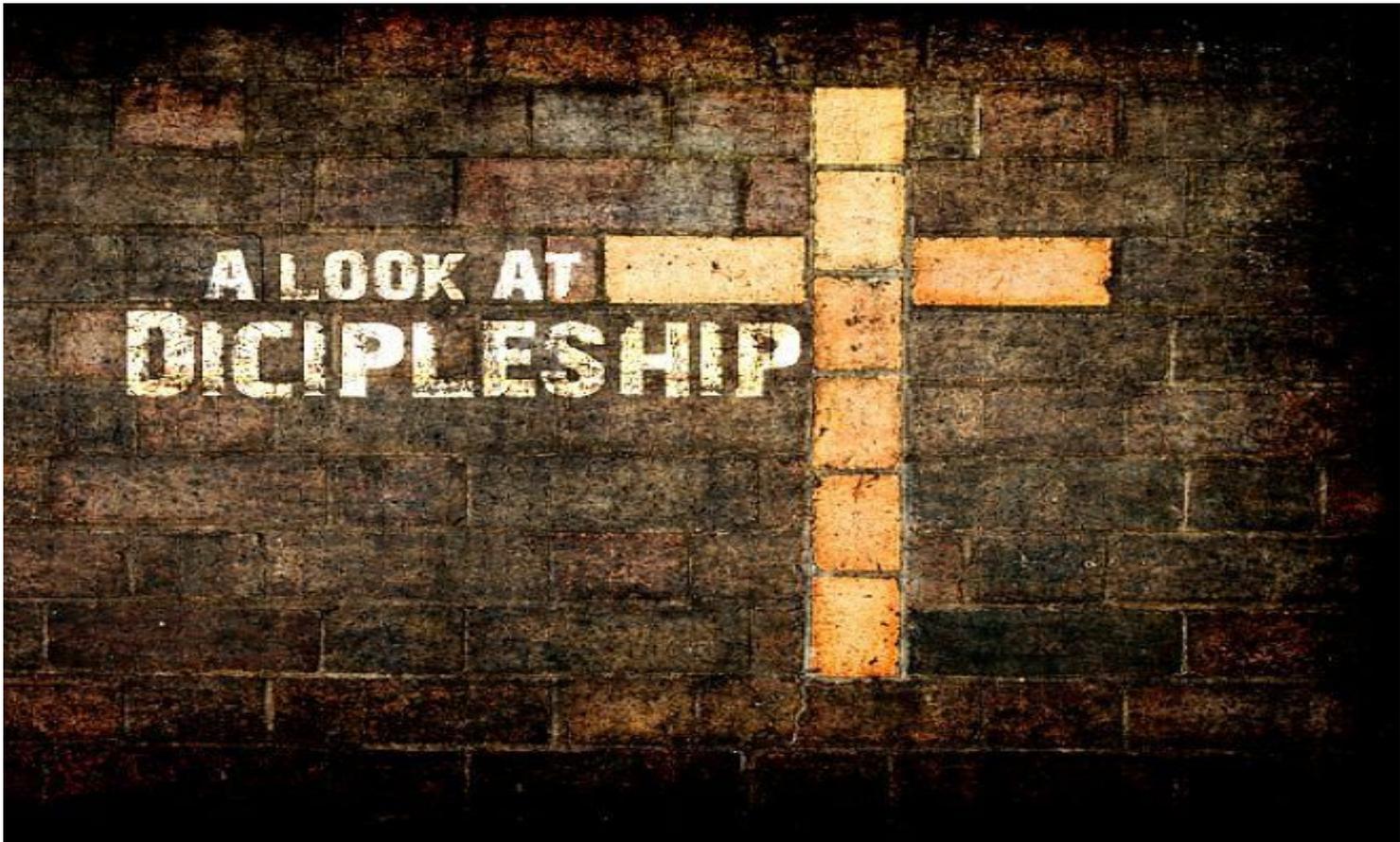


Highland United Methodist Church
Home Group Study
May/June 2018

"What should I do, Lord?' 'Get up,' the Lord replied, 'and go...'"



Acts 22:10b

Ground Rules for Home Groups

DON'T FIX: Try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want your advice, they'll ask for it. If people think that as soon as they share a problem or issue everyone is going to immediately try to fix them (offer advice/solutions) often they simply won't share at all.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Don't be thinking about what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond. Really listen (for the purpose of understanding).

PAUSE: After someone shares, give a pause to allow the group to feel the weight of what was just shared and to fully consider it before the next person shares. This also provides the person sharing with the opportunity to continue with their thought without feeling rushed. Often people will only share what's above the waterline, but if given the opportunity (and encouragement), they might share the deeper things. (Lots of things happen in the 'pause')

SILENCE: This is much like the pause but used in a broader and more deliberate way. Silence is used to wait for someone to share next without trying to fill the void with talk. Silence can create tension in a group, but tension isn't a bad thing if used wisely. (Let silence do what silence does.)

NO "CROSS-TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

DON'T RESCUE: When people are sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and result in their not getting as deep as they might have gone. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

USE 'I' STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment – words, actions, and non-verbal communications.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: It's important that we all use this time to consider where we stand on any given subject or issue. How am I walking this out in my personal life? How does this affect my ability to lead others? What is my part of the issue and/or solution? What positive change does God want me to make?

MODEL HOME GROUP:

- Welcome
- Opening Prayer
- Purpose/Vision Casting
- Ice Breaker
- Topic/Story
- Preparing our Hearts
- Tell the Story
- Rebuild the story
- Read the story
- De-brief the story
- Close in prayer

Week 1

Jesus Finishes The Work Of Salvation.

John 18 – Acts 1

Big Idea: Jesus volunteers his death and controls every aspect of his last moments. No one took his life—he gives it.

Daily encounters:

Day 1 John 18

Day 2 John 19

Day 3 John 20

Day 4 John 21

Day 5 Acts 1

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What evidence can you see of Jesus being in control even during his arrest in the garden?

Day 2: How many times does Pilate go back and forth between Jesus and the Jewish leaders? Pilate knows it is right to release Jesus so why didn't he do it?

Day 3: What does Mary Magdalene expect to see at the tomb? What do you make of her slowness to believe? What is it that finally dried her tears?

Day 4: How many times does Jesus question Peter? What does he ask him? How do you think this relates to Peter's earlier denials of Jesus?

Day 5: What kind of power does the Holy Spirit give to the church? What is the mission of the church?

Home Group:

Warm up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. Have you ever served on jury duty? What was it like?
2. As a child, what was your greatest fear?
3. When did you have trouble believing something that turned out to be true?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: John 20:24-29

Ask someone to read the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Why do the gospels record such an embarrassing story about Peter who was the great leader of the early church? How do you explain the change in Peter from his fear-filled denials in John 18 to his bold preaching in Acts 2?
2. How is Jesus a king? If his kingdom is not a political kingdom (18:36), what kind of kingdom is it? If the cross is his throne, what message does it send about his power?
3. John is the "disciple whom Jesus loved". Why does Jesus want him to see Mary as his mother? How does the Cross make strangers into family?
4. There are many great religious leaders and teachers. What is it about Jesus in these chapters that sets him apart from all others?

5. If the Resurrection is true, what does it require of us? How does the resurrection reveal the meaning of life and the destiny of the human race?

Faith in Action

1. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you”. Where is Jesus sending you this week? What does he want you to do when you get there?
2. Why did John write his gospel (20:30-31)? What will you do to help others believe and have life in Jesus?

Prayer time with group

Notes

Week 2

The Holy Spirit fills the church!

Acts 2 - 6

Big Idea: Through the Holy Spirit, the church carries on the mission of Jesus.

Daily encounters:

Day 1 Acts 2

Day 2 Acts 3

Day 3 Acts 4

Day 4 Acts 5

Day 5 Acts 6

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What are the main points of Peter's sermon? How does he want people to respond? What is repentance?

Day 2: What are the main points of Peter's second sermon? How do they compare to his first?

Day 3: What does the Holy Spirit do in this chapter? What does it mean to be "filled with the Holy Spirit"?

Day 4: Who did Ananias and Sapphira lie to? Why was this so serious?

Day 5: What was the conflict in chapter 6 and how did the church resolve it?

Home Group:

Warm up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. What is the strongest windstorm you've ever seen?
2. How do you feel about public speaking?
3. What is the most courageous thing you've ever had to do?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Acts 3:1-10

Ask someone to read the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Acts has been called the "acts of the Holy Spirit". How does the Holy Spirit inspire and guide the events of Acts?
2. The life of the early church is summed up in Acts 2:42-47. What are the most important aspects of the church's life? How does our church measure up to this outline?
3. Acts 4:12 says there is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ. What does this mean for us? Is it true? If so, how does it change the way we think and act?
4. In 5:29 Peter says to the court that he must obey God rather than men? Under what circumstances are Christians required to engage in civil disobedience? How should Christians go about making such a momentous decision?

5. Gamaliel points out that many religious movements have come and gone so it's not necessary to oppose them since most religious fads fade away? How would you explain the explosive growth and endurance of Christianity across time and culture and geography?

Faith in Action

1. What stifles the power of the Holy Spirit in you? What can you do to break up the logjam and get the Spirit flowing again in your life?
2. Who are the lame and needy within your eyesight whom you could help in the name of Jesus Christ this week?

Prayer time with group

Notes

Week 3

Origins of a Disciple

Acts 7-11

Big Idea: Discipleship is Inclusive

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Acts 7

Day 2: Acts 8

Day 3: Acts 9

Day 4: Acts 10

Day 5: Acts 11

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What incites the stoning of Stephen? Does this tell you anything about the nature of what the Sanhedrin worships? (Acts 7)

Day 2: In what ways does the persecution of the early church help the church? (Acts 8)

Day 3: What is it that Ananias understands about God that allows him to accept the news of Paul's conversion? (Acts 9)

Day 4: What does verse 15 tell us about Christ's work in regard to God's covenant with the Jews? (Acts 10)

Day 5: In chapter 10 Peter begins his ministry to the gentiles. Why does he have to defend this in chapter 11? (Acts 11)

Home Group

Warm Up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. What's the strangest food you ever had to eat?
2. Have you ever had to change your mind about someone?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Acts 9

Ask someone to tell the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Often we are told to be wary of authority that claims divine sanction. Stephen says the problem with the Sanhedrin is not that they claim divine authority, but that they reject God. What does this tell us about the relationship between God and human authority?
2. We often perceive persecution as a tragedy. Was the persecution in chapter 8 a tragedy for the church? Why?
3. How central is forgiveness to Christianity? How can the story of Paul's conversion help us answer that question?
4. A common criticism on Christian belief is that it excludes. Does the story of Peter's vision support that criticism? Explain your answer.

Faith in Action

1. Ananias was bold in his obedience to God. Are there any areas in your life where you need to be bold?
2. Peter was tasked with communicating both God's grace and God's law to a permissive pagan culture. How can we communicate the inclusivity of God's law?

Prayer Time with Home Group

Week 4

Paul Begins His Journey

Acts 12-16

Big Idea: Discipleship sends us out to the world

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Acts 12

Day 2: Acts 13:1-48

Day 3: Acts 13:49-52; Acts 14

Day 4: Acts 15

Day 5: Acts 16

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What were the different responses to Peter's escape from prison (i.e., Peter's, Herod's, those Christians praying for Peter), and why do you think these individuals responded as they did? (Acts 12)

Day 2: What part of Paul's speech do you find most encouraging? Why did "almost the whole city" return to hear them on the next Sabbath (v 44)? (Acts 13:1-48)

Day 3: Besides eager acceptance (as in most of chapter 13), what other types of responses greeted Paul and Barnabas on their journey? (Acts 13:49-52; Acts 14)

Day 4: What is the main point of contention to be settled by the council, and what are the main opposing arguments? (Acts 15)

Day 5: Considering both this passage and the setting in which this took place, what charges do you think were levied against Paul and Silas; why were they *really* imprisoned? (Acts 16)

Home Group

Warm up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. If you could travel anywhere, where would you want to go, and why?
2. Relate an instance when someone tried to encourage you? How badly was it needed? What did they do? What impact did it have on you?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Acts 12:1-7; 13:1-3; 13:42-52; 14:21-28; 15:12-21

Ask someone to tell the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Why did Paul (with Barnabas and later with Silas) go on these journeys? Was it to do more than to spread the "good news" (13:32-33)? If so, what else did Paul's journeys accomplish? What, if anything, does this tell us about what we should be doing in our "journey" in the world?
2. It seems that the message was being effectively spread during this time (12:24, 13:49). If you were there during that time, what would have had the biggest impact on you: the miracles being performed, the powerful speeches, the courage of the apostles, the message itself, something else? Why?
3. Why were some (non-believing Jews and Gentiles) angry with Paul? Was it the message, Paul's actions, something else? When a message of yours fails to have the desired response, do you ever doubt yourself and/or the adequacy of your message? Do you think that those who

did not believe are described as having "rejected it" or as having "refused to believe" (13:46 and 14:2) says anything about whether the message was adequate and delivered clearly?

4. What arguments were made to the apostles and elders concerning the dispute over whether the Gentiles needed to be circumcised or not? Which do you find most compelling and why? What requirements did the council set in their response? Why do you think they included these? See 1 Corinthians 8; what does this say about the possible rationale?

Faith in Action

1. Who in your life is in need of encouragement or support? What can you do to help them in their journey?
2. What persecution and challenges do you face in your life? How could your responses be more like Paul's?
3. What impact would more courage and determination have on your life and your mission?

Prayer Time with Group

Week 5

Paul Brings The Gospel To The World

Acts 17-21

Big Idea: Discipleship reveals God's presence in the world

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Acts 17

Day 2: Acts 18

Day 3: Acts 19

Day 4: Acts 20

Day 5: Acts 21

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: How did Paul tailor his presentation of the gospel to his audiences, especially in verses 1-4 and verses 22-34? Do you speak the gospel to those around you? How do you explain God's judgment to others (cf. verses 30-31)? (Acts 17)

Day 2: Paul didn't take rejection of the gospel personally (verse 6); do you take it personally when people attack the gospel either to your face or on the Internet? Where does the strength come from to do this (cf. Luke 10:11)? (Acts 18)

Day 3: How do verses 1-22 show Jesus's authority over everything, including evil spirits? What does verse 30 show about listening to godly counsel? (Acts 19)

Day 4: What emotions do you see here from Paul? What does he do with those emotions? (Acts 20)

Day 5: Does Paul's courage in the face of violence (starting in verse 11 and culminating in verse 31) inspire you or intimidate you? Do you depend on Jesus when threatened? (Acts 21)

Home Group

Warm up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. What is your favorite summer activity or vacation?
1. Did you ever go camping when growing up?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Acts 20:13-37

Ask someone to tell the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Why does Paul say in verse 26 that he is “innocent of the blood of any of you”?
2. What should we “be on guard” against (verse 31)?
3. The statement “I consider my life worth nothing to me” stands in contrast to how many of us live our lives. What is Paul focused on instead in order to make such a statement?

Faith in Action

1. Do you find time to “help the weak” (verse 35)? If so, how?
2. Do you know what “task the Lord Jesus has given” you (verse 24)? What can you do to prioritize it in your life like Paul did?

Prayer Time with Group

Week 6

The World Strikes Back

Acts 22-26

Big Idea:

Discipleship Pits Us Against the Rulers and Principalities of the World's Darkness

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Acts 22

Day 2: Acts 23

Day 3: Acts 24

Day 4: Acts 25

Day 5: Acts 26

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Paul addresses a crowd and tells them his story. What upset the crowd to the point of demanding he be flogged? And why do you suppose that information was so alarming to them? Something saved Paul from being beaten, what was it? (Acts 22)

Day 2: This chapter illustrates the differences between Sadducees and Pharisees. What are those differences and how did it affect the way they saw Paul? (Acts 23:26-30)

Day 3: The governor, Felix kept Paul in prison for two years. Do you think he honestly believed Paul had committed a crime? For what political reason did he leave Paul in prison after he was succeeded in his post? (Acts 24)

Day 4: Why did Paul ask to appeal to Caesar? Why do you think King Agrippa wanted to hear Paul's story? (Acts 25)

Day 5: Again Paul tells his story, this time to Agrippa. How do you suppose his story sounded to those who held political office? What was Agrippa's response? Do you think he was sympathetic to Paul at all? (Acts 26)

Home Group:

Warm up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. Have you ever seen a ghost a supernatural experience? What was your reaction?
2. Do you consider it an advantage to be an American citizen in today's world?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Acts 26

Ask someone to read the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Paul's arrest and trials parallel Jesus's experience in many ways. Both stories point out the reluctance of any political leader to take a stance and make a decision. Why do you think this was the case?
2. Often our perspectives, as Christians threaten the secular world. We sometimes meet opposition in our own circle of family or friends. How do you handle it when someone challenges you and asks you to state which "side" you support? There are many controversies of that kind going on right now. Gay marriage? Abortion? Even the preference to say "Merry Christmas." How should we express ourselves when we take a stand?
3. The interesting thing about Paul's imprisonment is that no one seemed to really believe he did anything wrong, yet they were reluctant to release him. Even the first commander who held him took action to make certain he was not lynched. Imagine, for the moment, the possibility that these authorities secretly believed Paul and did not want to be responsible for his death? Is it ever okay to downplay one's Christianity in order to be accepted by the secular populace?

Faith in Action

1. We know taking a stand for Christ will often pit us against the world. Do you regularly need to remind yourself that as a Christian you are *in the world, but not of it*? Is it difficult? What examples can you use to illustrate this concept to your children/friends?

Prayer Time with Group

Week 7

Paul Confronts Our False Gods

Acts 27-Romans 3

Big Idea: God Wants to Break Your Heart

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Acts 27

Day 2: Acts 28

Day 3: Romans 1

Day 4: Romans 2

Day 5: Romans 3

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What finally drove the sailors to listen to Paul? How was God glorified by the outcome of the sailors' pride? (Acts 27)

Day 2: What does Paul do while he is on the island of Malta? How did God use the misfortune of being shipwrecked to further the kingdom of God? What does this teach us about God's will and how we perceive it? (Acts 28)

Day 3: What happens to the unrighteous in verses 21-25? Compare where this progression starts to where it ends? Does this seem like the natural end? (Romans 1)

Day 4: Read James 1:21-24. Compare and contrast this with Romans 2:8-16. How does this insight develop our understanding of righteousness vs. un-righteousness? (Romans 2)

Day 5: In Romans 22-24 Paul points out that all are welcome to receive redemption because all have sinned, both the Jew and the Gentile. What does this teach us about the nature of false gods and the nature of sin? (Romans 3)

Home Group

Warm Up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. What is the roughest boat ride you have ever experienced?
2. What is your favorite distraction when you procrastinate?
3. What is your favorite was to stay focused?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Romans 1

Ask someone to tell the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Read Romans 1:16-17. According to these verses, is faith a onetime choice? How does this change the way we live out our faith?
2. In Romans 1:21-27 Paul connects idolatry to sexual immorality, one variety of sexual immorality in particular. Does this connection surprise you? Does Paul's discussion here shed light on why faithful Christians insist that sexuality is something about which Christianity ought to have an opinion?
3. Read Deuteronomy 5:6-21 and Romans 1:29-30. Compare and contrast the two lists. How does this change the way you read the rest of Romans chapter 1?
4. Romans 1 contains a lot of extremes that are easy to exclude yourself from when reading. Read the last two verses of the chapter, what are some extremes our current culture promotes that we accept without recognizing the dangers of that acceptance?

Faith in Action

1. What are some practices we can take up to choose faith anew every day and "live faith to faith" as Paul says to do in Romans 1:17?
2. How can we approach our culture and the problems facing it to better spread the grace and redemption of Jesus?

Prayer Time with Group

Week 8

Paul Confronts Our Self-Destruction

Romans 4-8

Big Idea:

A Relationship with Christ Saves Us from Both Sin and the Law.

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Romans 4

Day 2: Romans 5

Day 3: Romans 6

Day 4: Romans 7

Day 5: Romans 8

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What do you think Paul means when he writes that Abraham “is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised”? (Romans 4)

Day 2: Review Paul’s reasoning regarding how sin came into the world. Why do you think it is important that Christ is the “second Adam”? (Romans 5)

Day 3: Why do you think Paul uses the metaphor of slavery to talk about **both** sin **and** righteousness? (Romans 6)

Day 4: Review verses 21-24. Can you relate to Paul’s conundrum? (Romans 7)

Day 5: What do you think Paul meant when he wrote that “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”? (Romans 8)

Home Group:

Warm up: *(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)*

1. Learn the song, “Father Abraham” along with the hand motions. Can everyone in the group keep up with the hand motions while you sing it?
2. What’s the best gift you’ve received when you were a child?

Hearing God’s Word Together

Story passage: Romans 7

Ask someone to read the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God’s Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Review Romans 4. What is meant by the word “righteousness?” What is normally thought to produce it? How is it that faith can produce righteousness?
2. In Romans 5:12 Paul writes, “just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. . . .” Part of the scriptural support for the doctrine of Original Sin, this passage strikes many as highly unfair, even barbaric. How is it that all of humanity could come under indictment because of the actions of one man? Even if this is not literally true, do you think it is an accurate assessment of our own condition? Do we carry with us the guilt of generations past? Do we really act out, wittingly or unwittingly, the sins of our parents?

3. In Romans 7 what do you think Paul means when he writes: “For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.” How is it that sin and the law are related? How, according to Paul, does this affect our behavior? What is the relationship between sin and death? Although we know from scripture that the wages of sin is death, is Paul referencing some other kind of death as well?

4. Review Paul’s famous conundrum in Romans 7:14-24. For Christians, this summarizes the central psychological fact of the human life. Do you agree with Paul’s evaluation? If this is the case, do justifications like, “I was born this way!” make any sense at all? What is Paul’s (and Christ’s) solution?

Faith in Action

1. Given that we are all slaves to sin and equally condemned apart from Christ’s gift to us, how might this knowledge affect how we behave toward those who have hurt us?
2. A line from one of the most popular songs in recent years goes, “I was born sick, but I love it.” How ought a Christian respond to a sentiment like this? How should we treat unrepentant sinners?

Prayer time with group

PRAYER JOURNAL

I'm called to
MAKE DISCIPLES
because the
SACRIFICE
it requires is a
powerful way to
live out the
STORY OF THE CROSS

Home Group Leaders Role Description

Highland United Methodist Church

Mission of Home Groups

- Equip followers of Jesus Christ to be disciples who make disciples (*Matt. 4:19*)
- Connect believers to other believers
- Help develop disciples and build Christian relationships
- Support each other as we apply God's Word in our lives
- Provide social and service-oriented fellowship opportunities

Roles of Home Group Leaders

- Shepherd – share your life, go after stray “lambs” and model Godly habits
- Facilitator – coordinating communication within your group and the Home Group Support Team
- Prayer Warrior -- pray for members and keep a prayer journal

Recommendations for Home Group Structure

- Establish consistent meeting dates and locations
- Consider Home Group Co-Leaders to share the responsibility and provide ongoing support
- Provide regular communication (email or phone calls) for meeting reminders
- Request group members to RSVP for proper planning before each meeting
- Offer light refreshments - *optional*

Resources for Home Group Leaders

- The Bible
- Home Group Study Booklet (*monthly hard copies in the lobby*).
- Sermon Notes

CONNECT with God. GROW in Spirit and Truth. SERVE the World for Jesus Christ.

