



2012 GenMin Camp Chapel Curriculum

Written by: Mark Stapleton

Senior Pastor, Cornerstone Community Church – San Diego, California

Camp Director, SEP SoCal



A MINISTRY OF GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL



INTRODUCTION

If there is one thing we want you to capture here at camp, it's this truth: **God loves you!**

Let me elaborate: God loves you *unconditionally*! And that means no matter what!!

God loves you when you are mad at him. God loves you if you don't love him. God loves you if you've been good and if you've been bad. God loves you even if you are not sure he exists (an agnostic). He loves you even if you're sure he does not exist (an atheist).

No matter what, God loves you anyway. And that love is all around you.

Here's another truth: God does not force his love on us. He does not make us love him back. We are free to love God or not love God. Either way, he loves us. God in his freedom *chooses* to love us no matter what we do or do not do. A very familiar text in the Bible puts it like this:

John 3:16-17 (NCV)

¹⁶ "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him.

And just in case you still think that God only loves people when they are good, note this:

Romans 5:7-9 (NCV)

⁷ Very few people will die to save the life of someone else. Although perhaps for a good person someone might possibly die. ⁸ But God shows his great love for us in this way: Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

The Bible reveals that God chose to love you in and through Jesus when you will still a sinner. Elsewhere it says this choosing occurred before the creation of the world. Long before you took your first breath, long before you did anything good – or bad – God loved you and chose you! He chose you because he wants to know you and he wants to be known by you – he chose you for the purpose of *relationship*. Not just any relationship, mind you, but a priceless, joy-filled relationship with him for all eternity.

Of course, God desires that you will love him in return. And not just to say that you love him, but love him actively in a real friendship. Can you imagine saying to a friend: "Hey, you are my friend," yet you never spend time with that person? Never hang out with them; laugh with them; share stories, hopes, thoughts, ideas, frustrations and all that comes with a close friendship?

Our theme at camp this year is ROOTED. Now, what does "rooted" have to do with God's love? Well, roots are the underground portion of a plant that serves as its means of support; the means for it to draw minerals and water from the soil, and sometimes the means for storing food.

To be rooted is to be firmly established, settled, or entrenched. We want to help you see how you can choose to be rooted – established – entrenched, in the reality of God's love and thus enjoy a rooted relationship with him.

Our hope is that during this camp and beyond you will plant your roots more deeply in the soil of God's love – and there be rooted for life. Not our camp theme scripture, which is from a letter in the Bible called Ephesians.

EPHESIANS 3:14-19 (NLT)

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

This week in our chapel services, we will follow the different growth stages of a tree. This will give us a picture that will help us see how we can be rooted deeply and then grow in God's love.

As with all living things, trees have a life cycle – growing from conception (seed), to birth (sprout), to infancy (seedling), to juvenile/adolescent (sapling), and on to adult (mature). Like physical growth, spiritual growth is a *process*. Just as tree roots take time to grow deep, our relationship with God takes time to root and mature.

Please know that God's love is all round us. We experience his abundant love both directly and indirectly in many ways, including through other people. There is nothing we can do to *earn* God's love. We don't go through these growth stages in order to *deserve* God's love. Rather, we progress and grow so that we can live deeper and deeper into the reality of God's unconditional love for us – so that we can increasingly understand and appreciate and thus experience just how wide, long, high and deep God's love for us truly is. Growth comes as we learn how to receive and express God's love. This growth is a journey with God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit—let's journey over the next few days together!

Let's start by singing our theme song, "Rooted" by Nathan Keating:

Verse 1

I wanna be rooted, deep in Your love
Forever planted, standing firm in Your Word
I won't be shaken, no I'll never move
As long as I am rooted in You

Verse 2

I wanna be rooted, in pastures of grace
Forever growing, until I see Your face
I'm giving You glory, with Your mercies anew
As long as I am rooted in You

Verse 3

I wanna be rooted, in Your triumphant hand
With the strength of Your promise
in victory I'll stand
Whatever the battle, no, I'll never lose
As long as I am rooted in You

Chorus

Like a tree... by living waters
Forever sustained by You
On Your Word I am standing
In faith I am planted
My heart wants to be
I wanna be rooted
I wanna be rooted

CHAPEL 1 – SEED

DYING (to LIVE)



Life source: Soil / God's Love

Practice: Silence & Solitude

Text(s): John 12:24–25; I Corinthians 15:36–38

Resource: Nooma–Tomato

Suggested activity: As chapel begins (or as a dorm activity before) split campers into groups and have each draw the life cycle of a tree on a large piece of paper. This will help them think about what will be discussed in this lesson. They'll probably leave out certain stages, but that will provide a teaching point.

Chapel teaching text:

[Show a seed]. Here we have a seed—so small yet full of potential—able to produce an abundance of fruit. This is the point of beginning. Where the seed is planted is vital. Anywhere conditions are favorable for germination, seeds sprout and grow. In bad conditions, they won't.

Germination is the process of the emergence of growth from a resting stage. It is the activation of a dormant seed that causes it to sprout and develop the first tiny shoot (up) and first tiny root (down). But to grow, the seed must be severed from its life source—it has to fall to the ground and lie dormant. It has to “die.”

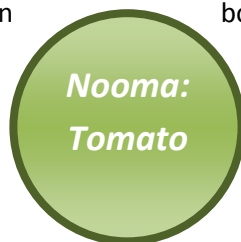
Jesus spoke to this:

John 12:24-25 (NCV)

²⁴ I tell you the truth, a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to make many seeds. But if it never dies, it remains only a single seed.²⁵ Those who love their lives will lose them, but those who hate (disregard / die to) their lives in this world will keep true life forever.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about this reality:

I Corinthians 15:36-38 (MSG) “Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this 'resurrection question closely, you realize how this kind of thing. We do have a plant a "dead" seed; soon there is likeness between seed and plant. would look like by looking at a and what grows out of it don't look in the ground and the resurrection (new, God-filled) body that comes from it will be dramatically different.



body' look like?" If you look at this absurd it is. There are no diagrams for parallel experience in gardening. You a flourishing plant. There is no visual You could never guess what a tomato tomato seed. What we plant in the soil anything alike. The dead body that we bury

For new (resurrection) life to begin, death must first occur. That death is the death of self—we die to self just as the seed does – we empty ourselves just as the seed does. Though scientists tell us that a seed is not *technically* dead, they appear to be and soon, through a new “birth” will become something quite different from what they are. The seed falls to the ground, and thus is disconnected from its life source. Only then, can it sprout and mature. In the fall, most trees disperse their fruit, thereby planting seed nearby for reproduction. Or some of the fruit may be eaten by birds or animals, passed through their digestive systems and thus carried to new locations for dispersal. These seeds lie dormant (“dead”) until germination in early spring.

Now this “dying” to self is not something we can do on our own. Christ lives in us to guide us on this path. The Gospel stories show how Jesus “died to self” on our behalf. A seed is reborn in the soil. Our death, rebirth and new life begins in the “soil” of Jesus’ death for us. We don’t cause our rebirth through anything that we do. Jesus has done it for us. He has prepared the soil. His death is the soil in which rebirth occurs.

By embracing Jesus’ death for us, we “die” to self and are thus ready to embrace whom God re-created us to be in Jesus’ resurrection. Thus, it is in dying to self that our new life in Christ begins. Even as difficult as that is, it is done not through our own effort, but through God’s grace—it’s a gift already given. And you can ask God to help you receive it for yourself.

God provides all that we need—all the “nutrients” needed for health, vitality and the energy to lose ourselves and to then allow Jesus to fill us full. A seed that falls to the ground gets the nutrients it needs for the next phase of its life cycle from the soil. We get what we need from God, trusting that he loves us unconditionally. That trust is more than just knowing—it means relying on God, walking in the reality of his love. Oh yes, that love is quite real. More real than the dirt on the ground that trees call home. God’s unconditional love for us is our home.

One way to make the most of our time in the soil – this time of “dying to oneself” – is something called *silence* or *solitude*. A seed lies dormant during this stage of its life. It is a time of silence—a time of solitude, of being alone. There are so many voices, noises and distractions in our world. It’s hard to clear our heads and hear God. There are times when we need to be “dormant”---to unplug from everything and sit in silence with God. And this will most likely mean being alone. Carving out times for solitude is healthy, refreshing and nourishing. Sitting in quiet stillness with God—soaking in his life-giving love.

CONCLUDING QUESTION: Have you ever tried being by yourself for a while to pray and listen to God? Have you experienced times of silence and solitude recently (no music, iPod, phone, TV, internet or people)—just you and God? What were those times like?

Just as there are multiple environmental conditions necessary for a tree to grow (soil, air, water and sunlight), so too there are multiple spiritual practices that help us grow as followers of Jesus. Those practices include silence and solitude by which we embrace the new life that God gave to us in Jesus long before we even knew about it. As we embrace that life, we begin to grow into all that we are created in Christ to be. In the next four chapels during this camp, we will highlight other spiritual practices that help us embrace Christ, and thus grow.

Debrief Questions – Chapel 1



SEED: Dying (to Live)

1. What are your thoughts about “dying to live?” Does that make sense to you?

As we discuss these ideas, please know that God does not hold anything back from us. He is not requiring us to die before he gives us life. He gave us life even while we were “dead” and now that he has made us alive in Christ, we are invited to embrace that life.

2. What kind of environment (soil) are you now planted in? What kind of environment is your current life providing? Is it rich with nutrients: healthy and good? What is feeding your soul?



CHAPEL 2 – SPROUT

EMERGING

Life source: Sunlight / The Light that is Jesus

Practice: Spending Time with God in Creation

Text(s): John 8:12; 12:35, 45–47, Ephesians 5:8–13, I John 1:5–7

Resource: Nooma–Today

Suggested activity: As chapel begins (or as a dorm activity before), put campers in different groups than yesterday and have them mind-map their group response to this question:

- What is your picture, image, idea or opinion about God? (Specifically God the Father.) What do you think he is like?

Then ask each group where this idea comes from. Then, have them create a second mind-map related to this question:

- What is your picture, image, idea or opinion about Jesus? (Who is God the Son) What do you think he is like?

An embryo (which eventually grows into a tree) is located within each seed, yet not all seeds germinate. Favorable environmental conditions enable the embryo to grow, expand and break through the seed coat using the stored food supply of the seed for the necessary energy to grow. Yesterday we talked about the seed needing good soil to begin the growth process. The root grows down in the soil to anchor the sprout and search for water and nutrients, while the sprout grows up seeking sunlight. Ideally, the sprout will find light and then the leaves, or needles, will develop further to allow the tree to make its own food through photosynthesis (refer here to the pictures the groups drew yesterday).

Thus, we see that the seed, which is now sprouting, needs sunlight to grow. This sunlight gives it the energy it needs and the sprout can then push downward into the earth beginning its root system.

Just as the sprout needs light at this important stage – so do we. We need sunlight for physical health. And as humans created in the image of God, we need the true Light of God for spiritual life. And that True Light is Jesus Christ. As we spend time with him, we receive deeply of his light—his love, which transforms us.

John 8:12

¹² Later, Jesus talked to the people again, saying, "I am the light of the world. The person who follows me will never live in darkness but will have the light that gives life."

John 12:35, 45-47

³⁶ Believe in the light while you still have it so that you will become children of light." ⁴⁵ Whoever sees me sees the One who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come as light into the world so that whoever believes in me would not stay in darkness.

Light reveals. Have you ever taken a trip or gone somewhere at night, in the dark? When you look around, you can't see much. But the next morning, when the sun comes out you are able to get a completely new picture of your surroundings. "Ohhh, this is what it looks like. Now I see. I missed so much in the dark."

Jesus is true light—the light that reveals the Father to us. He shows us what the Father is truly like. Jesus said, "If anyone has seen me, has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Without Jesus in our lives, we are stumbling around in the darkness.

Every person was created to love and be loved. But often we don't feel loved, and thus we don't live as if we are loved. That is life in darkness. But the truth is that God who is love, loves us all unconditionally.

We see God's love in everything that Jesus did—how he lived, and how he died for us. That is how God the Father feels about us too. We are his and he loves us – whether we know it or believe it, or not.

Ephesians 5:8-13

⁸ In the past you were full of darkness, but now you are full of light in the Lord. So live like children who belong to the light. ⁹ Light brings every kind of goodness, right living, and truth. ¹⁰ Try to learn what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the things done in darkness, which are not worth anything. But show that they are wrong. ¹² It is shameful even to talk about what those people do in secret. ¹³ But the light makes all things easy to see, ¹⁴ and everything that is made easy to see can become light.

I John 1:5-7

⁵ Here is the message we have heard from Christ and now announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ So if we say we have fellowship with God, but we continue living in darkness, we are liars and do not follow the truth. ⁷ But if we live in the light, as God is in the light, we can share fellowship with each other. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin.

It's hard to imagine that God loves us completely, all the time. There are times we don't feel lovable or loved. But God's love for us is "unfailing" and repeat this theme, using those descriptors of overcast, or worse, when there is a strong, Of course it is. The sun is always there, even love for us—it never ceases. We need the God and to reveal the Father to us. Even feels like God is on vacation and he has taken he love is here with us. A line in a recent Cage the Elephant song goes like this: "Even on a cloudy day, I'll keep my eyes fixed on the sun." Even on a cloudy day in our lives, let's keep our eyes fixed on God's Son.



**Nooma:
Today**

"everlasting"—it "endures forever." The Psalms God's love over 75 times! When the sky is scary storm brewing – is the sun still there? if we can't see it. The same is true of God's light of Jesus – to show us the truth about when times are tough, when life stinks and it his love with him, it's comforting to know that

CONCLUDING QUESTION: In what ways do you walk in the “light?” (The way of Jesus)?

A practice that we can participate in that reveals God as our Creator, is spending time in his creation. Being around the natural things that God has created opens our eyes and enlivens our senses to the reality of God. Often we are too busy to “stop and smell the roses.” We rush around and miss the soft breezes blowing with the aroma of jasmine. We turn on the T.V. instead of watching a beautiful sunset. We miss the trees, flowers, plants, insects, sights, sounds and aromas of creation. God has made and sustains all these things.

Romans 1:20 (AMP)

²⁰For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity, have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made (His handiworks).

Spending time with God in creation is eye opening. Doing so doesn’t necessitate lengthy trips—it can be as simple as contemplating the intricate structure of a tree or flower in your back yard. Feel the rocks. Watch a bee pollinating flowers. Do this with the intent of communing—not just with nature, but with the One who created and now sustains nature. A quiet time in a meadow, field or park is refreshing and allows your pace to slow enough to hear God. Let what has been created reveal your Creator. See God and be rooted in his love.



Debrief Questions – Chapel 2

SPROUT: Emerging

1. Now that we've been through this lesson, has your picture of God changed? If so, edit it on your group's mind map (i.e., have the group compare the two mind maps they made and see if there's anything that needs to change).
2. Share a time when you were out in nature and experienced the reality of God's love.



CHAPEL 3 – SEEDLING

REACHING

Life source: Air & Oxygen / Presence of God

Practice: Prayer / Breath Prayers

Text(s): Romans 8:9–11; Ephesians 4:4–6, Colossians 1:15–17

Resource: Nooma–Breathe

The tree sprout now grows, developing woody characteristics. The soft green stem begins to harden, change color, and develop a thin protective bark. Leaves or needles develop and continue to search for light. The roots continue to grow downward, branching out to resemble an upside down underground tree with a flattened top. The majority of the tree's roots are in the upper portions of soil to absorb water and nutrients but also to breathe.

Trees breathe—they take in carbon dioxide from the air, with which they manufacture starches and sugars and gives off oxygen as a waste product. But trees face many threats. One in particular is air pollution, which often is caused by people---by their automobiles and factories. This pollution can lead to the production of “acid rain,” which can cause trees to defoliate. Without their leaves, trees cannot manufacture the food that keeps them alive and growing.

We too face many dangers—we are vulnerable and fragile, our life is but a breath and yet it is breath that keeps us alive and growing.

Spiritually speaking, what kind of “air” are we breathing? Is it polluted? Is it causing us harm?

CONCLUDING QUESTION: What are the things that we think are essential for human life? Conversely, what things in the environment keep us from that life? What spiritually might keep us from enjoying fully the eternal life that God has given us?

We think that the most important thing we need to live is air, water and food (and maybe good coffee ☺). These things are vital to our existence. But there is something even more fundamental to fullness of life—and that is God. He made the cosmos, the universe, the earth—and all of us.

Ephesians 4:4-6

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Thankfully, we don't have to remember to breathe. It comes naturally. As imperfect humans, though, we do need to remind ourselves sometimes how much we need God. We look around at all the good things there are and we think they will suffice to give us the joy and vitality we need. But they do not fulfill. They may be good, (and some are not so good for us) but they never fully satisfy. Only God fully satisfies.

One way that we can be reminded of our dependence on God is through prayer – specifically through what is sometimes called ***breath prayers***. These are short and simple prayers that can be said in the pattern of our breathing in and out [give an example].

[Give a handout, or display on the screen a few breath prayers, and have the audience practice them for a couple of minutes]

Here are sample breath prayers:

Jesus, may I walk in the light of peace.

Lord, may I sense your presence.

Spirit, breathe life into me.

May I trust you with my soul.

May I make you my refuge.

Lord, grant me an understanding heart.

May I be secure in you.

May I be strong-hearted today.

Open my eyes to your presence.

Please bless me with peace today.

Jesus, my faith rests in you.

May I accept what you have for me today.

Grant me a humble spirit.

Keep my heart close to your heart, O God.

Concluding thought:

God is as close (closer really) as your next breath. Praying as an act of breathing (breathing as an act of praying) can help close the gap that we might experience with God (that gap is only on our side—there is no gap on God's side, because in Jesus all people have been reconciled to God—he has closed the gap through his own Son!). May prayer help you to experience the reality of God's love—his presence that is with you always!



Debrief Questions – Chapel 3

SEEDLING: Reaching

1. How would life be if your air was cut off? How would your life be if you were cut off from God? *(Remember, we can't remove ourselves from God through our behavior. The connection is permanent, and in Jesus. So we are talking about whether or not we are enjoying and experiencing the connection that already exists).*
2. Do you find it hard to pray? If so, what do you think about breath prayers as an approach? *(Perhaps practice here some more breath prayers – see them imbedded in the lesson)*



CHAPEL 4 – SAPLING

DEEPENING

Life source: Water / Holy Spirit / God's Word

Practice: Bible Reading

Text(s): John 4:13–14, Jeremiah 17:7–8; Psalm 1:1–3;

Resource: Highway Media – The River

Start this chapel by having the audience divide into small groups for a brief activity: *Water is important to trees and humans. For minute or two, name as many things as you can that water is used for.*

A *sapling* is a small tree with a trunk usually between 1 and 4 inches in diameter at 4 ½ feet above the ground level. In this juvenile state, the tree is not mature enough to reproduce. However, it is rapidly growing. Its root system holds it securely in place and draws water and nutrients from the soil to nourish the tree. Trees make their own food from light, air and water in a process called *photosynthesis*. Water is combined with carbon dioxide by the tree's leaves as it uses sunlight to make food. One of the cool things about this process is that trees remove carbon dioxide (which is harmful to us) from the air and add oxygen to the atmosphere (which we need to breathe.) Thank you trees! We have talked about *light* and *air*, now let's talk about *water*.

In several places in the Bible, the writers liken people seeking for God to trees planted by an abundant source of water:

Jeremiah 17:7-8

⁷ "...Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Psalm 1

¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

[At this point you can view the video *The River*, available online
<http://www.highwaymedia.org/The-River-P831.aspx>]



at

Water is essential to a tree's survival, growth and vitality. What is our water source, spiritually speaking? Note Jesus' words concerning himself:

John 4:13-14

"Everyone who drinks this water (water from a well he was drinking from) will be thirsty again,
¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling (gushing) up to eternal life."

Just as a tree sinks its roots into the ground in search of water, we too need to search for what sustains us in life. Jesus is that sustenance. He is the true and living water. He invites us to plunge headlong into his love and life and drink deeply.

Water is essential to life. In dry places where water is scarce, it is a precious resource. When it is not scarce, we tend to take it for granted. We just turn the faucet and there it is. But in many places, people walk for miles to get just a small amount of water, which may not be at all clean.

In Bible times, water was so precious that it represented life itself. Flowing water was especially important. God showed his amazing provision to a band of people who fled slavery in Egypt to find a promised permanent home. They wandered in what the Bible calls the "wilderness"—a very dry, desolate and inhospitable place with very little food or water. The whole Israelite community was on the move. They had just left the Desert of Sin and had come to a place called Rephidim. There they camped, but there was no water and the people were very thirsty. . . So Moses cried out to God, "What can I do?" The LORD said to Moses, "Go ahead of the people with the elders . . . where I will stand in front of you on a rock at Mount Sinai. Hit that rock with your stick, and water will come out of it so that the people can drink." So Moses did as God told him, struck the rock and water gushed out as the elders looked on . . . (Exodus 17:1-5)

This event was always remembered in Israel during their Feast of Tabernacles celebration in the fall when they reflected on their wilderness experience. The celebration included a water pouring ceremony, which had meaning at several levels. One was to show reliance on God who provides water and rain. In that dry land, water was seen as a special, life-giving blessing from God—they called it "living water." So . . .

John 7:38-39

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Jesus here offers something (someone) even more life-giving and satisfying than water—the Holy Spirit, which Jesus identifies as the true "living water." The symbolism of water in connection with the Spirit is found often in Scripture and Jesus elsewhere promises to send the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:15-17, 26; 16:7, 13-15). The Holy Spirit is not a mere "force" or "power" but one of the three persons of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit guides us into truth, comforts us, empowers and encourages us. He gives us life (2Cor.3:6) and works in us to transform and renew us (Titus 3:5-7). We are "washed" by the Spirit who is "poured" out on us by the Father, through Jesus. The ultimate trifection! Just as a tree needs water to live, we need the Holy Spirit to impart to us the eternal life of God.

GROUP DISCUSSION: What do you think a relationship with the Holy Spirit looks like?

We relate to the Holy Spirit and he to us in many ways. A key way is his communication with us in and through the Bible (Holy Scripture).

The Bible is a special book, a collection of letters, stories, poems, history and accounts of God's love for humanity. It is written primarily in the form of narrative – story – but it's not just any story. It's *God's* story—the account of his passionate pursuit of us.

The plotline of this story of God is focused on God's interaction with humanity. It shows humankind turning its back on God, then returning, then leaving, then returning again – all the while God showing himself to be a faithful, relentless lover of humankind—offering to us redemption, restoration and reconciliation. The plot of God's story focuses not on our weakness but on God's power and grace—seen above all else in the person and work of his Son Jesus for us—God come among us, as one of us, in order to save us.

God the Holy Spirit leads us to read and to understand this story of God. In doing so, he plants our roots deeply in the nourishing soil of God's love. From there he nourishes us with the water of life—the love and life of God given to us through God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit uses Bible reading to shape our hearts and minds as he inserts us into God's story in a deeply personal way—the story becomes our own.

Now, the Bible can seem rather intimidating. It is long, and contains lots of unfamiliar words and hard-to-pronounce names. But understand this: The Holy Spirit will help you and guide you.

Remember that the Bible is read best with Jesus always in mind. Some say it this way: "Read the Bible through the lens of Jesus." We'll discuss some ideas about this in our Chapel debrief.

Jesus, who is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, is our "light" and "living water." The Bible is a great reservoir of life-giving stories that point us to Jesus. Thus, there is no better place to go to have your spiritual thirst quenched. Jesus said it this way: whoever "drinks from him will never be thirsty again." Drink deeply from Scripture!



Debrief Questions – Chapel 4

SAPLING: Deepening

1. In what ways are you nourished by reading the Bible?
2. What is your favorite part of the Bible and why? What other books do you read for spiritual nourishment?
3. Here are some helpful tips for a Bible reading plan (copy and hand out the next two pages to your campers, briefly discuss the options given).

Tips for Bible Reading

Sacred Bible Reading (Lectio Divina)

- Read a selected scriptural passage slowly, attentively several times. If you wish, you can write down words from the scripture that stick out to you or grab their attention.
- Take one of the words or phrases that you picked out and reflect on it, thinking in God's presence about the text. The Holy Spirit's ministry to you can impart spiritual understanding of the text.
- Next pray to God with intent to also listen to him. In this prayer, allow the word that you have taken in and on which you are pondering to touch and change your deepest self. In this way, you allow yourself to be touched and changed by the word of God.
- Finally, focus on God and his love. Enter into a beautiful, wordless contemplation of God, a joyful rest in His presence.

Use a Daily Plan:

Bible reading plans walk you through the entire Bible over the course of a year. There are many different ways to do it. These plans will have specific readings that will take you straight through (Genesis to Revelation) or by reading a small portion of a different section of the Bible each day. Ask your parents to go online with you to find one that works for you.

Use S.O.A.P.

This is an acronym for a type of Bible reading and journaling. It stands for the following:

Scripture: Start off with the Bible. Read the verses that are on your plan for the day.

Observation: As you read, write down any observations that you have from the text. Use the questions, "Who is God?," and "How do I enjoy Him?," to focus your observations even better.

Application: Based on what you have read...what should you do? Try to make this practical and realistic. Set a goal for the day based upon your reading. Write it down and hold yourself accountable to it.

Prayer: Last but not least, spend some time in prayer to God. Confess and repent of any sins that were brought to light while you were reading. Spend time thanking God. Also, spend some time in silence listening to God. Make note of these in your journal.

Helpful Tips for Reading the Bible (From American Bible Society)

Reading the Bible is one way to learn about God and what God wants from us. When we read the Bible, we read about a specific people and their relationship to God, but we also can learn about our own relationship with God. Set aside time to read the Bible on a regular basis. Be realistic. For some people, this may be a few minutes once a day. For others, it may be a longer time a few times a week. Try to make it about the same time each day, whether in the morning, at lunchtime, or just before going to bed.

Find a quiet place so that you can be alone with your thoughts without being disrupted. If you find it helpful, you might want to have a notebook nearby to jot down questions and thoughts you have as you read and reflect on the biblical text.

Begin by praying. You may want to spend a few minutes in prayer before you begin reading. Ask for an open mind and for God's guidance.

Here are some suggestions for reading the Bible. These are only suggestions for you to use as a model as you find your preferences for spending time with the Scriptures.

1. Select a passage/ text

Some people find it helpful to follow a specific Bible reading plan to guide their reading. Many Bibles have reading plans included at the back. The American Bible Society provides a Daily Bible Reading plan that you might want to consider. Other people want to read through the Bible on their own. Still others move from one passage to another based on preference, lectionary readings, or Church School lessons.

Any of the above ways to select a passage is fine. The important thing is not to spend too much—if any—of your reading time in selecting the passage!

2. Read the passage the first time

Read the passage the first time without stopping in order to gain an overall sense of the passage. Listen to your initial reactions to the text...both positive and negative.

3. Read the passage a second time

As you read, pause from time-to-time and answer questions about the background (or context) of the passage. You might choose to pause between verses or small groups of verses, between significant events or announcements in the passage, or between any natural break you see as you read. Below are some types of questions about the context of a passage that you might find helpful as you read.

In what book of the Bible is this passage found?

Is this book a prophetic book? A historical book? A book of poetry? A Gospel? A letter?

What happens immediately before and after the passage? In other words, what is the specific literary context of this passage? Who are the main characters in this passage? Do they speak or do others speak for them? What are the relationships between these characters?

What is the relationship between God and the characters in this biblical text?

Where did these things take place?

What are the key places mentioned or assumed in the passage? What has happened before this passage? What is happening during this passage? In other words, what is the specific historical context of the passage?

What are key words or phrases that are repeated in the passage? What is the significance of these words?

Are cause and effect relationships established in this passage?

Are any comparisons made or similarities pointed out? Are there any contrasts made between people, things, or ideas?

What is the intent or purpose of the passage?

As you ask yourself these questions, answer them in your words. Be careful to listen to the text. Try to avoid listening to what you want the text to say to you. If you are using a notebook, take a few minutes to write down your answers to these questions. Be prepared to be comforted by the text, but also be aware that you may also be confronted, even challenged.

4. Read the passage a third time. Then reflect on your answers to these questions.

What did I learn about God from this passage? What did I learn about human nature?

What did I learn about my own relationship to God? In other words, how does this passage apply to me?

Is there anything I need to change in my life based on my reading of this passage? How can I be stronger in my faith?

What can I do to show God's love to people in my life?

If there is one verse or part of a verse you would like to remember, you might want to write it on an index card and carry it with you throughout the day.

5. Finally, thank God for the time you had to read from Scripture.

Ask God to help you make the changes you identified.

For Tips on Studying the Bible, Versions of the Bible, Inspiration and Authority of the Bible among many other great articles about the Bible you can go to www.gci.org/bible.



CHAPEL 5 – MATURE REPRODUCING

Life source: Reproduction / Spirit Empowerment

Practice: Discipleship, Service

Text(s): Hosea 14

Resource: Nooma–Dust, or Nooma–You

With favorable conditions, a sapling will continue to develop into a mature tree. During this stage of a tree's life cycle, each tree grows as much as its species and site conditions permit. In addition, during this stage, reproduction occurs: flowers develop, fruit forms and seed is dispersed. And the life cycle repeats itself.

Seed from trees is eaten by animals, blown by the wind into rock crags, or into rivers, and other often hostile and inhospitable environments. Seed can be trampled underfoot. Sprouts and seedlings can be scorched by the sun, choked out by weeds or plucked by birds to be used as nesting material.

Saplings have to contend with other plants and trees for space, sunlight and water. Harsh weather can damage or doom all of them.

Mature trees, though, are rooted deep. They can withstand the harsh elements of wind, rain and cold. They aren't impervious to harm like disease or fire or the woodsman's axe, but what was once very vulnerable as a seed or sapling, is now mature and able to survive and even thrive by reproducing—bearing fruit. Mature trees also provide shade and shelter for wildlife, and food for both animals and humans.

However, the top branches, limbs, bark and leaves of a mature tree remain healthy and life giving only as the tree remains deeply rooted in fertile soil, receiving what it needs from the soil together with what it received from sunlight and air.

When a tree reaches maturity in reasonably good health, it becomes what it was created to be – life giving. It produces fruit with seed that falls to the ground or is dispersed through harvesting by humans or animals, or dispersed by forces of water or wind. The dispersed seed then starts the cycle all over again: from germination to maturity. By God's design, multiplication occurs. That's also God's design for you.

There are many amazing books and stories in the Bible about God's design for us—one of them is the book of Hosea. It's the story about Israel's unfaithfulness, but its focus is not on human failure but on God's faithfulness—his unfailing love for his people. It is the story about how God, in love, restores his unfaithful people. It ends with an invitation to his people to turn to back him (we call that repentance)—to come out of the darkness into his marvelous light of love, moving into God's design for their lives.

God's desire for his people (who are a picture of all humanity) is that their roots be deeply planted in his love and there they will flourish. To tell this story, Hosea uses the imagery of fruitful trees and blossoming vines and flowers. This is a picture of health and vitality—fruitful life:

Hosea 14 (NCV)

¹ Israel, return to the LORD your God, because your sins have made you fall. ² Come back to the LORD and say these words to him: "Take away all our sin and kindly receive us, and we will keep the promises we made to you. ³ Assyria cannot save us, nor will we trust in our horses. We will not say again, 'Our gods,' to the things our hands have made. You show mercy to orphans." ⁴ The Lord says, "I will forgive them for leaving me and will love them freely, because I am not angry with them anymore. ⁵ I will be blossom like a lily. Like the cedar firm. ⁶ They will be like spreading trees and the sweet-smelling Israel will again live under my grain, they will bloom like a vine, and Lebanon. ⁸ Israel, have nothing to do with idols. I, the Lord, am the one who answers your prayers and watches over you. I am like a green pine tree; your blessings come from me." ⁹ A wise person will know these things, and an understanding person will take them to heart. The Lord's ways are right. Good people live by following them, but those who turn against God die because of them.



We have looked at the elements that impart life, nutrition and health to a tree: soil, sunlight, air and water. In order for a tree species to continue on, there must be reproduction. In order for this reproduction to occur, the tree must give itself.

It is the same with us. By becoming human, the Son of God gave God's own life for us, so that we, in turn, might share that life with others. In this way, we are participants in God's own life-giving. As co-workers with Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to help others be "planted in the soil of God's love,"—we share in what God is doing to open people's eyes—to escort them out of the darkness into the light, which is the love and life of Jesus with them.

It is our high calling to help people be connected to the reality of God's presence with them. We do so by journeying with them—showing them God's love—helping them learn to "breathe in" the love of God on their own. As we journey with them, we point the way to the "water source" and offer to them a cold, refreshing cup of the water of God's grace in Jesus.

This journey, this relational process, is *discipleship*. Discipleship is not a fancy program or a mechanical method to get someone to think as you think. It is life-on-life sharing of God's love and life—allowing yourself to be a conduit of the water of life—a vessel of God's grace.

You don't have to wait until you've fully mature to start being a disciple-maker who participates actively with Jesus in the discipling process. Your roots may already be deep enough in Jesus to begin to help someone else as they journey.

A tree does not hold onto all of its sources of life—rather it uses them to root deeply, and there utilize these resources by giving them away through reproduction. We are blessed in order that we might be a blessing to others.

Matthew 28:16-19 (NCV)

¹⁶ The eleven followers went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.¹⁷ On the mountain they saw Jesus and worshiped him, but some of them did not believe it was really Jesus. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. ¹⁹ So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age."

"Go, teach, share, disciple, serve, love with Jesus." You may think there is no way you could do that. You might think you're not ready to be a disciplemaker with Jesus.

Maybe; maybe not. But know this: God gives you all you need. Through the Spirit, it is in you. Now it may need to be discovered, coaxed out, developed a bit—but it's in there. What it takes to be a tree is in the seed. What it takes to serve, love and disciple is in us. The faith of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit are in you.

May you be deeply rooted in God's love so that you may flourish and grow and help others do the same.



Debrief Questions – Chapel 5

MATURE: Reproducing

1. Can you see that God grows you and wants you to live deeply rooted in his love so that you can help others do the same? Share your thoughts on the idea of discipleship.

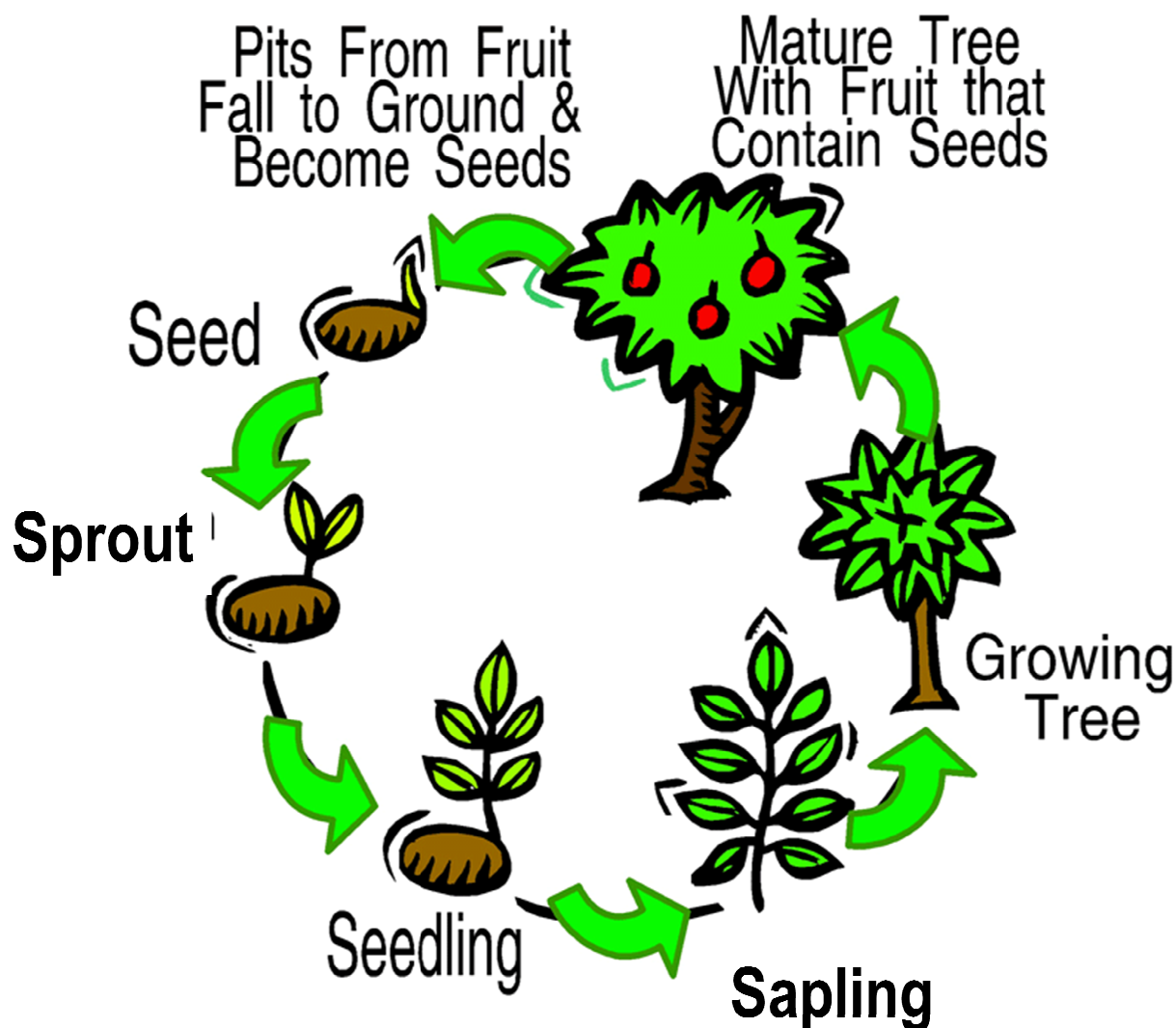
(If Nooma “Dust” was shown to the campers, ask what they think of the idea that Jesus has faith in them – faith that you can be like him?)

(If Nooma “You” was shown, ask what they think of this statement: “You are the gospel.” Or, “If people had your life (as the only example to look at) and they were asked the question, ‘Has Jesus risen from the dead?’ how would they answer?”)

2. Which of the five “practices” are you most excited about and why?
(Silence/Solitude, Spending time with God in Creation, Breath Prayer, Bible Reading, or Discipleship/Service.)

Note: in order to set up for this question at the end of camp, consider throughout camp having a chart on the wall where, each day, you add the practice covered that day.

3. What are your goals and hopes for life after camp? (Especially in light of hearing about how trusting Christ will enable your roots to grow deep down into God’s love and keep you strong and help you understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.) How will you engage with and solidify what you learned this week into your life and the lives of others?



John 3:16-17 (MSG)

¹⁶⁻¹⁸“This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.”

Genesis 18:1-2, 10, 18-19

¹ The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. . . . ¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” . . . ¹⁸ Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

Story of Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 21:1- 22:1-18

¹ Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac^[a] to the son Sarah bore him . . .

Genesis 22:1-18

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am,” he replied. ² Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” ³
Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. ⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

¹² “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.” ¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

EPHESIANS 3:14-19 (NIV)

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

John 14:9b-11

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

Ephesians 2:1-6 - He Tore Down the Wall

¹⁻⁶It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

Exodus 17:1-5

¹ The whole Israelite community left the Desert of Sin and traveled from place to place, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink.² So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why are you testing the LORD?" ³ But the people were very thirsty for water, so they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Was it to kill us, our children, and our farm animals with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried to the LORD, "What can I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me to death." ⁵ The LORD said to Moses, "Go ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you. Carry with you the walking stick that you used to strike the Nile River. Now go! ⁶ I will stand in front of you on a rock at Mount Sinai. Hit that rock with the stick, and water will come out of it so that the people can drink." Moses did these things as the elders of Israel watched. ⁷ He named that place Massah,^[a] because the Israelites tested the LORD when they asked, "Is the LORD with us or not?" He also named it Meribah,^[b] because they quarreled.

WATER & HOLY SPIRIT SCRIPTURES

Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 12:10

Titus 3:5-7

³ In the past we also were foolish. We did not obey, we were wrong, and we were slaves to many things our bodies wanted and enjoyed. We spent our lives doing evil and being jealous. People hated us, and we hated each other.⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was shown,⁵ he saved us because of his mercy. It was not because of good deeds we did to be right with him. He saved us through the washing that made us new people through the Holy Spirit.⁶ God poured out richly upon us that Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Savior.⁷ Being made right with God by his grace, we could have the hope of receiving the life that never ends.

Isaiah 49:10 / Revelation 7:16-17

¹⁰ They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water . . .

¹⁶ 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any

scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

Revelation 21:5-7; 22:16

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. . . . ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Ezekiel 19:10-11

¹⁰ "Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water. ¹¹ Its branches were strong, fit for a ruler's scepter. It towered high above the thick foliage, conspicuous for its height and for its many branches.

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Romans 8:9-11

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Hosea 14 (NIV)

¹Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! ²Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. ³ Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion." ⁴"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. ⁵I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; ⁶his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. ⁷People will dwell again in his shade; they will flourish like the grain, they will blossom like the vine— Israel's fame will be like the wine of Lebanon. ⁸Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a flourishing juniper; your fruitfulness comes from me." ⁹Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

AIR / OXYGEN

What is air made of?

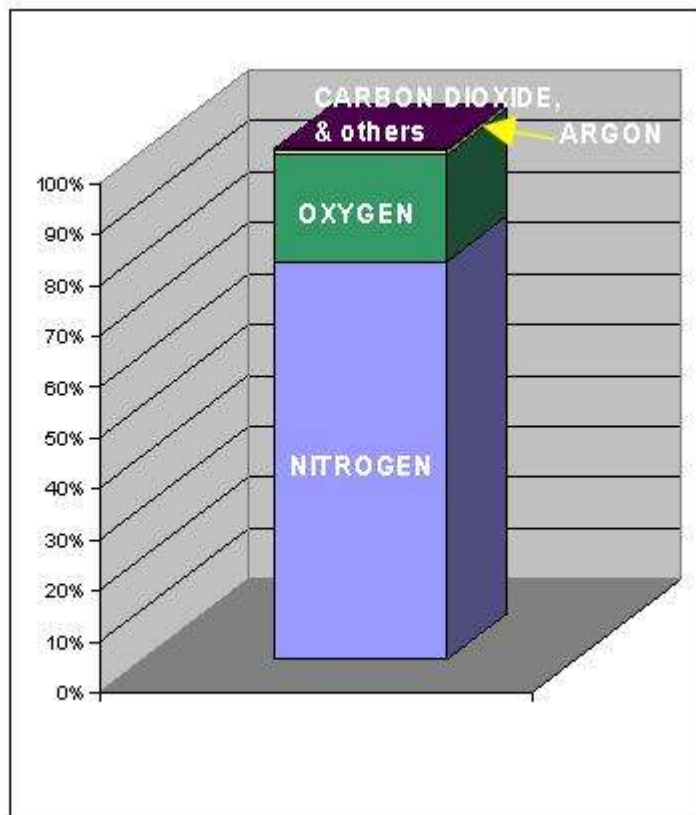
Dry air is primarily made up of nitrogen (78.09%) and oxygen (20.95%). The remaining 1% is made up of argon (0.93%), carbon dioxide (0.039% as of 2010) and other trace gases (0.003%). Water vapor (water in its gaseous state) is also present in the atmosphere in varying amounts, by up to 2%.

Interesting facts:

CARBON DIOXIDE: The amount of carbon dioxide, although small, will likely double in the next 100 years as more petroleum and coal is burned to fuel the world's need for energy. About half of the carbon dioxide produced in this way gets absorbed by vegetation, which uses it for photosynthesis.

OXYGEN: While we know that vegetation produces oxygen as part of photosynthesis, the origin of the huge amount of oxygen in the atmosphere (20.95%) is somewhat of a mystery. Most of it is thought to have been produced from chemical reactions in ocean sediments.

(page last updated 11/26/2010) http://www.weatherquestions.com/What_is_air_made_of.htm



Composition of the Earth's Atmosphere

Source: Definition of the U.S. Standard Atmosphere (1976)
CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, 77th Edition

Gas	Formula	Abundance	Abundance
		percent by volume	parts per million by volume
Nitrogen	N ₂	78.084%	780,840
Oxygen	O ₂	20.9476%	209,476
Argon	Ar	0.934%	9,340
Carbon Dioxide	CO ₂	0.0314%	314
Neon	Ne	0.001818%	18.18
Helium	He	0.000524%	5.24
Methane	CH ₄	0.0002%	2
Krypton	Kr	0.000114%	1.14
Hydrogen	H ₂	0.00005%	0.5
Xenon	Xe	0.0000087%	0.087

http://education.jlab.org/glossary/abund_atmos.html

Here is an article that speaks to “dying to self” or, as the article phrases it, moving from the “false self” to living out of the “true self.”

TAPING FRUIT ON TREES

Ian Morgan Cron

Thomas Merton was one of the great religious masters of the 20th century. Trappist monk, writer, social critic, activist, poet, photographer and painter, Merton's capacity to articulate the ways that ordinary men and women could live extraordinary spiritual lives is unparalleled. He has marked my life more than any other Christian thinker.

I became a follower of Jesus in Young Life in the 1970s. After "giving our lives to Christ," my leader told my friends and me that the focus of our lives was to "become like Jesus." We took this project to heart. We scoured the gospels, cataloging the actions of Jesus so we could mimic them, believing this was what it meant to be conformed to the image of Christ.

More often than not, this effort led to feelings of shame when we failed to live up to the ideal of Jesus, or worse, to a spirit of smug superiority when we managed to get it right. In the words of Mark Twain, many of us became "good in the worst sense of the word." I fear that this reductive approach of imitative discipleship remains popular in many quarters.

For me, the problem with reducing spiritual formation to simply imitating Jesus was that it was confusing. The more I focused my energies on acting like Jesus, the more confused I became about my own God-given identity. In becoming like Jesus, was I being asked to sublimate or self-negate my own unique person?

Not only was imitating the life of Jesus confusing, it also felt inauthentic. Most of the time, I was just taping fruit to the tree and calling it spiritual growth. In the end no one could give me a clear answer about how this process of becoming like Jesus really worked.

Then I read Merton.

In Merton's book *New Seeds of Contemplation*, I came across a liberating statement that clarified my understanding about the end game of spiritual formation.

Merton writes, "For me to be a saint means to be myself."

At first, I bristled when I read this assertion. It sounded like Merton was encouraging a model of spiritual formation that was excessively self-interested; one that was all about me rather than all about Jesus. But in fact, nothing could be further from the truth! This statement should be heard often from people who care about spiritual formation.

Merton believed that each of us goes through life shadowed by an illusory person he calls the false self. The false self is a distortion of our true being. It is an empty and manipulative persona whose goal is to get the rest of the world to revolve around our egocentric desires. It seeks to convince others that it has the credentials and right to rule its own little kingdom, not to mention everyone else's.

The false self scans the environment while asking the question, *"What mask must I wear right now to convince others and myself that I am in ultimate control of my fate? What social image do I need to project that will fool*

others into believing that I can make life work apart from God? What do I need to do to manipulate others to admire me?" It can be argued that the false self is the locus of sin.

The person who is no longer content to live life hidden from God, herself and others is moving toward the true self. Unlike Adam, who covered himself and hid from God in the garden, the true self wants to know and be known by God.

In Merton's *An Invitation to the Contemplative Life*, editor Wayne Simsic describes the true self as that part of us that has "let go of any pretense of ultimate control. It embraces gifts, talents, skills, and body as wondrous graces from a loving God. The true self...seeks only to do the will of God, which is, simply put, to love. The true self finds rest in God's embrace; it is the self at home in the person of Jesus Christ."

If the false self seeks to "exist outside the reach of God's will and God's love," then the true self seeks to live theocentrically; deeply embedded in the loving heart of God.

What would happen if we were to frame the journey of spiritual formation as being about identifying and deconstructing the false self so the true self can gradually emerge, to live in naked, honest, authentic relationship with God? What would it look like to employ a spiritual formation model that includes weaning ourselves off the need to live behind the mask of the tyrannical false self so we can become truly ourselves? Is it possible that becoming truly oneself is what being conformed to the image of Jesus means?

The false self will not go quietly. Dismantling the scaffolding of our false selves and encouraging our true selves to emerge is a painful, frightening and lifelong journey. As Richard Rohr writes, though, "Once you learn to live as your true self, you can never be satisfied with this charade again: it then feels so silly and superficial."

*Ian Morgan Cron is an author, speaker and Anglican priest. His book *Chasing Francis: A Pilgrim's Tale* (NavPress) has been hailed and endorsed by The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Brian McLaren, Fr Richard Rohr, Phyllis Tickle, Tony Campolo and Brennan Manning. He's currently writing a spiritual memoir for Thomas Nelson to be released this spring. He lives with his wife Anne and three children in Franklin, TN and Dorset, VT*

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