

FAMILY FOCUS

MARCH 2020

CONNECT WITH CHRIST, CHURCH AND COMMUNITY!



THE REDEEMING WORD

By Rev. Dr. Jonathan Lovelady

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 13:12-14 (NIV)

Change is a difficult road for most people. Some people contend that people do not change. However, I am optimistic: I believe people can change, but it is not always an easy process. At times it is filled with tension, uncertainty, and fear. As we go through this year of reading the Word, it is important to recognize its power to change us. Last month I focused on the information from the Center for Biblical Research and the impact that reading Scripture four times per week can have upon our lives. When we regularly read Scripture, we find ourselves stronger and better able to resist temptation, respond to God's will, and feel connected to God's goodness in our lives.

Human change is one of God's specialties. Reading Scripture is a change agent for our lives, because it tells us about redemption. Redemption is part of the plan of salvation. It is simply that we have not done what God wants us to do, and the relationship between ourselves and God is broken. We can look at the Genesis narrative with Adam and Eve to help understand this break. However, personal redemption begins when we come to an inward realization that we have sinned and fallen short of honoring God in our lives. We are reluctant to admit this because it means that we will need to change, and change in such a manner that may be a reversal of previous choices. The Chicago O'Hare Airport is named after the World War II Medal of

Honor winner, Lieutenant Commander Edward Henry "Butch" O'Hare. Yet, his making it into Annapolis and becoming a Naval aviator contains a story of redemption. The radio commentator, Paul Harvey, tells the story this way:

Lieutenant Commander Edward Henry "Butch" O'Hare was the Navy's number-one ace in the Second World War and the first naval aviator ever to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. Chicago's O'Hare International Airport is named for him. What "Butch" O'Hare became, however, was made possible because someone else paid a great price. That someone else was Butch's father, Edward J. O'Hare, a slick lawyer for the gangster Al Capone. "Artful Eddie," as he was known, had money and power, but one day he squealed on Capone. The reason for this sudden change of heart? He wanted to give his son a break, he said. Before long, the mob silenced Artful Eddie with two shotgun blasts. But because of Eddie's courageous change of heart, his son Butch was accepted at Annapolis: Eddie's confession and subsequent death satisfied admissions people that the family's mob connections were severed. Artful Eddie paid with his own life for his son's chance to make good. (Leadership, Vol 12. For a more complete version of the story see <https://www.stlmag.com/The-Butch-OHare-Story/>)

Artful Eddie who had been Al Capone's partner would share accounting information with the IRS that would lead to the conviction of the notorious mob boss. Butch's father paid the ultimate price to redeem the wrong that he had done. It was a dramatic change to give his son a different opportunity. God does this for us in Jesus Christ. This is the ultimate story of redemption. In order to redeem us and restore the relationship with us, God sacrificed his own Son!

We see in God's Word the grand story of redemption, but also the particular intersection of God's Word with the lives of individuals as they experience this redemption. The conversion of Paul is one of the earliest conversions that is recorded in the Book of Acts. It was a change that was so dramatic that it was hard for the first Christians to believe! However, even if we begin with a dramatic change, all of us must engage the ongoing change that God's Word can create in our lives. One of the great early "church fathers" was St. Augustine of Hippo. In his *Confessions* (Book 8, chapter 12) he writes about his own conversion:

So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, "Take up and read; Take up and read." Instantly, my countenance altered, I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words: nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find...Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle (Paul) when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provi-

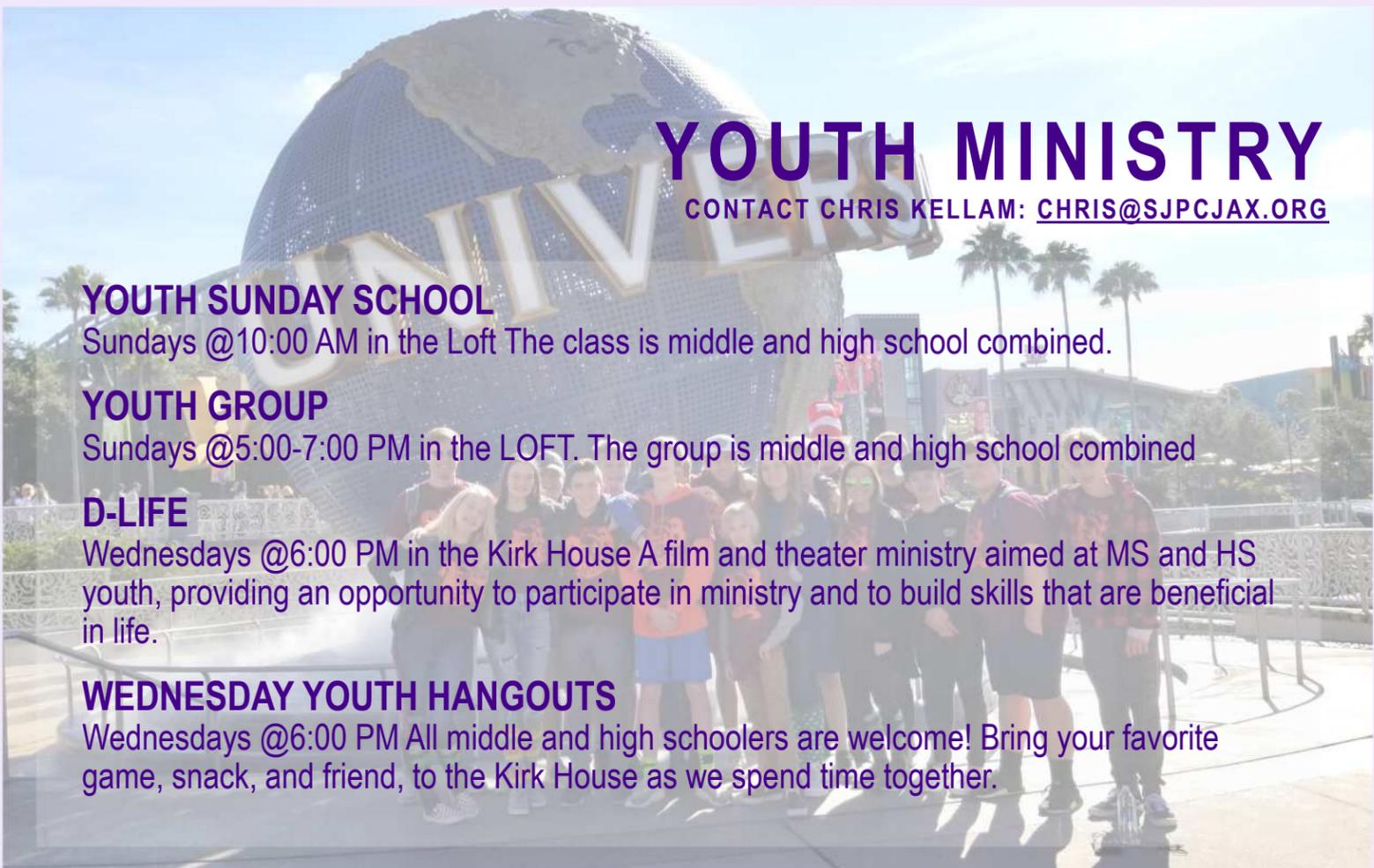
sion for the flesh, in concupiscence. (Romans 13:13-14) No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

In this moment, this thirty-year-old professor of rhetoric was encouraged by the voice of a child to experience the redeeming Word of God for his life and it would change his course forever. It would be a year before he was baptized by Ambrose in the city of Milan, Italy. It would be several more years before he was ordained to be a priest, but at each point he was greeted by the Word "to put on the Lord, Jesus Christ" in order to find the power of redemption in his life.

St. Augustine's conversion remains one of my favorite because it begins so simply, yet it has such a dramatic impact over time. We see this redeeming Word at work within his life and leading him to bring others to the power of redemption. As we go through this year, renew your effort to let this Word move you to a change that will draw you closer to our Lord and Savior! Amen.

In Christ,





YOUTH MINISTRY

CONTACT CHRIS KELLAM: CHRIS@SJPCJAX.ORG

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sundays @10:00 AM in the Loft The class is middle and high school combined.

YOUTH GROUP

Sundays @5:00-7:00 PM in the LOFT. The group is middle and high school combined

D-LIFE

Wednesdays @6:00 PM in the Kirk House A film and theater ministry aimed at MS and HS youth, providing an opportunity to participate in ministry and to build skills that are beneficial in life.

WEDNESDAY YOUTH HANGOUTS

Wednesdays @6:00 PM All middle and high schoolers are welcome! Bring your favorite game, snack, and friend, to the Kirk House as we spend time together.

SMALL GROUPS

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Mondays, @10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. The group is reading *A Woman God's Spirit Can Guide: New Testament Women Help You Make Today's Choices*, by Alice Mathews. The study discusses stories that remind us doors open in surprising places for women willing to say yes to God's leading. Contact Diane McFadden at bmdm56@gmail.com for more information.

WEDNESDAY MEN'S GROUP

Wednesdays, @6:00 AM at Maple Street in Murray Hill They are studying *The Minor Prophets; Who Were Those 12 Guys?* Contact Trip Stanly at 904-866-2118 or wastanly@hotmail.com for more information.

SJPC MOMS' GROUP

Thursdays, @9:00-11:00 AM in the Kirk House This group is reading *Mom Set Free* by Jeannie Cunnion. Contact Pamela Smith at barbregirl3@aol.com or Lauren McLaughlin at lmclaughlin7@yahoo.com for more information.

S.W.A.T. (SENIORS WITH A TESTIMONY)

During the month of March, S.W.A.T. will meet on Thursday, 3/19 @ 10:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall. St. Johns' very own Scott Hanigan will discuss the benefits of preplanning a funeral. A complimentary lunch from SUBWAY is included. Please RSVP Shirley Douglas at (904) 771-0810 if you plan to attend.

Sunday School Classes

ALL CLASSES AT 10:00 AM

Women's Class

Location: Purple Door Room"/Room 23 The group is reading *Hebrews: The nearness of King Jesus*. Author Lisa Harper invites you to "love bigger, fear less, and run headlong into the arms of Jesus as a result of hiking through Hebrews." This group meets through May 17th. Contact Heather Griffin at 904-710-7427 (text or call) or hgriffin7427@gmail.com for more information.

Kirk House Class

Location: Kirk House
The group is studying *Harmony of the Gospels*, a study of Jesus' life and teachings from the book of Luke with added context of the Old Testament prophecies and the traditions and teachings of the day. Contact Kevin at kevinhunger@gmail.com or Wendi at wbirdh@comcast.net for more information.

Nolan/Pajcic Class

Location: Adult Bible Study Classroom in the Kindergarten Wing
This class will be using this time to for our Lenten study; Andy Stanley's *Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith*. Anyone can join and books are available outside of the church office and in the Narthex. Contact Jim Nolan at james.nolan@gray-robinson.com or Curry Pajcic at curry@pajcic.com for more information.

Men's Class

Location: Session Room
The group is studying the Gospel of John. Contact Bill Mentz at wmmmentz@gmail.com for more information.

Friendship Bible Fellowship Class

Location: Chapel
study of "Windows on Easter", written by Bill Crowder. Who was there for the death and resurrection of the Savior? What part did each person play? What do the scriptures tell us about that time? Join us. Contact Diane McFadden at bmdm56@gmail.com for more information.

Little Flock Class

Location: Nursery
Pre-K through 1st and 2nd through 5th in the "Rainy Day Playroom" Contact Mollie Lackey at mollie@sjpcjax.org for more information.

Youth Class

Location: The Loft
This group is for middle school and high school students. Contact Chris Kellam at chris@sjpcjax.org for more information.



2020 LENT STUDY GROUPS

JIM NOLAN AND CURRY PAJICIC'S SUNDAY LENT STUDY GROUP:

Location: Adult Bible Study Classroom in the Kindergarten Wing
 Time: 10:00 AM
 Starting Date: 3/1/2020
 Contact: james.nolan@gray-robinson.com, curry@pajicic.com

KEVIN & WENDI HUNGER'S SUNDAY LENT STUDY GROUP:

Location: The Hunger's home (please email for address)
 Time: 5-7:00 PM
 Starting Date: Sunday, 3/1/2020
 Contact: wbirdh@comcast.net

BILL & DIANE MCFADDEN'S MONDAY LENT STUDY GROUP:

Location: The McFadden's home (please email for address)
 Time: 7:00 PM
 Starting Date: Monday, 3/2/2020
 Contact: bmdm56@gmail.com

TONY NASRALLAH'S TUESDAY LENT STUDY GROUP:

Location: Optional dinner at Tijuana Flats restaurant off of Roosevelt and meeting in Session Room
 Time: 5:00 PM Optional Dinner, 6-7:30 PM meeting
 Starting Date: Tuesday, 3/3/2020
 Contact: TonyNaz@comcast.net

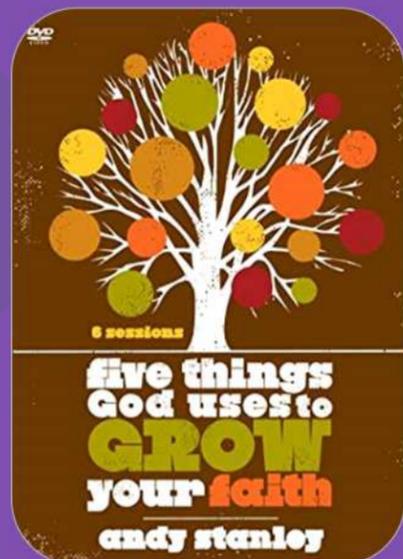
PASTOR JON LOVELADY'S TUESDAY LENT STUDY GROUP:

Location: Session Room
 Time: 6-7:30 PM
 Starting Date: Tuesday, 3/3/2020
 Contact: jon@sjpcjax.org

MOLLIE LACKEY'S THURSDAY LENT STUDY GROUP:

Location: Session Room, (childcare is provided)
 Time: 6-7:30 PM
 Starting Date: 2/27/2020
 Contact: mollie@sjpcjax.org

This Lenten season St. John's is studying Andy Stanley's *Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith*. All videos are online at <https://sjpcjax.org/2020-lent-study-groups/> Books are included and are available for you to take from the Narthex and in front of the church office.



Is Luck real?

BY LISA REINHARD

It is the month of March, when we hear all about the luck of the Irish and the gold of the leprechauns. Many times in our lives, we have been wished good luck when we interview for a new job, apply for a scholarship, or compete in a sports event. Some people answer, when asked about a success, that it was just good luck. I suppose that most of us have wished someone else good luck on something they wanted to achieve, but I wonder if we've really stopped to think about what luck is, and what the idea of there being both good luck and bad, really says about our faith in God. I got thinking about that recently, and it occurred to me that if we believe in the randomness of luck, then we really don't think God is in total control of everything. Is it bad luck when we have a horrific car accident or are diagnosed with cancer? Is it good luck when we are in the right place at just the right time?

As I delved into my Bible for answers, I looked in my concordance and found no listing for luck. Also, no listing for fortune, as in "good fortune." I did, however, find many listings for the word promises. Isn't that what we're told to stand on? God has promised many things, and if we take a look at some of them, I think we'll find that they blow the notion of luck clean away.

In Exodus 3: 16-20, Moses is sent by God to his people to deliver God's message: "I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, . . . –a land flowing with milk and honey." He further tells the elders of Israel to go to the king of Egypt and ask permission to go into the desert to perform a three-day sacrifice to the Lord their God. But

God adds that He knows the king will not let them go unless He intervenes, saying, "I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, He will let you go." God also makes the Egyptian people "favorably disposed" toward the Israelites so that they leave with Egyptian gold, silver, and fancy clothing. God is willing to provide the means to carry out what He has promised. He is with us, every step of the way. Think of the parting of the Red Sea and try to convince me that *that* was just luck.

God made and kept promises to many people of the Old Testament. In 1 Kings 8:20, Solomon declares, "The Lord has kept the promise He made: I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the Lord promised." He promised the prophets the Messiah, and wow, did He make good on that one! The Psalms are chock-full of promises that we need to claim every day in our lives, the way we spend our time, the thoughts we allow in our heads. Here are just a few examples. "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart." (Psalm 91: 4) "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4) "The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:17-18)

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish." (Isaiah 41:10-11) These are words from our God who never wavers in His

commitment to us and His love for us. He is omnipresent and omnipotent. He loves us so much that He gave us the gift of free-will, so that we would choose to turn to Him and obey Him. When we do not, He allows things to happen—things we have an impossibly hard time wrapping our minds around and fully understanding.

Hebrews 10:23 gives us a key to hold onto—hope. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who has promised is faithful.” In Romans 4:18-21, we are given another tool—unwavering faith. We read that God made a promise about Abraham’s offspring, and Abraham had faith even though he was 100 years old and Sarah was past the child-bearing age. “Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised.”

God’s promises are true, and they are forever. I am convinced that they are not influenced by such a weak and nebulous thing as luck. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11) I believe Him.

***This article was originally printed in March 2019.*

UPCOMING DATES:

WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY 3/2

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME 3/8

FINAL LUNCH BUNCH 3/8

MEN’S PRAYER BREAKFAST 3/10

DUVAL COUNTY ELECTIONS IN FELLOWSHIP HALL 3/17

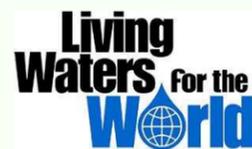
S.W.A.T. EVENT 3/19

STEPHEN MINISTRIES MEETING 3/19

LIVING WATERS FUNDRAISER @ THE LOOP 3/19

MEN’S PRAYER BREAKFAST 3/24

LIVING WATERS CUBAN SANDWICH FUNDRAISER 3/29



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

KATHARINE LOVETT FANT	MARCH 3	GAYLE TOLBERT	MARCH 22
MADLINE BOLTON	MARCH 6	CODY BURTON	MARCH 23
KELLY MCWHORTER	MARCH 6	LEAH FILES	MARCH 23
BROOKS HUBBARD	MARCH 8	BRUCE JACKSON	MARCH 23
CHARLOTTE NOLAN	MARCH 8	DAWN MONTGOMERY	MARCH 23
CAROLYN VANDERHOFF	MARCH 13	CAROL WHYRICK	MARCH 23
RACHEL TUCKER	MARCH 15	TAYLOR DANSON	MARCH 25
LISA BROWN	MARCH 16	BROOKS COLLIER	MARCH 28
THOMAS STANLY	MARCH 19	JAY FANT	MARCH 28
RYAN RAFFERTY	MARCH 21	ISABELLA KERR	MARCH 29
KATHERINE EASLEY	MARCH 22		

PRAYER REQUESTS

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| -POLLY WALKER | -SUE CULPEPPER |
| -POLLY ANN ANDERSON | -DORIS CASS |
| -FRAN MILES | -AIREN WALKER |
| -JUDY DAILEY | -VIRGINIA STAATS |
| -KATE MARPLE | -MARYLEA RUSSELL |
| -BILL DUNN | -RUTH LAVENDER |
| -WAYNE HOLLAWAY | -LIZ MCKEAN |
| -MAL MAY | -MARY SAMFORD |
| -GAYLE TOLBERT | -MICHAEL YARBROUGH |
| -GINNY WHITNER | |

If you have a birthday or a prayer request and you would like it to be in the newsletter, please email Brittany Harris at sjpc@sjpcjax.org or call the office at (904)384-4501.