

New Beginning

A Bible Reading and Prayer Experience

Introduction:

Community Baptist Church is thirty years old this year. The Lord sent church planters to Cold Lake in late 1979 and began to work through them to establish a congregation to serve the community. There have been plenty of changes and comings and goings in these thirty years. Our Lord has lead, equipped, provided for and filled the congregation all along as it applied itself to serving Jesus' work in Cold Lake.

The time comes in the life of a church for the people who currently make up the congregation to listen to the Lord as he leads them to rethink what it means to be his servants and what he wants them to apply themselves to at the present time. Community Baptist has experienced these interesting times with the Lord through its thirty years of service. In 1985 the pastoral team announced that it was time for them to move on and the church began the search for a new pastor. Later that year and into 1986, the leadership team of the church reviewed the organization of the church and its demand on people and designed a much simpler way of looking out for the affairs of the congregation. On September 27, 1992 the church turned the sod for the renovation of our building and we moved in January 1993. In the mid nineties the church worked together to think strategically about the future. All along the Lord has created, equipped and lead creative and innovative ministries and activities that have been a part of the congregations service. Times to rethink and re-imagine with the Lord come to his people. And I think we are in one of those moments now.

For the first quarter of this year I have been laying a foundation of Biblical readings and ideas to shape us as we work together with the Lord in getting a fresh new sense of being his servants in Cold Lake. What I have put together is a Bible reading and prayer experience that will allow you to read through these Biblical texts and think about what the Lord is saying to us and in what direction he is leading and equipping us for the next while. The booklet will give you something to read, think and pray about each week, this summer, June through September. The idea is to encourage each of us to listen to the Lord as individuals and as part of the church family, with faith and hope that together we will hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us and to get a sense of the direction the Wind of God is blowing us.

Community Baptist Church and all of us in it are in the caring and capable hands of the Lord of new creation and new beginnings, who is shaping us in a way that seems good to himself, releasing our imaginations to the new future we are called to participate in the Spirit, for the glory of God.

Pastor Phil

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New Creation / New Beginning

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Key Scriptural Idea: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, then new is come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

In Christ “everything has become new.” This is quite the conviction. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to release our imaginations to envision a new beginning and a new future. Jesus is the Lord of the new creation and every new beginning that witnesses in some small way to the fullness of new creation.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. How might this reading have helped communities of Jesus followers desire to discover God’s imagination for them?
2. What does this text say to you about your desire to discover God’s imagination for Community Baptist Church?
3. What is God saying to you in this text? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Christ, The New Beginning

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:1-23

Key Scriptural Idea: He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Colossians 1:18

Paul's letter to the Colossians contains some of the greatest statements about Jesus ever written down. The focus of our attention is on Jesus as the New Beginning as this relates to your life and the life of our church community. Jesus is the new beginning. Jesus is, therefore, the Lord of new beginnings and each new beginning are moments of witness to the reality and promise of new creation in its fullness.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. When you read this Scripture with the idea that Jesus is the Lord of new beginnings, how does it open you to appreciate new beginnings?
2. How might this reading speak to you and to our church family as we experience new beginning?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

He's Changing Us

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-31

Key Scriptural Idea: Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again.

This is one of the great change stories in the Bible. This is the story of a man who experienced a dramatic change and the impact this change had on other people, including a church community. But it is this change story because it is foremost the story of the God who brings change. Someone has said, "God can totally change us."

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What kinds of change do you see in this story? What does this story say about Jesus and change? What impact on individuals and communities do these changes have?
2. How does this reading make you feel about change? In what way is this story like your story or the story of Community Baptist Church?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord:

Prayer:

As Seems Good To Him

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-12

Key Scriptural Idea: But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Here is one of the great story metaphors in the Bible that have the power to capture our minds and get us thinking freely and creatively with the Spirit. We are experiencing a time in the church of being reshaped as seems good to the Lord. We are in the capable hands of the master potter. And if we think about it and chat about it with one another we will begin to get a sense of what God's imagination is for us in the next while.

Listening to the Scriptures:

1. What do you notice in this reading that you find interesting?
2. What does this reading say that helps you to get a sense of God's imagination for your life and the ministry of our church?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Part Of The Body

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12

Key Scripture Idea: Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

One of the ways to appreciate Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is as a way of speaking to a breakdown of love in the church. Reading chapter twelve reveals the great respect and honor members of the church have for one another for each is a part of the body of Christ.

1. In what way does this reading give us insight into the imagination for a new beginning that Jesus might have for a congregation of his people.
2. What might this reading be saying to you as an individual disciple and to us as a church.
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Jesus, The Light

Scripture Reading: Mark 4:21-22

Key Scripture Idea: If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

In this strange little reading, I believe that Jesus is talking about himself and what he can mean in the lives of those who follow him. Jesus is the lamp that is meant to bring light so people can see. He did not come into the world to hide and conceal his light, but to give his light to people. Accessing this light requires listening to Jesus.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What kinds of changes can you imagine happening to those who listened to Jesus? How would these words be important to them?
2. What kinds of change are you experiencing? What changes is the church experiencing? What does this reading have to say to these changes?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

A Safe Place To Talk

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:1-38

Key Scriptural Idea: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.
Luke 22:15

God's imagination for our church is in us as a congregation. Through conversation with each other we will begin to get a sense of the direction the Holy Spirit is leading us. Such a conversation might explore how we are feeling, what we are thinking and ideas that have come to us about the new beginning Community Baptist is experiencing. To have such a conversation we need to work with the Lord in creating a safe environment to give voice to what is in us.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What does the Lord's Supper account in Luke suggest to you about Jesus creating a safe place for his disciples to give voice to how they feel and what they are thinking?
2. The Lord's Supper is an activity that Community Baptist observes at least once a month. How does the Lord's Supper contribute to making a safe place for us to give voice to what's in us? What does it take for Community Baptist to be a safe place to talk?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord

Prayer:

Called Into The Neighborhood

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53

Key Scriptural Idea: He poured his life out unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

Isaiah 53 is the great hymn to the sacrifice and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus for us. We usually apply it to ourselves individually. But we can also read it through the lens of who Jesus identified himself with and with whom he was identified when he was crucified.

Listening to Scripture:

1. Who was Jesus associated, connected and identified in his suffering and crucifixion?
2. What does “he was numbered with the transgressors” mean to you? What does it mean to us as a church serving Jesus mission?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Jesus, One Who Serves

Scripture Reading: Luke 22 & 23

Key Scriptural Idea: I am among you as one who serves. Luke 22:27

Community Baptist Church is a sent people. The church was planted, called together and sent by Jesus to serve his mission in Cold Lake and surrounding countryside. This is something that we say on Sunday's quite often. But it is worth thinking and praying about again.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. Where did Jesus suffer for us? Take note of all the locations mentioned in the reading.
2. Where is Jesus at work in Cold Lake? What might he be doing there? Where can you imagine yourself working with Jesus in a neighborhood?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

He Is Risen

Scripture Reading: Luke 24

Key Scriptural Idea: It is true! The Lord has risen...

We serve a risen savior. He's in the world today. He is risen, alive, present and actively seeking people in Cold Lake.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. Where are conversations with and about the risen Jesus taking place in the reading?
2. Where have conversations with and about the risen Jesus taken place in Cold Lake? Where can you imagine yourself involved in a conversation with and about the risen Jesus?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Acts of Discipleship

Scripture Reading: Luke 24

Key Scriptural Idea: They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. Luke 24:42-43

There is value in dwelling with a reading from the Bible for a while. Luke 24 has plenty for us to listen to. A significant part of our lives is our participation in symbolic acts. They help us remember. They are acts of hope for the future. They allow us to make commitments. And they lead us in a loving life through good habits and practices.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What symbolic acts are represented in this reading?
2. What symbolic acts are part of your life? What do they mean to you? What are they encouraging in your life?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?

Prayer:

Mission and Vision

Scripture Reading: Luke 24

Key Scriptural Idea: It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Peter. Luke 24:34

We staying with Luke 24, dwelling with it, to give it time to work deep within us, by the Spirit. The lense for reading today is mission and vision. Mission is what we are called to do. Vision is the future we imagine being created by what we do.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What does this reading say about Jesus mission and his vision for the future?
2. What mission for Community Baptist Church is stirred by this text and what does our future look like?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Brothers and Sisters

Scripture Reading: James 1-5

Key Scripture Idea: My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this. James 1:19

Practical Christian faith is important to all of us. What does Christian living look like? What is living a consistent Christian life? The Letter of James is where many disciples turn to answer this question. It does not take long to read the letter. How does it speak to you as an individual? What does it say about church community?

Listening to Scripture:

1. What struggles is the church having, that James speaks to. What does he encourage to take place in the church?
2. How can James guide you and Community Baptist in the service of Jesus' mission in Cold Lake? What vision of the future does James' letter suggest?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Readiness Praying

Scripture Reading: Acts 1

Key Scriptural Idea: They all joined together constantly in prayer... Acts 1:14

Prayer prepares us for what the Lord has for us. What the Lord has for us is going to come out of us as a congregation. In the next while, heart bursts in us will begin to be expressed. And these heart bursts will begin to form into ideas of how we can serve. And these ideas will turn into experiments in bringing the grace of Jesus to people and situations in Cold Lake. Prayer prepares you and I for what we are to do and what the future will be in the grace and power of the Spirit.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What does this reading have to say about Jesus mission and the disciples part in it? How does prayer fit in?
2. How is this reading directing you to Jesus mission and the future your service will help create in Cold Lake.
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

A Mother's Heart

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 1&2

Key Scriptural Idea: My heart rejoices in the Lord. 1 Samuel 2:1

This is the wonderful story of Hannah and her dedication of Samuel into the Lord's service. Listen to this story from the point of view of a church with a mother's heart.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What catches your imagination in this story?
2. What feature of this story helps you appreciate the Lord's imagination for your life and Community Baptist?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Hospitality

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Key Scriptural Idea: But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over. Luke 24:29

Hospitality is visible love. A church serving the mission of Jesus needs to be a fully hospitable community.

Listening to the Scriptures:

1. What do you see about hospitality in this reading?
2. In what way is the Holy Spirit directing your thoughts about being hospitable?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

Missional Spirit

Scripture Reading: Acts 2

Key Scriptural Idea: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Acts 2:17

Doing the work of the mission Jesus calls us to and seeing a vision of the future this will make is done by the leading, guiding and power of the Holy Spirit.

Listening to the Scripture:

1. What does this reading have to say about the Holy Spirit and serving Jesus' mission in the city.
2. What does this reading say to you and to Community Baptist about the Spirit and serving Jesus' mission in Cold Lake?
3. What is God saying to you? What are you saying to God?
4. In silence take time to appreciate the Lord.

Prayer:

New Beginning

A Community Baptist Church
Bible Reading and Prayer Experience



Questions to Think About

Pick one or two questions that you find interesting or that you relate to and allow it to stimulate your reflections and thoughts. Over the weeks of the summer allow different questions to excite your imagination in the Spirit.

1. What kind of church do you want?
2. What is meaningful to you about Community Baptist Church?
3. What would be helpful to you in your discipleship?

4. What kind of church would Christ want?
5. What would Christ find meaningful in Community Baptist Church?
6. What would Christ recommend as helpful for your discipleship?

7. What is it about our experience of Jesus Christ that the community cannot live without?

8. What is happening to our people in day to day life?
9. What might God be saying in these stories?
10. In what ways might God already be present among people in our community?
11. How might we join God in what is already happening?

12. What kind of change are you experiencing?
13. What kind of change is happening in our community?
14. What is God up to in these changes?
15. How might these changes be part of God's mission in the world?

16. What has God put inside us to come out in his service?
17. What has God put in you to come out in his service through CBC

A Prayer For The Day

Upon Waking Up

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will forever be. Amen.

Christ,
the true Light,
You enlighten and sanctify every person.
May Your light shine in us
that we may see Your radiance.
Help us to live
according to Your commandments,
through your intercession
and the prayers of all Your Saints.
Amen.

Lord, give me the strength
to greet the coming day in peace.
Help me in all things
to rely on Your holy will.
Reveal Your will to me
every hour of the day.
Bless my dealings with all people.
Teach me to treat all people
who come to me throughout the day
with peace of soul
and with firm conviction
that Your will governs all.
In all my deeds and words
guide my thoughts and feelings.
In unexpected events,
let me not forget that all are sent by you.
Teach me to act firmly and wisely,
without embittering and embarrassing others.
Give me the physical strength
to bear the labours of this day.
Direct my will,
teach me to pray,
pray in me.
Amen.

Prayer For Community Baptist Church

1. Invitation to Prayer:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ. Pray that we may proclaim it clearly, as we should. Colossians 4:2-4

Thank you Father, for the call to seek you on behalf of Community Baptist Church.

2. Adoration of God (Praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what he has done):

Our Father, we give you thanks and praise for your creative and saving work that brought Community Baptist Church into existence and into your service.

Lord, you gave the vision and motivation for planting this church in Cold Lake and you have been with us through the years in all the changes and comings and goings, giving us the grace to love and serve you.

Holy Spirit, in a transient changing place you have provided everything that we needed to be your witnesses in this city.

(Think of some stories of God's work and blessing in the life and ministry of Community Baptist Church.)

3. Affirmation of Faith:

Father, you have made us a visible example of how your good news in Jesus Christ, is present in people, and transforms culture to reflect more faithfully your intentions for all of creation. You have made us a community that actively participates in your activity in this world.

Father, you have given us the mission of Sharing Christ and Caring in his name.

You have given us the vision to attract and lead people to Christ, to stimulate spiritual growth so that they become fully devoted followers of Christ, and equip them to serve the Lord and make a difference in the church, the community and beyond.

4. Confession and Dedication:

Our Father, we recognize that we as individuals and as a church are incomplete expressions of your kingdom. Together, we press on to a more faithful life with you,

depending on your loving presence and power.

5. Intercession:

a. The Congregation:

Father, move us, as a congregation and individually to proclaim the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, work with us that we may be active learners and become fully devoted and mature disciples of Jesus.

Father, continue to lead us to read the Bible regularly, individually and as a congregation, seeking to be obedient to the Word of God.

Father, help us to center our lives in Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection.

Father, inspire us to be serve your mission through the church and in our own lives.

Father, direct our path so that we walk with one another in Christian love: supporting and building one another up in love.

Father, shape us into people who practice the process of reconciliation within and without the church, so that people can experience a new life with God and each other through Jesus Christ.

Father, create in us a generosity of sharing our time, talents and offerings to support the life and ministry of the church family.

Father, continue to develop in us a welcoming and hospitable way to help neighbors and friends become citizens of your kingdom.

Father, lead us in our public witness to your good news. Inspire us to pray for the health and welfare of our city and to speak and act with prophetic love where this is needed.

Father, renew is us the desire and wisdom to gather to worship you together. This is the central act of this church. Meet with us that we might celebrate with joy and thanksgiving your living presence and promised future.

b. Our Pastor:

Our Father, we seek you for our Pastor, that through your grace and love he may be a man; after your heart, of the word, who allows you to direct his steps, who has a growing, deepening relationship with you in prayer, who is Spirit-filled with faith and love, of good health, strength and endurance, loves and cares for his family, prays for and instructs us, whose ministry is fruitful, equips us for service and discipleship, and is

protected from the evil one.

c. Our Leaders:

Our Father, we come before you on behalf of those who have accepted leadership responsibilities in the church, that by your mercy and kindness they might be men and women; who love you and are growing deeply in you through your word and prayer, who love and care for their families, who are full of the fruit of the Spirit, giving themselves as gentle and caring servants, and whose work bears fruit in the depth and maturity of the discipleship and service of the congregation in your kingdom.

d. Our Weekly Service:

Our Father, as we gather together each week may the service glorify you, may the hearts of all who attend be prepared to hear you, may our pastor be sensitive to your leading in preparation and in speaking, may we see how to apply your word to our lives, may the musicians be in good voice and show the joy of the Lord, may the service know your guidance in it's preparation, may all the equipment work properly, may there be a spirit of love, peace, unity and joy, and may all who come know they are welcome and at home.

e. Our Life & Ministry:

Our Father, we hold before you the visible examples of our life and ministry asking that you would make them all they can be to your glory.

(Think of the gatherings and activities that are happening this week and hold them before the Lord.)

Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen

Prayer For The Lord's Guidance In Conversation

Our Father, we believe that Community Baptist Church exists in Cold Lake to serve you, as a result of your creating and saving work. You have planted us here to be a visible example of how the good news of Jesus Christ, is present in human life, and how it transforms culture to reflect more faithfully God's intentions for creation. You have given us the privilege of visibly and effectively participating in your activity in this place.

We are thankful to you, our Father, for the many years of life and service this church has experienced through your love and faithfulness. We thank you for all the people who have been this congregation, the many experiences we have shared and the changes and transitions you have guided us through.

Our Father, we feel that we are, again, in a time of change and transition. We believe that you are shaping us with your loving hands into a different vessel in your service. We believe that your imagination for us is in us as a congregation and that through conversation with the Scriptures and one another we will begin to discover what you have put in us to be brought out and into your service. We ask that you will help us listen to you, by listening to your word and each other, so that we might discern the new beginning that you are working in us.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

An Evangelism Prayer

In the name of
The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen!

Our Father,
Eternal life is to know you
And the one you have sent,
Jesus Christ, the Lord.
It is your will and desire
That all kinds of people come to know you,
Through faith in your Son.
You are active in this work
And have called me to serve you in this process.
Keep me alert to each person I encounter.
Open a door for your word,
That I may declare the mystery of Christ and
That I may explain it as clearly as possible,
For the saving benefit of the person I am connecting with.
Help me to conduct myself wisely,
Being willing to enter into the lives of others
And to welcome them into my life.
Help me to use time properly,
To speak graciously, and
To season the conversations with salt.
Help me to know how to answer everyone
You bring into conversation with me,
That these conversations
May lead to their conversion to Christ.
In the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord,
Live with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever.
Amen!

Sharing Our Thoughts And Ideas!

The purpose of this New Beginnings Bible Study and Prayer Experience is to help each of us ponder what the Lord has in mind for us in the next while. I hope that each of us will find the readings and prayer personally helpful. But I am also hoping that this experience will help us in Spirit lead conversation to see a sense of the shape that Lord is creating us into for his service. Sharing our thoughts and ideas will be an important part of the experience.

1. E-Mail

One way we can collect thoughts and ideas is through e-mail. As you read and pray your interesting thoughts and ideas will come to you. You can e-mail them to Pastor Phil at cbc@incentre.net

2. Idea Basket

Another way we can collect thoughts and ideas is in a Idea Basket. There will be an idea basket set up in the church. There will be cards available to write down ideas and put them in the box.

3. Stories

A third way to collect thoughts and ideas is to write them as stories of your experience in reading and prayer. This is a form of prayer diary writing that is meant to be shared with the church family. If this appeals to you, you can e-mail your stories to cbc@incentre.net or drop them off to Pastor Phil.

4. Bring Something to Share

A fourth way to hear what the Lord has been saying is to bring a short thought, idea or story to be shared during the Sunday service. Time will be provided on some of the Sunday's to share.

5. Plan A Meal

Why not invite everyone that is interested to a BBQ and conversation at you home or a picnic at the park or the beach.