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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Looking Ahead - 1.26.2025 - Are We There Yet?

January 26, 2025

Have you ever been in a season of big change and thought to yourself, “I’m all in!”? You were excited and ready for new beginnings! Maybe it was that new job or a big move—whatever it was, you thought, “bring it!” If so, you can resonate with the Israelites who were just freed from Egypt and ready to follow God wholeheartedly.

Exodus 24:3

Then Moses went down to the people and repeated all the instructions and regulations the Lord had given him. All the people answered with one voice, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.”

But then a little time passed ... and if you’re anything like the Israelites, you found yourself pining for the familiar, missing what you knew, and not remembering exactly where God was taking you in the first place. It doesn’t take long before you’re worried and anxious and ready to turn to something that seems like it will bring comfort in the moment.

It’s here that we would be better off turning to God, but so often, we end up seeking approval from places that can never really provide what we desire. We put our trust in the idols of our day (i.e.: our job, our family, our need for control) instead of the Lord.

Today, set aside time to seek God and be in his presence. Listen to what God is saying to you and consider where you may tend to seek approval that is not from God. Then respond to the following questions and reflect on how you can take a step or two forward to deepen your connection with him.

Discussion Questions:

Ice breaker: What was the best part of your week?

What sorts of things do people tend to make into idols today?

Read Exodus 32:1 and John 16:33. Compare and contrast these two verses.

What can you learn about yourself from these verses, and what do you learn about God?

What idols/false needs do you need to surrender today?

What is one step you could take toward trusting God?

21 Days of Prayer

Day 21 - Praise

Today's Prayer Focus: To Praise Him (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Today's Prayer:

Dear Father, I praise you for all you have done in my life and in my heart over these last 21 days. Thank you for drawing close to me and for leading me. Help me to continue growing and taking steps toward you throughout this year, so that I might know you more and make a difference for you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

This post was written by Kelly Pagel, Director of the LivingItOut

You Might Still Be In Egypt! - Are We There Yet?

January 27, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: John 16

Many years ago, there was a funny (but potentially offensive) skit by comedian Jeff Foxworthy titled, "You Might Be A Redneck If..." followed by innumerable reasons why—if you did this or had that—you might be a redneck. (You can find it on YouTube.) I feel like the infant nation of Israel, in their new freedom from slavery, was having a similar identity crisis: "You Might Still Be In Egypt If..."

After 400 years of slavery and never having to decide for themselves what to do, to eat, to wear, or to worship, the Israelites were not equipped to make good decisions. They did not know how to be free!

God, in his mercy, brought Moses up to his mountain where they had quite the chat. After 40 days, Moses started back down the mountain with instructions, a framework by which the Israelites could live, thrive, and worship together.

Unfortunately, in Moses' absence, the Israelites became anxious and antsy! All the promises they had made fled before the wind. They turned back to "Egypt," to slavery, which was all they knew, forgetting how truly awful it had been.

The Israelites, having lost their faith, made a golden calf and bowed down to it.

This was often my response when I encountered a new situation that looked difficult or challenging. I'm not good at waiting. I'm a "do something, even if it's wrong" type of person. And believe me, just like the Israelites, it has gotten me into messes!

I have my own golden calves—the need to control, wanting to have all the answers, being all things to all people, and wanting the approval of others. These are all pride, and all about me! Thankfully, with God's power, I have become better at noticing it and naming it, which then allows me to diffuse* it. This open attitude offers me the best opportunity for good outcomes.

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Just like God wanted to transform the Israelites from slaves to his sons and daughters, he wants to do the same with us. With our Heavenly Father at the center of our lives, we don't have to be slaves to our idols.

*From [Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs](#) by Steve Cuss.

Questions:

Where have you left the Promised Land and returned to the slavery of your sin? Are you ready to turn back to God and ask for his guidance?

Next Steps:

As you pray, ask God to reveal where you have turned from following Jesus to the slavery of your former life. Ask him to provide his direction for you. Listen to his response.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive me for all the times I have gone off on my own. Forgive me when I choose the old ways, thinking they're less difficult than what you ask of me. Your way leads to life, but mine only leads to death. I know this, and yet so many times, I choose other things that seem shinier than you! Nothing, NO THING, is more glorious than you. I am so grateful for your mercies, which are new every morning! Thank you, Lord. I bow to you alone! In your beautiful name, I pray, amen!

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

This post was written by Lauri White, an Oregon attendee, and a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Trusting God in the Waiting - Are We There Yet?

January 28, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: John 17

Exodus 32:1

When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron. "Come on," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt."

Waiting for the miracle of pregnancy felt like an unbearable test of faith after experiencing the heartbreaking loss of two precious babies that my husband and I will never hold this side of heaven. Each passing month brought a mix of

fragile hope and crushing disappointment, with worry becoming a constant companion.

I found myself wrestling with relentless questions:

Did God hear my prayers?

Was something wrong with me?

Why me?

Though my heart longed to trust God's timing, the waiting felt endless. The temptation to focus on what I could control was strong, pulling me away from fully leaning into God's sovereignty.

The Israelites faced a similar struggle in Exodus 32. They had witnessed incredible miracles—the Red Sea parting, manna from heaven, and God's provision every step of the way. Yet, when Moses took longer than expected on Mount Sinai, they panicked. Fear replaced faith. Their waiting turned into worry, and their worry turned into actions outside of God's plan. They created a golden calf, placing their faith in something tangible because they couldn't see what God was doing.

Waiting can test all of us. Whether it's waiting for healing, an answer to prayer, or the fulfillment of a deep longing, it's easy to fall into the trap of worrying and acting impulsively to regain a sense of control. But God is not idle in our waiting. He is working in unseen ways, shaping our hearts and preparing us for what's to come.

Looking back on that season of waiting, I now see how God was with me in the struggle. He used that time to draw me closer to him, teaching me to trust his goodness, even when I didn't understand his timing. When I finally held my newborn baby in my arms, the joy was sweeter because I had witnessed God's faithfulness through the wait.

If you're in a season of waiting, take heart. God sees you, loves you, and is working on your behalf. Instead of letting worry take root, lean into him. Trust that he is writing a story far greater than you can imagine.

Questions:

In what areas of your life are you struggling to trust God's timing, and how can you surrender those worries to him this week?

How has God shown his faithfulness to you in past seasons of waiting, and how can reflecting on those moments encourage you in your current journey?

Next Steps:

This week, set aside ten minutes each day to pray specifically about the area where you're waiting on God. During this time, thank him for his past faithfulness, surrender your worries to him, and ask for peace and trust in his perfect timing. Write down one way you see his presence or provision each day as a reminder that he is with you, even in the waiting. Then come back next week to keep leaning in and growing in God's word.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I praise you for being faithful and unchanging, even when my circumstances feel overwhelming. Thank you for loving me and walking with me, especially in seasons of waiting. I confess that I often let worry take over and struggle to trust your timing. Please forgive me and help me to lean on your promises instead of my fears. Today, I surrender my doubts and my need for control to you. Help me to see your hand at work in my life and to trust that you are always working for my good and your glory. Give me patience, peace, and a heart that rests in your perfect plan. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

This post was written by Monique Myers, a Perrysburg attendee, and a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Deliverance - Are We There Yet?

January 29, 2025

In the biblical story of Exodus, God named Aaron the High Priest to represent his people. And so it was Aaron's responsibility to step in to lead the Israelites when God called Moses to Mount Sinai.

Unfortunately, in Moses' extended absence, the Israelites questioned if God had abandoned them, too. They were lost both physically in the wilderness, and spiritually. But instead of leading his people back to God, Aaron led them to make a golden calf to worship in God's place.

Exodus 32:4

Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded it into the shape of a calf. When the people saw it, they exclaimed, "O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

The Israelites got up early the next morning to make their daily sacrifices, but things quickly turned to pagan revelry. They found an earthly solution to a spiritual problem.

Although our lives are quite different in the 21st Century than what the Israelites encountered in biblical times, we still suffer from our own wilderness experiences, and we are just as guilty of worshiping idols. We say similar things, like:

God is not with me.

God can't get me out of this situation.

God caused this to happen.

Instead of going to God in need, we turn to our idols, just like the Israelites did. An idol is anything we put ahead of God—anything we turn to for our happiness, value, and worth. Today, that can also manifest as false needs, like control, perfectionism, the approval of others, or materialism.

When things don't happen on our time table, or when we want to force a certain outcome due to underlying anxiety, we are prone to operate under our own power, trying to fill that need with something only God can deliver. And when we do that, we will always struggle. False needs never deliver and can

often destroy or distract us from our true purpose and the rich and satisfying life God intends for us (John 10:10).

Do not despair! There is hope!

Be sure to join us tomorrow as we learn how to turn to God instead of idols during those very moments when we need his deliverance.

Questions:

What is an idol/false need you have put before God?

Where can you be vulnerable and ask God and others to provide what you need?

What have you believed that is not from God?

Next Steps:

Authentically share your challenges with a trusted friend, whether you are in a wilderness season or stuck worshipping an idol. Then confess your idols to God, and ask him to help you put him at the forefront of your life.

If you participated in 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, reflect on your experience and ask God where he is leading you next.

Prayer:

God, you say to be strong and courageous, that you are with us wherever we go. At times I go to idols instead of you when I have needs. I come before you. I need (blank), God. I am sorry that I have been impatient, and that I have not seen the work you are doing. You may not deliver me now, but I trust you will keep your promises. You are with me and will not forsake me. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

This post was written by Becca Roberts, a South attendee, and a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Where's Your Focus? - Are We There Yet?

January 30, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: John 19

A few years ago, I overheard my wife talking with our youngest son, Jax, and paused to listen. Jax was expressing his anxiety about another father at the bus stop yelling at him!

I don't like bullies, especially adults, so I jumped into the conversation, explaining that the other father and I were going to have a misunderstanding on our way to a solution. Jax seemed confused, and Erica began laughing as she told me to relax.

Getting heated caused me to miss the most critical part of the conversation—it was a dream! If Jax's dream had been reality, I would have quickly spun that situation out of control.

When we're confronted with a problem, it's not uncommon for us to respond in one of two ways. Sometimes, we become way too emotionally invested, placing more pressure on ourselves and others than is necessary. Other times, we shy away from it, trying to avoid the situation altogether.

If I had completely avoided my son's problem, I would have let him down, but raising my energy would have been problematic for all parties. Both choices would have led to disharmony, because failure results when we lose control of our reactions.

Losing control is an indicator that we should get curious. Whether it's our need for control, need to have all the answers, or need for approval, we must first notice our reactivity and name it so that we can diffuse* the situation, rather than chasing after those false needs, trying to solve everything on our own.

We will never find peaceful resolutions when we turn from Jesus and look for answers or distractions from worldly idols and false needs. Trying to be the answer only creates more conflict. Thankfully, God offers us a better way.

John 16:33

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you

will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Jesus promises that he has overcome the world, including the challenges that we’ll face during our time on earth. We don’t have to face them alone, and we don’t have to fall into the trap of idols and false needs that arise from our anxiety. Instead, we can direct our focus to Jesus, who offers us peace, even during our trials, and promises to lead us toward his perfect plan.

*From [Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs](#) by Steve Cuss.

Questions:

Where is your focus during times of difficulty?

What idols/false needs do you create?

Where have you found peace?

Next Steps:

Compare the times that you reacted poorly in a situation to the times you trusted God to lead you. Journal about a time when you stopped being afraid, and instead, let other people in to help.

Begin naming your idols/false needs. Mention those needs in your prayers and ask God to replace them. If you notice a problem, pray and ask a friend, pastor, or mentor for help stepping forward.

Prayer:

Lord, I so often fail because I continue to think I’m stronger than I actually am. Continue to show me why I need your love and that of my Christian brothers and sisters. I ask for guidance and wisdom as I embrace and endure new challenges by placing my heart and worries in your hands first. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

This post was written by Jaron Camp, a Findlay attendee, and a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Trust His Word - Are We There Yet?

January 31, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: John 20

While it's easy to look at the Israelites and think, *I'd never make a golden calf and worship it*, when we examine our lives closely, we realize just how prone we are to fall into the same trap. Whether it's our work, our family, or even our ministry, these good things, if we aren't careful, can become more important than God. They can become our idols.

But there is a way to keep the good things in life in their proper perspective and our eyes fixed on God—by studying his Word.

Joshua 1:8

“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”

The Bible is a key way God speaks to us. His Word encourages us during difficult periods and guides us as he seeks to transform us.

This week, make a plan to interact with God's Word daily, not as something to add to your to-do list, but as a way to deepen your relationship with Christ and trust him more.

Choose one of the following plans, or create your own, to make 2025 a year to meet God regularly in his Word:

- Commit to reading *The Daily* every day next week and journaling on the verses.
- Jump into the New Testament Reading Plan found at the top of each devotion Monday-Friday. (It's ok if you're behind, just begin!)
- Join a Group that is studying Scripture this spring.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the gift of your Word. It is not a rule book but a way you communicate with and refresh me. Those who delight in it are like trees planted by a river bank—their leaves never wither (Psalm 1:3). Give me the

desire to spend time with you through your Word regularly. Grant me wisdom and understanding, and help me draw closer to you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

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This post was written by Kelly Pagel, Director of the LivingItOut

Reflections - 2.1.2025 - Are We There Yet? - Are We There Yet?

February 1, 2025

Throughout this past week, we have explored how anxiety is not a sin but a signal. So often, we turn to false needs to calm ourselves, yet they never deliver. Instead, we need to identify our false needs, and then disarm them by shifting our focus to God.

Today, I invite you to carve out a few quiet moments to reread the verses that really spoke to you this week. Some possibilities may come from last weekend's message, such as Joshua 1:8 or John 16:33. Then look back on the notes you captured from last Sunday and reflect on the actions you took this week.

Prayer:

Lord, I confess that when I get worried or anxious, I tend to turn to things that allow me to feel in control, or I stew in worry thinking that will help. This is not what you would have for me, Father. You sent your Son, Jesus, so that I may know a peace that surpasses all understanding. Today, help me to trust in Christ and shift my gaze to him rather than trying to handle it myself. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:2

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