

At Ridgewood, we are nothing more than real people living in a real world serving a real God.

March 19, 2023

Ridgewood CHURCH

Here are things that may be different from your previous church experiences:

No Age-Graded Ministries | All God's people - from infants to the elderly - are needed in relationships with each other. We worship together as one big family - the family of God.

Children are Welcome and Encouraged in the Worship Gathering

It is the parent's duty to train their children to participate in corporate worship, including singing, tithing, prayer, and active listening to the teaching of the Word of God. (Deut 31:12-13, Ezra 10:1, Matt 18:1-5, 19:13-15, Eph 6:1-4, Col 3:20) As part of this training process, children may make small noises in the service. These are a reminder "to such belong the Kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). However, we also have the "Genesis Room" at the far end of the hall set up with video and audio feed for your convenience if you feel your child needs more attention.

We Partake in the Lord's Supper Weekly | We ask that the elements only be taken by professing baptized believers who are in a good standing with their local church. (Acts 2:43-47, 1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

We Practice Systematic Exposition | The Bible is God's word and is our final authority in all matters of faith and practice. The music is prayerfully selected based on each week's text of Scripture. (Acts 2:42-27, Colossians 3:16)

Weekly Fellowship Meal | Families of Ridgewood have brought food for their own household and extra to share with visitors. Fellowship is one way we endeavor to 'encourage one another' in our Christian walk. (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:24-25)

Use this Bulletin Throughout the Week as a Home Worship Guide

God has called you to disciple your household. He has also called His church to encourage, equip, and expect you to disciple your household. Use this bulletin as a home-worship guide throughout the week.

The song of the month is a great place to start with family worship. The prayer guide is a tool designed to guide you and your family in prayer. The catechism/doctrine and home devotions are wonderful discipleship tools for everyone, especially for children of all ages. If you have any questions, the fellowship meal is a great time to get help and encouragement from others. That's what we are here for!

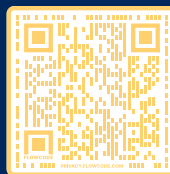
True Life Cards | We encourage you to pick up some True Life Cards in the foyer and give out a few every week. Pray for an opportunity of Gospel conversation with and the salvation of people in the following categories: Family, Friends, Neighbors, Coworkers, Community. Go to truelife.org for more information.

Announcements:

- » **Wednesday Nights at 6p**
 - Wednesday Study resumes this week at 6p
 - Our Bible Study on the Doctrine of Man continues this week on March 22nd at 6p on the Fall of Mankind in the Fall of Adam. We will look at Scripture and see that "All Men are Born in Sin."
- » **Shine-On Summer Kick Off Event**
 - Save the Date - Shine On Summer Kick Off Event for guests with special needs of all age and their families. 6/3/24. Flyers available.
- » **Extra-Cushion Diaper Ministry**
 - Outreach Port Arthur will be distributing diapers the second Wednesday of each month from 3-5p. Contact Savannah S if you would like to help
- » **Operating:**
 - Please pray about giving toward the outside remodel project
 - Please remember to be faithful in your tithes and offerings (2 Cor. 9:6-7)
 - Offering plates are at the back of the auditorium, or text "\$amount" to 409-239-0774

409.729.6000 • ridgewoodchurch@yahoo.com • www.ridgewoodchurch.us

Our Purpose... To Belong to Christ
Our Mission... To Become like Christ
Our Vision... To Bear Christ's Fruit



Welcome Guests!



Welcome

Catechism/Responsorial Doctrine - The Atonement - The Covenant of Grace

37. What is a covenant? An agreement between two or more persons.

38. What is the covenant of grace? The agreement God made with His elect people to save them from their sins.

39. What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace? To keep the whole law for His people and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

Memory Verse:

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Pray for our Church Body (James 5:16)

David Gillespie

Pray for Kings and Those in Authority (1 Timothy 2:2)

Local | Gene Winston | Constable Precinct 8

State | Major General Thomas Suelzer | Tx. Adjutant General

National | Merrick Garland | Attorney General

Pray for the Great Commission (Luke 10:2)

New Testament Scripture

John 6:60-71, page 892

Songs:

"Unto Him"

"Beautiful Jesus"

"Healer"

Old Testament Scripture

Ezekiel 37, page 724

Song of the Month | scan QR code for lyrics/video

"Yes and Amen!(Eph. 1)" by Shane&Shane/KindgomKids

Message

Following - Part 3 | Matthew 4:12-23, page 809

Confession/Repentance

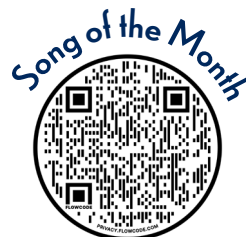
Lord's Supper

"Nothing But the Blood"

Dismissal/Offering

Fellowship Luncheon

Please join us in the gym for fellowship and food!



UNIT 3 – SECTION 2

Covenant of Grace

QUESTIONS TO LEARN:

37. What is a covenant?

An agreement between two or more persons.

38. What is the covenant of grace?

The agreement God made with his elect people to save them from their sins.

39. What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace?

To keep the whole Law for his people, and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

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Throughout history, men have attempted to add to the gospel of Christ, believing that they must contribute to their own salvation. The Bible tells us that even the apostle Peter became temporarily ensnared by such false beliefs. Imagine what it took to draw him away from the truth, and how he must have felt when Paul publicly exposed his error. By Martin Luther's day, in the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church's distortions to the simple gospel had settled like a dark cloud over the covenant of grace, but the Holy Spirit led Luther to find the truth through his own prayerful study of God's Word.

One Step Back, Three Steps Forward

A group of the faithful followers of Christ in Antioch reclined in the shade of a courtyard, sharing their morning meal. Peter, who had excused himself just before the meat was served, stood outside a window where he could not be seen. He longed to be in with them, but just couldn't risk being found actually eating *with* Gentiles—eating *what* Gentiles eat. If he got close enough, however, Peter could hear their voices.

"I understand that a group from the Jerusalem church is due here this evening," confided Barnabas to those gathered around the table nearest the window. Actually, Peter had been notified that a delegation from the Jerusalem church would arrive this morning, which was precisely why he was not inside breaking bread with his friends.

Peter alone knew why the delegation was coming—to address the threat that Gentile Christians posed to the Jewish laws. Some in the Jerusalem church wanted to make the Gentiles act like Jews, eating only acceptable foods, and following all the other rules and rituals that God had required of them before Christ had come. In part, these Jewish Christians hoped to maintain enough of their Jewish heritage to continue to be accepted into the synagogues and temple.

"Surely, preserving a few of the Jewish customs won't compromise the gospel," Peter tried to assure himself.

While pondering this matter, Peter's attention was drawn back to the courtyard by the mention of his own name. "Where's Peter?" asked a passionate, confident voice he recognized at once as Paul's.

No one said anything, but Peter detected the general rustling of shoulders shrugging in response. He strained to detect whether they were hurt by his absence or just confused by it. He could not tell.

At just that moment, Peter felt a tap on his back and swiveled abruptly to face the Jerusalem contingent. There stood their leader, smiling at Peter approvingly.

"Peter, we're so glad to hear that you are on our side. We cannot allow these Gentiles to run rough shod over God's Law," he said, as he looked in through the window and saw Paul eating forbidden meat next to Gentile believers.

"You betrayers of the Law!" he yelled into the courtyard. "Eating with uncircumcised Gentiles!"

The brothers in the courtyard froze, with their mouths full, as the delegation from Jerusalem entered, uninvited. "All you Gentiles must immediately obey our Jewish laws, including those about circumcision, what you eat, and how you prepare your food," their leader commanded. "How can you expect God to include you in Jesus' atonement if you won't first follow his laws?"

The Antioch believers stared silently at their indignant visitors. Exasperated, the angry leader waved Peter into the courtyard. "Peter, tell them," he said.

Peter stuttered around for a moment or two, wondering what he should say. Why, just yesterday he had been here eating right alongside his Gentile friends, having discarded the ceremonial Jewish laws just as the rest of them had.

Finally Paul could bear it no longer. He jumped on top of the table he had been eating on and proclaimed, "No, my friends! Don't listen to them. We Jews know better than anyone that we cannot reach God through the Law, because none of us can obey it perfectly. God gave us the Law so that we would understand our sin and be convicted of our wrongdoing. But through the new covenant—the covenant of grace—we benefit by Christ's righteousness. He alone kept the whole Law perfectly. He is the fulfillment of God's covenant with us to save us from our sins. If these men are right, and we could be righteous by observing the Law, then Jesus would not have had to die for us. His sacrifice would have been in vain. But it is not so.

"If Peter truly believes what these men say, he has been hoodwinked," Paul told the Antioch brothers. "But in truth, I think he is simply being a hypocrite. He himself ate with us yesterday.

"How is it, Peter, that you now try to force these Gentiles to follow the Jewish customs that you do not?" Paul asked.

Paul's words stung Peter's tender conscience. Slowly his head began to clear. How could he have belittled the tremendous sacrifice of his Lord? Was not Jesus' death enough?

"Yes, . . . yes, Paul is right," he admitted humbly. "These men are trying to add onto the gospel of Christ. They would have you believe that we must deserve salvation by living a certain way, rather than relying on the simple, undeserved mercy of Christ alone. But we must face it, brothers," and here he turned to the men from Jerusalem, "we can not get to God by our own effort. Our Lord's sacrifice was enough. Accept it, and rejoice!"

Taken from: Acts 15:1-11; Galatians 2:11-21.

FROM THE BIBLE:

"Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." (Acts 15:10-11)

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. (Galatians 6:12)

TALKING IT OVER:

1. *Some of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were misleading the Gentiles by telling them that they couldn't have eternal life unless they followed certain Jewish rules. From the story and the Galatians passage, why might they have done this?*
2. *What is grace? (Unmerited favor.) What did Jesus do for us in the covenant of grace?*
3. *Are there any works we must or can do to help us gain God's forgiveness? (See Ephesians 2:8-9.)*

The Monk Who Couldn't Measure Up

Outside of Martin Luther's tiny tower room, crudely chiseled stone steps wound down to a large cavern where the other monks sat around several wooden tables eating their dinner of mutton, bread and water.

"Will Brother Luther join us tonight?" asked a young monk, as one of the others rang the dinner bell again for Luther. None of them really expected a reply, for Luther often studied while the others ate. As usual, tonight he ignored the summons and continued his reading. Many times he would go days without joining them for a single meal, locked in his barren room without sleeping or speaking to anyone. He often knelt or lay on his face for hours at a time praying for righteousness.

"He's a troubled young man," the monks whispered to one another. "Nothing satisfies him." And they were right.

As a monk, Luther had learned that he might hope to avoid God's wrath by devoting himself to fasting, praying, taking up collections for the Church, and participating in the Church's many rituals. Luther desperately wanted peace with God, and he pushed himself harder than any of the other monks to win God over with such behavior. For he believed that if he didn't try hard enough to be good, God would judge him unworthy of eternal life in heaven.

No matter how hard Luther had tried, however, he feared that his efforts fell far short of God's standard of righteousness. He found that he could not completely deny himself. He could not go long enough without eating or wanting to eat. He could not pray without stopping or letting his tired mind wander. Despite his enormous self-control, hateful thoughts about his fellow monks entered his mind and sometimes lingered there. Worst of all, when he had managed to be very good, he often felt himself superior to the others. At these times, Luther would torture his body and soul all the more, hoping his penance might soothe God's anger.

By now, however, Luther despaired of ever being able to gain God's favor. None of his good works was enough. He could never quite overcome all of his selfishness. He had done everything he knew to do, everything that the sixteenth-century Roman Church had taught him was necessary to attain salvation. According to the Church, he was okay. Yet where was the peace that he so longed for? All he saw was God's mighty hand raised against him in judgment. And worse still, he knew that was what he deserved.

Day after day, Luther pored over the Bible hoping to find some comfort. There was something about salvation that he did not yet understand . . . something. Although his teachers had treated the Church's doctrines as more authoritative than the Bible itself, Luther was convinced they had gotten something wrong. Had they added something that wasn't there or left out something important? So it was that in his searching he was led to the book of Romans.

In his tower room that night, the Holy Spirit gradually revealed to Luther the meaning of these words from Romans 1:17: "*The just shall live by faith.*" The just shall live by faith.

Faith. Not rules. Not perfection. Not penance. Faith.

"That's it!" Luther realized. "I can never do enough good works to please God, or make myself suffer enough to appease him. What he commands instead is simply that I put my trust in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was righteous by obeying the Father in all things, even unto death on the cross. He took my place! He took my sin. He gave me his righteousness. All the fasting, praying and rituals in the world cannot save my soul. It's a gift, by his grace! Why, he has even given me the faith to believe."

Finally Martin Luther had seen how contrary the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church of his day was to God's truth. Somehow, over the years, the church had slipped back into the old mindset that salvation depends in part on human effort. And the Church had set itself up as the judge of that effort—dictating what people had to do to win eternity, and claiming to have authority from God to grant salvation. Often, what the Church directed the people to do could not even be found in the Bible. In fact, some of these requirements were simply for the purpose of raising money to finance grandiose building schemes, not to save souls.

God sent Luther with his newfound truth to knock on the Church's door and demand a return to the covenant of grace, based as it is solely on the worthiness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. With Luther's careful teaching, many people of his day and since have understood that entry into this covenant with God does not depend on our own works, no matter how zealous.

FROM THE BIBLE:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:33, 34b)

And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, . . . (Romans 4:5)

TALKING IT OVER:

1. *Whose work makes the covenant of grace possible?*
2. *Why did the Roman Church in Luther's day teach that salvation is dependent on men's works?*
3. *How did Luther enter into a covenant with God concerning his own soul?*