



May 17, 2020

Title: *The Engine of the Universe*

Scripture: Colossians 1:15-20

Introduction to Analog

Analog is designed to be a tangible way to take a deeper look into each week's Sunday morning message. *Analog* can be used by individuals, friends, couples, or small groups to further discussion and exploration of the Sunday teaching. May this tool help you to connect with God as we continue on this journey of following Jesus together.

Teaching Season

THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS: All we need is love; it's that simple. Jesus said that loving God and loving others are the two greatest commands, and that all of Scripture hangs on these two commands. His words echo those of an influential rabbi who predated Jesus who said the same thing, but concluded all of Scripture is mere commentary on what this love looks like. If this is the only thing that counts, if love is the foundation of the greatest commands, then it stands to reason this is what we should devote our whole selves to, always seeking to understand at deeper levels what does it look like to practice love?

Overview

When Jesus came screaming into the world from the womb of his mother, it wasn't his first showing. He'd always been around, but this time he was showing up differently. He had put on flesh and made his dwelling among humanity. This is a deep truth attested to throughout the Bible. In him all things were made and in him all things hold together. This mysterious power, energy, force – the glue that holds our expanding universe together is something that still stumps the most brilliant scientists in the world. However, the biblical writers had no problem naming it – it was the life of God and that life was now made human. We can now see it, touch it and it has a name.

That name is Jesus. The face of a God who is love. This realization led Teilhard de Chardin to claim love at the heart of the universe. He recognized all things were powerfully drawn to one another in relationship. This, he observed, is love. If love, then, is the engine of the universe, it's possible when we participate in anything else we work against the very life of God.

Theme

We will explore the depth and breadth of love so that we can learn to see the Divine Mystery (love) in and through all things – including ourselves.

Opening Question

You may want to use this Opening Question as a way to start your discussion with your group. It is the kind of question everyone can answer and points toward the theme of the rest of the discussion. *What change in your life or someone else's life has surprised you?*

Questions for discussion

Here are five questions for discussion or reflection. Don't feel like you have to cover them all. The Spiritual Practice for this week could be very meaningful for you or your group, so plan on 5-10 minutes for this exercise. If you are using this in a group context, read through these questions before your group meets to familiarize yourself with this material.

1. *Read Colossians 1:15-20. Paul paints the picture of Christ as the sovereign power of the universe. Comment on what you think each of these phrases mean and the significance of each statement:*
 - “The Son is the image of the invisible God”
 - “in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...”
 - “all things have been created through him and for him”
 - “in him all things hold together”

2. *Another phrase in this passage is: “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself”. What do you think it means that God and his life and energy and love is reconciling all things?*

3. *Comment on this statement: Love is the engine of the universe.*

4. *When it comes to practicing love, a healthy self-love is important. Why is that so difficult? What wounds, experience or messages keep you from loving and accepting yourself?*

5. *In the early 19th century, even people who were opposed to the slave trade in England and America didn't believe it could ever end. We tend to view things in our current world that we sense are not right and just as unchangeable – “that's the way it is”.*
 - *What is an example of a needed change that seems impossible?*
 - *Is it impossible?*
 - *If true change is to happen, what part could love and God's pursuit of reconciling all things play in this change?*
 - *If true change is to happen, what part might we – as a community committed to love – play in this change?*

Spiritual Practice

Each week, Analog includes a spiritual exercise that is designed to provide an opportunity to encounter God using practices that Christ followers have utilized for centuries. Today's practice is Lectio Divina.

Lectio Divina or "Sacred Reading" is an ancient way of prayerfully receiving the Word of God. The process of Lectio Divina engages the whole person before Christ by reading a passage in Scripture through four times. Each time we engage with the Word in an intentional way. There are typically four movements that we engage in after each reading.

Scripture: Psalm 36:5–9 (NIV)

⁵ Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

⁶ Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep.

You, LORD, preserve both people and animals.

⁷ How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.

⁹ For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Begin your time by taking 2-3 minutes of silence to quiet your heart and soul before the Lord.

1. First Reading (Lectio/Listen) - *This first reading is a way for us to listen, to be still before the Lord and simply hear the Word. During the first reading, simply listen for an overall sense of the passage. Listen with your whole self, mind, body, soul, and spirit. As you listen, get familiar with the ideas; if it's a story, use your imagination to place yourself in the scene. Pay attention not only to your thoughts, but try to engage emotions and physical sensations.*

Read the passage aloud for the first time, then allow 1-2 minutes of silence to process and journal if desired.

2. Second Reading (Meditatio/Meditate) *The second reading is a chance for us to reflect on the passage. In this reading, listen for any particular word, phrase, or image that stands out. It may feel purposeful or it may feel random. It can be positive or negative. What is one word, phrase, or image from the passage that stands out more than any other? Write this down and simply sit with it in the presence of God.*

Read the passage aloud for the second time, then allow a short period of silence for people to process and journal if desired. After a period of silence invite people to share their word or phrase or image aloud if they are comfortable sharing.

3. Third Reading (Oratio/Pray) *The third reading is an opportunity for us to bring our hearts to God, offering our loving God whatever surfaces during the readings, our emotions, our longings, whatever is stirred in us, we offer it to God in conversation. After this reading, take several minutes to reflect and pray on how God is inviting you to engage with the word, phrase, or image you have been given. What feelings does it stir in you? Do you feel prompted to act or change anything? Come before God as you are, and be honest about what this story is stirring in you. Ask for God's invitation.*

Read the passage aloud for the third time, then allow a period of silence for people to process and journal if desired. After the time of reflection invite people to share with the group what God may be inviting them into.

4. Fourth Reading (Contemplatio/Contemplate) *This reading is a time for us to rest in God's presence and embrace. No words are needed, no action, we simply sit in the presence of God. Awake to God in a new way.*

Read the passage aloud for the fourth time, then allow a period of silence for people to process and journal if desired. After the time of reflection, close in prayer.

Resources - To learn more about Lectio Divina, check out the resources below.

Gravity Center: <https://gravitycenter.com/practice/lectio-divina/>

Soul Shepherding Inc: <http://www.soulshepherding.org/search/Lectio+Divina/>

Bible Gateway: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/lectio-divina/home>