

## Atlanta Congregational United Church of Christ

### August and September 2022 Newsletter

#### The Pastor's Page

Dear members and friends.

In this past Sunday's message; Jesus called us to listen to his word. One way we do that is by reading and studying the Bible. I know that can be an overwhelming endeavor at times so in this newsletter I'm sending you a way to start. Dive in deeper to the word and start enjoying a deeper understanding and relationships with Christ! God bless you and enjoy.

#### **Adult Christian Education**

##### **Studying the Scriptures**

The Bible is God's revelation of who God is. Studying God's word is a means to dive deeper in our faith and experience his presence and hear his voice. There are several ways we can study the Bible, but one of the most effective and simple approaches to reading and understanding God's Word involves three simple steps:

Step 1: Observation—What does the passage say?

Step 2: Interpretation—What does the passage mean?

Step 3: Application—What am I going to do about what the passage says and means?

##### **How to Study the Bible in 3 Steps**

###### **Step 1: Observation**

Observation is the first and most important step in how to study the Bible. As you read the Bible text, you need to look carefully at what is said, and how it is said. Look for:

- *Terms, not words.* Words can have many meanings, but terms are words used in a specific way in a specific context. (For instance, the word *trunk* could apply to a tree, a car, a storage box or the nose of an elephant. However, when you read, "That tree has a very large trunk," you know exactly what the word means, which makes it a term.)
- *Structure.* If you look at your Bible, you will see that the text has units called paragraphs (indented or marked ¶). A paragraph is a complete unit of thought. You can discover the content of the author's message by noting and understanding each paragraph unit.

- *Emphasis*. The amount of space or the number of chapters or verses devoted to a specific topic will reveal the importance of that topic (for example, note the emphasis of Romans 9 and Psalm 119).
- *Repetition*. This is another way an author demonstrates that something is important. One reading of 1 Corinthians 13, where the author uses the word “love” nine times in only 13 verses, communicates to us that love is the focal point of these 13 verses.
- *Relationships between ideas*. Pay close attention, for example, to certain relationships that appear in the text:
  - Cause-and-effect: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things” (Matthew 25:21).
  - If*s and *thens*: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).
  - Questions and answers: “Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty” (Psalms 24:8).
- *Comparisons and contrasts*. For example, “You have heard that it was said...but I say to you...” (Matthew 5:21).
- *literary form*. The Bible is literature, and the three main types of literature in the Bible are discourse (the epistles), prose (Old Testament history), and poetry (the Psalms). Considering the type of literature makes a great deal of difference when you read and interpret the Scriptures.
- *Atmosphere*. The author had a particular reason or burden for writing each passage, chapter, and book. Be sure you notice the mood or tone or urgency of the writing.

After you have considered these things, you then are ready to ask the “Wh” questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Who are the people in this passage? Who wrote the passage and why? What is happening in this passage? Where is this story taking place? When in time (of day, of the year, in history) is it?

Asking these “Wh” questions can help you notice terms and identify atmosphere. The answers will also enable you to use your imagination to recreate the scene you’re reading about.

As you answer the “Wh” questions and imagine the event, you’ll probably come up with some questions of your own.

Asking those additional questions for understanding will help to build a bridge between observation (the first step) and interpretation (the second step) of the Bible study process.

## **Step 2: Interpretation**

Interpretation is discovering the meaning of a passage, the author's main thought or idea. Answering the questions that arise during observation will help you in the process of interpretation. Five clues (called "the five C's") can help you determine the author's main point(s):

- **Context.** You can answer 75 percent of your questions about a passage when you read the text. Reading the text involves looking at the near context (the verse immediately before and after) as well as the far context (the paragraph or the chapter that precedes and/or follows the passage you're studying).
- **Cross-references.** Let Scripture interpret Scripture. That is, let other passages in the Bible shed light on the passage you are looking at. At the same time, be careful not to assume that the same word or phrase in two different passages means the same thing.
- **Culture.** The Bible was written long ago, so when we interpret it, we need to understand it from the writers' cultural context. This is especially true in the New Testament. The parables of Jesus, some of the letters of Paul and especially the book of revelation need to be understood through the culture of the Middle East and how information was communicated i.e. story telling, metaphors and paradoxes. Jesus grew up in the cosmopolitan town of Capernaum, which was located on the Silk Road. He was exposed to many of the Eastern wisdom thoughts and methods. Jesus historically was viewed as a wisdom teacher- one of many in that time. His parables were prime examples of Eastern Koans, stories told by the master teacher using metaphor and paradox to make the student think and meditate on the truth - in other words to dig deeper which we are doing when we endeavor to study the scriptures.
- **Conclusion.** Having answered your questions for understanding by means of context, cross-reference, and culture, you can make a preliminary statement of the passage's meaning. Remember that if your passage consists of more than one paragraph, the author may be presenting more than one thought or idea.
- **Consultation.** Reading books known as commentaries, which are written by Bible scholars, can help you interpret Scripture.

## **Step 3: Application**

Application is why we study the Bible. We want our lives to change; we want to be obedient to God and to grow more like Jesus Christ. After we have observed a passage and interpreted or understood it to the best of our ability, we must then apply its truth to our own life.

You'll want to ask the following questions of every passage of Scripture you study:

- How does the truth revealed here affect my relationship with God?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with others?

- How does this truth affect me?
- How does this truth affect my response to evil?

Simply answering the above questions does not complete the application step; the key is putting into practice what God has taught you in your study.

If you use a computer there are many wonderful comprehensive web sites that provide you multiple ways to explore the scriptures including commentaries and numerous other Bible translations. Bible gateway and Bible Hub are examples of two such sites. If you prefer to not use a computer then a good study bible will provide you with lots of information. I have three that I like, the NIV and the NLT and the NRSV. Our church library has plenty of study resources from a set of Barclay commentaries to bible dictionary.

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**Deacon's Meeting:** Sunday, August 14, following Morning Service

Sunday, September 11, (This is tentative) Following Morning Service

**Trustee's Meeting:** To Be Announced

**Baby Basket News**

At the Baby Basket, we are loaded with clothes, but we are only doing food by gift certificates. I do have some non food items to help those in need, such as laundry detergent, toilet paper, paper towels and I will purchase shampoo and conditioner, as well as sanitary items.

Donna, Acting Director

**Deacons**

We have now decided to do the Coffee Hour on the last Sunday of the month. Actually in August, that is our Gospel Sunday Service in the park, at the Pavilion which will be August 28<sup>th</sup>. Everyone is asked to

bring a dish to pass. We will have drinks, we always have a great variety. We are looking forward to the Service.

Jan Davis; Diaconate Secretary

**Women's Fellowship**

We are meeting on the First Tuesday of the month. In August it will be 2<sup>nd</sup>, and in September it will be held on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Our social time is 10 am, with the business meeting at 11. We haven't decided yet if we are going to have everyone bring a sack lunch, or if we are going back to the dish to pass tradition. I hope to see many of you there.

Barb Esper, President

**Prayer Needs**

People need us to keep them in our prayers, because of having varying problems, and we all know what a difference prayers make. There are many prayer needs that we don't even know about, so as we pray, may we ask God to help all those that only He is aware of. Thank You

Joan Beauregard-----Rev. Keith Titus-----Bud Plane

Bud & Gerry Klein-----Warren Keith-----Scotty Moore

**All those that don't feel comfortable attending church services yet.**

We are also asked to keep a different United Northern Association Church in our prayers each month. For the month of August, we are asked to keep; *Cadillac 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational United Church of Christ* in our prayers, and for September, we are asked to keep *Charlevoix 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational United Church of Christ* in our prayers.

**Ushers for August**

**September**

07 Gary McMurphy and Paul Bliss

04 Gary McMurphy and Paul Bliss

14 Ben and Patty Bolser

11 Paul and Louise Godi

21 Ben and Patty Bolser

18 Ben and Patty Bolser

28 Gospel Sunday

25 Paul and Louise Godi

**August Birthdays**

08 Sue Stout (our Florida friend)

10 Gary Renaud

10 Jim Barr

12 Lori Davis

21 Kathy Weaver

25 Bennie Bolser

**August Anniversaries**

14 Jim & Linda Coran

15 Hal & Judy Jonas

22 Paul & Louise Godi

26 Bill & Barb Esper

28 Bennie & Pat Bolser

**September Birthdays**

07 Donna Anderson

09 Bud Klein

11 John Coon

17 Debbie Wilson

19 Claudia Sherwood

**September Anniversaries**

15 Paul & Lois Bliss

19 Larry & Lori Pascador

**August Liturgists**

07 Ben Bolser

14 Bonnie Harrison

21 Bob Skaggs

28 **Gospel Sunday**

**August Greeters**

07 Andrea Mellinger

14 Bonnie Harrison

21 John Coon

28 Paul Bliss

**September Liturgists**

04 John Coon

11 Ruth Jackson

**September Greeters**

04 Andrea Mellinger

11 Ruth Jackson

18 Ben Bolser

18 Gloria Mabie

25 Bob Skaggs

25 Lynda Utt