

A 40-DAY FAITH EXPERIENCE

LIGHT

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

Why 40 Days?

Number “forty” + (time period) is mentioned 146 times in Scripture.

It symbolizes trial and testing, probation, or the fulfillment of promises.

40 Days in the Bible

- Ezekiel bore the iniquity of Judah for 40 days (Ezekiel 4:6)
- Joash reigned as king of Judah for 40 years in Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:1)
- God gave Nineveh 40 days to repent (Jonah 3:4)

A dark blue space background with a starry field. On the left, a large, dark, cratered sphere (the Moon) is partially visible. On the right, a large, blue and white sphere (the Earth) is partially visible. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Where it all begins

Genesis 1

In the beginning God created the
heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

God is not bound by time... Bereshit ("in the beginning") begins time

Then God said, “Let there be **light**”; and there was **light**. Genesis 1:3

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר

First recorded words spoken by the Creator God are “Yehi Ohr” יְהִי אוֹר .

Two weeks ago...

Learn

John 3

Jesus said, “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” John 3:20-21

People choose to remain in Darkness in order to hide from the Light, hoping that Darkness will eventually satisfy.

What can we LEARN about Light?

- **When** does the search begin? When all that life offers still seems dark
- **Where** does the search begin? The place of spiritual humility
- **Where** does the search for Light end? At the cross
- **How** is Light given? By the sacrificial death of the Savior
- **How** is Light received? By receiving new life (being “born again”)
- **Who** can give Light? God, the Creator of Light
- **Who** can receive Light? Those living in darkness looking for Light
- **Why** was Light given? For God so loved the world

Last week...

Initiate

John 1

He [John the Baptist] came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. John 1:7-8

- Why are Christ-followers called to be witnesses who testify?
“So that all might believe”
- We are not called to defeat the enemies of Jesus, we are called to make disciples of Jesus.
- As followers of Jesus, we must remember what we are and what we are not

Where Should Followers of Jesus Initiate Spiritual Conversations?

- Social groups
- Work
- School
- Neighborhood
- Family gatherings
- Hobbies/Activities

How Can Followers of Jesus Initiate Spiritual Conversations?

- Pray for hearts to be open
- Invite them to church
 - Social media
 - Text, Email
 - Phone calls
- Meet their real needs
- Encourage and support those who are hurting

Why Should Followers of Jesus Initiate Spiritual Conversations?

- Your life has been changed
- You have found the Light of God
- People around you are hurting
- People around you are looking for the Light
- People around you are waiting to be invited

40 Days of LIGHT

January 10

Where it all begins

January 17

Learn

January 24

Initiate

January 31

Gather

February 7

H

February 14

T

First Melissa's passion is to make disciples of Jesus who:

REACH INTENTIONALLY

CONNECT AUTHENTICALLY

EQUIP


CONTINUOUSLY

LIVE PASSIONATELY



Gather

Build relationships
that encourage real
faith in real life



***Why does our culture
need to gather in
“authentic connections”
right now?***

Coronavirus: The possible long-term mental health impacts

BBC
NEWS

October
28,
2020

Chronic loneliness brought on by social isolation or “a lack of meaning” in life during the pandemic is another major concern, says Nippoda. Some people have involuntarily found themselves with fewer close connections in the age of social-distancing and may find it challenging to rebuild their networks. Others deliberately withdrew from the outside world to feel “a sense of safety” and may become resistant to increasing their social interactions in the future, says Nippoda. “When people experience stress in the outside world, they can detach themselves from that world. Once they experience this detachment, it might be difficult for them to come out into the world and socialise with others.”

Meanwhile, the stress of living through Covid-19 is likely to have a greater ongoing mental toll on those who have had painful life experiences in the past. “It might trigger the memory of the trauma consciously and unconsciously, which can affect you. In this case, the mental health conditions can become long-term, as it can open the lid of the trauma,” explains Nippoda.

November
24,
2020

Silverstein recommends that families implement a daily schedule to keep children on task, and find new ways to have fun together at home, like scavenger hunts and virtual dance parties with friends and family.

Similarly, Danovitch emphasized the need to establish and keep up with a consistent routine.

"Make sure that you are exercising, getting good sleep and getting good nutrition," he said. "Make sure you're not spending too much time on screens, that you're not getting overloaded with information that you can't do anything about, but that you're getting information from reliable resources."

Danovitch says that in order to maintain good mental health over the long term, people should find ways to connect with loved ones and, importantly, find ways to be of service.

"Having a sense of purpose is enormous. It allows people to cope with a lot of adversity," he said. "But if you are finding yourself having persistent anxiety, or feeling so down that you're not able to function, ask for help. Reach out to your physician and get some support."

The silver lining, both experts said, is that the pandemic has created space in many people's lives to slow down, spend time with family, refocus on what's important, and connect with one another in new ways.

"The other side of this coin is that events like this can be associated with post-traumatic growth," Danovitch said.

"People develop resilience. They learn how to deal with mental health challenges, and they find resources, internal and external, that they didn't know existed."



January
22,
2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our lives. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but they can make us feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. **Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and those around you become more resilient.**



Stress can cause the following:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances



January
22,
2021

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. It's good to be informed, but hearing about the pandemic constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, tv, and computer screens for a while.
- **Take care of your body.**
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#)  .
 - [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.](#)
 - [Exercise regularly.](#)
 - [Get plenty of sleep.](#)
 - Avoid [excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use.](#)
 - Continue with routine preventive measures (such as vaccinations, cancer screenings, etc.) as recommended by your healthcare provider.
 - Get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when available.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** [Talk with people](#)  you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- **Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.** While social distancing measures are in place, try connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.

Even the CDC
says you
should
connect with
your church!

***How can we Gather
around the Light?***

1 John 1

What we have **seen** and **heard** we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship [koinonia Κοινωνία] with us; and indeed our fellowship [koinonia Κοινωνία] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy [χαρά chara] may be made complete. 1 John 1:3-4

- Do you have fellowship with God's people?
- Do you have fellowship with the Father?
- Do you know that living in spiritual Darkness robs a person of joy?

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light [φῶς phos], and in Him there is no darkness [σκότος skotos] at all. 1 John 1:5

- If you are looking for spiritual Light, you will ONLY find it by connecting with the Creator God
- If you are looking for spiritual Darkness, you will NOT find it by connecting with the Creator God

If we say that we have fellowship [koinonia Κοινωνία] with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice [do] the truth [ἀλήθεια aletheia]; 1 John 1:6

“Walking in the light means living under the controlling desire for God instead of the world — the kind of life you live if you see things the way God sees them and share His values. Walk means life.” – Pastor John Piper

What does “walk in the darkness” look like?

The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 2:9-11

but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

Independently and simultaneously, followers of Jesus are called to walk (live) in the Light of God. When this happens, hearts and minds and spirits and families and priorities and passions are GATHERED together and guided by the Holy Spirit.

We ALL Need Spiritual Light

If we say that we have no sin [ἁμαρτία hamartia], we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8

- For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God Romans 3:23
- For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23
- Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Ephesians 2:3

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Only when we let the light of God shine into our whole life, permitting even its secrets to be judged by Him, can we be purified from our sinful habits and be made more holy. – Jewish New Testament Commentary

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:10

“The claim to sinlessness is not only self-deception, but blasphemy. It amounts to calling God a liar... Walking in the light means seeing things the way God sees them and responding the way He does. We walk in the light when we hate the sin we fall into and name it for the ugly thing it is and agree with God about it and turn from it. So confessing sin is a crucial part of walking in the light.” – Pastor John Piper

***What does it look like
to Gather in Light?***

Acts 2

What do you prioritize when believers Gather in Light?

They were continually devoting themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 2:42-43

What do you give when believers Gather in Light?

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Acts 2:44-45

What are the results when believers Gather in Light?

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

Gathering In Light Requires Unity

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Romans 12:4-5

Gathering In Light Involves Teamwork

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Gathering In Light Depends On Truth

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:15-16

“speaking the truth in love” Ephesians 4:15

ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ (aletheountes de en agape)

In the original Greek, the verb “speak” is not there, this instruction is literally written as “**truthing in love.**”

What is agape love?

A self-sacrificial love that works for the benefit of the loved one; the unmerited love God shows to humankind in sending His Son as suffering redeemer.

Encourage Others To Gather in Light

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:23-25

Even the CDC says you should connect with your church!

Encourage Others To Gather in Light

DID YOU KNOW?

It is the responsibility and assignment of every person in this room and every person joining online or on radio to help us **gather** and **connect authentically**. If you have been involved in this church for 40 years or 40 days, it is your calling to help us gather and connect authentically with the people in our church family and in our communities so we can all be connected to the Savior.

Where Do We Gather?

- Worship services with the church family
- Bible studies and classes
- Small Groups
- Volunteer Ministry Teams
- Your home
- Your office
- Your school

How Do We Gather?

- Be genuine, be honest, be yourself
- Build your calendar around weekly worship
- Connect with others when you come to church
- Take the first step to say hello
- Connect deeply with a few other Christ-followers in on-going relationships
- Invite new people to church every week... at work, at school, at the grocery store, at your sports events
- Pray for God to give you opportunities, courage, and words to point people to Jesus

Why Do We Gather?

what we have seen and heard we
proclaim to you also, so that you too may
have fellowship with us; and indeed our
fellowship is with the Father, and with His
Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3

Please Gather with us as we follow Jesus the Messiah