

SANTA BARBARA
COMMUNITY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION

1 John 4:18a

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

Leviticus 25:17

You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 13:4

You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

1 Samuel 12:24

Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.

Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 27

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.

³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

⁴One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

⁶And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

⁷Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!

⁸You have said, "Seek my face."

My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek."

⁹Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help.

Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!

¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

¹¹Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path

because of my enemies.

¹² Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they breathe out violence.

¹³ I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the
Lord

in the land of the living!

¹⁴ Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!

Psalm 34

¹ I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

² My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.

³ Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

⁴ I sought the Lord, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.

⁶ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

⁹ Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!

¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

¹² What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?

¹³ Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous
and his ears toward their cry.

¹⁶ The face of the Lord is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.

¹⁸ The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.

¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

²⁰ He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.

²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be con-

demned.

²² The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be con-
demned.

Psalm 46:1-3

¹ God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives
way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of
the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Isaiah 41:10, 13

¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

¹³ For I, the Lord your God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, "Fear not,
I am the one who helps you."

Jeremiah 17:7-8

⁷ "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit."

Haggai 1:13

¹³ Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave this mes-
sage of the Lord to the people: "I am with you," de-
clares the Lord.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,
what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what
you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body
more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they
do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your
heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more
valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying
add a single hour to your life?

²

⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the
flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splen-

dor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 10:29-31

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 28:18-20

⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

John 14:27

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 16:33

³³ “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hebrews 10:23-25

²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

James 5:10-11

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

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In this season of unusual rhythms of worship, fellowship, and study, we hope to provide some additional resources for your spiritual growth. It is our hope that even as we walk through uncharted territory we will discover anew our unchanging God in the pages of his Scriptures.

WEEK OF MARCH 22

Read Isaiah 40.

Reflect and respond...

The passage begins with the words, "Comfort, comfort my people." Which aspects of this description of God provide you with comfort?

Look again at verses 6-8. These words were spoken to a people who had experienced exile and the cruel tyranny of Babylon. In light of that context, how might these verses contribute to the message of comfort for God's people?

Verse 8 insists that, “the word of our God endures forever.” Which of God’s promises is most resonant for you right now in our season of uncertainty? If you can’t think of any, consider reaching out to a friend to find out how they might answer this question.

Verses 12-26 give significant attention to the power and sovereignty of the Lord. What emotions are stirred in you as you read these verses?

At the end of this passage, verse 31 promises that, “those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” How are you seeking to fortify your hope in the Lord during this time?

Try to put yourself in the place of Isaiah’s original readers. How do you think they might have been compelled to live differently in light of the message of this chapter? How might the message of Isaiah 40 inform the way you live?

Old Testament scholar John Oswalt, reflecting on Isaiah 40, offers this timely encouragement: “[God] is aware of our distress and our captivity, our joy and our accomplishments, and he is able to come to us, sharing the joy and delivering us from our distress. He is great enough to be able to help, and he is near enough to want to help.”

Prayer:

Write out a prayer of response to what you've considered about the character of God from Isaiah 40. Alongside praising God for his character, keep in mind various forms like confession, lament, and dedication.

Scripture memory:

Consider memorizing Isaiah 40:9-11 this week. Perhaps you could work with a friend, coworker, housemate, or family member and encourage one another in this endeavor!

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WEEK OF MARCH 29

[Read Romans 12:9-21](#)

Reflect and respond...

Consider how these “family norms” get worked out in everyday life of the church. In your own words, come up with a list of at least 5 things we’re to aim for in our life together. Here’s a couple examples to get you started...

- We care for one another.
- We are generous in responding to each other’s needs.
-
-
-
-
-

In verse 10, Paul combines two family words (philostorge and philadelphia) to emphasize that we are to love one another like family. How did / does your family show love to one another?

How can you care for your church family in ways that express affection and devotion?

Verse 13 tells us that we are to share with the Lord's people who are in need. Read [Galatians 6:10](#). In the days to come, we are going to see more needs in our church family than ever before. Being a family means that other's hardships become personal for us. How might you respond to the growing needs?

Verse 12 tells us that those in God's family are to be patient in affliction. Take an inventory of your heart. Do you expect life to be hard or is comfortable supposed to be "normal"? How might we learn from our brothers and sisters in the majority world about suffering patiently?

Prayer:

Maybe you've found yourself wanting to help during this pandemic but feel like you've been stymied by all the rules around social distancing. There's a great way you can help people while maintaining physical distance- prayer! In prayer we trust people to the care of the One who is always near. What are your habits of prayer? What is one step you can take this week to be more consistent in prayer?

Scripture Memory:

Memorize Romans [12:10-13](#) to continue pondering these truths this week.



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WEEK OF APRIL 5

Read Revelation 19:11-16, 21:1-5, and 22:1-7

This past Sunday, we were reminded in our Sunday service of God’s great promises past, present, and future.

Reflect and respond...

Throughout the Scriptures, we see that God’s past promises can motivate faithful living even in times of difficulty. For one powerful example, read Joshua 1:1-9. Whose heart might you encourage—maybe it’s your own—with a reminder of the fact that God’s promises are secure even in times of difficulty? How might you go about offering that encouragement?

The continuity of the New Testament from the Old Testament is predicated on the truth that God makes and keeps his promises to his people. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 1:20, the Apostle Paul makes this astonishing claim: “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (NIV).

Steve reminded us of the still-future aspects of God's promises by highlighting various ways that the Triumphal Entry of Matthew 21 prefigured the future arrival of King Jesus. Read Revelation 19:11-16, 21:1-5, and 22:1-7. Which of these promises of what is still to come resonates most deeply in your heart and soul?

Waiting isn't easy. Peter suggests there is even a spiritual danger for those who find themselves waiting. Read 2 Peter 3:3-14. How do these verses challenge, encourage, and motivate you?

How can others in your life pray for you as you wait for the final fulfillment of God's promises? Who can you be praying for? In this time of isolation and distance, how will you let others know about your prayer needs and that you're praying for them, also?

Prayer:

Spend some time expressing gratitude for God's promise-keeping nature. Consider writing out some of the promises of God on pieces of paper to post around your home and then, whenever you see one, praise God for his promise. Ask God to make you patient and faithful as you wait for fulfillment of future promises.

Scripture Memory:

Work on memorizing Revelation 21:1-5 this week. Perhaps you could work with a friend, coworker, housemate, or family member and encourage one another in this endeavor!



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WEEK OF APRIL 12 - BIG HOPE!
1 Corinthians 15:12-57

Think back over the course of your life. Can you remember a time when you found yourself greatly anticipating something? What was it? If it ever finally arrived, did it live up to your hopes?

The resurrection of Jesus stands at the center of Christian hope in part because it signifies Jesus' victory over the grave but also because it points forward to the resurrection awaiting all humanity. In a letter written to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul makes a clear connection between the hope of Jesus' resurrection and the future hope of the resurrection for all people.

Reflect and respond...

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-57. As you read, jot down anything that stands out to you, strikes you anew, or prompts further questions.

Paul seems to be addressing a situation in which some were denying the reality of the resurrection of the dead. This was not uncommon in his day (see, for example, Mark 12:18-27 and Acts 17:32), nor is it in ours. In the space below, try to summarize Paul's line of thinking from verses 12-19 related to the reality and significance of resurrection.

Look again at verses 19-23. Paul treats resurrection as an indispensable part of salvation and, therefore, of Christian hope. How have you thought of resurrection, if much at all?

We live in a time of great physical uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. How might this passage—especially verses 42-49—provide comfort and hope in a situation like the one we're living through?

This passage is full of rich promises and good news about the future for those who belong to Jesus. Which promises in these verses stand out to you and resonate with your heart?

Theologian Hans Schwarz wrote, "Christians are Easter people living from and toward that Easter experience of a new creation." How can the certainty of the resurrection—guaranteed by Jesus' own resurrection—serve to motivate your faithfulness to Christ? Who might you share these insights with and how will you do it?

Prayer:

Spend some time praising God for the resurrection. Thank him that, because of Christ's resurrection, you can be freed from the tyranny and fear of death. Ask the Holy Spirit to make the great truths of the resurrection—both Christ's in the past and yours in the future—more sweet and real to you.

Scripture memory:

This could be a great week to memorize 1 Corinthians 15:53-57. Perhaps you could work with a friend, coworker, housemate, or family member and encourage one another in this endeavor!

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WEEK OF APRIL 19

Read Psalm 67.

Reflect and respond...

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Week of 3-29

Reflect and respond:

Read Psalm 67. As you read, make notes on anything that stands out to you.

Part of belonging to a big family is recognizing that the family of God extends beyond national and ethnic divisions. In these verses, the psalmist urges the people of God to see their salvation as part of God's global plan to bless all people.

Verse 1 opens with words of blessing. Make a list of all of the outcomes that the psalmist hopes for as a result of God's favor and kindness.

The two different Hebrew terms that are translated as “peoples” or “nations” in this Psalm occur a total of eight times in seven short verses! What do you think is the intent of this repetition?

What is the cause of the jubilant singing and praise of the nations?

In this time of hunkering down and rightly seeking to care well for those in our immediate nuclear and church families, how could Psalm 67 broaden your thinking?

This is a time of great upheaval for many who are serving the kingdom of God overseas. Not only is viral infection an equally great concern in global contexts, but many Christian global workers are also seeing their support rates fall as the economic realities of COVID-19 take hold. Are you connected to any of SBCC’s global workers? If so, how might you be able to reach out and encourage them?

Prayer:

Many of our brothers and sisters around the world live out their faith in contexts of great uncertainty—and have done so for longer than this current health crisis. Use the space below to write down names of countries where Christian faith is threatened and our Christian family members follow Christ in challenging contexts.

In the week ahead, pray for believers in these places to walk faithfully with Jesus in all seasons of their faith.

Pray also that God will use the events of the moment to bring people to find their joy and gladness in him!

Set aside some time this week to intentionally praise and rejoice and bless the Lord, even in the midst of stress and anxiety. Get creative in this. Take a nature walk and praise God for his creation. Use worship music to prompt your soul toward praise. Perhaps even write your own psalm of praise!

Scripture Memory:

Consider memorizing Psalm 67 this week. Perhaps you could work with a friend, coworker, housemate, or family member and encourage one another in this endeavor!

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WEEK OF APRIL 26 - BIG FAITH

HEBREWS 11:1-40

Can you think of a time when you took a “leap of faith?” Perhaps it was faith in yourself, in others, or in Jesus. If so, use the space below to write down any emotions that you remember feeling during that time.

In this week’s sermon, we considered Jesus’ call to the disciples to exercise faith in him in the middle of the storm (Matthew 14:22-33). Faith doesn’t always look as dramatic as Peter stepping out onto rocky water. Sometimes, in fact, steps of faith may look rather ordinary.

Reflect and respond...

Read Hebrews 11:1-40 and, as you read, make a note here of any of the situations or stories mentioned in this great chapter with which you are not very familiar. (In the week ahead, try to read through as many of these unfamiliar stories as you can!)

Look back at Hebrews 11:1. What is the difference between what is described there and what is commonly ridiculed as “blind faith?”

In verse 6 the author writes, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Respond to that assertion. Does it seem like an overstatement or does it make sense?

Verses 13-16 highlight the appropriate mentality of the person of faith when it comes to perseverance and even earthly rewards or difficulties. Does your perspective sound similar to that described here? If not, what challenge or encouragement might you find in these verses?

Notice that the exemplars of faith included in this chapter experienced a mixture of victory and challenges. Look again, especially, verses 32-38 and consider the highs and lows that the people of God faced. Name some of your own highs and lows you’re experiencing right now, whether large or small.

In verses 39-40, the author of Hebrews does something remarkable and ties the faith of these ancient ones together with those of us who follow Christ today. How could knowing that you are a part of this great chain of faith encourage you or inform your mindset this week?

Is there a specific area of your life in which you feel God is calling you to demonstrate your faith in him? If so, write it down here. If not, perhaps consider using the space below to write out some of the places where God has already placed you and in which he may be calling you to new steps of faith (relationships, physical spaces, living arrangement, work situation, etc.).

Prayer:

If you have a somewhat clear sense of what God might be calling you into, use the space below to write out a prayer of dedication, asking God to fill you again with his Spirit so that you might step out in faith and follow his prompting. If you don't yet have a clear sense about that, use the space below to write out a prayer asking God to move in your heart and reveal where he might be calling you. If you're not even ready to ask that, perhaps consider simply repeating the prayer of the overwhelmed father we meet in Mark 9:24, "Help me overcome my unbelief."

Scripture memory:

Try to commit Hebrews 11:13-16 to memory. Perhaps you could work with a friend, coworker, housemate, or family member and encourage one another in this endeavor!