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ONE

the mystery of God in the mundane

5-Week Guide

*The Mystery of God
in the Mundane*

GUIDE – The Mystery of God in the Mundane

❖ *Why this special focus?*

Just as Advent is a time to remember, anticipate, and celebrate the incarnation of Christ, this time of year (known as *Lent*) gives us the opportunity to re-center our lives by recalling the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Lent is hard, and it can be frustrating to lose our focus and surrender to our weaknesses time and time again. In our context, it is easy to get lost in the cultural expectations of Easter and miss the meaning. That is why so many of the saints before us encouraged stillness and reflection as a way to grow as disciples in God's presence. Through times of meditation, we take our eyes off ourselves and fix them on the Jesus. As we practice these ancient spiritual disciplines, we prepare our minds and hearts for the gift of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Instead of arriving distracted and exhausted on Easter Sunday, we walk joyfully into church ready and eager to adore our resurrected King.

❖ *How do I use this guide?*

This guide will help you rest with God. Each week includes a Scripture reading and exercise that will prepare you for Micah's message, as well as a framework for reflecting on the main theme for the week (*humility, generosity, compassion, hospitality, and love*).

Each week, you will read and reflect on the provided passages and practice the exercise that is provided. This guide is meant to be used daily as an encouragement to pursue rest with God.

❖ *How do I get started on theological reflection and journaling?*

As you read, discuss, and pray through the selected scriptures, hopefully many questions will begin to emerge in your mind and heart. However, as a starting point, consider using these general questions:

1. What do these passages of Scripture reveal about the nature and character of God?
2. What do these passages reveal about your own spiritual condition – your heart, mind and soul?
3. What do these passages reveal about the necessity of fellowship and community? What about the nature of the kingdom of God?
4. How should you respond to these revelations? What actions are you called to take to better align yourself with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

❖ *What about my children and/or teenagers?*

Inside the guide, families with elementary aged kids will find the *CHILDREN'S CORNER* for each new week. A set of *Resurrection Eggs* will be used to accompany this guide for children ages 6th grade and younger. **Please pick up 1 egg carton per family at the Ministry Table in the Gathering Room or in the church office.** This section includes an age-appropriate scripture focus, reflection questions, prayer, and activities. This will serve to help engage your children in the discussion throughout the week. **Note:** 12 eggs are included in the Resurrection Egg carton. **We will open 3 eggs per week as directed in the guide, beginning on Week 2 of the guide.** We encourage families with teens to treat them as adults as you include them in your weekly readings and discussions.

❖ *What is the goal of this guide?*

The goal is that you will engage in some God-focused rhythms like scripture reading, reflection, prayer, journaling and gospel-oriented action to prepare your whole self for being a dwelling place for the Resurrected Redeemer, Jesus the Son of the Living God.

Week 1 (March 1-6): **ONE Decision: changing course, divine impact**

Weekly Focus: As we begin our journey toward Jesus' death and resurrection, it is significant for us to *intentionally turn ourselves toward God*. It is easy for us to be distracted, even overloaded, with good things; however, as we consider our calendars – our time – often there is very little (if any) space with God. Lent is a season to change course. Make the decision today to spend quality time with God over the next five weeks. Change your course and experience God working through what we might consider mundane activities.

Weekly Scriptures: Psalm 62, 116, and 131

Exercise for Practice: **take a few minutes each day this week** to sit still and repeat what is referred to as *The Prayer of Indifference*. As you inhale, silently pray, "Lord, help me to see..." Then as you exhale, pray slowly, "...what needs to die in me."

For Reflection: Typically, when we think about 'indifference,' we characterize it as negative or not caring. However, in the spiritual realm indifference means, 'I am indifferent to anything but God's will.' This is a state of agreeance with God in which I am free from attachments to any particular outcome, and I am capable to relinquish anything that may keep me from choosing love. For any of us to come to this place of indifference is no small task. In fact, gaining indifference is one of the most demanding aspects of discernment and wisdom.

The movement toward indifference is the threshold between two worlds: human decision making and spiritually discerning the divine will. In this waiting room of the soul, we are ready to pray for God's wisdom (James 1:5). Discernment requires us to spend time with God listening intently to the Spirit, who dwells deep within us and bears witness with our spirit about things that are true (Romans 8).

Here is how Thomas Kelly portrays this beautiful reality for the disciple: "Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice to which we may continually return. Eternity is in our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly submitting ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely to the Light Within is the beginning of true life."

"Gladly submitting ourselves...to the Light Within..." this is what is required of us to be in communion with God. So, as we begin our journey toward our Resurrected Lord and Savior, let us prepare ourselves by saying and practicing this prayer. Here are some reflection questions as you work your way through the week: 1) What, specifically, needs to die in me? 2) What needs to be put to death, so that my soul can live? 3) What am I insisting on?

Lent Prayer: Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, loosen our clinched-fist and help us to open our palms to receive all that you want to give us. May we be willing to relinquish anything that stands in between us and our relationship with you, O God. By your power, create within us a heart that longs only for your will to be done. In Jesus name, Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – Week 1 (March 1-6)

We will begin Week 1 together with a bit of preparation for the following 4 weeks of the guide. We will start our Resurrection Egg devotionals on Week 2 as we move together toward Easter.

Each week, we are going to use a simple prayer prompt to help us talk to God and then take some time to be still to help us practice listening for God's voice.

Our prayer prompt will include these 4 words for the kids to use as a guide each week:

PRAYER PROMPT:

* WOW → _____

* THANKS → _____

* SORRY → _____

* PLEASE → _____

WOW = this will help us remember to tell God how amazing He is and to give praise to God for His great love, for all things in creation, or for anything we want to proclaim as God's goodness.

THANKS = this will help us remember to thank God for all the ways He is with us, cares for us, and loves us; for giving us life; and for giving us Jesus.

SORRY = this will help us remember to tell God where we made mistakes and to give us a time to ask for God's help to receive forgiveness where we need it for ourselves & to offer forgiveness to others who may have hurt us.

PLEASE = this will help us remember to ask for God's help in looking for ways to choose kindness and to give us time to pray for others who might need help or healing.

God desires to speak to our children, for them to know and follow His voice. As they learn to hear and recognize God's voice when they are young, they will much more likely continue to know and seek God's voice when life becomes more complicated.

We can work together to guide them in learning how to listen for God's voice reminding them that God often speaks through Scripture but can also speak to us in other ways as well:

- through dreams &/or visions (like a picture in your head while awake)
- through a song or Bible verse remembered at the exact right moment
- through a whisper in my heart

Try to find some time each week as we move through this guide together to create space to guide your children in being still, coming to the quiet, and listening. Sometimes they still wiggle or make weird noises; sometimes they are quiet but report completely random thoughts about worms or unicorns; but sometimes, especially as we continue to help gently guide their focus a bit, our children listen to the Lord's voice quite well and articulate things that our adult hearts need to be reminded of. God's voice will always sound like love – love for God, love for myself, and love for humanity. God is, in the words of Anne of Green Gables, "our most kindred spirit."

Week 2 (March 8-13): **ONE Dollar: small gift, divine impact**

Weekly Focus: Lent is a time to re-center our lives with God. Often times, one of the things that draws our affections away from God is money/possessions. Jesus talks more about this persistent problem (idol) than anything else in the gospels. We often pursue more money and better possessions to the point that our security and comfort are connected to what we have. We hold tightly to our way of life, and in return, struggles with defects of character abound like control, greed, pride, apathy, and cynicism. Lent is a time to loosen our grip on money and possessions. It is a time to practice empathy, generosity, and renewed trust in the Lord.

Weekly Scriptures: Malachi 3:6-12; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Exercise for Practice: this week **take 5-10 minutes each day** to consider the following question and pray this prayer: *Question:* How can I grow in generosity to reflect the Lord's goodness? *Prayer:* "Lord, I freely yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. Help me to see where and how to give to bring you glory."

For Reflection: In the spring of 1999, I (Micah) was raising money to go on a mission trip (Let's Start Talking) to Miskolc, Hungary. At the time of fundraising, it was more of a traveling opportunity for me than a chance to share the gospel story of Jesus. I wanted to explore Europe and this trip promised a 10-day tour of ancient cities, so I was excited.

As the summer approached, I was well short of funds and out of fundraising ideas. It did not look like I was going to go on the trip. However, one Sunday at my parent's new home church, I met Richard. He and his wife had five beautiful children, and he was a small business owner. He was not wealthy, but made a good living making commercial signs. After church, he asked me, "Your parents tell me you're going on a mission trip?" I replied, "Well, I sure would like to, but I'm a bit short on funds." "Oh really, how much we talking about?" Richard asked me. "Right at \$1,000 and I'm running short on time." Richard encouraged me to not give up on what sounded like a wonderful opportunity.

I thanked him and went to lunch, not giving our conversation another thought. Later that day, I saw Richard again at Sunday evening church. He walked over to me and stuck out his hand to shake mine. As our hands met, I felt something in between our hands. Richard smiled and said, "I'm so excited for you. Have a wonderful trip." We hugged and I put the money in my pocket. After church in our car, I pulled the money out and counted it. It was ten, one-hundred dollar bills. I did not know it then, but that one, sacrificial gift changed the trajectory of my faith journey. For it was on that trip that I decided to change my major to Bible/Ministry. We never know how one gift can be used by God to make a divine impact.

Lent Prayer: Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, loosen our clinched-fist and help us to open our palms to receive all that you want to give us. May we be willing to relinquish anything that stands in between us and our relationship with you, O God. By your power, create within us a heart that longs only for your will to be done. In Jesus name, Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – Week 2 (March 8-13)

We will open Resurrection Eggs 1, 2, and 3 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 1 = Palm Branch

Scripture focus = Matthew 21:9

EGG 2 = Silver Coins

Scripture focus = Matthew 26:14-15

EGG 3 = Last Supper

Scripture focus = Matthew 26:26-28

Reflection Questions:

What does "generous" mean?

What does the word "reflection" mean?

Work with your family to list some ways that you can be *generous* with your money, your time, with the things you have, and with your heart as we think about being a *reflection* of God's goodness in our world.

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, help me to focus on Your love and Your goodness. Please help me to think of others and to not be so focused on the things that I want for myself. Help me to share what I have with others and to practice being generous with my words and my actions to reflect Your goodness.

PRAYER PROMPT:

* WOW → _____

* THANKS → _____

* SORRY → _____

* PLEASE → _____

Activities:

- **Scripture reading with each egg** – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- **Engage in prayer** with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week. **Remember to try to create space for talking to God AND for listening to God.**
- As a family, spend some time brainstorming ideas on how to be generous with our money, our time, and our hearts. Maybe include ways to serve people that you know well & ways to serve people in our community. Consider ways that you can be generous of heart with written or spoken words of encouragement. Talk about the ideas together & pray about which ones your family can put into action. Feel free to reach out to me (andriatucker@altamesa.org) if I can be of help with service project ideas.

Week 3 (March 15-20): ONE Conversation: listening ear, divine impact

Weekly Focus: God can use one mundane conversation to make a divine impact. Just ask Nicodemus if this is true. Lent is a time to slow down, to abstain, to repent, to confess...to renew and re-center our lives with God. One great way to do this is having conversations with God. Typically, we are good to talk at God...to bring our petitions, requests, and even demands before God; however, many of us struggle to posture ourselves as listeners with God. So, this week, choose to listen. And maybe, just maybe, you will hear an invitation from the Lord.

Weekly Scriptures: John 6:25-35; 8:12-30; 10:1-10; 10:11-18; 11:17-25, 38-44; 14:1-7; 15:1-8

Exercise for Practice: **take 10-15 minutes each day this week** to spend time with God in Scripture. For each day, use one of the seven texts above to practice *Lectio Divina* (process below).

For Reflection: *Lectio Divina* is an ancient practice that is a simple, and yet profound way to contemplate Scripture. *Lectio Divina* is Latin and means 'divine reading.' This approach to Scripture promotes communion with God and heightens our awareness and knowledge of God's Word for our lives.

Lectio has been personally impactful for my (Micah) discipleship journey. For example, in the fall of last year, I asked several members of our church family to join me in memorizing sections of the Sermon on the Mount. I decided to take the Beatitudes. I chose to not only memorize them, but also use them as a text for *Lectio*. Paying attention to words and phrases that stood out to me, and listening for an invitation from the Lord, this practice made a divine impact. Through that experience, I was called by God to serve in a specific ministry, and I'm doing my best to accept that invitation.

Now it is your turn to practice *Lectio*. One resource laid out this five-step process for *Lectio*, though this is not the only way to practice it.

- 1) **Reading** – choose a text (above) and read it slowly. Pay attention to words and phrases that stand out to you.
- 2) **Prayer** – have a loving conversation with God. Ask God to help you focus on the text.
- 3) **Meditation** – think and reflect deeply upon the text. Read it a second time listening for a possible invitation from God.
- 4) **Contemplation** – rest in God's presence and consider what the Lord's invitation might be for you from this text.
- 5) **Action** – accept the Lord's invitation and do your best to act on it.

For help with reflection/meditation, see the questions provided in the introduction of the guide.

Lent Prayer: Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, loosen our clinched-fist and help us to open our palms to receive all that you want to give us. May we be willing to relinquish anything that stands in between us and our relationship with you, O God. By your power, create within us a heart that longs only for your will to be done. In Jesus name, Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – Week 3 (March 15-20)

We will open Resurrection Eggs 4, 5, and 6 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 4 = Praying Hands

Scripture focus = Matthew 26:39

EGG 5 = Whip

Scripture focus = Mark 15:15

EGG 6 = Crown of Thorns

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:29

Reflection Questions:

Lectio Divina is Latin & means "divine reading." It is an ancient, spiritual practice that is a simple way to help us pay attention to Scripture & to practice listening.

Have each family member share a favorite scripture or look one up together. Talk about what words or phrases stand out to you & why.

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, help me to listen for Your voice in Scripture and help me to keep learning more about who You are. Please help me remember that You are always with me and Your love is never-ending.

PRAYER PROMPT:

- * WOW → _____
- * THANKS → _____
- * SORRY → _____
- * PLEASE → _____

Activities:

- **Scripture reading with each egg** – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- **Engage in prayer** with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week. **Remember to try to create space for talking to God AND for listening to God.**
- **Spiritual Art Cards**

Using art can be a powerful way to engage with God in a different way than through Scripture or through nature or stillness. You can visit the following website to view a gallery of spiritual art by Melanie Weidner – www.listenforjoy.com

Consider having your children individually look at some of the images and choose 1 that really stands out to them or that they keep being drawn back to. Have them describe why; what they see; how it makes them feel; how they hear or see God through that particular picture. You might even have them sit with the picture on their own quietly for a bit before asking some of the questions or engaging in discussion.

***NOTE:** You may want to look at the website without kids first – some of the artwork is a bit more graphic or abstract than others. It may help to narrow the choices for them.

Week 4 (March 22-27): ONE Meal: welcomed space, divine impact

Weekly Focus: Divine things can happen when disciples gather around the table. Just ask Simon the Pharisee or the apostles. Just ask the Emmaus disciples in Luke 24. As we consider Jesus' practice of table fellowship, may we grow in our practice of gracious hospitality expecting the Lord to show up in our midst and change us.

Weekly Scripture: Luke 22:7-32

Exercise for Practice: **take a few minutes each day this week** to sit still and repeat Luke 22:19 as a breath prayer. As you inhale, silently pray, "This is my body given for you..." Then as you exhale, pray slowly, "...do this in remembrance of me."

***If you feel comfortable and are not at high-risk, consider inviting a family over this week for dinner. Specifically, a family that you do not know very well. Provide a welcomed space and experience the Lord together.

For Reflection: In Luke 22:8, the day of Unleavened Bread (the day on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed) had arrived. Jesus gave them precise directives, which they found exactly as Jesus had said. By verse 15, Jesus states clearly, "I have earnestly desired to eat *THIS* Passover with you before I suffer." This is a clear distinction from the previous Passover meals Jesus had shared with his disciples. It was *THIS* Passover meal that would culminate in his death. Jesus would become the ultimate Passover Lamb for the sake of the world. We see foreshadowing in verse 18 where Jesus says, "I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." Jesus knew that by this time Judas had already betrayed him and the events of his death had been put in motion.

What is also interesting is that after Jesus finished pouring out his heart about his suffering and his betrayal by one of his own, his disciples immediately begin arguing about who the greatest is. Jesus again delivers an allegory about who is greater, the servant or the one sitting at the table—Jesus was both sitting at the table and serving. This passage ends with Jesus telling Peter that Satan has demanded they (disciples) be sifted (tested), but Jesus tells Peter that he (Jesus) has prayed specifically for him (Peter).

Even with the awareness of betrayal, denial, and abandonment by his disciples, Jesus desired to dine and provide a welcoming space for those he loved. The table is meant to be a place where we remember and meet the Lord; but it can also be a place where we experience the Lord together through gracious hospitality.

If you are able host a dinner in your home, here are some table questions for holy conversation: 1) What's going on in your life right now? What is sucking life out of you? 2) Where do you feel at home with God? When is the last time you've been there? 3) What is something you know about God by experience?

Lent Prayer: Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, loosen our clinched-fist and help us to open our palms to receive all that you want to give us. May we be willing to relinquish anything that stands in between us and our relationship with you, O God. By your power, create within us a heart that longs only for your will to be done. In Jesus name, Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – Week 4 (March 22-27)

We will open Resurrection Eggs 7, 8, and 9 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 7 = Nails

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:31

EGG 8 = Dice

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:35

EGG 9 = Spear

Scripture focus = John 19:33-34

Reflection Questions:

What's your favorite meal?

If you could eat dinner with anyone in the world, who would it be? What would you ask them?

Talk about the communion meal, what it means, & how Jesus welcomes us to the table.

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the practice of communion to help us remember Your great love. Please help us to remember that all are welcome at Your table as we gather to give thanks and praise to You, God.

PRAYER PROMPT:

* WOW → _____

* THANKS → _____

* SORRY → _____

* PLEASE → _____

Activities:

- **Scripture reading with each egg** – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- **Engage in prayer** with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week. **Remember to try to create space for talking to God AND for listening to God.**
- As a family, talk about how sharing a meal with people impacts your relationship with them. What do you feel or experience when you share a meal with someone that's different from when you are in a class with them or when playing a game or outside with them? Consider sitting with someone different at lunch when you are at school or church this week. Talk as a family about who you might feel led to invite to your home or to meet somewhere (like a park or restaurant) to share a meal with this month.

Week 5 (March 29–April 3): **ONE Week: divine moments, divine impact**

Weekly Focus: This is the week that we choose to consider, reflect, and remember the passion week of Jesus. We can learn many things about God and his kingdom through the messages of the cross. If we are paying attention, Jesus' example on the cross speaks loudly for us to hear and follow. Humility. Grace. Love. Forgiveness. These are kingdom values that were vividly portrayed by Jesus on the cross. As a part of our lent journey, it is significant for us to pause and do a self-inventory and acknowledge the areas of our lives that need confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

Weekly Scriptures: Luke 22:32-43; Luke 17:1-10; Psalm 139:23-24; Matthew 5:21-24; 6:12-15

Exercise for Practice: **take 10-15 minutes each day to do a spiritual inventory of our relationships.** Use the questions provided (below) as a guide and then make a plan to seek or offer forgiveness by the end of the week.

For Reflection: As we commit to take a spiritual inventory of our relationships, we pray as Jesus taught us, "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." In order to offer forgiveness, we first must evaluate both our past and present relationships with others:

- 1) What has hurt you?
- 2) Against whom have you been holding a grudge?
- 3) Against whom are you still seeking revenge?
- 4) Are you jealous of someone? Why?
- 5) Have you tried to justify bad behavior by pinning blame on someone else?
- 6) Who have you hurt?
- 7) Who have you been critical of or gossiped about with others?

These questions can guide you as you commit to confess wrongs done, repent, and seek/offer forgiveness. Forgiveness is never easy or cheap. It cost Jesus his very life. In terms of resurrected living, in order to be completely free from resentment, anger, fear, guilt, shame, and bitterness, we must find a way to offer and/or accept forgiveness in all applicable areas of our life. If we don't, our discipleship journey will be stalled and our spiritual growth hindered. Hear the messages of the cross, and allow them to echo in your soul...and then, go and do likewise.

Lent Prayer: Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, loosen our clinched-fist and help us to open our palms to receive all that you want to give us. May we be willing to relinquish anything that stands in between us and our relationship with you, O God. By your power, create within us a heart that longs only for your will to be done. In Jesus name, Amen.

CHILDREN'S CORNER – Week 5 (March 29 - April 3)

We will open Resurrection Eggs 10, 11, and 12 this week. Feel free to space these out as it makes sense in your family schedule.

EGG 10 = Linen

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:65-66

EGG 11 = Stone

Scripture focus = Matthew 27:59-60

EGG 12 = Empty Tomb

Scripture focus = Matthew 28:5

Reflection Questions:

How's your heart today? (Help guide your children in talking about anything that is heavy on their heart – whether that is a hurt, a sin, or a weight. Consider talking about the difference between a weight and a sin.)

What is confession? What is forgiveness? (Consider talking about how our heart heals with bringing hurts, sins, or weights to the light and talking about them to God and with someone we trust.)

What does resurrection mean? Do you believe Jesus is alive? How is Jesus alive in you?

Weekly Prayer:

Lord, thank you for loving us so much that You came to earth, lived here, and then chose to walk the path of the cross for us. Thank you for Your overwhelming love, for Your mercy and forgiveness. Help me to have courage to bring anything that's heavy on my heart to You for healing and forgiveness. We praise Your holy name, forever and ever, and we rejoice that the tomb is empty & that you give us life through Jesus!

PRAYER PROMPT:

- * WOW → _____
- * THANKS → _____
- * SORRY → _____
- * PLEASE → _____

Activities:

- **Scripture reading with each egg** – feel free to expand the discussion of those scriptures or read surrounding scriptures as you feel led with your family.
- **Engage in prayer** with your children regardless of age throughout the week as you discuss the contents of each egg & scriptures. Depending on their age, consider using the reflection questions and prayer section to help guide your discussion and prayer times throughout the week. **Remember to try to create space for talking to God AND for listening to God.**
- **Object Lesson** → YouTube video link: <https://youtu.be/EZN0DzWLthU>
Start with 3 labeled cups = YOU (fill w/ water); SIN (fill w/ water + add blue or red food coloring); CHRIST (fill w/ bleach) and then follow these steps:
 - 1) Pour some "SIN" into "YOU" = makes it dark
 - 2) Pour some "CHRIST" into "YOU" = washes away sin – makes it clean again
 - 3) Pour some "SIN" into "CHRIST" = stays clean / Christ overcomes the darkness
 - 4) Pour "CHRIST" into "SIN" = makes it clean