



# THE RADIX PROJECT

*small groups / deep roots*

**FALL 2020:**  
**SURPRISE IN SCRIPTURE & SPIRITUALITY**



SAINT MARK'S  
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL



Friends,

**Y**OU may recall we chose the name “Radix” for this small group ministry because it means “root,” and we are reclaiming our Christian roots by this practice. Jesus lived and taught in small groups, as did the early Church. To be “radical” doesn’t mean to be rebellious—rather it describes the freedom to stretch into the borderlands precisely because one is rooted in the deep soil of a defining narrative, which, for us, is the brilliant and liberating gospel of Christ. Through this defining narrative we are known and nourished in the church community, and connected through past, present and future to all who are so rooted. Radix groups reveal this connection in tangible and life-giving ways.

For this season, we have chosen scriptures that detail some element of surprise in the lives of those whose stories are shared. It is our great hope that as you read them, you will find God in the unexpected aspects of your life, as well.

In Christ,

Steve, Kelly, Cristi, Nancy, Jennifer

**THE RADIX PROJECT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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Please feel free to contact anyone from the Planning Committee if you have any questions or concerns along the way. Thank you for your participation!

## OVERVIEW FOR SMALL GROUPS

Small groups are designed to gather people of faith in settings that foster trust so that our relationships with God and one another are strengthened. When we meet each other for earnest conversation, sharing and prayer, we deepen the bonds of affection by which we learn how to love ourselves, each other and God more fully. In this way, small groups are intentional about providing space for prayerful support and accountability, guided by the One we know as Jesus the Christ.

For our purposes in the Radix Project, we have designed a process for guiding 6–10 people in their season together, designed as six 90-minute sessions, with a plenary gathering before the first session. Each small group gathering is structured to open with prayer, to have time for check-in, scripture reading and reflection, sharing of stories, and check-out with prayer.

# SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

In addition to the six small group meetings (which will convene at various times), there is a plenary gathering to which all who participate in the small groups are invited. So the flow of the season looks like this:

## **OPENING PLENARY**

Wednesday, September 30, 2020,  
7–8:30 p.m., via Zoom

*The Opening Plenary will begin with a brief presentation by Dean Steve, giving a general introduction to the various stories which will be discussed in the small group meetings. This presentation is open to anyone, whether or not they are participating in the small groups. Following this presentation, the groups will meet individually for the first time in break-out sessions.*

- SESSION 1: JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS** . . . week of October 4, 2020
- SESSION 2: MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH** . . . . . week of October 11, 2020
- SESSION 3: ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW** . . . . . week of October 18, 2020
- SESSION 4: JESUS HEALS A MAN** . . . . . week of October 25, 2020
- SESSION 5: “MEN LIKE TREES”** . . . . . week of November 1, 2020
- SESSION 6: DAY OF PENTECOST** . . . . . week of November 8, 2020

# ESTABLISH GROUP NORMS

In order to grow in trust, it is important for groups to agree to norms for their time together and revisit them periodically as needed. It is important that everyone agree to abide by the same expectations for their time together. Here are some aspects of relational group culture that all groups will want to discuss as they begin their work

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

- ◆ What is allowed to be shared outside the group?
- ◆ What may be shared on social media?

## **RESPECT AND MUTUALITY**

- ◆ Let others finish without being interrupted.
- ◆ Resist the temptation to problem-solve.
- ◆ Mutual respect is essential.
- ◆ Give everyone a chance to speak.

## **LOGISTICS**

- ◆ What are expectations about beginning and ending on time?
- ◆ ...about informing others of an expected absence?

## **ATTENDANCE**

- ◆ Be punctual.
- ◆ Commit to regular attendance and participation.

## **PREPARATION**

- ◆ What, if anything, are group members expected to do to prepare for their meetings?

## **COMMITMENT TO PRAYER**

- ◆ What are expectations that each group member commits to pray for the others daily during this time as a small group?

# ZOOM ETIQUETTE

Keep your microphone on mute when not speaking.

Take responsibility to practice using the technology ahead of the meeting, and ask for help as needed.

## FLOW OF THE SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

A key to the flourishing of small groups is some consistency week to week so folks will know what to expect. A group facilitator will encourage the group to stay on track, but everyone has a part in making that happen. Here is the suggested format for all Radix Project groups which are designed to meet for 90 minutes each week:

<b>GATHERING</b> . . . . .	5 minutes
<b>OPEN IN PRAYER</b> . . . . .	5 minutes
<b>CHECK-IN QUESTION</b> . . . . .	.10 minutes
<b>SCRIPTURE REFLECTION</b> . . . . .	.20 minutes
<b>GROUP DISCUSSION</b> . . . . .	.30 minutes
<b>CHECK-OUT INCLUDING PRAYER REQUESTS</b> . . . . .	.10 minutes
<b>CLOSING PRAYER/WORSHIP</b> . . . . .	.10 minutes

# IDEAS FOR CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

*Pick one for each week.*

- ◆ Do you prefer to be surprised, or to surprise others?
- ◆ When and where do you take off your shoes?
- ◆ What was the first music album you remember buying with your own money?
- ◆ Pick a single word that relates to your week, share it with the group, and explain why you chose it.
- ◆ What are the signs of autumn that you appreciate most?
- ◆ Share the name of a person you are holding in mind and heart this week, and how you are connected to this person.
- ◆ This time last year, what was your biggest concern? What concerns you today?

# OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS/CHECK-OUT

Leading one another in prayer is a responsibility that is meant to be shared among the group. At the close of each week, invite a group member to find and share a brief opening prayer, and another to bring a closing for the following week. These may be extemporaneous, or sourced from the rich variety of resources, some of which are listed below:

- ◆ Daily Devotions, BCP, p. 137–140
- ◆ Compline, BCP, p. 127
- ◆ A brief hymn, chant, or Taizé prayer
- ◆ Lectionary-based Prayers from Vanderbilt Divinity School  
<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=154>
- ◆ The Book of Common Prayer Online  
<https://www.bcponline.org/>
- ◆ The New Zealand Prayer Book Online  
<https://anglicanprayerbook.nz/>  
Here are three that might work well:  
<https://anglicanprayerbook.nz/138.html>
- ◆ The Work of the People  
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/visual-liturgy>  
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/be-still>  
(Some resources on this site will require a password, available from Kelly [kmoody@saintmarks.org](mailto:kmoody@saintmarks.org) or Greg, [gbloch@saintmarks.org](mailto:gbloch@saintmarks.org).)

Closing prayer is an opportunity for each member of the group to reflect on the time together, articulating what they learned, and to ask the group to hold them in prayer with special intention. That intention may have arisen in the

context of the meeting, or it could be that you are asking for prayers for some prevailing part of your life (e.g., my child has surgery next week, or I am retiring from work, etc.). The important thing is that the prayers of the group gather all those intentions up as the meeting comes to an end, AND that each person commits to holding those prayers through the week, until you meet again.

In addition to including a prayer from one of the above resources, consider the following:

- ◆ The group may choose to go around and allow each person to pray for the person sitting to their right, with the facilitator opening and closing.
- ◆ Alternatively, after the intentions are named, sit in silent prayer, centered on God's mercy and presence.

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# SCRIPTURE STUDY GUIDES

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# WEEK 1: JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS

## THE STORY IN CONTEXT

To engage with the scripture passage more fully, read the complete Joseph saga across the book of Genesis, chapters 37–50, or listen to Kelly Moody tell the story at:

<https://www.saintmarks.org/radix>

## SCRIPTURE *Genesis 45:1–15*

**T**HEN Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Send everyone away from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. **2** And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. **3** Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

**4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. **5** And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6** For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. **7** God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. **8** So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **9** Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down

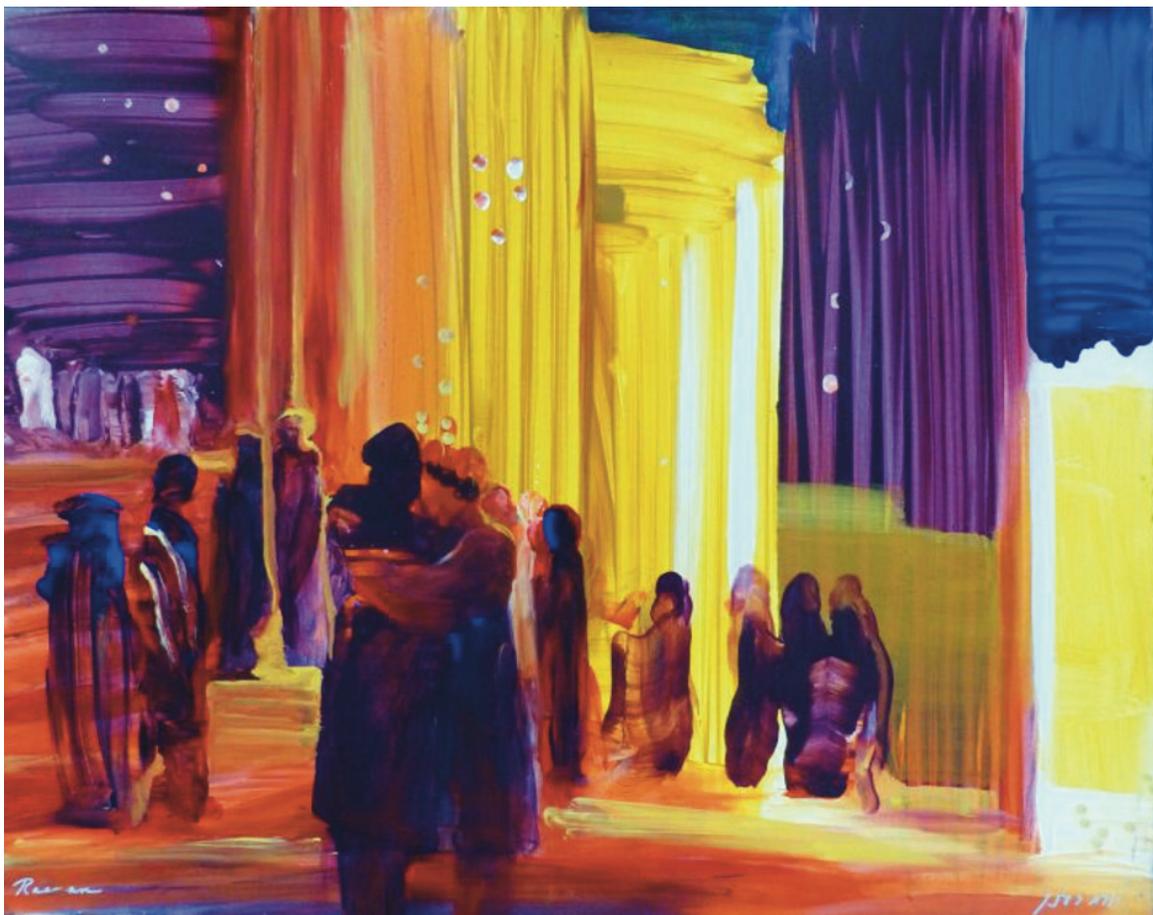
to me, do not delay. **10** You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. **11** I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' **12** And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. **13** You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." **14** Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. **15** And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him. ♦

#### **QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

1. What word or phrase in this passage stands out for you?
2. What, if anything, surprises you about the story?
3. What emotions are mingled into this remarkable scene of reunion? How do such emotions provide impetus for a particular outcome? Is there risk here?
4. Why do you think Joseph was prepared to forgive his brothers after they did such terrible things to him?

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Forgiveness is hard work. Can you think of a time in your life when someone forgave you for a wrongdoing, and how did that feel?
2. Can you think of a time when you were called to forgive but chose not to? What happened?
3. What surprises you most about the catalyzing power of forgiveness in relationship?



*The Brothers* (2015) by Yoram Ranaan  
acrylic on canvas, 80x100 cm  
<https://www.aish.com/tp/b/art/502293121.html>

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

*A Poem for Joseph and his Brothers*

by Carol Penner

It wasn't the colourful coat  
or even Joseph's dreams that tipped the balance.  
Maybe it was the day—too hot,  
or maybe just the fact that there was a pit.  
If the traders hadn't happened by  
they would have all had supper together,  
Reuben's voice as eldest  
would have decided the outcome.  
But instead the cup of resentment,  
filled drop by drop for years,  
is drained in one sudden act of violence.  
The deal is done, the money changes hands  
and Joseph is on his way to Egypt.  
The coat is the cover-up they need.  
They find their story in the mind of their father,  
anxious about his young son's solitary journey.  
They didn't even technically lie, only asking,  
"Is this your son's coat?"

The one thing the brothers hadn't counted on  
was their father's grief;  
it's expansiveness, its power to grow in their lives,  
like a seedling in the crack of a rock.  
In Egypt we find that Judah is a changed man.  
It wasn't being thrown in jail that did it,  
or the misfortune of the mysterious stolen cup.  
It's not the trips back and forth, carrying money and grain.  
The seed of remorse was rooted in him,  
watered by years of Jacob's tears,

*continued* ►

and it blossoms suddenly as he bargains for his brother's life,  
as he tries to give his own to save his father,  
who cannot survive another season of grief.

When the Egyptian ruler speaks their language  
with the shocking words, 'My brothers...'  
they see him morph from bejeweled foreigner  
into Joseph, their own flesh and blood.  
Risen from the grave of Egypt,  
his presence haunts them with forgiveness.  
Even at their father's death the brothers still fear Joseph.  
Their long-done deed aches like an old wound  
in the deep heart's core,  
untouched by Joseph's healing words,  
the tears he weeps. ♦

## NOTES

**NOTES**

## WEEK 2: MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH

**SCRIPTURE** *Exodus 3:1–12*

**M**OSSES was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3** Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” **4** When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5** Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6** He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

**7** Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, **8** and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9** The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. **10** So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11** But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12** He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” ♦



*Burning Bush* by Mark Wiggin  
[www.veritasse.co.uk](http://www.veritasse.co.uk), used by permission.

### **QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

1. What word or phrase or idea stands out to you in this passage?
2. What do you feel is a bigger surprise to Moses in this story? That there's a burning bush not being consumed—and it's God!—or that God wants Moses to be the one to rescue the people out of Egypt? Why?
3. Moses approached the burning bush with normal curiosity. He doesn't recognize he's on holy ground until God tells him to take his shoes off! What does "holy ground" mean to you? Have you ever been surprised by recognizing holy ground?
4. What is God up to here; what does he want with Moses? How does he convince Moses to do it?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Have you ever felt like the Spirit was trying to get your attention, or leading you toward something? What did or would that feel like? How hard did/does God have to work to get your attention?
2. When have you been surprised by what you are asked to do, or felt like you were not up to a critical task or call? How were convinced to say yes? Where was God in it?
3. What does it mean for us, that God saw his people's suffering and calls a person forward to do something about it? Do you think God is still working that way?

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

*Holy Now*

a song by Peter Mayer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiyPaURysz4>

*Lyrics:*

When I was a boy, each week  
    On Sunday, we would go to church  
And pay attention to the priest.  
    He would read the holy word  
And consecrate the holy bread,  
    And everyone would kneel and bow.  
Today the only difference is  
    Everything is holy now.

When I was in Sunday school,  
    We would learn about the time  
Moses split the sea in two,  
    Jesus made the water wine.  
And I remember feeling sad  
    That miracles don't happen still.  
But now I can't keep track  
    Cause everything's a miracle.

Wine from water is not so small,  
    But an even better magic trick  
Is that anything is here at all.  
    So the challenging thing becomes  
Not to look for miracles,  
    But finding where there isn't one.

When holy water was rare at best,  
    It barely wet my fingertips,  
But now I have to hold my breath,  
    Like I'm swimming in a sea of it.  
It used to be a world half there,  
    Heaven's second rate hand-me-down,  
But I walk it with a reverent air,  
    Cause everything is holy now.

Read a questioning child's face  
    And say it's not a testament—  
That'd be very hard to say.  
    See another new morning come  
And say it's not a sacrament—  
    I tell you that it can't be done

This morning, outside I stood  
    And saw a little red-winged bird  
Shining like a burning bush,  
    Singing like a scripture verse.  
It made me want to bow my head.  
    I remember when church let out.  
How things have changed since then—  
    Everything is holy now. ♦

## NOTES

## NOTES

## WEEK 3: ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW

**SCRIPTURE** *1 Kings 17:8–16*

**T**HEN the word of the LORD came to him, saying, **9** “Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” **10** So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” **11** As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” **12** But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” **13** Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth.” **15** She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah. ♦



*A Place for the Prophet* by Jan Richardson  
[www.janrichardsonimages.com](http://www.janrichardsonimages.com), used by permission.

### **QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

1. Elijah happens upon this widow at a dire hour, and he asks for all they have left. Can you think of other Bible stories when someone is asked to give all they have? What is the outcome?
2. Notice that the scripture references “the word of the Lord.” How might you describe the character and purpose of the word of the Lord in this story?
3. What questions do you have about the widow? About Elijah? About the son?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. How do you listen for “the word of the Lord” in your life?
2. In this story, God brings together two people who must trust God in order to help each other. Has anyone ever showed up in your life that seemed to be a “Godsend”? What was that like?
3. What does divine abundance look like to you?

**FOR FURTHER REFLECTION**

*Elijah and the Widow*

by Kristina Erny

Even ravens need crust, something.

Left behind, everyone left.

It begs the question:

jar bottom,

a flag of surrender?

Hostile, hand-held, the haze.

Always the tone;

never the ringing.

Driven you

to the pot where the flour is

hoped for, hidden—~~o~~ then, his face in the doorway—*have,*

*eat—Yes, we are eaten—*still a future, grim, O,

*won't you come in.*

I would have baked the cake ~~o~~

died. Instead, you perform, participate in

onerous miracle, ~~o~~ tomorrow

wake up, blinking, hoary film under your nails. ♦

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

*Trying to swim with God*

by Warsan Shire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-A9I7UvhS0>

*Istaqfurulah*<sup>1</sup>

My mother says this city is slowly killing all our women;  
practising back strokes at the local swimming pool.  
I think of Kadija, how her body had failed her  
on the way down from the block of flats.

The instructor tells us that the longest  
a human being has held their breath under water  
is 19 minutes and 21 seconds. At home in the bath,  
my hair swells to the surface like vines, I stay submerged  
until I can no longer stand it, think of all the things  
I have allowed to slip through my fingers.

*Inna lillahi Wa inna ilaihi Rajioon.*<sup>2</sup>

My mother says no one can fight it—  
the body returning to God,  
but the way she fell, face first,  
in the dirt,  
mouth full of earth,  
air, teeth, blood,  
wearing a white cotton baati,<sup>3</sup>  
hair untied and smoked with ounsi,<sup>4</sup>  
I wonder if Kadija believed  
she was going to float. ♦

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1. Arabic for “Allah forgive my sins.”
  2. Arabic for “To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.”
  3. A long Somali nightdress
  4. This refers to the Somali tradition of burning frankincense and myrrh over coals and releasing aroma through the smoke.

## NOTES

## WEEK 4: JESUS HEALS A MAN

**SCRIPTURE** *Luke 5:17–26*

**O**NE day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting near by (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. **18** Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; **19** but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. **20** When he saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” **21** Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, “Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” **22** When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? **23** Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? **24** But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the one who was paralyzed—“I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home.” **25** Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. **26** Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen strange things today.” ♦



*The Paralytic* (2001) by J. Kirk Richards  
oil on panel, 48×48 inches  
[art.jkirkrichards.com](http://art.jkirkrichards.com)

### **QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

1. There are many characters in this story. Which one (or ones) do you identify with?
2. How do you suppose it came to be that the friends of the paralyzed man bring him to Jesus? Tell how you imagine that story.
3. What catches your eye in the J. Kirk Richards painting of this scene?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Jesus asks, “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? What do you think? Is either easy? Which would you want Jesus to say to you?”
2. Have you ever had friends like those who lower the paralytic man through the roof? Have you ever been a friend like that? What was it like?
3. What “strange things” have you seen in your life that filled you with awe and made you aware of God’s presence?

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

*Miracle*

by Seamus Heaney

read by Hozier: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqHOuhMRNno>

Not the one who takes up his bed and walks  
But the ones who have known him all along  
And carry him in—  
Their shoulders numb, the ache and stoop deeplocked  
In their backs, the stretcher handles  
Slippery with sweat. And no let-up  
Until he's strapped on tight, made tiltable  
And raised to the tiled roof, then lowered for healing.  
Be mindful of them as they stand and wait  
For the burn of the paid-out ropes to cool,  
Their slight lightheadedness and incredulity  
To pass, those ones who had known him all along. ♦

## QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

1. Seamus Heaney writes, “Be mindful” of “those who had known him all along.” What do you suppose they knew about the paralytic man?

## NOTES

## NOTES

## WEEK 5: “MEN LIKE TREES”

**SCRIPTURE** *Mark 8:22–26*

**T**HEY came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to [Jesus] and begged him to touch him. **23** He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” **24** And the man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” **25** Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. **26** Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.” ♦



*I See Men Like Trees, Walking* (2020), by Fr. Cassian Sibley  
watercolor and ink on paper, 18×24 inches  
[fineartamerica.com](http://fineartamerica.com), used by permission.

### **QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

1. Jesus isn't totally successful healing the man on the first try. Do you think Jesus is surprised by that? What is significant about that for you?
2. How do you think the man felt after Jesus' first attempt? How would you feel?
3. Jesus was emphatic that the man should not go back to the village. Why? What would you do if you had been the one to be healed?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. When have you been surprised by something that took longer than you expected? What did you learn from that experience?
2. The man's healing takes place in two parts. Has there been a time in your life when the "in between" time ended up better than the final resolution?
3. Sibley's image is an attempt to capture what the man might have seen. What do you notice about the painting? How does this compare to your own experience of not being able to see clearly?

**FOR FURTHER REFLECTION**

from *A Lot of the Way Trees Were Walking* by Cynthia Briggs Kittredge

Downside

All was black

he could stay in

town.

When he saw men like

trees

walking

he was our peer

he had lots of company

all those other

trees.

When all was clear

He could never

go

back. ♦

## NOTES

## NOTES

## WEEK 6: DAY OF PENTECOST

**SCRIPTURE** *Acts 2: 1-21*

**W**HEN the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

**5** Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

**14** But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. **15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock

in the morning. **16** No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

‘In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

**21** Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ ♦

### **QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

1. What were the disciples likely thinking in this moment, when unusual (or supernatural) events unfolded before them, especially given the recent crucifixion of Christ and then his resurrection, and the confusion they had in the days that followed?
2. Can you name a few other scripture stories where the Spirit’s movement was surprising? How did the people respond?
3. What does it mean that they “were filled with the Holy Spirit?” Why do you think that experience is sometimes met with suspicion even among Christians?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Have you ever been in a situation in which the crowds were speaking all sorts of languages and yet there was a sense of connection and understanding still? What was that experience like?
  2. Can you share an experience in your life when you sensed the Spirit moving, inspiring you to some new thing?
  3. How are we called, as a community of Christians, to open ourselves to the Spirit, or be filled with the Holy Spirit, and what happens (might happen) when/if we do?
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### **CLOSING DISCUSSION**

This is the end of six weeks of study and reflection together. Take time to pray together about next steps, both as individuals and as a group.



*Day of Pentecost*, a detail from a fresco depicting the life of Mary in the chapel of Keur Moussa Abbey, near Dakar, Senegal. (See full view below.)  
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## NOTES

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