

The material here is linked to the April–June issues of *Today's Light*, a quarterly magazine designed to lead God's people as they read through the Bible in two years.

We've tried to include enough discussion starters for about 45 minutes of study. Feel free to duplicate the questions and use them with *Today's Light* readers.

Suggestions for Using *Today's Light* Discussion Questions

- You could gather a group of *Today's Light* readers during Sunday morning Bible class time.
- You could invite all *Today's Light* readers in your congregation to a midweek home discussion.
- You could make the questions available to all *Today's Light* readers and encourage them to partner with one or two other people over lunch once a week.

To subscribe to *Today's Light*, contact Concordia Publishing House via e-mail at cphorder@cph.org, via phone at 1-800-325-3381, or via fax at 1-800-490-9889.

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TODAY'S LIGHT (ISSN 1084-4775) is published quarterly by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Subscription rate: 1 year, \$24.60; single copy, \$6.15. Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO, and additional mailing offices.

April Week 1

April 1–5; Daniel 1–4

1. Review Daniel 1:1–17. When do you find it especially difficult to believe that God is in control of all that occurs in our world? What opportunities do you have to demonstrate His presence in your life as you serve and witness in an unbelieving world?
2. Read Daniel's song of praise recorded in Daniel 2:20–23. In these words Daniel praises God for making known to him the things he asked to be revealed to him in prayer. Share a clear answer to prayer that God has revealed to you.
3. Review Daniel 3:8–30. When have you felt God's comfort and peace even as you stood in the fires of trial?
4. Read again and reflect upon the events of Daniel 4. God worked through the events in Nebuchadnezzar's life to accomplish His will. What change do you think God is desiring to work in your life right now?

April Week 2

April 6–12; Daniel 5–12, Hosea 1

1. Review Daniel 5. Belshazzar and his companions came to understand the meaning of the words written on the wall—“Your days have been numbered. Your behavior has been weighed. Your kingdom has been divided.” Apply these words to yourself as a redeemed child of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
2. At break of day, King Darius hurried to the lions’ den and cried out to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” (Daniel 6:19–20) If this question would be addressed to you as a servant of God through faith in Christ Jesus, how would you answer it?
3. Review Daniel’s vision of heaven recorded in Daniel 7:13–14. The term “Ancient of Days” refers to God. Why does the term accurately describe God?
4. In his prayer of repentance, Daniel asked God for forgiveness. He prayed, “We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy” (Daniel 9:18b–19). How has God shown His great love and mercy toward us?
5. Daniel 12:1–3 speaks of the end of all things. Summarize Daniel’s prophecy about the end of the world.
6. Read Hosea 1:1–7. Brokenness occurs as the result of sin. What brokenness concerns you today as you think about the world in which we live? As you think about your own life?

April Week 3

April 13–19; Hosea 2–14

1. Review Hosea 3:1. Compare Hosea's love for his wife with God's love for Israel and with God's love for you.
2. Charles Dickens described the setting for *A Tale of Two Cities* with the words "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." After reading Hosea 4, reflect upon the world in which you live. Do you think we live in the best of times? the worst of times? or both?
3. The words of Hosea 6:1 invite: "Come, let us return to the LORD; for He has torn us, that He may heal us; He has struck us down, and He will bind us up." Apply these words to your spiritual life.
4. What is the meaning of the phrase "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind"? See Hosea 8:7 and its context.
5. Hosea 11:1 records: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Describe three ways this verse may be applied. See Deuteronomy 4:35–37; Matthew 2:15; and Romans 6:6–7.
6. Hosea 12–13 traces God's faithfulness to His people in spite of their faithless idolatry. Describe your personal legacy of God's faithfulness to you and to your family.

April Week 4

April 20–26; Joel 1–3, Amos 1–5

1. Joel 1:15 reads: “Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near; and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.” What thoughts come to mind as you anticipate the day of the LORD? According to Joel 1:13–14, how do people prepare for the day of the Lord?
2. Read Joel 2:21–32. Note the reasons for God’s people to rejoice outlined here. What reasons do you have to rejoice in our God and Savior?
3. Sections of Amos 1 and 2 begin with the words “For three transgressions . . . and for four, I will not revoke the punishment.” What does this repeated refrain remind us about our God?
4. Reflecting on Amos 3, describe the cause-and-effect relationship between sin and consequences.
5. Explain this verse: “‘I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me,’ declares the LORD” (Amos 4:6). How would you apply it in your life?
6. Describe the spiritual blindness of those to whom God is addressing the following: “Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him” (Amos 5:18–19).

April Week 5

April 27–30; Amos 6–9

1. The Lord almighty declares: “I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his strongholds, and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it” (Amos 6:8). What kind of pride does the Lord abhor?
2. Review Amos 7:1–9. Each of us, when measured against the plumb line of God’s Law, is found to be out of plumb. But God is not only just, He is also merciful. Explain how these two qualities came together in the work and person of Jesus Christ.
3. A basket of ripe fruit is pictured at the beginning of Amos 8. Yet rather than a symbol of blessing and bounty, here the basket of ripe fruit refers to God’s judgment. Explain.
4. Read Amos 9:11–15. What do these words say to God’s people today? To whom does verse 11 refer?

May Week 1

May 1–3; Obadiah, Jonah 1

1. How do the seven closing words of Obadiah (vv. 15–21) describe a believer's outlook on life?
2. Review Jonah 1. Instead of advancing in obedience, Jonah retreated into hiding. In what instances or situations do you sometimes find yourself making a similar decision?

May Week 2

May 4–10; Jonah 2–4, Micah 1–5

1. Review Jonah's prayer from inside the great fish (Jonah 2). Describe the tone of Jonah's prayer.
2. As a result of the Spirit of God at work in the preaching of Jonah, the Ninevites repented of their sins (Jonah 3:7–10). Describe the change in people that occurs as the result of true repentance.
3. When God did not bring upon Nineveh the destruction He had pronounced, Jonah became angry. He said, "I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" (Jonah 4:2). Under what circumstances might you react similarly to God's amazing acts of love and grace?
4. Where do you picture yourself in the scene described in Micah 2:12–13? Who is the king described in verse 13?
5. In Micah 4:1–5 the mountain of the LORD represents the church, which is made up of all who love and trust in Jesus as their Savior. How do these verses describe the church?
6. Relate the words of John 8:58 to the description of the Savior given in Micah 5:2.

May Week 3

May 11–17; Micah 6–7, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

1. What expression of faith does God desire among His people, according to Micah 6:6–8?
2. Review Nahum 1:1–7. Describe God's judgment and His grace as expressed in these verses.
3. Often, like Habakkuk, we lament the apparent happiness and prosperity of the ungodly. With Habakkuk we complain, "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?" (Habakkuk 1:13). What qualities of God suggest an explanation? See Exodus 34:6–7.
4. What reason do you have to rejoice in God's goodness even during those times in your life when "the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls" (Habakkuk 3:17)?
5. Review Zephaniah 2:1–3. Jesus once said, "As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark" (Matthew 24:37–38). Reflect on these verses as you think about today, God's day of grace to you.
6. In Zephaniah 3:19–20 we find the word *gather* used twice. Explain the blessings of God accompanying each use of this word.

May Week 4

May 18–24; Haggai, Zechariah 1–9

1. Haggai 2:7 is sometimes translated “desire of all nations.” How might this title describe Jesus, the promised Messiah?
2. The word translated as mercy in Zechariah 1:16 has also been described as “motherly compassion.” What example of motherly compassion reminds you of God’s unconditional love and mercy?
3. In what way are you a “brand plucked from the fire” (Zechariah 3:2)?
4. What does it mean that our Savior, the Messiah, is both a king and a priest (Zechariah 6:13)?
5. Zechariah 8:8 proclaims: “I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.” Explain these words as they apply to the church today and as they apply to those in heaven.
6. Zechariah 9:9–11 prophesies the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. How does this description of our king match the kind of battle Jesus waged for us and for our salvation during the events of holy week?

May Week 5

May 25–31; Zechariah 10–14, Malachi 1–4

1. The words of Zechariah 11:15–17 may refer to the Antichrist. Contrast this description with that of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–16).
2. Zechariah 12:10–11 reminds us of our Lord's suffering and death on the cross. As God's Spirit works in our heart through the Word of God, why will our reflecting upon Jesus' suffering and death on the cross cause us personal grief and sorrow?
3. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7). These words were quoted by Jesus to describe His abandonment by the disciples after His arrest (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27). In what way might these words also apply to God's people living today?
4. How have you been made "Holy to the LORD" (Zechariah 14:20)?
5. Give an example of how contemporary believers "bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick" as their offering (Malachi 1:13).
6. Explain these words of God found in Malachi 3:10: "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need." See also 2 Corinthians 9:6–15.
7. Read Malachi 4:1–6. What two groups are distinguished from each other here (vv. 1–2)? What is the standard according to which those who believe in the Lord are therefore to pattern their lives (v. 4)? To whom does the expression "the sun of righteousness" refer (v. 2; see 1 Corinthians 1:30)?

June Week 1

June 1–7; Matthew 1–7

1. Although Matthew 1 focuses on Jesus, Joseph could be called the chapter's main character. What information do we learn about Joseph from this chapter?
2. What metaphor for a ruler was included in the prophecy the Bible scholars shared with the Wise Men as they searched for the infant Christ (Matthew 2:6)? What comfort does God bring us in this metaphor?
3. Review Matthew 3:1–12. John the Baptist emphasized the role of repentance in a believer's life while criticizing those who found security in the fact they were children of Abraham. What parallels might be drawn in our days to those claiming privilege because they are Abraham's children?
4. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). How did Jesus fulfill them?
5. Jesus invites us as the people of God not to worry but rather to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and we will be blessed (Matthew 6:33). How do we, as God's people, do this?
6. Explain the meaning of Matthew 7:9–11: "Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

June Week 2

June 8–14; Matthew 8–17

1. Reflect on the domains over which Jesus demonstrates His authority as evidenced in Matthew 8. What does it mean to you today, knowing that Jesus possesses ultimate power and authority?
2. With what two pieces of information does our Savior surround His directive “Fear not”? See Matthew 10:29–31.
3. Matthew refers to Jesus’ fulfillment of the words recorded by the prophet Isaiah: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope” (Matthew 12:20–21). What do these words mean to you?
4. Review the parable of the sower recorded in Matthew 13:1–23 in light of the parable of the weeds recorded in Matthew 13:24–30. How does God’s Spirit work to make you productive soil in spite of the forces working to dry out, choke out, or carry away the power of the Gospel in your life?
5. Review Matthew 15:1–20. What was Jesus’ ultimate goal in His dialogue with the Pharisees and teachers of the law? See also 1 Timothy 2:4.
6. Explain the value of the question “Who is Jesus?” See Matthew 16:13–20.

June Week 3

June 15–21; Matthew 18–28

1. Matthew 18:15 tells believers that if a fellow believer sins against us, we are first to go to that person to talk about the offense. What benefits are likely to be associated with this direct and intimate approach?

2. Think of yourself as one of the workers hired to work in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16). At what “time of the day were you hired”?

3. In Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem He fulfilled the words spoken by the prophet: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden’” (Matthew 21:5). Which of these words honor Jesus as the promised Messiah? Which words suggest the submissive manner by which He would win our freedom from sin, death, and the power of the devil?

4. Faith and the power to love and serve God are all His gifts to us. In light of this truth, what does Matthew 25:29 mean?

5. During His humiliating questioning by the high priest, Jesus affirmed Himself as the Christ, the Son of God. Then He added, “But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). What comfort do these words bring to all believers who suffer? What do these words mean to persons without faith?

6. Review Matthew’s account of the resurrection (Matthew 28:1–10). Explain the significance of the words “He is not here, for He has risen, as He said.”

June Week 4

June 22–28; Mark 1–10

1. In the first chapter of his Gospel, Mark records that Jesus rose very early in the morning while it was still dark and went out to a desolate place (v. 35). Why?
2. Hearing the accounts of Jesus' ministry, His family concluded that Jesus was out of His mind and came to "seize Him" (Mark 3:21). When Jesus was told that His family had arrived, He looked at those seated around Him and announced, "Here are My mother and My brothers! Whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." What did Jesus mean by these words?
3. The demon-possessed man begged to go with Jesus after Jesus had healed him. Instead, Jesus directed the man to return home to his family to tell them how much the Lord had done for him and how the Lord had had mercy on him (Mark 5:18–19). How did the man respond (v. 20)? With what results?
4. What examples can you give of people today who, like the Pharisees of the first century (Mark 8:11), desire to see a sign from heaven?
5. At the transfiguration, a cloud enveloped the disciples and a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him" (Mark 9:7). What do these words of our heavenly Father mean to you?
6. Review Mark 10:42–45. How does greatness in the kingdom of God differ from greatness as the world perceives it?

June Week 5

June 29–30; Mark 11–16

1. In His discourse on the end of all things, Jesus describes the signs of the end appearing in the context of birth pains (Mark 13:8). What characteristic of birth pains reminds us that the end is rapidly approaching?
2. Foreshadowing occurs when an incident hints at or pictures an event to follow. How did Jesus' breaking of the bread and distributing of the wine at the Last Supper foreshadow the events of the coming day? See Mark 14:12–26.

Leaders Notes

Many of the questions call for group participants to share personal insights, examples, or life experiences and applications. Answers to these questions will vary. If no one answers right away, allow a moment or two of silence so that everyone has time to think through the question. Other questions call for specific factual or analytical responses. Suggested answers for these appear below.

April Week 1

1. Participants may mention times of struggle and tragedy as times when it is especially difficult to believe that God is in control. God's people strengthen, support, encourage, and uplift one another and witness to unbelieving neighbors during these times by the words we speak and the attitudes we project.
2. Encourage participants to share examples of times when God's answer to prayer was made especially clear to them. Comment that sometimes we receive answers to prayers and, like nine of the lepers healed by Jesus (Luke 17:11–19), fail to acknowledge God for the answer to prayer He has graciously provided.
3. Affirm participants in the stories or incidents they share. Underscore God's love, care, and nurturing even in the most unpleasant and trying of times. Stress that God desires to use our hardships to discipline, mold, and ultimately bless us.
4. Do not force anyone to share. Stress God's desire to build us into His people—those who trust and depend on Him. Sometimes He must cut through our sinful pride to lead us to rely on Him. Daniel 4 ends with these words, “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, for all His works are right and His ways are just; and those who walk in pride He is able to humble” (Daniel 4:37).

April Week 2

1. These words of the Law cut and condemn sinners. However, these words do not condemn those who belong to God by faith in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1–4 records, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according not the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
2. God is able to rescue us from all that would hurt or harm us. He has saved us from the threat of eternal damnation through His Son, Jesus Christ. One day we will join the multitudes in heaven praising Him with the words, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Revelation 7:10). We will witness the angels worshiping God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen” (Revelation 7:12).
3. The term “Ancient of Days” accurately describes God because God was from eternity and forever will be.
4. God shows His grace and mercy to us in a variety of ways. He made a beautiful world for us to live in and enjoy. He has given us people who love us and with whom we share our lives. He has given us meaningful work to do and recreation and entertainment to enjoy. Most important, He has given us Jesus to be our Savior and eternal friend.
5. Michael the angel will protect and deliver through a time of extreme tribulation those whose names are written in the book of life. At the resurrection of the dead the judgment will occur. The righteous, by virtue of their faith in Jesus, will attain everlasting life, and those without faith will receive eternal punishment. The righteous will shine with the brightness of the heavens and those who led others to faith like the stars. See also Philippians 2:14–16.
6. Participant examples of brokenness will vary. Possibilities include broken relationships between people, groups, and nations; between works, neighbors, and congregation members; and among family.

April Week 3

1. Like the Israelites, we return God's faithful love and care for us with unfaithful words, attitudes, and actions. God still calls us back to Himself so that He may forgive us and reinstate us in a close relationship with Him.
2. Although much wickedness and rebellion against God exists everywhere, God's love and grace still abound. Through the blessings of new travel and media technologies the opportunities are greater than ever to reach more people more quickly with the Good News of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus.
3. God may allow the Law and the consequences of sin to have their effect even on the people of God. His desire is always to bring us to repentance so that He may provide us with the sweet reassurance that in Jesus our sins are forgiven.
4. Sin has devastating and far-reaching consequences. James writes, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:14–15).
5. Applying the words, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" to Israel—God brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt at the time of the exodus. Applying the words to Jesus—God brought the holy family back from their exile in Egypt after the death of King Herod. Applying these words to Christians—God brought us out of the bondage of sin, death, and the devil through Jesus' redeeming work.
6. Encourage participants to share their story of how they came to faith and joined God's family through the waters of holy Baptism and of how God has blessed and sustained them through Word and Sacraments.

April Week 4

1. Thoughts about the Last Day are likely to include the end of the security of the world and our existence as we know it and the end of all evil and wickedness. Joel 1:13–14 indicates that people best prepare for the Last Day by living a life of repentance.
2. Joel 2:21–32 describes God's bountiful provision; it is often read at Thanksgiving and is the source for a number of Thanksgiving hymns and anthems. God has given us all the necessities and comforts of our life. His greatest gift to us is the forgiveness, life, and salvation that Jesus earned for us at Calvary.
3. The repeated phrase "For three transgressions . . . and for four, I will not revoke the punishment" reminds that us people repeatedly sin and that God is just; He punishes sin.
4. Amos 3 poetically reminds the reader that sin always carries consequences. Encourage participants to share examples.
5. God uses the consequences of sin to call us back to Himself so that He may comfort us with the Gospel.
6. Without the Holy Spirit who brings people to faith through the means of grace, people continue to flounder in spiritual darkness. 1 Corinthians 2:14 records, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

April Week 5

1. The Lord abhors human self-sufficiency and arrogant trust in skills or technological achievements. Our Lord desires us to find our identity in Him and to trust in Him for our salvation.
2. God punished sin. He laid the sin of all people on His only Son. Jesus suffered pain, humiliation, torment, and separation from God in our place. But God is merciful; He gave His Son up for us, raising Him from the dead so that all who believe might enjoy a new and eternal life in Him.
3. God says, “The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them” (Amos 8:2). Comment that the day is approaching when God will bring all things to an end and take those who love and trust in Him to live with Him forever in glory.
4. The final verses of Amos describe God’s restoration of Israel. The reference to the restoring of David’s fallen tent is generally regarded as a reference to Jesus the Messiah. Note the beautiful poetic description with which the Book of Amos ends, “‘I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,’ says the LORD your God” (Amos 9:15). We are the Israel of the New Testament. These words describe for us the happiness and bliss that God brings to those whom He has made citizens of His kingdom.

May Week 1

1. All of human history may aptly be summed up in these words, “And the kingdom shall be the LORD’s.” God will ultimately rescue and save all who love and trust in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Revelation 11:15 echoes these words, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

2. Affirm participant responses but do not force anyone to share. Honest responses will raise the point that the pressures of a world unsympathetic or even hostile to a Christian life and witness may make retreating and hiding a comfortable and attractive option.

May Week 2

1. Jesus referred to Jonah's time in the belly of the fish as a sign of the three days in the tomb preceding His resurrection. Jonah's prayer from inside the great fish already thanks and praises God for the deliverance He has provided. Jonah's confident prayer in this situation reminds believers that we need not fear death; for us it is a transport to the safe harbor of heaven.
2. True repentance involves a change in behavior with the demonstration of a Spirit-driven desire to turn away from sin and to enjoy a close communion with God.
3. Accept participant responses. Comments are likely to center on what we may perceive as an overabundant manifestation of grace toward those we may deem unworthy. Point out that God's gracious loving and forbearing ways transcend our human
4. Responses may vary. Participants may see themselves either as sheep in a pen or like a flock in its pasture. Our God and Savior is the king who will lead us to our deliverance.
5. Micah 4:1–5 describes the church of God—"peoples shall flow to it" (v. 1), "many nations shall come . . . that [God] may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths" (v. 2). In it He will give us the peace that only God can provide, and we will live in His kingdom forever (vv. 3–5).
6. Micah 5:2 describes Jesus as the eternal ruler "whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." John 8:58 records Jesus' giving of an example of the everlasting quality of His reign: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

May Week 3

1. By the power and motivation the Spirit of God, working through the means of grace, God's people are "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).
2. In the first six verses of Nahum 1 the theme of God's judgment dominates with an emphasis on God's avenging anger and power against those who reject Him. Verse 7 describes God's love and mercy in the words, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him."
3. Qualities of God exemplified in His delay in punishing the ungodly or in calling them to task for their wicked behaviors can be found in Exodus 34:6–7: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."
4. God's love for us in Christ Jesus cannot be overcome by the circumstances of this life. The forgiveness, new life, and salvation won for us on Calvary give us a peace that passes all understanding to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7). With Habakkuk we can proclaim, "GOD, the Lord, is my strength; He makes my feet like the deer's; He makes me tread on my high places" (Habakkuk 3:19).
5. Reflections on the coming day of the Lord's judgment will vary. Participant comments are likely to mention a general lack of concern for the Word of God, particularly God's call for repentance. Stress the confidence and assurance in God's promises that all who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior may possess.
6. God promises to gather those who have been scattered and to give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame (Zephaniah 3:19). He also promises to bring us home and to give us honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when He restores our fortunes before our very eyes (v. 20). Comment that these words refer to the restoration God promises to us through Christ Jesus, our Savior.

May Week 4

1. The title “Desire of all Nations” reminds us that Jesus is the only source of salvation for people in any land or country (Acts 4:12). Simeon used similar terms to describe Jesus (Luke 2:31–32).
2. Participant responses may vary. Comment on the unconditional qualities commonly associated with maternal love. Share with the group God’s words through the prophet Isaiah, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49:15).
3. By nature each of us is worthy only to burn in punishment. But God in Christ has snatched us from the fires of eternal damnation and given us instead forgiveness, life, and salvation.
4. As our priest Jesus sacrificed Himself to pay for the sins of the world. As our king He rules and reigns over all things. At last He will take us to live with Him in the glories of heaven.
5. All who trust in Jesus as their Savior are members of the true church—the people of God. Our triune God remains ever faithful to us, even though we continue to sin by disobeying God and taking His blessings for granted. Believers in heaven live in perfect obedience to our God in His eternal presence.
6. Zechariah describes our king as “righteous and having salvation,” yet “humble and mounted on a donkey.” Jesus came to Jerusalem to earn our salvation for us. Having lived a righteous and holy life in our place, He journeyed to Jerusalem to allow Himself meekly to be tortured, humiliated, and executed in our place. His resurrection indicates that He broke the battle bow of Satan and established peace for His people.

May Week 5

1. The Antichrist “does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs” (Zechariah 11:16). By contrast, the Good Shepherd “lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:11). He knows His sheep and is known by them.
2. Our sins will cause us sorrow in the realization that our Savior suffered and died to pay the penalty we deserve because of those sins.
3. Because of mankind’s our sinfulness, God’s people today often likewise also scatter when our Lord is attacked rather than remaining to be identified as His disciples.
4. Each believer has been made “Holy to the LORD” by faith through the waters of Holy Baptism (Ephesians 5:26).
5. Like the Old Testament worshipers called to account by the prophet Malachi, we sin against God in our offerings when we give to Him from our castoffs rather than giving to Him generously from our firstfruits.
6. God promises to abundantly bless those who give generously to Him from the heart. He will give us from His riches so that we are abundantly equipped to be a blessing to others. God Himself is the ultimate generous giver, sending His only Son to live and die in order to save us.
7. In Malachi 4:1–6, evildoers are distinguished from those who fear the Lord’s name, that is, believe in Him. Those who believe in the Lord will also conform their lives to His written word, referred to in verse 4 as “the law [or instruction] of my servant Moses.” In verse 2, the expression “the sun of righteousness” refers to Christ.

June Week 1

1. Matthew traces the ancestry of Joseph back to King David and even farther back to Abraham (Matthew 1:1). Joseph is engaged to Mary. Matthew describes Joseph as a righteous man who did not want to disgrace Mary after learning of her pregnancy. After being enlightened in a dream that Mary was pregnant with the promised Messiah, Joseph obediently took Mary as his wife and, upon the birth of her son, named Him Jesus.
2. Matthew quotes a Micah prophesy (Micah 5:2–4). The Messiah is referred to as “a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.” Through this metaphor God promises all the blessings of a righteous, caring Shepherd—peace, care, and protection.
3. Responses may vary somewhat. We may “claim to be Abraham’s children” when we find our sense of security in any human relationship or affiliation—even a congregation or church—rather than in the Savior who lived, died, and rose again for us.
4. Jesus came to fulfill the Law—in every dimension, including the letter of the Law and also its intent. Taking our place, He perfectly comprehended and lived according to God’s will. In yet another way He fulfilled the Law, dying in our place to pay the penalty we deserved because of our sins.
5. God’s people seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness as they study His Word and receive the Sacraments. His Holy Spirit moves, directs, and empowers us through God’s Word and the Sacraments. God promises to bless those whom He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies as His very own.
6. People may give nice gifts to their children, but God knows and gives what is best for those who love and serve Him. The most important blessings He gives us are the spiritual gifts His Spirit imparts through the means of grace.

June Week 2

3. In Matthew 8 Jesus demonstrates His almighty power over illness, nature, and the forces of evil. God's people can live in confidence and security trusting that the Savior who defeated sin, death, and Satan's power has all things under His control.
4. Through Matthew, God assures us that we need not worry. He tells us that the God who cares for the sparrows certainly cares all the more for us and that God cares about us even to the extent that He knows the very number of hairs each of us has on our head.
5. Responses will vary somewhat. Participant comments are likely to focus on God's care and patience, loving and nurturing those who have the tiniest potential for coming to—or being sustained in—the saving faith. He is the hope of the nations.
6. Through the means of grace God's Spirit works in us the ability to produce abundant fruit in spite of the many forces working to choke out, scorch, or carry off our faith in Jesus.
1. By pronouncing Law to the Pharisees, Jesus was working to bring them to a realization of their sin and call them to repentance so that He might offer them forgiveness. God desires all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).
2. The question "Who is Jesus?" is vital to the welfare of every human soul. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). God's Word teaches that only those who believe in Him will be saved (Mark 16:16).

June Week 3

1. Going to the person directly and privately keeps the matter from escalating and may help to facilitate a quick and quiet resolution to the matter.
2. Participants are invited to share the point in their life at which they came to faith. Most likely many came to faith at their infant Baptism “early in the morning.” Others may have come to faith during the third, sixth, ninth, or eleventh hours of their life.
3. The reference to Jesus as king honors Jesus as the promised one. The words “humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden” draw attention to Jesus as the humble servant of all, who gave His life, suffering and dying a horrible death in our place so that we might have forgiveness and eternal life.
4. God promises abundant blessings to all who by the working of the Holy Spirit continue to avail themselves of the gifts God provides through the means of grace.
5. Believers can meet Jesus at His second coming with welcome anticipation. To those without faith Jesus’ second coming will mean judgment. But at His second coming both believers and unbelievers will pay homage to Him as Lord. (See also Philippians 2:9–11.)
6. The angel’s words call attention to the fact that Jesus fulfilled the words He spoke concerning His death and resurrection. Similarly, every word of Jesus is truthful and dependable.

June Week 4

1. Jesus went early in the morning to be by Himself so that He might communicate with His heavenly Father in prayer. Jesus modeled for His followers a pattern for talking with God in prayer.
2. Jesus' words refer to the close relationship that exists between those who love and trust in Him and Himself. The apostle Paul refers to this close relationship as a body of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22–23).
3. The healed man obeyed Jesus and went away to the Decapolis, where he told the people how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed (Mark 5:20). Comment that Jesus sent the man home to witness to those already within His sphere of influence. Also note that being amazed is not the same as trusting in faith.
4. Today's scoffers, like those of old, claim that a sign is required in order for them to come to faith. Specific examples will vary.
5. Our heavenly Father not only identifies Jesus as His Son and the object of His love, but He also commands us to listen to Him. We listen to Jesus as He speaks to us through God's Word. John's Gospel reminds us that Jesus is the Word (John 1:14).
6. In Mark 10:42–45 Jesus juxtaposes the world's perception of greatness with that of the kingdom of God. According to the world's standards greatness is measured by the number of people over which a ruler exercises authority. Jesus defines greatness as servanthood and the greatest person as the one willing to be the slave of all. Jesus came as the Messiah, not to be served, but "to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

June Week 5

3. Birth pains progress, occurring closer together as the birth nears. Observers may recognize the rapidity of change in our world as symptomatic of the approaching end of all things.
4. Jesus' breaking of the bread and distributing of the wine at the Last Supper foreshadowed the breaking of His body by the spear and the spilling of His blood on Good Friday when the Son of God died for the sins of the world at Calvary's cross.