

Thoughts From Keith

Immerse: Kingdoms

BY KEITH JOHNSON



I want to wish you a very blessed New Year as we embark on 2024. As we begin the new year we are again going to read the Bible together with *IMMERSE*. In the fall of 2022 we shared a similar experience. *IMMERSE* is designed to get all of us to read the Bible less like a reference book and more like a story. It consists of a just a few basic ingredients—a unique Bible format, a 40-day reading plan, four discussion questions and small groups.

Start by thinking of *IMMERSE* more like a book club than a Bible study. The book we'll be using is called "Kingdoms". We'll read the Bible and then simply talk about what we read. For these eight weeks we will...

- Read the books Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings.
- Seek to understand the text with introductions to the books and, if desired, additional tools that we'll provide.
- Discuss together what we read with all kinds of existing and new discussion groups meeting each week in many places and at different times. Some will meet before or after services, others at regular small group times throughout the week.

It sounds simple because it is. The impact of reading and sharing together in this fresh, new way, however, has proven to be very significant in many people's lives.

During *IMMERSE*, you'll read from a unique Bible. We'll distribute these free to everyone. When you open your copy, the first thing you'll notice is that this is no ordinary Bible. There are no chapter or verse numbers and no study notes, cross-references or red lettering. That's because none of these features are original to Scripture. Most were added centuries later.

IMMERSE helps us understand that the Bible isn't a reference book. First and foremost, it's a story. It's a collection of books, each of which was meant to be experienced as a whole. We'll be using the New Living Translation of the Bible, a contemporary translation that hopefully makes these books more understandable. It has been laid out in a fresh, new format, designed to be read from beginning to end. In addition, you can choose to listen to an audio edition of the "Kingdoms". Also, family guides will be available to everyone which will include a shorter reading and family friendly questions. I encourage you as families to engage fully in *IMMERSE*.

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IMMERSE
The Bible Reading Experience™

KINGDOMS

January 6 & 7

Introduction to Immerse: Kingdoms

January 13 & 14

Superintendent Greg Yee will be preaching

January 20 & 21

Joshua

January 27 & 28

Judges, Ruth

Free Range Devotions

The Big Dig

For over a decade, construction of the Big Dig disrupted Boston. The massively complex and expensive infrastructure project had the lofty goals of improving not just mobility through the city, but revitalizing it. One major aspect of the project included reconnecting downtown to the waterfront by submerging six lanes of elevated Interstate 93 bridges underground, and creating 17 acres of greenspace in the heart of the city where the bridges existed. During the Big Dig's design and construction, there were constant stories of massive cost overruns, faulty materials, mismanagement, unforeseen engineering obstacles, and ever-changing detours for commuters as traffic was continually rerouted. The focus appeared to constantly be on the mess and troubles that plagued the project.

However, in the final episode of WGBH's podcast *The Big Dig*, host Ian Cross states that thanks to the perspective of twenty years since its completion, the project actually delivered on its promises to transform the city. Drive times through the city have been slashed significantly; people actually want to live and work downtown near the greenspace now. But if you know anything about the Big Dig, it's probably about the problems or how expensive it was to complete.

BY SEAN CONNOLLY



Cross says what got lost along the way was "the vision; the story. Because perception matters. The narrative matters ... If we can't tell the story of what we're doing – if the public doesn't feel part of it – then the best plans and contracts won't be worth the paper they're written on."

After healing a man possessed by demons, Jesus tells him, "Go home to your own people. Tell them your story—what the Master did, how he had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19, Message). Tell them your story about the joy you're experiencing despite all of the trouble you've been through. Because stories allow people to make connections to their own lives. Because stories tap into people's hearts and minds.

Because stories can inspire hope and give someone a reason to endure. We are all under spiritual construction, with a seemingly constant stream of difficulties, detours, and unforeseen obstacles. And as followers of Christ, if we choose to focus on what's wrong with the world around us, but fail to tell our own story about what Christ's love, mercy and grace have done for us personally, we won't win many hearts and minds. If we focus on the mess, we might miss the success.

What stories are you telling?

"SOUPER" 55+ BETTER LUNCHEON

Friday Jan. 19
@12:00pm



**Please note the change of date*

Join us for a "Souper" time! We will have a couple different soup options plus rolls, salad and dessert!

GUEST SPEAKER:

LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY
COMMISSIONER, TOM ROLFE

RSVP: (406) 442-6813

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Each week, participants will share their reflections on what they have read with their discussion groups, using these four simple questions:

1. What stood out to you this week?
2. Was there anything confusing or troubling?
3. Did anything make you think differently about God?
4. How might this change the way we live?

When you read whole books of the Bible, you may notice things for the first time. You may have questions that you have never asked before. You may come across things that trouble you. These discussion prompts are meant to help you navigate the Bible, without giving you all the answers. They're an invitation to wrestle with the bible and ponder it's application to your life.

Rediscover what the Bible has to say. I hope each of you will get connected and involved in IMMERSE.



THE TBR SHELF

KATHY BISCHOFF (TO BE READ)

Happy New Year, fellow readers! New Year's resolutions! Whether it's with the traditional list or the more current "word for the year", there is a strong pull to start the new year with some new goals. But, before deciding to tackle all nine fruits of the spirit this year, a time for some self-examination and reflection can be helpful.



That's where *The Next Right Thing* comes in. That is the name of not only a book, but a guided journal, as well as a podcast. I started listening to the podcast several years ago and it quickly became one of my favorites. Emily's 20 minute episodes

attempt to help listeners be mindful of their daily thoughts, habits and choices so that they might then be better able to move forward, in love.

From that podcast came the book. The chapters are short and each addresses a single idea that may help the reader decide how to make a small change in a new direction. The chapters end with a prayer and a suggested, "Practice". Some of the ideas are simple, some are not.

From that book came the guided journal. Our past informs our present and can guide our future. That premise is the foundation for the journal's organization. Through the use of lists, questions and suggestions, the journal helps us to not simply record our days but to reflect on them as well.

It is a gift to be able to look back with new perspective. What seemed to be big challenges shrink over time while small graces, repeated often, shine brightly. God's faithfulness, provision and mystery are evident, and the challenge of a "New Year's Resolution" shrinks to simply another step forward. Maybe this book, or journal or podcast can provide that gift for you. As always, "Happy reading (or journaling or listening)"!

DIVORCE *Care*

DivorceCare is a safe place to experience hope and healing alongside others in the face of separation or divorce.

Join us on Wednesdays at 12:00pm in Room 203 beginning January 10.



EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE TOGETHER IN LIFE GROUPS

As we begin the Immerse Bible Reading Experience, we encourage you to participate in a Life Group where you can grow together as we read the Word of God.

A list of groups will be available by Jan. 6th on our website and during our weekend services.

GRIEF *SHARE*

GriefShare is a grief recovery support group where you can find help and healing for the hurt of losing a loved one.

Join us on Wednesdays at 11:00am in Room 202 beginning January 10.



Contribution Statements

Thank you for your generous financial support of the ministries of Life Covenant Church! Contribution statements for 2023 will be mailed out as soon as possible in January, but no later than January 31, 2024.



We are starting January by learning all about our hibernating friends, bears. Our days will be filled with songs and stories about these furry animals. In the second half of the month, we will brighten the winter gloom with colors. Each day will focus on a different color of the rainbow. We even get to dress up to match each day's color!

Registration 2023-2024

Jan 29th:

Registration opens to current preschool families and church members.

Feb 5th:

Registration opens to the general public.

Keep an eye on the church website and bulletin for information on the application process. If you have questions about our preschool or would like a tour, email Harmony at preschool@lifecchelena.org





For ages 2yrs to 5th grade.

Tuesdays 6pm to 7:15pm
Family dinner at 5:15pm.
More information: lifecchelena.org

Date	Dinner	Theme	Bring
Jan. 2	Chicken & Rice	PJ Night	Wear your pajamas
Jan. 9	Mac & Cheese	Birthdays	We will celebrate everyone's birthday
Jan. 16	Spaghetti	Backwards	Wear something backwards
Jan. 23	Tacos	Beach	Dress for the beach (no swimwear please)
Jan. 30	Surprise!	B.A.R.F.	Bring A Real Friend



Scan to find more information about our kids and student ministries on our website!



9th - 12th Grade

Weekly | Wednesdays at 6:30pm
Doors open at 5:30pm



6th - 8th Grade

Weekly | Mondays at 6:30pm
Doors open at 5:45

CONFIRMATION

6th - 8th Grade

Weekly | Mondays at 6:00pm
Doors open at 5:45



AWANA Christmas Store

Thank you to all our donors and volunteers who made the AWANA Christmas store an amazing event! Each present was carefully selected with love. What a blessing to see and hear the excitement as our AWANA clubbers shopped for their loved ones! Thank you for being a part of this tradition and helping our AWANA clubbers experience the joy of giving.



Kids Church will be joining the Immerse Bible Experience, using lessons from The Biggest Story Bible Storybook. At each service, following the offering, we'll dismiss children to one of the pods listed below:

- Seedlings / Sprouts pod: ages 3 and 4 - 2nd grade (Rm 104)
- Roots pod: 3rd - 5th grade (Rm 202/204)



Life Covenant Church
800 North Hoback
Helena, MT 59601

Periodicals
US Postage Pd.
002231
Helena, MT

POSTMASTER

Send address change to

Life Covenant Church

800 N. Hoback, Helena, MT 59601

Return Service Requested



*"Be strong and
courageous. Do not be
afraid; do not be
discouraged, for
the LORD your God
will be with you
wherever you go".*

Joshua 1:9