

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

AUGUST 21 -25, 2023



# MONDAY

Read [Revelation 18:4-7](#); [Zechariah 8:6-8, 12](#); [John 4:35-36](#)

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Next Sunday is Glenkirk Church's annual congregational meeting. Pastor Tim will speak on "The State of the Church" during that day's services. The Church's condition—at Glenkirk, nationally and globally—is therefore the emphasis of this week's devotionals series.

We live in an increasingly post-Christian America, a continuing trend gaining momentum in the 1960s. Note the US's increasing demographic representation of "nones"—those claiming no religious affiliation at all. This demographic has doubled since the '60s, making it America's fastest-growing "religious" group. However, there is hopefulness here: about 60% of the "none's" indicate that they are religiously "nothing in particular" vs. self-describing as "atheists" or "agnostics." The "*fields are ripe*" (John 4:35) indeed!

For the first time as of 2020, most Americans are not church members. It has been said of contemporary Europe, "Their churches have become museums and the museums have become churches"—sadly, the US is trending similarly. In response, some congregations have become so inwardly focused and culturally distant that they are almost monastic—they might have something to say, but no one to say it to. Other churches have "adapted" by being "seeker-sensitive" and so "self-help" oriented that they are nearly indistinguishable from social clubs and secular organizations—"relevant" and close, but with little uniquely God-honoring or compelling to say.

At Glenkirk, average in-person worship attendance is roughly 60% of pre-pandemic levels—about 30% of what it was 10 years ago, aligning with US trends. However, God remains faithful, blessing us abundantly! Glenkirk’s giving has sustained a budget of pre-COVID levels despite reduced attendance. We have added 30+ new members over the past 12 months, baptizing 10 children concurrently. Glenkirk’s recent Vacation Bible School hosted 350 campers, over 300 of them making first-time faith commitments or recommitments amidst VBS.

We live as God’s adopted exiles scattered throughout “Babylon”—biblically representing self-absorbed, idolatrous cultures. How can we manage being “in the world”—engaged and relevant—while not “of the world”—distinguishable from greater culture and prayerfully grieved regarding surrounding ungodliness? Invite another to join us next Sunday, as Pastor Tim addresses Glenkirk Church’s continuing plans “to love God and His world.”

## QUESTIONS

Which of the national and local church statistics do you find most surprising? What are the two opposite, misguided paths taken by some churches in response to America’s increasing secularization? What does “Babylon” represent biblically?

## PRAYERS

[For International Fellowship of Evangelical Students \(IFES\) in Turkey](#)

This year’s National Student Conference for Christian collegians in Turkey will focus on the book of Nehemiah. The workshops, Bible studies, and discussions will all be led by students. Pray for blessings on them as they prepare.

# TUESDAY

Read **2 Kings 4:1-7; Psalm 23:5-6; Jeremiah 29:11**

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The enemy would have us see the Father as a spoilsport, God's rules "cramping our style." Satan loves promoting the lie that God's ways are disadvantageous. Accordingly, the serpent discredited the Creator and deceived Eve in Eden when claiming that upon eating the forbidden fruit, "*You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it ... you will be like [Him]*" (Genesis 3:4-5).

However, Scripture and God's continuing provision indicate how "*the Father [loves to] ... give good things*" (Matthew 7:11). Moreover, He produces abundance from apparent scarcity. Jesus fed 5,000+ people using only 5 loaves and 2 fish—there were even 12 baskets of leftovers upon all being fed (Matthew 14:13-21).

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, we see an illustration of God's provision amidst needful circumstances. At the time of these events, most Israelites had wandered far from Yahweh, prompting national scarcity in several areas: resources, faith, truth and love. Elisha had succeeded Elijah as Israel's prominent prophet, raised up by God for such a time. A colleague died, his widow left desperately in debt and seeking the prophet's help. Upon learning she had a small jar of olive oil, Elisha had her borrow empty vessels from neighbors, after which she poured enough olive oil from her original jar to pay debts and support both herself and her sons.

I've heard believers complain about God withholding disclosure of His will for their lives. However, closer examination of circumstances revealed that they had not fully applied what He had provided and revealed already. Desperation can focus us on what we don't have or may have lost. It can take our eyes off of the Lord, multiplying faithlessness and ingratitude along with poor decision-making. Abundance, however, starts with what we have. And when we are faithful with what we have, God ensures that it is enough.

Glenkirk's attendance and budget are less than they were 10 years ago. However, the quality of the essentials—worship, teaching, key programs such as VBS, etc.—are as strong as ever. The resourceful staff has “tightened belts” discerningly while securing grants, using more volunteers, etc. And God faithfully continues to bless and provide!

## QUESTIONS

What things do “Feeding the 5,000” and “Elisha and the Widow's Oil” have in common? Why doesn't God simply give us all of the good gifts He wants us to have at once? How have you seen God move abundantly at Glenkirk?

## PRAYERS

For International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)  
in Turkey

Pray for many students to be able to come to the national conference. May their hearts be open to and challenged by what they hear at this year's gathering. May the Lord's purposes for this conference be fulfilled.

# WEDNESDAY

Read [Isaiah 12:1-5](#); [John 4:28-30, 39-41](#); [Matthew 28:18-20](#)

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Glenkirk continues to progress amidst seeming scarcity. New people are joining, seekers are accepting Christ, and other congregants continue growing. Attendance increased 20% this past year, though largely through Glenkirk people reconnecting in-person. We aim to grow 20% going forward, next year primarily via truly new people joining—former “nones,” young families, and others from varied backgrounds and circumstances.

To grow by 20%, each of us—per Glenkirk’s “WORSHIP” and “INVITE” emphases—must heighten connecting with “outsiders.” *Everyone* needs Christ and people will meet Him at Glenkirk. Including others in worship benefits everyone—proper worship, like prayer, is the believers’ “spiritual oxygen.”

Perhaps you’ve heard, “Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary, use words.” This is like saying, “Feed the hungry; if necessary, use food.” Of course we must live out our faith. However, we must also verbalize it: *“And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ”* (Romans 10:14-17). Among the many misperceptions to overcome: “There are many ways to God,” or “We all have the ‘Christ consciousness’ within us.” Another misrepresentation: “If you accept Christ, all your problems disappear and God will ‘prosper’ you” (“Prosperity Gospel”).

The true Gospel: God created us for loving relationship with Him. However, God's "very good" (Genesis 1:31) creation fell when Eve was deceived and Adam joined her rebelliously, sinning and separating humankind from God. Our inherited sinfulness, creation's fallenness, and Satan account for the world's problems. God loves us so much, however, that Jesus Christ came to earth on a rescue mission. He paid the price God's justice requires, crucified in our place. God's Son, the Man Jesus, rose from the tomb, defeating death and sin as the only Way of salvation for those repentantly turning from sin, believing in Him and following Him. Others who reject Christ will face God's judgment for their sins.

We cannot know whom God is calling, so we must "scatter seed" (Matthew 13:1-8) continually. We're called to faithfulness, not to results—the results ("harvest") are God's work.

## QUESTIONS

How will you support Glenkirk's aim to grow 20% in attendance over the next 12 months? What's the problem with the saying, "Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary, use words"? How comfortable are you with sharing the Gospel actively?

## PRAYERS

[For International Fellowship of Evangelical Students \(IFES\) in Turkey](#)

IFES in Turkey is now forming student groups in other cities beyond Antalya. Pray for Hilay, who is helping with this expansion. May the Lord raise up others who have a heart for students. Although universities are still online since the earthquake, the Lord still opens doors. (Ten major cities are still struggling to recover from the February 6 earthquake. They need our prayers!)

# THURSDAY

Read **Psalm 133; John 13:34-35; Hebrews 10:23-25**

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I joined a small group at Glenkirk 28 years ago, and I'm in it to this day. Though Bible study focused, our group has done service projects, stayed connected via ongoing fellowship and prayer, and "done life" together. Small groups are a means by which we grow individually and collectively, "becoming fully devoted followers of Christ."  
(GlenkirkChurch.org)

Key to Jesus' "Great Commission" is its exhortation to "*make disciples*" (Matthew 28:19). However, we must first be well-formed disciples ourselves if we are committed to fulfilling this command and Glenkirk's synchronous "BECOME" missional element. A seven-week "*Re-Formed*" small group curriculum will launch accordingly within Glenkirk's fall "Sermon on the Mount" teaching series; its goal is to involve at least 250 Glenkirkers in *Re-Formed* small groups.

Our Lord used small groups extensively during His First Coming mission. Per Roger Barrier: "Even Jesus needed a small group. .... Knowing He was about to be crucified, [Jesus] spent time with His good friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. ... Jesus selected twelve and divided them into three small groups ... [See] Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:13-16. ... Jesus used small groups as His model for ministry. ... He could have transferred His ministry to one person that He had trained quite well ... [or] refused all [other] personal relationships and concentrated on ... teaching only the Twelve. ...



He could have held classes for any wanting to attend. ... Jesus placed highest priority on His small group. Jesus, who had the whole world to save, made the Twelve His priority.”

Barrier continues: “There are at least 11 great reasons for small groups: Community ... Fellowship ... Friendships ... Comfort and Help ... Overcoming ... Encouragement ... Christian living ... One another ... Openness ... Love ... [and] Meeting with Jesus ... Most small groups mature over time: ... [Such groups often form] intimate [friendships by which] we can absolutely unveil the truth of our lives.”

If you are not presently in a Glenkirk small group, why not join one now or when the *Re-Formed* series commences in October? If you are already in a small group, will you embrace the *Re-Formed* series when it starts, walking alongside the Glenkirk community?

## QUESTIONS

How do small groups fit with Jesus’ “Great Commission” and Glenkirk’s mission? Which of the reasons provided for small groups do you find most compelling? Will you join fellow Glenkirkers in the *Re-Formed* series small group curriculum this fall?

## PRAYERS

[For International Fellowship of Evangelical Students \(IFES\) in Turkey](#)

During the earthquake, IFES opened its library to everyone and organized events for students still in Antalya. Pray for open hearts among these student connections. Praise the Lord for the two who were baptized this summer.

# FRIDAY

Read **Mark 12:28-31; Galatians 6:2; Revelation 7:9**

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Even on the eve of His crucifixion and its horrors, Jesus never stopped lovingly teaching. He exhorted His followers, *“By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another”* (John 13:35). From this and other Scriptures we derive “the Law of Christ: love God and love others in His name.” This teaching is the backbone of the love elements of Glenkirk’s mission, “loving God and His world.”

One way we will love and further Kingdom purposes is via ongoing support to ECO church plant, La Casa Church, serving God and the San Gabriel Valley’s/Inland Empire’s Spanish-speaking community. We continue to work with La Casa to enable this congregation’s progress and eventual status as a stand-alone ECO church.

Another means of “loving God and His world” is Glenkirk’s excellent lay counseling ministry, supervised and equipped under a licensed therapist. The number of Glenkirk lay counselors has declined recently, but this ministry will be an emphasis in the year ahead.

“The goal for the counselor is to care for and empower individuals ... walking through a new or difficult season(s) of life. ... [Lay counseling] goals [include]: providing a healthy mental framework for processing life situations; improving relationships with others; facilitating behavior change in [the client’s] life; developing healthy coping mechanisms;

[and/or] guidance on an important decision. ... Millions ... face mental health issues every year. ... Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-34, and the 10th leading cause of death for all ages in the U.S. ... [its rate having] increased by 31% since 2001. ... An estimated 48 million people battle anxiety disorders—about 19% of the [American] population.” (Natalie Walkley)

La Casa Church lovingly continues to “*make disciples*” in our Spanish-speaking community while Glenkirk lay counseling helps the troubled and hurting draw closer to the God who “*is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (Psalm 46:1). We are never more like Christ than when loving others for God’s glory. Your support—prayerfully and in time, treasures, and talents—will be multiplied by God through Glenkirk’s various ministries next year.

## QUESTIONS

What is “the Law of Christ” and how does Glenkirk’s mission statement harmonize with it? Which US mental health statistics do you find most troubling? How will you support Glenkirk’s various ministries in the coming year?

## PRAYERS

For International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) in Turkey

Praise the Lord for Joah, Emre and his wife’s happy and healthy 8-month-old. He’s a huge blessing to them! Continue to pray for a Turkish visa for Emre’s wife, Feven (born in the Netherlands). They believe God wants them to continue their ministry with IFES in Turkey.

## Sources

- Much of today's content is derived from Pastor Tim's Peck's "State of the Church" sermon and annual congregational meeting information that will be shared at Glenkirk Church on Sunday, August 27, 2023.
- Glenkirk Church's mission statement and key emphasis areas can be found at the Glenkirk website, [www.GlenkirkChurch.org](http://www.GlenkirkChurch.org).
- Dr. Roger Barrier's quotes are from <https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/ask-roger/reasons-small-groups-are-so-important-to-jesus.html>.
- Natalie Walkley's quotes can be found at <https://www.lciministry.org/what-is-lay-counseling/>.

