

10/26/25
Reformation
For Group Meetings from October 19th – October 25th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 18:1-8) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: John 8:31-36

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What condition does Jesus give for being his disciple in verse 31?
2. How do the Judeans respond to Jesus statement that the truth will make them free?
3. What is the truth that Jesus speaks about that will set them free?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Share a time that someone connected you to a community?
2. What does it look like to let Jesus "set you free" in a specific area where you struggle with control, fear, or resentment?
3. Who or what reminds you of your identity as a child of God?

Memorize this verse: "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31) What practices help you stay rooted in scripture?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 46. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

What would you do if you knew you might fail and it just didn't matter? I don't mean "didn't matter" in the sense that there would be no cost, or that it would be difficult or disappointing. No, what I mean is, what would you try if the attempt itself was worth it whether it succeeded or not? Or, even more, what would you risk if the ultimate outcome was guaranteed even if your immediate venture failed? I think that's a big part of what this week's reading from John's gospel is about. In John 8, Jesus invites us to imagine that belief in him equates to the freedom of the heir rather than the insecurity of a slave. There is a harsh distinction in the ancient world between those who are "in" and those who are "out" of a family and its privileges and future, and Jesus is inviting all of us to claim our inheritance as "children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Because Jesus has secured our place with the Father we are in every way free. Free to venture, to risk, to try and even to fail, because it is the Son who secures our place, position, and future.

So, let me ask again: what would you do if failure didn't matter? What mission would you attempt, what venture would you risk, what great deed would you undertake? So often, these things seem either so hopelessly impossible or so ridiculously insignificant that we just don't try. But the promise of the Gospel is that we are free. Free to risk, to dare, to love, to live, to work, to dream, and to struggle. Because we have God's promise that there is no small gesture and there is no impossible deed. And for this reason, we are free even to fail, trusting that the God who raised Jesus from the dead will also bring all things (even our failed efforts) to a good end. One of my favorite movie scenes comes from *Apollo 13* when NASA's Flight Director Gene Kranz (played by Ed Harris), boldly declares, "Failure is not an option." But as inspiring as I find that line, I know the opposite is more often true: failure is regularly the option. More to the point, if you're going to risk anything that matters, "not failing is not an option." Risk entails failure. Change entails failure. Creativity and innovation and experimentation all entail failure. And if we forget that we will either never try anything that matters or end up sorely disappointed.

Recently, I heard a story about Martin Luther I hadn't heard before that seems appropriate for Reformation weekend. I knew that Luther died in Eisleben, the place of his birth, bringing his work and life full circle. And I knew that he preached his last sermon there after successfully negotiating disputes between several local magistrates. What I didn't know was that only five people showed up for his final sermon. What I didn't know was that he was ticked off. He wrote a friend about the event, despairing over what he feared was a "failed" reformation. While I can understand his dismay and disappointment, I nevertheless think that at that moment Luther forgot that much of our energy and effort will be given over to failed endeavors. He'd forgotten that our ultimate hope rests not in our successes but in God's great failure on the cross, the failure that redeems all failures and successes, binding them together in the promise of resurrection. He'd forgotten his own words at the close of his famous hymn, "Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. God's kingdom is ours forever." This is God's doing and so we are free — free to risk, to dare, to love, to live, to work, to dream, to struggle, and even to fail; all in hope.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen