

# Immersed in God's Word, following Jesus – together

*They took note that they had been with Jesus. ~ Acts 4:13*

## Monday, Jan 29 Theme: Experiencing the Face of God

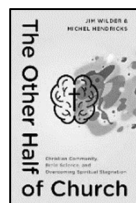
*The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face toward you  
and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26*



**Pondering Point:** Our theme this week revolves around the face of God. The concept is used multiple times in Hebrew, but often translated as the Presence of God. Former discipleship pastor Michael Hendricks devotes an entire chapter to understanding the face of God in his book, *The Other Half of Church*. Here is a quote from that chapter:

“When I compared the many scriptures that describe God's face shining on us with what I now know about how our brains were designed, I came to three important points of convergence:

- (1) Joy is primarily transmitted through the face (especially the eyes) and secondary through voice.
- (2) Joy is relational. It is what we feel when we are with someone who is happy to be with us. Joy does not exist outside of a relationship.
- (3) Joy is important to God and to us.”



56, Wilder, Hendricks, *The Other Half of Church*

Use this priestly blessing as a basis for prayer as you move into the rest of your week looking for His face to shine upon you.



**Prayer:** Lord God, thank You for blessing us and keeping us; for making Your face shine on us and being gracious to us; for turning Your face toward us and giving us peace. Amen.

## Micro-Group Connections: A Disciple's Lifestyle



**Micro-Group Moment:** We see group life as essential in connecting people with God and others as we read the Bible. A disciple's lifestyle includes participating in group life. And we aim for weekly connection that may sound like a big commitment. But hear me out. You'll be surprised how readily this adapts into the lives of people. Group life supplements the overall goal of connecting people with God daily through His word and prayer as we practice the values of being in God's word and under the influence of His Holy Spirit, these are enhanced as we share that Word and Spirit's influence within Christ-centered groups. God uses us to shape one another: our experiences, our thoughts, our conversations, our struggles, our joys, our celebrations – all viewed through the lens of walking with Jesus our Lord.

### ***Spiritual Micro-Group:***

A connection with one to four others that acknowledges God.

By, the way, you can file this next piece under the “did you know” category. Leonard Nemoy, AKA Spock, drew his inspiration for the Vulcan salute from the hand gesture associated with the priestly blessing taken from Numbers 6. Here is a brief explanation below:

### **LIVE LONG AND PROSPER**



SHADDAI is a Hebrew name for LORD.  
The Temple Priests would hold out their hands  
in this position to give the Benediction:

**"May the LORD bless you and keep you. May He lift up His Face to shine Light upon you and be gracious to you, and may He give you Peace."**

## Tuesday, Jan 30: God's Mission in Luke 19:1-10

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd.*

TRANSFORMATION  
**TUESDAYS**



**Pondering Point:** Read Luke 19:1-10. The Bible story with Zacchaeus is selected for our “face of God” theme because of his great desire to catch a glimpse of Jesus. As the children’s song relates it, “he climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see.” Keep in mind that this is a full-grown man of significant wealth climbing this tree. He was a man on a mission.

Little did Zacchaeus know that while his mission was to take Jesus in with his eyes, Jesus had a mission to take Zacchaeus in heart, soul, mind, and strength. By the time Jesus finished eating with Zacchaeus, this wealthy tax collector was putting into action what Jesus called the greatest command: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*” The second is this: “*Love your neighbor as yourself.*” There is no commandment greater than these (Mark 12:30-31). As a result, we hear Jesus say, “*Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*” Whereas the face-to-face experience Moses had with God changed his outward demeanor (Exodus 33:11, 34:29-35), time with Jesus creates a change in Zacchaeus from within. In both cases, it is evident they had been in the presence of God. This begs a question: Do you spend time with God and is it evident to others? Let pray on that.



**Prayer:** Father God, I know that spending time with You is good for me. I know that it is good for others that I spend time with you. Show me how to make time with you a continual priority – and let this time with You be evident in the way I live my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

*For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 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.* ~ Ap. Paul, 2 Corinthians 4:6

**Because God made His light shine in our hearts, we count ourselves as servants of others for Jesus' sake.**



**Pondering Point:** Read through 2 Corinthians 4:6. The bible uses a variety of descriptions to capture what it means to be a follower of Jesus – *disciple* being one among many. While talking to His disciples in the Upper Room, Jesus says, *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you* (John 15:15).

In elevating them to *friends*, He does not negate other uses of the term *servant*. He described Himself as one who came to serve by giving His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). We too then, as friends of Jesus, look to serve others for Jesus' sake. In other words, we serve to highlight what Jesus stood for. In doing so, we hope to see people experience the love, joy, and peace that comes through encounters with God – particularly displayed in Jesus Christ.



**Prayer:** Thank You Heavenly Father, for shining You light into our hearts. Even more so, let there be light! I ask to be used as a servant to enable others to experience *the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ*. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I found out from Jim and others that God designed our brains to run on joy like a car runs on fuel.

55, Wilder, Hendricks, *The Other Half of Church*



*Hear my voice when I call, LORD;  
be merciful to me and answer me.  
My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"  
Your face, LORD, I will seek.  
Do not hide your face from me,  
do not turn your servant away in anger;  
you have been my helper.* Psalm 27:7-9



**Pondering Point:** As you read the above verses, note two conversations in there. One is between the writer David and His God, the Lord. The other is an internal dialogue from one part of David (the heart) to another (mind? soul? spirit?). This is not unusual, as David speaks to his soul in Psalms 42, 43 and again in 103. That soul cries out to God after being encouraged to do so by his heart. This is a godly kind of self-talk – way better than calling ourselves names or beating ourselves up internally. Let's revisit our internal conversations and re-center them around God.



**Review:** How does self-talk go for you in general: positive or negative? Do you build yourself up or tear yourself down? Is God welcome into such conversations, as with David?



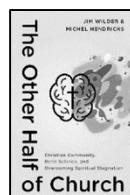
**Repent if necessary** using negative talk against one of God's children (even if it is yourself!). Or, if necessary, repent of leaving God out of these significant dialogues about you.



**Return as necessary:** Consecrate your whole self to God – your heart, soul, mind, and strength. As God to help you align your “parts” with Him and his will for you.

“God's face is connected with joy in the Bible. One of the first scriptures I memorized when I was a new Christian was Psalm 16:11, ‘in your presence is fullness of joy.’ However, the original Hebrew renders this verse, ‘abundance of joy with your face.’ “

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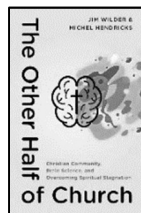


*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ. ~ Ap. Paul, 2 Corinthians 4:6*



**Pondering Point:** When you read about the glory of God being displaying in the face of Jesus, then compare it to the priestly blessing of Numbers 6, Jesus becomes the literal embodiment of this benediction. He is the blessing of God – in the flesh. He is the BLESSING from GOD for the people of God. Let’s take in another quote from Hendricks connecting these dots about joy and the face of God:

“When I read ‘the Lord make His face shine on you’ and ‘the Lord turned His face toward you,’ this sounded like the neurological definition of joy. This blessing falls under the definition of joy that Dr. Shore discovered from his research on the brain. We don’t know his beliefs, but the professor was discovering what God knew all along. God designed our brains for joy, and He wants us to live in the glow of His delight. This blessing expresses a joy that can be paraphrased, ‘May you feel the joy of God’s face shining on you because He is happy to be with you.’”



54,55 Wilder, Hendricks, *The Other Half of Church*



Think about stories you’ve learned of encounters Jesus had with people. Which of them strikes you as displaying God’s blessing onto His people in the person of Jesus? Which of your own stories strike you as displaying God’s blessing onto you in the person of Jesus? Take time to thank God for them both.



**Prayer for the day:** Father God, thank You for the blessings of light and life that come to us through Jesus. Continue to let the darkness be overcome in me and others. Amen.

## Saturday, Feb 3: Scripture's Story for the Week

### Jesus at the House of Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10



**Pondering Point:** Re-read the story from Luke 19:1-10. We visited this story Tuesday looking from the vantage point of Jesus' mission with Zacchaeus – to bring salvation to his house. Zacchaeus hosted Jesus and saw his life changed; we too host Jesus, not just in our homes, but in our hearts. *How is He inspiring change in your life?* Don't drift past this question; pause and ask Him what impact He is (should be) having. Consider coloring the picture below while you ponder the question.



**Prayer for the day:** Lord Jesus, I am Your host in this temple of my body. May I also host You in the midst of my home, within my relationships and in the center of my life choices. In Your name Jesus I pray. Amen.



## Accept one another

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you,  
in order to bring praise to God.   Romans 15:7*



**Pondering Point, part one:** Stop and think on this: When you accept someone (like Christ accepted you), it brings praise to God; it's an act of worship. When Jesus chose to love and accept you – it wasn't because you earned it -- the wages of your sinful life were death, but he gifted you with life. Let's gift others with similar acceptance. Who knows – through our God-honoring act of acceptance, God might breathe a little life out there through the same grace he used to accept you as His child in Jesus.



**Prayer:** Father God, from grace given (by You) to grace given (by me to others), may Your grace be received by those around me. Let my acceptance of others align with your will and Spirit, Your Word and ways. In the name of Christ I pray. Amen.

*And*

so that you may live under the same grace  
you are to offer to others...

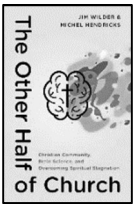


**Pondering Point, part two:** Stop and think on this as well: When you accept yourself like Christ accepts you, you emulate the One who died to set you free; it's an act of worship. Who knows – through our God-honoring act of acceptance, God might breathe a little life in there through the same grace he used to accept you as His child in Jesus.



**Prayer:** Father God, from grace given (by You) to grace given (by me toward myself), may Your grace do its God-ordained work. Let my acceptance of myself align with your will and Spirit, Your Word, and ways. In the name of Christ I pray. Amen.





Here are a few more lengthy quotes to chew on from *The Other Half of Church*:

When translating the original languages of the Bible, joy sometimes disappears in modern languages. We see it clearly in the Hebrew, but it gets lost in translation. An example is Psalm 89:15. The NIV translates this, “Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.” In the Hebrew, “in the light of your presence is literally “in the light of your face.” 54

In John 15, Jesus talks about how He loves His disciples with the same love that the Father has for Him. Then He says, “I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (v.11) If we replace “joy” with the fuller definition, Jesus’ statement in John 15 would be, “My father's face lights up when He sees me because I'm so special to Him. I'm telling you this so that you will feel how special you are to My Father and to Me. Our faces are shining on you with delight.” I can feel that in my body when I picture it. Can you? 57



Joy helps us regulate our emotions and endure suffering. Jesus refused to relinquish joy in the midst of His suffering on the cross. When we are able to stay relationally connected to others and God, we experience joy while we suffer. Joy does not remove our pain, but it gives us strength to endure. Remember that joy is relational, so “joy in suffering” means that God and our community are glad to be with us in our distress. They do not allow us to suffer alone. We are able to bear our suffering like Jesus, “who for the joy set before Him endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). 59

A high-*hesed* community is bound together by strong and lasting attachments. Ideally, spouses, family, and close friends naturally enjoy *hesed* relationships... Character develops through relationships -- *hesed* relationships -- that can handle times when things go wrong. A secure *hesed* attachment can ride through storms and remain loving. 81, 82