



HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN

A HOPE SERMON SERIES

Arise & Shine

Growth Group Guide

Theme: Arise and Shine

Topic: Plugged In God – Part 1 – God is our Foundation

Key Point: GRASPING GODS LOVE enables us to ARISE and SHINE

Key Scripture: [Ephesians 3: 14 - 19](#)

4 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family[a] 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.

GROUNDED IN LOVE

1. Paul uses two images below to describe what being rooted in love looks like. Which image do you most identify with and why?

a) A growing tree that sinks down its roots enabling it to withstand drought and the fierce storms of life...while getting its nourishment, nutrients, water and very life from ground.... To be rooted in God's love means.... getting all, we need in him.

b) And a strong foundation.....Connected to, infused into the rock enabling the building to withstand the elements... To be grounded in God's love is to have your deepest foundation in him— He is what we build our entire lives upon.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S LOVE

2. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was quoted to have said that "Indeed, our chief defect as Christians is that we fail to realize, hold onto, grasp Christ's love for us." Discuss his comment; Do you agree or disagree? Do you relate with his comment?

3. The word Paul uses for love in Ephesians is agape, which means, unmerited or unconditional love. The author Watchmen Nee contrasts God's love with our human expression of love: "The nature of God's love is unchangeable. Ours alternates all too readily. If it is our habit to love God with our own affection, we shall turn cold towards Him whenever we are unhappy." If Paul and Nee are right, how should we

respond to God's unmerited/unconditional/unchanging love? (Psalms 139:8-10, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4)

GRACED BY LOVE

Paul's prayer intimates that in our strength we cannot comprehend God's love for us but in His grace, He strengthens us to HELP us grasp how;

- Broad the love of God is... that it encompasses people from every tribe and tongue
- That it is so long that it stretches from the very foundations of the world through the present and into eternity
- So high that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ raising us with him.
- So deep that it was able to reach us even when we were in complete trouble and dead in our sin.... or when we feel we are sinking in a sea of doubt.

1. What do you think/feel about the idea that you need help in order to grasp/understand how much you are loved?

2. Do you think/feel that you experience God's power to help you grasp His love for you?

3. God's love is transformative i.e. He loves you too much to leave you unchanged. Transformation can bring some pain but ultimately bring good outcomes. When things have been tough, in what ways has God reminded you that He still loves you?

PRAYER POINTS

1. What are some of the things that prevent you from receiving God's love? Bring them before God in prayer.

2. Pray for each other to experience His power to help in receiving His love.

Theme: Arise and Shine

Topic: Plugged In God – Part 2 – People are our priority

Key Scripture: [Ephesians 2: 19 - 21](#)

9 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When Paul says in his writing that the Ephesians were 'no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people,' what was the context he was writing in with regards to the relationship between the Ephesians/gentiles and the Jews? What possible parallels could you draw between Paul's context and ours?
2. What do the terms 'citizens' and 'household' bring to mind? What could Paul be aiming to say about what it means to come under God's leadership?
3. Paul employs building construction language to make his point. What point is He seeking to make?
4. Through Christ the community of faith becomes a holy temple. Through Christ the individual becomes a dwelling place of God's Spirit. Is it possible for God to dwell in the hearts of believers and fail to dwell in the gathered community of believers?
5. It is clear that God through Christ is seeking to dwell in our hearts as well as in the community of followers of Christ, how can this insight shape the practice of our faith?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray into things that cause separation/division in God's household.

Theme: Arise and Shine

Topic: Switched On – Part 1 – In Faith

Key Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-10

2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.”[b]

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”[c]

8 and,
“A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”[d]
They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

PREAMBLE

Peter is writing to a persecuted community of faith. In chapter 1 he reminds them of the certainty of their salvation owing to the finished work of Christ on the Cross. He reminds them that their faith is precious – worth suffering for - and that God is calling them to live out holy lives, set apart and distinct from the ways of the world. Now in chapter 2 he urges them to pursue maturity of faith, leaving behind all that was of the world and press on and into God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Peter employs the metaphor of a newborn that craves milk that in turns brings growth. He seems to imply that 'spiritual milk' is available for his readers to take and grow in their salvation. What could the 'spiritual milk' represent?
2. Peter uses the metaphor of a building and likens his readers to living stones that are being fitted together – by God – to make a spiritual house where spiritual sacrifices are offered to God. This speaks to the call for daily surrender to God that is a spiritual act of worship (Rom.12:1-2). What is the connection between surrendering to God and faith in God?
3. After conferring on his readers titles of esteem and honour, Peter mentions that they are now to 'declare the praises of him who called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light.' The journey of moving from darkness and into God's light, is likened to responding to the irresistible call of God. That journey tells of the power of God and can build the faith of others. Attempt to summarise your own journey down to one minute and share with the group. Remember to praise God through your one-minute story!
4. 'Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.' The switch of identity is striking and this now becomes a key pillar of Christian faith. Remembering who you are and whose you are through Christ establishes a secure base to build your faith and life. In what practical way(s) do you remind yourself of your identity in Christ? What regularly challenges your identity in Christ?
5. 'Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.' A key outcome of coming to Christ and submitting to his leadership is the removal of a guilty conscience by knowing you have been forgiven by God. This reality silences condemnation and creates a faith-nurturing mental and emotional space. (Rom.8:1-2). What are some practical ways that as a group you can help each other accept and embrace God's forgiveness?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray through areas or talking points that stood out in your discussion.

Theme: Arise and Shine

Topic: Switched On – Part 2 – In Gifting

Key Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:11-16

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Romans 12:3-8

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,[b]do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

PREAMBLE

Paul in writing to Ephesians stresses how maturity of faith and character come through the equipping of the saints by the work of the five-fold ministries. In writing to the church that met in Rome, he stress the place of humility that rises out of acknowledgement that the body though one, it has many parts that serve different functions

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Christ is the one that gives His church the gifts of leadership to equip His followers for works of service. What does this insight reveal about Christ? What

does this insight reveal about the church? In what way can this insight encourage participation in the life of the church?

2. The purpose of equipping the saints for works of service is to facilitate maturity into Christlikeness. What does this insight reveal about Christ? What does this insight reveal about the church? In what way can this insight encourage participation in the life of the church?

3. Paul writing to the Romans says that 'For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.' There is acknowledgement of distinctives yet awareness that interdependence and connectedness for normal functioning of the body/church. What practical thing(s) can the church do to better reflect this Scriptural image of the body? What are some things that come in the way of this image being fully realized?

PRAYER POINTS

1. Pray for courage for those who are feeling prompted to step into areas of calling
2. Pray for healing for those who are wounded by burn out.
3. Pray for unity of the church
4. Pray for the leaders of the church

Theme: Arise and Shine

Topic: Shine Bright – Part 1 – Individual

Key Scriptures:

Exodus 34:29-35

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Moses came down from Mount Sinai because he had spoken with the Lord. The glow on Moses was as a result of close interaction with God. Because Moses' face had a literal glow after being with God, what can we say about the very presence of God?

2. Now figuratively, Paul writes in 2 Cor.3:7-18 and states that like Moses, followers of Christ are being transformed into the image of Christ and their glow/character will progressively increase as the day of Christ approaches. What can we learn about the connection between our testimony to the world and our ongoing personal transformation?

3. The knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ i.e. to be aware that Christ reflects the true heart and character of God, is the light of God shining on the heart of the believer. To see Christ is to see God. To receive Christ is to receive God. Suggest one practical way that one can help to make this insight clearer and more believable in our day and age.

4. What does the 'jar of clay' represent? How can this image encourage one to evangelize more?

5. Pray together

Theme: Arise and Shine

Topic: Shine Bright – Part 2 – Corporately

Key Scriptures:

Isaiah 60:1-3

“Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

2 See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

3 Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Matthew 5:14-16

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Your Light has come... glory of the Lord rises upon you. Even though this is in the Old testament, it is fulfilled in Christ and connects with last week's summary of the New testament text 1 Cor.4:6-7 ...God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. The appropriate response to the appearance of this Light, was to arise and shine/reflect the light. What did it mean for the listeners of this prophecy? Why do you think this was the appropriate response to the appearance of the light?

2. What 'Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples' imply?

3. 'Nations will come to your light.' It is striking that this comes across with certainty as if a kind of declaration/proclamation as opposed to a mere possibility. What new light does this shed with regards to the nature of this light and also the state of those in darkness?

4. Matthew seems to insist that it is highly unlikely that one who has received this light will unexpectedly hide it. At the very least, Matthew is saying it should come naturally to us to want to let the light shine. How have you let the shine in the past one month?

PRAYER

1. Pray for boldness and wisdom when it comes to evangelism
2. Pray into belief blockers of our society