

VALLEY OF PEACE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Summer 2020*



**12 WEEK HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL**

Adapted by Emilie Moravec, CYF Director from Sanctified Art's "Unraveled" series



# UNRAVELED

SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS FALL APART



## 12 WEEK HOUSEHOLD DEVOTIONAL



**Who:** All households are invited to participate! Most of the activities in this devotional are specifically designed for households with children and youth, but anyone, of any age, in any household size can adapt these activities and complete them as they find meaningful.

**Why:** Just because regular faith formation programming takes a break until fall, doesn't mean the learning and growing has to stop. This devotional contains reflections and activities that will follow the Valley of Peace "Unraveled" worship theme and continue to grow your faith over the summer months. Sometimes in life we feel unraveled like a ball of yarn. Sometimes our plans or our lives don't go the ways we hope they will, which might cause us to feel sad, or angry, or upset. This summer we will explore how God is with us even when our plans fall apart.

**Bonus:** Post pictures of your completed activities or comment on reflections at our private "Valley of Peace Active Community" Facebook group and engage with other households all summer.





# WEEK OF JUNE 7TH

**SCRIPTURE : GENESIS 18:1-15; 21:1-7**

## **SARAH LAUGHS**

Sarah and Abraham really wanted to have children of their own, but Sarah was not able to have a baby. Then, one day when Sarah was really old, an angel appeared and told her that she was going to have a child, and Sarah laughed out loud because the news felt too good to be true. Sometimes God can surprise us and unravel our plans with unexpected joy and surprise.

### **ACTIVITY**

Make someone laugh! When Sarah found out she was going to have a baby, she laughed out loud. Laughing feels so good and can be good for your health. Find a new joke, share it with your family or friends, and make them laugh!!!

Reflect:  
When do you feel joy? Can you think of a time when you were really surprised? What makes you laugh?

### **FOR THE KIDS**

This story is all about surprises and the joy that can come from them. Plan a couple surprises through out the week for the children in your life. Maybe a room full of balloons, a scavenger hunt, staying up late, or a family sleepover in the basement. Talk about the little ways these surprises bring joy into your home as you remember the story of Sarah and Abraham.



"THE HEIR"  
by Hannah Garrity



# WEEK OF JUNE 14TH

**SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 14:22-33**

## **PETER SINKS IN THE WATER**

One day, Jesus and the disciples sailed to a mountain where Jesus could be alone. That night, the disciples slept in the boat while Jesus stayed on land, but then a storm came and the boat got tossed around in the waves. Peter stood up in the boat and saw Jesus walking toward them along the top of the water. It was unbelievable! But Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid." Now, Peter wasn't sure if what he was seeing was really Jesus or if he was dreaming, so he said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to walk on the water too." Jesus said, "Come." And Peter stepped out of the safety of the boat into the waves. The wind began to blow, and the water was very deep, and Peter was scared, so he started to sink. But just as he was sinking, Jesus reached out and caught him. They stepped back into the boat and the storm calmed. When we feel scared or uncertain, let us remember God's outstretched hand.

## **ACTIVITY**

Find some time to read the story above while surrounded by water. Maybe at your cabin on the lake, near a creek or river, or even while taking a bath.

Reflect: Have you ever gone on a boat ride? What was it like? Did the boat rock back and forth? Was it windy? Did you feel scared? Have you ever felt God's presence when you were scared?

## **FOR THE KIDS**

Let's play with water this week! After reading the story above, use water throughout the week for a little summer fun. Some ideas might be to play "Sink or Float," guessing whether objects will sink or float in a large tub of water, create a sprinkler obstacle course, make some watercolor paintings, or share your own water ideas with all of us on Facebook!



"STEP INTO THE SWELL"

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity



## WEEK OF JUNE 21ST

**SCRIPTURE: 2 SAMUEL 3:7; 21:1-14**

### **RIZPAH MOURNS HER SONS**

A woman named Rizpah lived long ago during the time of King David. But Rizpah was very, very sad because her sons died and she missed them very much. And so instead of ignoring or trying to hide her pain, she cried and showed her sadness to others in her town. King David found out that Rizpah was sad, and so he decided to help give her sons a proper funeral. It's ok to feel sad sometimes. When we are feeling sad, God is with us and God loves us. And God wants us to take care of each other so that we are never alone when we are hurting.

### **ACTIVITY**

Reflect: Do you ever feel sad? What helps you feel better when you are sad?

As a household, or individually, reach out to someone in your life who has experienced death or deep sadness this year. Write a letter or call them to let them know you are thinking about them and that they are loved.

### **FOR THE KIDS**

Draw a picture or create a collage that makes you feel happy just by looking at it. Hang it somewhere in your home or bedroom. If you're ever feeling sad or upset you can find your picture or collage and pray while looking at it.



"RIZPAH"

by Lauren Wright Pittman



## WEEK OF JUNE 28TH

**SCRIPTURE: LUKE 19:1-10**

### ZACCHAEUS THE WEALTHY TAX COLLECTOR

One time when Jesus entered a place called Jericho, there was a man there named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was very rich, but he had not earned his money fairly. He cheated and lied and stole other people's money. But somehow he had heard about Jesus, and so when Jesus entered the city, Zacchaeus climbed a tree so that he could see him through the crowds. When Jesus was passing by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and said, "Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay in your home today." And many people in the crowds gasped, saying, "Zacchaeus is a sinner and a bad person. He does not deserve to host Jesus." But Zacchaeus was changed in that moment, for he told Jesus and the crowds, "I will give half of my possessions to the poor and I will pay back four times as much money to those I owe." Zacchaeus had been a very selfish and greedy man, but when he met Jesus, he learned a new and better way to live—to share generously with others.

### ACTIVITY

Research a charity in your town or neighborhood that you don't know much about. How do they spend their donations? Who or what does it support?

Reflect: Have you ever given any of your money away to someone who needed it? How did it make you feel?

### FOR THE KIDS

With a grown up around to help and watch, try climbing a tree like Zacchaeus. If you don't have a good or safe climbing tree, try climbing something else. What can you see when you are up high?



"JESUS LOOKED UP"  
by Hannah Garrity



# WEEK OF JULY 5TH

**SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 5:1-2; 7:8-23**

**PHARAOH HARDENS HIS HEART TO MOSES' REQUESTS**

Long, long ago, the ancient Israelites lived in Egypt where they were forced to work in harsh and unfair conditions. The Egyptians were very mean to the Israelites and the Egyptian king, named Pharaoh, tried to keep the Israelites as slaves. But God had a different plan and told Moses to go to Pharaoh and say, "Let my people go." And so Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go." This happened ten times because Pharaoh kept saying no, until finally, Pharaoh relented and the Israelites were set free. The bible tells us that Pharaoh's heart was hardened toward the Israelites, meaning his heart was full of meanness instead of kindness. Sometimes we can be like Pharaoh and our hearts are also hardened, which can cause us to be mean to others. But God is always in the process of softening our hearts so that we can show kindness and love to others.

## ACTIVITY

Place your hands on your heart. Can you feel it beating? Now, hold your hands together so that they form the shape of a heart. Sometimes when we talk about love, we point to our heart, because that's where we can feel love in our bodies. Reflect: Have there been times in your life that you felt like your heart was hardened? What steps did you take to soften your heart? Where was God in your struggle? What did you learn?

## FOR THE KIDS

**MOVIE NIGHT!** Pop some popcorn, grab your favorite snacks and a copy of "Prince of Egypt" and enjoy a movie night together. Watch the story of Pharaoh come to life on screen.



"ANTI-CREATION NARRATIVE"

by Lauren Wright Pittman



# WEEK OF JULY 12TH

**SCRIPTURE: ACTS 9:1-20**

## THE CONVERSION OF SAUL TO PAUL

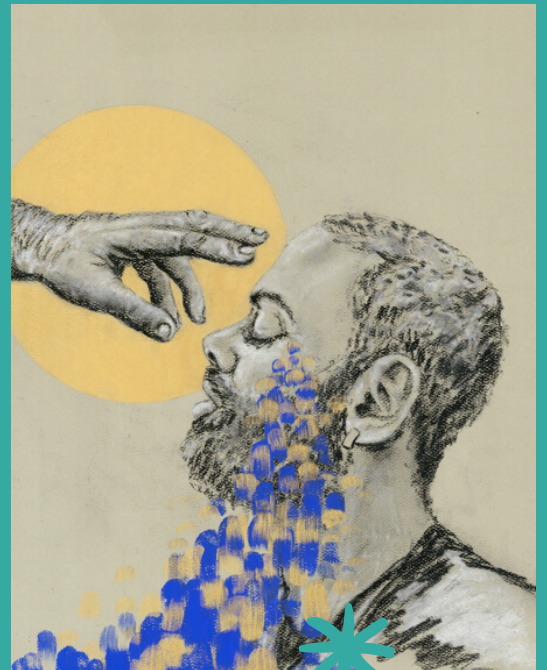
Today's story is about a man named Saul who lost his sight for three days; after the three days, he opened his eyes and he could see again, and he saw the world in a different way. Have you heard of a man named Paul? Sometimes we call him the Apostle Paul. He shared the story of Jesus with lots of people and even wrote some letters to early churches that are in our bible. But before Paul was an Apostle for the early church, he was actually named Saul and he was very mean to Christians. Saul traveled all around, looking for people who loved and followed Jesus because he wanted to hurt them. But one day, when Saul was on his way to a place called Damascus, God came to Saul and met him with a flash of light. Saul fell to the ground and God said to him, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" 'Persecute' is another word for being mean and cruel. "It is me, Jesus, who you are persecuting. Go into the city and you will be told what to do." Saul got up, but all of a sudden, he was blind and could not see. So his companions helped him stumble into the city. Now, in Damascus, there was a man named Ananias who loved Jesus. God came to Ananias and told him to find Saul and place his hands on Saul's eyes. Ananias was afraid because he had heard of Saul and feared he would persecute him. But Ananias listened to God and went to Saul and placed his hands on his eyes. In that moment, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. When he opened them, he saw Ananias who was no longer his enemy, but his friend in Christ. Paul realized that it was wrong of him to be cruel to those who loved Jesus and so he was baptized and began sharing the story of Jesus' love.

## ACTIVITY

Cover your eyes with your hands. Imagine what it would be like if you lost your sense of sight. Imagine trying to walk, or brush your teeth, or eat food. It would be really difficult. There are many people who live without their sense of sight, and they learn many new ways to live. Reflect: Was there a time in your life God helped you "see" something that you hadn't noticed or understood before?

## FOR THE KIDS

Stay up late one night and play flashlight tag, remembering how God came to Saul in a flash of light.



"RESTORED"

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity





# WEEK OF JULY 19TH

**SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 29:1-7**

**ENCOURAGE THE ISRAELITES IN EXILE TO PLANT GARDENS & BUILD HOUSES**

The Israelites considered Jerusalem their home. But the Babylonians forced them into exile, which means they were forced to leave Jerusalem and live in Babylon for many, many years. This was really hard because the Israelites wished to be back in Jerusalem where they could worship God in their temple. Thankfully, there was a prophet named Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah to send a message to the exiles, those who were held captive in Babylon. God told them to build houses and plant gardens and grow their families in Babylon. Even though the Israelites were far from their home, God was with them and helped them to make a new and good home while they were in exile.

## ACTIVITY

This is a good time for home projects! Is there something you were hoping to get done. Big or small, tackle a house project this week and Reflect: Have you ever moved to a new house or a new city? What was difficult or exciting about moving to a new place? Think about where you currently live. What makes your home feel like home?

## FOR THE KIDS

Jeremiah told the Israelites to build houses and plant gardens by which to live. Spend some time this week in the garden. Help your family pull weeds, water the plants, or plant something new! If you don't have a garden, consider planting a flower in a potted plant and leaving it on the doorstep of someone who might need a pick me up or place it outside of your house as a reminder of God's presence wherever we go.



"NEWROOTS"

by Lauren Wright Pittman



# WEEK OF JULY 26TH

**SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:1-29**

## THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL

One day, Jesus was in a place called Samaria. Remember that Jesus was a Jew and Jews lived in a place called Jerusalem. Most Jews did not go to Samaria and were not friends with Samaritans. But Jesus traveled with his disciples through Samaria on purpose and he came to a well at the hottest time of day. He found a woman there at the well, all by herself. Now, in those times, people did not have faucets and running water in their homes. So they had to walk to a well, which is a deep hole in the ground with water, to fill a bucket of water and bring it back home. When Jesus saw the woman, he asked her to give him a drink. The woman was shocked that Jesus was speaking to her, for Jesus was a stranger and they belonged to different cultures and religions. But after talking with her for some time, Jesus told her that he would offer her God's living water, water that would help her to always know and remember God's love and goodness.

### ACTIVITY

This story speaks to breaking down barriers. Take some time this week and learn about a culture different from your own. What are the similarities? What are the celebrated differences?

Reflect: Have you ever been really hot and thirsty? Where were you and what was that like? What are other "thirsts" that Jesus could quench?

### FOR THE KIDS

Remember God's love and goodness and living water every day by decorating a reusable water bottle. Use permanent markers or stickers and make it your own.



"YOU ASK OF ME?"

by Hannah Garrity



# WEEK OF AUGUST 2ND

**SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:19-29**

## **DOUBTING THOMAS**

Thomas was one of Jesus' disciples and Thomas loved Jesus very much. After Jesus died, Thomas was really sad. But Jesus was resurrected on Easter morning, and came back to be with the other disciples. When the disciples told Thomas that they had seen Jesus, he did not believe them. But then Jesus came back again and showed Thomas that it was really him, that Jesus was still with them. He breathed on them and said, "Peace be with you." Even when we are anxious or upset, God is with us and breathes peace into our lungs.

## **ACTIVITY**

Take deliberate time to breath slowly every day this week for at least ten minutes. Reflect: What does the word 'peace' mean? Can you think of times when you feel peaceful? Sometimes taking deep breaths in and out can help us feel peace, especially if we are feeling worried or anxious or upset. Practice taking deep breaths in and out. If you are ever feeling anxious or upset, you can always stop what you are doing and take three, deep, slow breaths.

## **FOR THE KIDS**

We all have questions and doubts sometimes. That is just fine. Questions help us learn more about God and more about ourselves and what we believe. Take some time this week to talk about any and all questions that you have...about ANYTHING! Work together as a family to answer your questions. Research, reach out to friends, or read to find your answers.



"GRIEVING THOMAS"  
by Lauren Wright Pittman



# WEEK OF AUGUST 9TH

**SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 1:22, 2:1-10**

## **MOSES' MOTHER GIVES MOSES UP SO HE CAN LIVE**

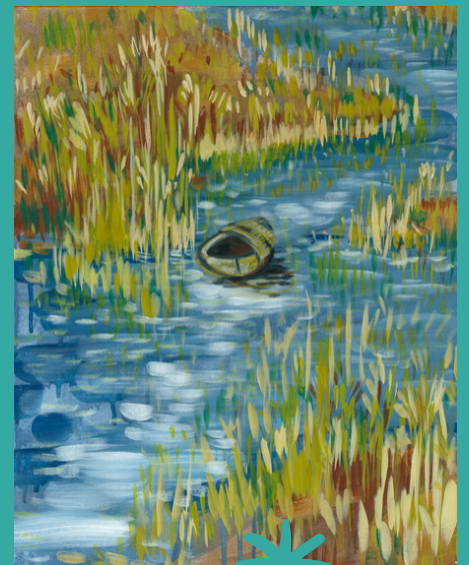
Long, long ago, the ancient Israelites lived in Egypt where they were forced to work in harsh and unfair conditions. The Egyptians were very mean to the Israelites and the Egyptian king, named Pharaoh, tried to keep the Israelites as slaves, and he did not want any of them to have babies. But there was an Israelite woman who had a baby named Moses. She was afraid that Pharaoh would hurt Moses, so she went with her daughter Miriam and placed him in a basket in a river close to where Pharaoh's daughter went into the river to bathe. Miriam watched Moses in the basket carefully to make sure that he stayed safe. Then Pharaoh's daughter found the baby in the basket, and she had compassion for him. 'Compassion' is a big word that means she showed baby Moses gentleness and love. Pharaoh's daughter decided to adopt Moses and to raise him as her son. This was good news to Moses' mother and sister because it meant that Moses would be safe. Sometimes God helps us to be family to each other so that we can all be loved and cared for. The church is also your family. That's why sometimes we call each other brothers, sisters, and siblings in Christ. Even though we are not biologically related, God brings us together to love and belong to each other.

## **ACTIVITY**

Every single family is different. Families come in all shapes and sizes, and no two families look alike. Some families have two parents and some have one. Some families have step parents, and some families have half-siblings, and some families have great-grandmothers. It doesn't matter what your family looks like; it only matters that your family loves each other.

## **FOR THE KIDS**

Work together to create a family tree. How far back can you go? Add pictures if you know what some of your family members look/ed like.



"AN IMPERFECT ALLY"

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity



# WEEK OF AUGUST 16TH

**SCRIPTURE: JOB 28:12-28**

## **JOB'S LAMENT & LOSS**

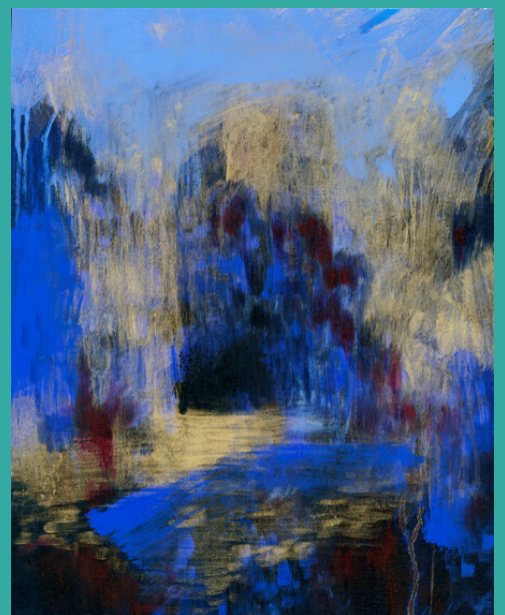
This week, our story is about a man named Job. Job had many 'why' questions for God. Job had suffered greatly and he asked God why these bad things had happened to him. Job didn't always find answers for his questions, but he learned that God's love for him was bigger than he could understand or imagine. It's as if God is bigger than what we can hold in our brains. It's ok to ask God our 'why' questions, for God loves us no matter what.

## **ACTIVITY**

Do some journaling this week asking God some of your 'why' questions. Like Job, many of our 'why' questions may never be answered. That's okay. Sit in the silence and in the questioning. Rest in that place and know that God loves you.

## **FOR THE KIDS**

Job's friends stayed close to him while he was struggling. Do you know anyone who is having a hard time right now like Job? Think of a way to cheer him or her up or simply let them know that you are here for them if they need a friend.



"THE WAY TO WONDER"

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity



## WEEK OF AUGUST 23RD

**SCRIPTURE: MARK 5:1-20**

### **JESUS HEALS LEGION, A MAN POSSESSED BY DEMONS**

One day, Jesus sailed in a boat with his disciples and they went to a place called the land of the Gerasenes. This was a place far from Jerusalem, and the disciples did not understand why Jesus was taking them there. When they got out of the boat, a man named Legion ran to Jesus and bowed at his feet. Legion was very sick and had been forced to live alone in a cave outside of the city. Jesus healed him and the man went into the town, telling everyone the story of Jesus' love.

### **ACTIVITY**

Make and decorate a bookmark with the following verse: (God said) "I will never leave you or forsake you." Hebrews 13:5. Reflect: It's not very fun being sick. What kinds of things do your friends or your family members do for you to help you feel better when you are sick? Maybe they give you medicine, or a warm blanket, or a hot drink to make your throat feel better?

### **FOR THE KIDS**

Our story this week is about a man who was sick and didn't have anyone there to help him feel better until Jesus came along. Write a thank you note or picture for healthcare workers who have worked so hard to care for others this year. Send it to the clinic or hospital and surprise them.



"BEGGED TO LEAVE"  
by Hannah Garrity