Gospel is great at setting the context for this scene and lets us know that Jesus experiences temptation while in a physically weak state.

**What coping mechanisms can help us deal with temptation when we are vulnerable?**

AFTER A FEW MINUTES, CONTINUE READING.

**10** *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" (Luke 4:3-4)*

In this first trial of three that Jesus will face in the wilderness he faces a temptation of the appetite. Undoubtedly, Jesus was physically hungry and the idea of using his power as the Son of God to turn a stone into bread was enticing, yet Jesus resists.

Did you notice how the devil is also attempting to challenge the identity of Jesus? "If you are the Son of God...." **What might the significance of this be?**

**What fear might the devil be trying to evoke within Jesus?**

NEW READER.

11 It's easy for us to think that we fall into temptation because we lack the willpower to resist. Certainly there is an element of this. *We've all eaten the extra cookie when we said we weren't going to!*

But could it be that something deeper, more spiritual might be at work when we succumb to temptations of the appetite?

Could it be that the deeper forces at work are related to our sense of worth and our fears, and not just our primal instincts?

What are ways that you see the 'seductive lie' of "*I am what I have*" playing out in our society and world?

How is the fear of scarcity or inadequate resources made manifest in our society?

CONTINUE READING.

12 The seductive lie of "*I am what I have*" ultimately seeks to chip away at our true identity and self-worth. The Good News that Jesus brings is that our self-worth and true identity are never tied to our earthly possessions.

Our true worth and identity are found in being created, loved, and redeemed children of God. We are loved in the midst of our human poverty and brokenness.

*"...while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died for the  
ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a  
righteous person though perhaps for a good  
person someone might actually dare to die.  
But God proves his love for us in that while we were still  
sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8)*

The journey of following Jesus is also one that invites us to trust that God will provide for our needs. When we feel tempted towards excess, materialism, and hoarding resources, the root motivation is often the fear of scarcity.

Someone grab a Bible and **read Luke 12:22-34**.

Spend the remainder of your time discussing one or more of the following questions:

Does this passage bring you comfort or frustration?

What do you find yourself worrying about most on a consistent basis?

Can you think of a time when God provided for your needs?

HOST, CLOSE US IN PRAYER

**13** *God, we confess that we often fall for the temptations of our appetites. Forgive us, Lord, for the times when we consume more than we need, and for the times when we fail to trust that you will provide for us in our moment of need. Give us courage and faith to trust that you will sustain us. Amen.*



Turn the page  
for this week's challenges!



# CHALLENGE: Generosity



## INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

This week your challenge is to find a way to live generously. In a world full of materialism, greed, and a 'dog eat dog' mentality – we are called to live differently!

The Christian life is one marked by abundance and generosity. Your challenge this week is to find a practical way to extend God's spirit of abundance.

HOW DID YOU REFLECT GOD'S GENEROSITY? (Financial gift, invest time, give away a possession, etc.)

TO WHOM OR WHERE DID YOU FOCUS YOUR GENEROSITY?

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU DID IT?

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

This week, try the generosity challenge with your family. Have a conversation with your family about doing the generosity challenge together. Pick a practical way that your family could embody God's abundance and then go for it!

Some examples could be to bake your neighbors some cookies, pick a date to serve together at a local organization, or to invite another family or friend over for dinner that could use some company. What other ideas can you brainstorm? Be creative!

Whatever you do – focus on investing your energy and resources as a family into others!

# week **THREE**



Temptations along the way:

## AMBITION

week  
three  
scripture

*Luke 4:1-8* Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him,

“If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

sermon notes/observations:



## WEEK THREE JOURNEY GROUP EXPERIENCE

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 Welcome to Week Three of the Journey! Get excited, because it's time for an icebreaker! **When you were young(er), what were your goals for adulthood? How have these goals changed or stayed the same over the years? These can be as lofty or concrete as you desire.**

NEW READER

2 It's time to talk about our Challenges! **Share with one another the ways in which you and/or your family lived generously this week. While you're at it, share a way in which you EXPERIENCED the generosity of someone else this week!**

KEEP READING

3 Last week we talked about TEMPTATION and SIN. We looked at three general types of temptation, including temptations of appetite, temptations of ambition and temptations of approval. Then we dove into what it means to be tempted by appetite—starting with Jesus! Is it strange to think that Jesus was tempted? And yet the Gospels say that he was! During Jesus' temptation in the desert, the devil tempted him to turn a stone into bread, thus satiating his hunger AND proving his identity as the Son of God. The devil tried to tap into fears of scarcity AND fears of identity. Jesus, however, resisted the temptation and responded with scripture.

**Share a time when you resisted temptation. Bonus points if you can share a time when you resisted a temptation of appetite! What helped you to do so?**



NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**4** On this journey of life and faith, there are lots of things that can throw us off track. There are lots of ways that we are tempted, and that our identity is questioned. Another common way that we are tempted is by sins of AMBITION.

Ambition in itself isn't always a bad thing, just like appetite isn't a bad thing. A healthy appetite tells us when it's time to nourish our bodies! And we hope that our loved ones will strive for good things, right? We hope that our children are ambitious enough to work hard for good grades, that their ambition fuels them to take positive risks, like trying out for a team.

**What are some of the areas in our lives in which we try to achieve?**

**What are some examples of ambition that you perceive are helpful and healthy that you have experienced in your own lives or in the lives of those close to you?**

**What is it about achievement that's so important to us? Why do we value a high level of achievement?**

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**5** You may have come up with some positive reasons for desiring and valuing achievement: for instance, you want to be successful in your job in order to earn income to feed your family. Great! Most of us desire to be seen as high achieving in some way or another. So what's the issue?

**What are some problems with focusing on achievement?**

**What are some things you might identify as temptations of achievement?**

## AFTER A FEW MINUTES, KEEP READING

Here is a hard truth that nonetheless may resonate with you: we often take things too far and misuse our ambition in the same way we misuse our appetites. One way we do this is when we begin to equate what we ACHIEVE with our IDENTITY. Sometimes, we even equate the achievement of OTHERS with our identity—for example, when we allow a neutral title like “soccer mom” to become the focus of our whole being, or when we define our identity by the success or failure of others’ ambition and actions.

What are some aspects of how you see yourself--or how the world sees you--that are based off of things that you DO or ACHIEVE (or that someone else does or achieves)?

Take a moment to brainstorm a list below, and then share your answers with your group.

## NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**6** Often we conflate our ACHIEVEMENT with our IDENTITY because we feel that our ACCOMPLISHMENTS equate to our VALUE. But again and again our scriptures tell us that our VALUE stems not from what we DO but from who—and whose—we are!

Someone grab a Bible and **read Luke 12: 6-7.**

God does not forget the sparrows; nor does God forget you. The sparrows or a newborn child do not get straight As or become CEOs or get bonuses or have perfectly behaved children. They simply are as God has made them, and God loves them for it.

Someone **read Genesis 1:27.**

Someone else **read Psalm 139:13-16.**

God formed us in God's own image. We have VALUE because we are beloved creations of a divine Creator. God knew and loved us prior to our accomplishments. THIS is the core of our identity.

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

7 So often, however, we try to shift our own worth away from whose we are and onto what we do. We feel that we HAVE to achieve certain things, or else...what?

**What are some of the reasons that temptations of achievement draw us?**

**What do we fear if we do NOT achieve certain things?**

It's possible that many of the fears we have connect to the idea of FAILURE.

**At what are you afraid of failing? Whom are you afraid of failing? Why?**

We spend a lot of time trying to prove ourselves and our value when we simply don't have to do so.

Someone **read Romans 5:1-11.**

God doesn't love us because we deserve it, just as parents don't love their children based on how many goals they score or solos they have. Christ died for us while we were still sinners. God loves us as we are. There are indeed ways that the world might judge us as failures. Thankfully, however, our true identity, the core of who we are, is not based on how the world perceives us; our identity is based on God. And God has said that our failures are not the sum of who we are, just as who we are is also not based on the sum of our achievements. Our ability to merit love is not based on our actions; it is based upon our identity as beloved children of a God whose grace and mercy passes all understanding.



NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**8** In case you might be feeling as though you are the only one who has wrestled with temptations of ambitions and questions of identity, know you aren't alone! Let's look at our gospel reading.

Someone please read the following passage from Luke Chapter 4:

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"*

*Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"*

The devil tried to lead Jesus to the height of achievement. To be king meant that Jesus would be at the top (it's no accident that the devil "led him up")! The king has all the power, all the social status, all the possessions, all the luxury, and, as the devil points out, glory and all authority. Sounds like a sweet life!

And again, achievement in itself isn't bad—but often the price is too high. For instance, in this passage, the devil tells Jesus, "If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

"If you, then, will worship me."



NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**9** Jesus keeps track of his identity. He doesn't succumb to the temptation of ambition. He doesn't forget that wealth and status and position are not the goals. Instead, he simply replies with scripture:

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him."

**What are some things that we worship instead of God? Why?**

**When we commit sins of ambition, whom are we trying to serve?**

AFTER A FEW MINUTES, KEEP READING:

Jesus kept his eyes on the prize. Jesus understood that worship and glory belong only to God. Furthermore, he keeps his MISSION in mind as well. Being a king—sounds great! But to have taken that path would have waylaid Jesus from what he was called to do: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." We are not called as children of God to serve ourselves, no matter how great the temptation of achievement may be.

Someone **read** Mark 9:33-35.

**What does it mean in practical terms to be a servant of all?**

**How do temptations of ambition get in the way of this calling?**

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**10** Jesus is able to resist temptations of achievement by remaining focused on his IDENTITY and his PURPOSE. He counters temptation by understanding—and naming!—that only God is to be worshipped, and that our role is to serve God. We are indeed called to action in this world. But we are called to action within our identity as beloved children of God. We are called to action not for our own

ACHIEVEMENT but to act as a servant of God. We are called to action not out of our own fear of failure but because we understand ourselves to be called into mission by our creator, to be co-creators with God of a more loving world. We don't have to worry about our value: There is nothing we can do OR fail to do that will make God see and love us any more or any less. We are whole, we are valued, simply because we are beloved children of God.

HOST, CLOSE OUR DISCUSSION IN PRAYER:


11 \*If you would like to use a guided prayer, use this one:

*God, we confess that sometimes we stumble on our journey. Sometimes we are tripped up by our own efforts to achieve what you have already granted us: a place at your table. Sometimes we try to define ourselves by what we do instead of by whose we are. Forgive us, Lord, when we get off-track. Forgive us for the times that we forget that we are your beloved children. Forgive us for selfish ambition and neglect of those who need it most. Help us, Father, to remember our true identity as your beloved children. Help us, Jesus, to remain focused on showing others your love, rather than building ourselves up. Help us, Holy Spirit, to remember that you love us no matter what our level of achievement. **Amen.***

## CHALLENGE: Lifting one another up

### INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

This week, practice being a servant of all by intentionally lifting someone up at work, school, or another setting. Look for opportunities to praise and encourage others. For instance, ask someone to share their opinion who normally isn't asked. Instead of sharing your needs, desires, and opinions, create space for someone else to share theirs. This could be in reaction to something ("I'm not sure, but Suzie had some great thoughts on that the other day") or could be proactive

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(approaching someone and sharing a positive observation about them, or sharing that observation with a boss or person in authority, for example, “Mrs. Kann, did you ever notice how Kevin is always so great about holding the door open for people?”). It doesn’t have to be dramatic; simply go out of your way to give credit, space, or a voice to someone you might otherwise overlook!

HOW DID YOU LIFT SOMEONE UP THIS WEEK?

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU DID IT? (This can include how they or a third party responded, as well as how it caused you to feel.)

### FAMILY CHALLENGE

The family challenge this week is to do the individual challenge—but for each other!

Find a way to lift each other up that is outside of the scope of what you would usually do. As an added challenge, try to lift each other up **WITHOUT** focusing on someone’s achievement. So for instance, if Peter always gets complimented on his cooking, look for a way to praise something different about Peter, such as his integrity or his loyalty or love of others or resilience. Even better if you can do so in a way that is public. This is your chance to brag on your spouse or other family member to someone! Just make sure to do it in a way that is genuine and is focused on lifting **THEM** up—not you by association!

Whatever you do, focus on investing your energy and resources as a family into others.

# week **FOUR**



Temptations along the way:

## APPROVAL

week  
four  
scripture

*Luke 4:1-13* Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus

answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.



sermon notes/observations:



## WEEK FOUR JOURNEY GROUP EXPERIENCE

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 It's Week Four! We've been together for several weeks already—but there is still much to learn about each other! For instance: **what is your favorite movie that is set in high school?** Examples might be *Breakfast Club*, *Clueless*, *Mean Girls*, *Sixteen Candles*, *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Grease*, *Dead Poet's Society*...the list could go on! Continue brainstorming if people are having trouble coming up with their own. Then tell one another what your favorite is...and why!

NEW READER

2 Last week ended with a challenge to lift up someone else. **What is a way that you lifted someone else up this week?** **How did it feel?** **Were you lifted up by anyone?** Everyone is invited to share!

KEEP READING

3 Over the last few weeks, we have talked quite a bit about identity and how our identity forms us on our journey. Last week we continued looking at the temptation of Christ as we examined the second temptation where the devil offered Christ power and glory; in short, the fulfillment of ambition.

As the last week has passed, have you thought any more about temptations of ambition?

Have you noticed any behaviors in your own lives that are motivated by fear of failure or desire for success?

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**4** As Christians we are called on one journey: a journey that takes us closer to God and closer to being who we truly are. But as we've discussed over the last few weeks, there are some general things that cause us to get off track. We've talked about temptations of appetite and ambition. Today we look at our third category: approval.

**What are ways that we show our approval to others? Give an example of how you have either shown or received approval in the last few weeks.**

**Whose approval do you desire? Whose approval matters to you?**

**Why do you think we crave approval?**



NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**5** Like our other categories, approval can be a double-edged sword.

**When can approval be helpful? Why is it helpful?**

Sometimes approval—especially the approval of mentors and people whom we have reason to trust—can be beneficial. It can help affirm that we are on the right track. It lets us know that we have the support of people whose opinions are important to us.

Sometimes, though, those opinions are wrong. For example, a teenager's friends are a valued source of approval. But they don't always value the things that are best for the person in question.

**Think of the movie(s) mentioned in our icebreaker. Do any of these contain examples of situations where a character sought the approval of peers or other people...and it didn't go so well?**

**Can you think of a comparable example from your own life?**

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

6 When we do things for the approval of other people, it doesn't always end well...because other people aren't perfect. They don't have perfect judgment and they don't have perfect intentions. Nor do any of us! Often doing things for approval leads to disaster.

More importantly, however, when we do things for the approval of other people, we prioritize their opinions of us over our self-opinions—and, more crucially, over God's opinion of us. This frequently leads to behaviors that are more about making other people happy than about seeking God's will for our lives.

Last week, we talked about how God wants us to be a servant of all. How is this different than seeking the approval of all?

We are indeed called to support each other, love each other, and desire what is best for each other. We are not called to spend our lives feeling as though our self-worth is wrapped up in what other people think of us. Instead, we are called to understand our value based on a Creator who sees us as beloved children.

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

7 Let's look again at the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Someone please **read the following passage from Luke Chapter 4:**

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"*

*Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I*

*give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”*

It’s relatively easy to see how the temptations given above relate to appetite and achievement. Let’s look at the last section of this story. **Please continue reading from Luke 4:**

*Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,*

*‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and*

*‘On their hands they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”*

*Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

Do you see any connections here to the idea of temptations of approval? If so, what are they?

AFTER A FEW MINUTES, CONTINUE READING:

If it's not obvious...that's okay. This one might require a little bit of context.

The first two temptations are pretty obvious, right? First the devil offers sustenance to a guy who has been living in the desert for forty days. Next, he offers the kingdoms of the world: power, glory, etc. Then...he offers the opportunity for Jesus to throw himself off of a cliff? Doesn't seem like much of a temptation, does it? "Gee, Satan, sounds tempting, but...."

So what IS the temptation here?

The answer lies in verse four. **Would someone read it again?**

The first two temptations were in the desert, in the wilderness, in a desolate place. But for the THIRD temptation, the devil transports Jesus to the Temple: the center of religious activity in Jerusalem, one that was constantly filled with people going in and out, and one that stood at the heart of the city. Physically, the Temple was the highest point in the city.

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**8** Why does this matter? Because the temptation isn't the dangerous leap off of the cliff; the temptation is the RESCUE.

If you want an easy way to show people that you are indeed blessed by God, what better way than a dramatic and public rescue by a squad of angels? Seems a lot easier than doing individual miracles in small rural Galilean towns, doesn't it? It would be a lot more efficient for Jesus if he just went straight to the Temple, proved that God loved and chose him by a dramatic angel rescue, and thus won the love and approval of the people.

But Jesus knows that his path is a different one. HIS path is one that does include some shouts of Palm Sunday proclamation...but his path doesn't lead to a rescue by angels. Jesus' journey leads to the cross.

Let's look at part of the story of Jesus' crucifixion for a second. Someone please **read Luke 23: 34-39**.

**What stands out to you from this reading?**

**What are the similarities and differences between this passage and Christ's third temptation?**

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**9** Jesus could have had the approval of the world, starting with the crowds around the Temple. He could have had praise and adoration and popularity. Instead, the story of Jesus' life on earth ends with Christ crucified, and our passage emphasizes that he was mocked by the crowds again and again. And at the very end, the temptation they offer echoes all the way back to the start of Jesus' ministry and his time in the wilderness: "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Come down off of that cross.

Yet Jesus resists the accolades of the world in favor of the mission to which he is called.

**What is the mission to which we are called as baptized children of God?**

**How can our desire for approval get in the way of living according to this mission?**

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT

**10** The reality is that approval feels good, doesn't it? Sometimes it can be helpful, especially if we feel that God approves of our actions! But it is a dangerous motivator, because it subsumes our identity so that instead of staying focused on who we are as children of God, we become focused on who we are according to the judgment of this world. It can

lead to behaviors in which we wouldn't otherwise engage and result in lowered self-esteem when approval is not forthcoming. Most crucially, however, temptations of approval unmoor us. They lead us off the path because they give us a false true north. When we base our decision making off of the approval of others, we stop making choices based on what God wants us to do. We have demagnetized our compass.

It's a good thing, then, that we have a God who forgives us again, and again, and again! It's a good thing that we have a God who knows what it's like to be tempted. It's a good thing that when we get off track, we can always find our True North.

And that's where we will pick up next week.

**What additional thoughts or ideas do you have about temptations of approval?**

**When we are tempted by our need for approval, what are strategies we could use to "get back on the path"?**

**How can we determine what God would approve of?**

HOST, CLOSE OUR DISCUSSION IN PRAYER:

**11 \*If you need a guided prayer, use this one:**

*God, we know that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We know that you made us in your own image. Forgive us for the times we forget that we have value because you made us, not because of what other people think. Forgive us for the times we have prioritized the approval of other people over doing the right thing. Help us as we continue our Lenten journey. Make your presence known to us. Keep us focused on a journey where we look to you to provide meaning for our lives, not to the approval of others. Amen.*





# CHALLENGE:

## Checking our need for approval

### INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

For some of us, this week's challenge may be the most difficult. This week, identify a behavior that is approval-seeking...then change it. For instance, there are many people who say "yes" to things when they would rather say "no" because they want the other person's approval. This is a common approval seeking behavior. It's okay to say yes to things you would rather not do—we are also called as Christians to sacrificial giving, and sometimes we do the right thing even if we would rather not do it because we are called to serve others. But if the occasion doesn't meet that metric, then make it a goal to say "no" to one thing this week. Or maybe you are someone who takes all disapproval personally. If that's you, during a calm moment, create some questions to ask yourself in order to help you determine whether that disapproval is more about you, or the other person. This is not always easy to discern but is an important step in detaching yourself from your need for approval. In short, determine what YOUR temptations of approval are...and then do one thing to reduce your need for the approval of others this week.

WHAT IS A TEMPTATION OF APPROVAL TOWARDS WHICH I AM PARTICULARLY INCLINED?

HOW CAN I OR HOW DID I RECOGNIZE AND CHANGE THAT BEHAVIOR THIS WEEK?

Turn the page for this  
week's Family Challenge!





## **FAMILY CHALLENGE: Determining Values**



If you are trying to minimize temptations of approval, then you need a reason for your actions beyond other people's opinions. Values provide a metric by which to measure your own desires, actions, and responses. This week, take time to be together as a family. Share a meal. Sit down together and come up with a list of the things that your family values. Add to the list the things that you believe that God values (if you aren't sure on this one, the Beatitudes are a good place to start!). Hopefully some of these will overlap! By articulating your values as a family along with God's values, you equip yourselves for the journey. End your time together by taking turns offering not your personal approval but an AFFIRMATION to one another other, using a sentence or phrase such as, "You, NAME, are a beloved child of God," or "You, NAME, are enough" or "You are loved exactly as you are" or another phrase that you create as a family.

# week FIVE



The journey lasts a lifetime!

week  
five  
scripture

*Luke 18:28-50* Then Peter said, “Look, we have left our homes and followed you.” And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.” But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have

mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

### sermon notes/observations:



## WEEK FIVE JOURNEY GROUP EXPERIENCE

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 Hello everyone! It's our last week! For tonight's icebreaker, **everyone share something they have appreciated about spending the last few weeks together.** You know the drill by now; anyone can start, but make sure everyone shares.

"Last week...."

NEW READER.

2 For the last few weeks we have explored three general types of temptations, including temptations of appetite, temptations of ambition, and temptations of approval. We explored each of these temptations through the story of Jesus' time spent in the wilderness after his baptism. We also explored how each one of these temptations are related to a 'seductive lie' we are told and an underlying fear.

Let's Review:

### **Temptations of Appetite**

The seductive lie: I am what I have

The seductive fear: lack/scarcity

How it plays out: greed, gluttony, desire, never satisfied, excess, etc,

### **Temptations of Ambition**

The seductive lie: I am what I achieve

The seductive fear: failure

How it plays out: workaholism, pride, selfish ambition, neglect of family/friends

## **Temptations of Approval**

The seductive lie: I am who likes me

The seductive fear: rejection

How it plays out: people pleasing, lack of conviction, being ungrounded, low self-esteem

**Which of these three have you struggled with the most throughout your life?**

**Is there a type that is easier for you to avoid than the others?**


**Has God been stirring anything within you these last few weeks?**

KEEP READING.

**3** Let's face it: sometimes it feels as though we've lost our way in life. The stressors of life pile up, responsibilities begin to mount, our attention drifts, and we experience hardship, grief, and seasons of doubt. These realities go hand in hand with our human experience. Sometimes life's circumstances become so all-consuming that we forget the larger story that God is writing on our lives. Sometimes, we lose sight that we are still on a journey with God.

**Have you ever felt like you have lost your way? Can you think of a season in your life when the journey of faith was less clear?** (This is the last week together; don't be afraid to show your vulnerability!)

The reality is that we are not Jesus, and God doesn't expect us to be. For the last few weeks we have explored the ways that Jesus not only dealt with distractions and faced temptations, but the ways in which



he stayed faithful to his mission. On our lifelong journey of discipleship we are called to resist temptation and stay focused on God's mission, but the reality is that we all fall short. We get distracted, we become discouraged, and we even find ourselves at times disillusioned with God.

We are no different than the disciples whom Jesus chose!

#### NEW READER

*4 Then Peter said, "Look, we have left our homes and followed you." And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."*

*Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.*

**How do you think Peter and the other disciples are feeling in this passage?**

**Why do you think Jesus persists with the disciples despite their perpetual confusion? What does this say about the character of our God?**

#### CONTINUE READING.

**5** Jesus never gives up on the disciples, even when they betray him, deny him, and flee from his side during his darkest hour. Jesus continually embraces the disciples with unconditional love and grace.

Jesus also never stops believing in the disciples' ability to be co-creators in the vision of restoring the world with grace & peace.

Someone **read Luke 24:36-44.**

Thinking about faith as a life-long journey, what stands out to you from this passage?

Can you think of time when Jesus 'showed up' in your life to remind you of God's unconditional love?

NEW READER.

6 It's God's grace that equips us for ministry! At the end of Luke's Gospel account Jesus reminds the disciples of their true purpose and mission:

*"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send to you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:46-49)*

Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples as a guide and comforter as they continue on their journey.

Just as the Holy Spirit AFFIRMED Jesus in his baptism, STRENGTHENED Jesus in the wilderness, and ANOINTED Jesus as he began his ministry – so too was the Holy Spirit an active force in the life of the early church and remains so today.



Can you think of a time when you felt AFFIRMED, STRENGTHENED, or ANOINTED by the Spirit?

What else has encouraged you along the journey of faith?

ONE LAST ACTIVITY.

**7** Over the last five weeks we've covered a lot of ground as we've journeyed together. To close out our time together we are going to do one last activity before we receive our final CHALLENGE.

This activity is called **"Take Away, Leave Behind"**.

Spend a few moments thinking to yourself about what you want to leave behind as you continue in your lifelong journey of following Jesus. It might be something as simple as "anxiety" or "pessimism" or "an over-scheduled life". Once you have identified what you want to leave behind **write it in the space below**.

I AM LEAVING BEHIND...

Then, spend some time thinking about what you are taking away from this journey that will help you live a more centered life. For example, it could be something like "new friendships" or "better perspective". Whatever it is, write it in the space below.

I AM TAKING AWAY...

Once everyone has completed the activity, **spend time going around the room and share reflections**.

CLOSING PRAYER.

**8** *God, thank you for this journey experience and the people in this room. Help us in our lifelong journey to follow you wherever you might lead. Give us your spirit of hope, and clarity to see all the ways in which you are restoring the world with grace & peace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Read on for your final CHALLENGE!



## CHALLENGE: FIND A GROUP or CREATE ONE!

Your final challenge is this: now that this journey has come to close, consider joining or forming a group!

The journey of faith is more enjoyable and doable when you have the support of others around you who are also seeking to live & love like Jesus. That is why we encourage everyone to find a group where you can belong.

Prince of Peace currently has a wide variety of groups that meet on a regular basis. Consider checking one of them out.

[www.popluther.org/find-a-group](http://www.popluther.org/find-a-group)

You could also consider forming a new group! Gather a few people together. Maybe it's centered on a book you are reading or a hobby you enjoy. If you need help in the process don't hesitate to reach out.

[plhlad@popluther.org](mailto:plhlad@popluther.org) - Pastor Lorne Hlad

[kskarda@popluther.org](mailto:kskarda@popluther.org) - Karen Skarda, Director of Ministries



# NOTES





# Prince of Peace

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