



Thy Word

(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for most effective study. Passages are printed below for ease in presentation.)

Share your favorite Bible passage with a partner or small group. Why is this your favorite? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should start to begin discussion.**

What Bible passage might help you witness to the Gospel news of mercy and grace in Jesus Christ? How? Share with your partner or the small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

The Psalmist proclaims: *Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (119:105 RSV). When we come to study God's Word, we know that He promises to guide and direct us through His Words of mercy and life.

Opening Prayer: Father, You created the world and each of us. In Genesis, You spoke the words, *Let there be ...* and it was so. Thank You for giving us life. We know that by disobeying Your Word of Law, we were all plunged into the mire of sin, despair, and death. In mercy You sent Your only Son, the Word made flesh, to live a perfect life, suffer, and die for our sins. Because He rose from the dead, we, too, will rise to eternal life. Thank You for the gift of Your Spirit Who uses Word and Sacraments as the means by which He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us. May He give us power to boldly witness to others about the Good News of salvation in Jesus as we live out our vocations. In the name of our Life-Giving Word we pray, Amen.

Thy Word of Mercy

Read **Romans 5:12-14** (review also **Genesis 3:1-7**). **Romans 3:23** declares, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*, and **Romans 6:23a**, *For the wages of sin is death*. How did sin enter God's perfect world? **The devil enticed Adam and Eve with "being like God" and they disobeyed God's command; because of that one sin, we are all born in original sin; death came to God's world.**

Romans 5:12-14: ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

(Genesis 3:1-7: ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.)

Faith Talk: Read **Hebrews 4:12**. What does it tell us about God's Word? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. The Word shows us our sin.**

Hebrews 4:12: ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Read **Psalm 32:3-4**. What are the physical and spiritual consequences of sin in our world? _____
Bones waste away, groaning, spiritual anguish, strength was sapped, the weight of sin was a burden.

Psalm 32:3-4: ³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

See **Galatians 5:19-21** and **Ephesians 2:1-3**. Make a list of sins and their effect on our world.

Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, dead in trespasses and sins, follow the course of this world, follow the prince of the power of the air, disobedient, live in the passions of our flesh, carry out the desires of the body and the mind.

Galatians 5:19-21: ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 2:1-3: ¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

The word "mercy" has been defined as "not getting what you deserve" because of sin. Read **Psalms 51:1-5** and **130:1-3**. Describe the feelings of the Psalmist as he pleads with God. Be specific. _____ **Answers will vary but could include: despair, anguish, sorrow, regret, urgency.**

Psalm 51:1-5: ¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalm 130:1-3: ¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! ²O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! ³If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

Read **Psalms 30:10-12; 32:1-2; and 103:1-13**. What phrases does the Psalmist use to describe the mercy of the Lord? _____ **Mourning turns to dancing, clothe with gladness, blessed, sin is covered, forgives all your iniquity, heals diseases, redeems your life from the pit, crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, satisfies you with good, renews youth like the eagle's, works righteousness and justice, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, removes our transgressions, shows compassion.**

Psalm 30:10-12: ¹⁰"Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me! O Lord, be my helper!" ¹¹You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, ¹²that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Psalm 32:1-2: ¹Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Psalms 103:1-13: ¹Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! ²Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. ⁷He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. ⁸The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

Faith Talk: If you are comfortable, share a time when mercy was shown to you. What did you deserve and what did you receive? How did you feel? Share with a partner or small group.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

The word “grace” has been defined as “getting more than you deserve.” Read **Romans 3:23-25** and **Ephesians 2:4-9**. What does God in His infinite mercy give to us for the sake of His Son?

Grace, Jesus’ righteousness, gift of justification, redemption, His love, life together with Christ here and in eternity, faith.

Romans 3:23-25: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Ephesians 2:4-9: ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Thy Word of Life: Here

God desires us to share His grace and mercy here on earth. Read the parable told by Jesus in **Matthew 18:21-35**. Who received mercy? **The servant who owed a great debt.** What did king expect the forgiven one to do with the mercy given to him? **Share that mercy with others, “and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”**

Matthew 18:21-35: ²¹Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Romans 6:11 encourages: *So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* God has given us many passages in His Word that can be used as a model for living

our lives as His people here on earth. Read the following passages and share some characteristics of Christian living.

Romans 8:5 _____ **Minds are set on the things of the Spirit.**

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-26 _____ **Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, crucified passions and desires, follow the Spirit, are not conceited, don't provoke each other, don't envy each other.**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Philippians 4:4-9 _____ **Joyful, reasonable, not anxious, pray, have the peace of God. Set minds on things of truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness and on things that are commendable, excellent, worthy of praise.**

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

1 Peter 2:16 _____ **Live in freedom and as servants of God.**

¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Colossians 3:12-17 _____ **Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bear with one another, forgive each other, put on love, let Christ's peace rule in our hearts, be thankful, let God's Word dwell in you richly, and do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Faith Talk: The Holy Spirit uses God's Word and Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) to work faith in the heart of every believer. The Spirit is at work through His Means of Grace. Share with a partner or small group specific ways that you use these Means in your daily living. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Thy Word of Life: Eternally

We are given God's hope for eternal life in His Word. Read Jesus' own words in **John 3:16**. Why might this be called the "Gospel in a nutshell"? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

What does God promise to us in **Psalm 23:6** and **Romans 6:4-5**? _____ **I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever; we have newness of life and resurrection in Jesus.**

Psalm 23:6: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Romans 6:4-5: ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

What is eternal life according to **John 17:3**? _____ **They know the true God through Jesus Christ.**

John 17:3: ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

How can we know Jesus and become heirs of eternal life in Him? Read **John 20:30-31**. _____ **Through God's Word.**

John 20:30-31: ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

What does God encourage us to do in **Jude 21**? _____ **Keep in the faith and mercy of Jesus that leads to eternal life.**

Jude 21: ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Faith Talk: How does the hope of eternal life in Jesus affect your daily Christian life here on earth? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Read these words from Jude 24-25 together: *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

Faith Walk:

1. Thank God for the gift of His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you focused on the Word and to give you boldness to proclaim the Gospel to those who need to hear the Good News.
2. Praise God for those who have shared and continue to share God's Word with you.
3. Memorize Psalm 119:105. Read the verse in several different translations.
4. Pray that you remain faithful in God's Word and Sacraments as you live with the hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Closing: Sing or listen to "Thy Word is a Lamp" (*LSB* 973) — **Go to the internet and perhaps play a video or audio of this song. The accompaniment for the hymn is found in the Lutheran Service Book Accompaniment Edition (Concordia Publishing House)** — or "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage" (*LSB* #582; *LW* #333; *TLH* #283).

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