

Worship Brainstorming

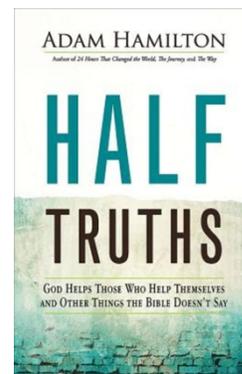
“Half Truths: *God Helps Those Who Help Themselves* and Other Things the Bible Doesn’t Say”

Mon., August 8, 2022 at LHUMC Fellowship Hall

12:00 p.m. Potluck

12:45-3:30 p.m. Brainstorming for Worship

September 4-October 2, 2022 (5 Sundays)



The worship brainstorming for this series will be held in Fellowship Hall. Members of all ages and backgrounds are invited to participate in the one-time commitment. The ideas generated at the brainstorming are used in worship.

We will have a potluck at 12:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share. Brainstorming is from 12:45-3:30 p.m. **Safety protocols will be the same as at church.**

Please pick up this brainstorming packet at church or find it online, read the Scripture reading and Pastor Mary’s message synopses, and preview videos when they become available.

RSVPs are helpful but not mandatory. Sign up at church or contact the church office (213-798-2181 or Office@LakeHarborUMC.org) or Karen Booth (231-798-8431 or 231-557-1069 or kwbooth@comcast.net). Please read the Scripture and message synopses and preview the videos before we gather if at all possible.

Social Justice Issue for September 2022: Voting Rights

Social Justice Issue for October 2022: Gun Violence

2022 theme connection: Part of our spiritual journey is recognizing that we believe some things that are not Biblically accurate or helpful. Too often we share these “half-truths” as Gospel truth, which can hurt others and compromise our witness. How can we “flip the script” on some long-held (and unhelpful) sayings? How can we trust Jesus and not lean on clichés? How can we better learn to offer grace and love - not platitudes?

Synopsis: We’ve heard certain phrases all of our lives, but in Adam Hamilton’s book, Half Truths: *God Helps Those Who Help Themselves* and Other Things the Bible Doesn’t Say, we learn that although they capture some element of truth, when compared to the wisdom found in Scripture, they’re really just popular sayings. What is the truth? How can we discover truth through context and close reading? What does that tell us about the nature of God? What happens when we view the world through the lens of Jesus?

Resources:

- <https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify/series/unitedmethodistpublishinghouse/14418-half-truths>
- Half Truths promo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q44KNpgbh8I&t=1s>
- Preview video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAEL5z38Exw> (not available to download)
- *Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I’ve Loved* by Kate Bowler. Related TED Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTcJmlbn5nw>

- *The Will of God* by Leslie Weatherhead
- <https://openthe bible.org/article/five-cliches-you-wont-find-in-the-bible/>
- <https://www.orbcfamily.org/blog/faith/7-christian-cliches-that-help-no-one/>
- <https://www.premierchristianity.com/i-dont-like-your-platitude-the-case-against-christian-cliches/3902.article>
- <https://faitheanne.medium.com/6-reasons-to-throw-out-the-platitudes-eaf2cbb082a5>
- <https://religionnews.com/2016/03/21/3-untrue-christian-cliches/>
- A 4-part series by Christian Piatt
 - <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christianpiatt/2012/07/ten-cliches-christians-should-never-use/>
 - <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christianpiatt/2012/07/ten-more-cliches-christians-should-avoid/>
 - <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christianpiatt/2012/07/nine-final-christian-cliches-to-avoid/>
 - <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christianpiatt/2012/07/ten-antidotes-to-christian-cliches/>

Related ideas:

- “God and Suffering” series from November 2019
 - <https://lakeharborumc.org/2019/11/november-3-2019-message-god-and-suffering/>
 - <https://lakeharborumc.org/2019/11/november-10-2019-message-unanswered-prayers/>
 - <https://lakeharborumc.org/2019/11/november-17-2019-message-gods-will-for-your-life/>
 - <https://lakeharborumc.org/2019/11/november-24-2019-message-love-wins/>
- Close reading of Scripture gives us more questions than answers.
- We want to make sense of why things happen, but sometimes our most faithful response is “I don’t know.”
- **Wesleyan quadrilateral** as a basis for Biblical interpretation: *Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience*
- Use **Wesley’s Covenant Prayer**

Music:

God Weeps (FWS 2048)

It Is Well with My Soul (UMH 377)

Be Still, My Soul (UMH 534)

Through It All (UMH 507)

Abide with Me (UMH 700)

Were You There? (UMH 288)

Goodness Is Stronger than Evil (FWS 2219)

What a Friend We Have in Jesus (UMH 526)

Thy Will Be Done by Hillary Scott

This Is My Father’s World (UMH 144)

Precious Lord, Take My Hand (UMH 474)

Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire (UMH 492)

When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise (FWS 2216)

In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful (FWS 2195)

Worn by Tenth Avenue North

Visuals: Use **emojis** as they're designed to be quick expressions (smiley face, praying hands, ill (green) face, heart), but they can only do so much. This may relate to our use of platitudes and clichés because it's no one's intentions to cause harm, but these phrases often do.

September 4, 2022: "Give Me a Reason" – 13th Sunday after Pentecost
ONE WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:00 a.m.

Half Truth: *Everything happens for a reason (or God works in mysterious ways).*

Flip the script: *Whatever happens, God is able to work through it, to redeem it, and to bring good from it.*

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30: 11-20 (NIV) (refer to Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, Romans 8: 31-39)

The Offer of Life or Death

¹¹ Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

¹⁵ See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹ This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Synopsis: Our lives are not product of simple chance or predetermined fate. A mix of cause and effect, our actions and the consequences of them, and our choices and the results all play a part in how things turn out. Saying "everything happens for a reason" is too simplistic - downplaying the importance of personal responsibility and putting too much responsibility on God.

Felt need: To understand that free will affects our lives

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Holy Communion

Media possibilities: Half Truths promo:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q44KNpqbh8I&t=1s> Length: 1:02. Cost: Free. They are simple phrases. They sound Christian – like something you might find in the Bible. Web

license: Not sure. We've all heard these words. Maybe we have said them. They capture some element of truth, yet they miss the point in important ways.

Music:

Children's Time:

Social media:

NOTE: This would be a good opportunity to define theological terms like *providence* (God's governance of the cosmos), *sovereignty* (God's authority or rule), and *theological determination/predestination* as it relates to *Calvinism* (God has predetermined everything that happens, even our salvation), and *Deism* (God is Creator, but is more like an absentee landlord). It would also be important to explain the *movement of God's grace* in our lives (*prevenient, justifying, sanctifying*).

Pastor Ray Firestone's reflection on suffering - pg. 44 of Hamilton's book:

"Suffering is not God's desire for us, but it occurs in the process of life. Suffering is not given to teach us something, but through it we may learn. Suffering is not given to punish us, but sometimes it is the consequence of our sin or poor judgment. Suffering does not occur because our faith is weak, but through it our faith may be strengthened. God does not depend on human suffering to achieve his purposes, but sometimes through suffering his purposes are achieved. Suffering can either destroy us, or it can add meaning to our lives.

Discussion points:

September 11, 2022: "God Helps" – 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Half Truth: God helps those who help themselves.

Flip the script: *Grace and mercy show us that God helps those who cannot help themselves.*

Scripture: Psalm 121 (NKJV)

121 I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?

2 My help *comes* from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.

4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD *is* your keeper;
The LORD *is* your shade at your right hand.

6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;
He shall preserve your soul.

8 The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore.

Scripture: Matthew 25: 31-40 (MSG)

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹⁻³³ “When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

³⁴⁻³⁶ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why:

I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.’

³⁷⁻⁴⁰ “Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 4-10 (NIV)

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Synopsis: Prayer and worship empower us to action even as we trust in God who is our help and is working for good. From a practical standpoint, we need help from others. From a spiritual standpoint, we’re called to help others as a reflection of God’s love, and we need God’s grace to sustain and lead us to deeper faith.

Felt need: To recognize our need for help - from God and each other

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Acknowledgment of 9/11 in prayer

Media possibilities: “Did You Know that “God Helps Those Who Help Themselves” Isn’t in the Bible?” Length: 0:57. Cost: Free. Web license: Not sure.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj3hxCtn-gw> Related resource:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2017/06/did-you-know-the-saying-god-helps-those-who-help-themselves-isnt-in-the-bible/>

Music:

Children's Time: Mister Rogers - *Look for the helpers.*

Social media:

NOTE: This is the first Sunday of fall programming.

Ora et labora - "pray and work"

Discussion points: go

September 18, 2022: "It's Too Much" – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Half Truth: God won't give you more than you can handle.

Flip the script: *God helps us to handle the adversity and struggle we face in life.*

Scripture: Psalm 46: 1-11 (NIRV)

- ¹ God is our place of safety. He gives us strength.
He is always there to help us in times of trouble.
- ² The earth may fall apart.
The mountains may fall into the middle of the sea.
But we will not be afraid.
- ³ The waters of the sea may roar and foam.
The mountains may shake when the waters rise.
But we will not be afraid.
- ⁴ God's blessings are like a river. They fill the city of God with joy.
That city is the holy place where the Most High God lives.
- ⁵ Because God is there, the city will not fall.
God will help it at the beginning of the day.
- ⁶ Nations are in disorder. Kingdoms fall.
God speaks, and the people of the earth melt in fear.
- ⁷ The LORD who rules over all is with us.
The God of Jacob is like a fort to us.
- ⁸ Come and see what the LORD has done.
See the places he has destroyed on the earth.
- ⁹ He makes wars stop from one end of the earth to the other.
He breaks every bow. He snaps every spear.
He burns every shield with fire.
- ¹⁰ He says, "Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be honored among the nations.
I will be honored in the earth."
- ¹¹ The LORD who rules over all is with us.
The God of Jacob is like a fort to us.

Scripture: I Corinthians 10: 13 (NIV)

- ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Scripture: Hebrews 13: 1-8 (NIV)

¹ 13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. ² Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. ³ Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”

⁶ So we say with confidence,
“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?”

⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Synopsis: Though we want to encourage one another in tough times, attributing struggles to God isn't helpful or faithful. Assuming that anyone should be able to “handle” struggles is also not caring or faithful to our calling as followers of Jesus. We can, however, trust that God will never leave us or forsake us.

Felt need: To know that we are not alone in difficult times and that we can lean on God and others

Visuals:

Hands-on item: “What God Hath Promised” by Annie Johnson Flint

*God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.*

*But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

*God hath not promised we shall not know
Toil and temptation, trouble and woe;
He hath not told us we shall not bear
Many a burden, many a care.*

*God hath not promised smooth roads and wide,
Swift, easy travel, needing no guide;
Never a mountain, rocky and steep,
Never a river, turbid and deep.*

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- "Faith in the Desert." Length: 2:40. Cost: \$20.00. God is in control eve when we fail, even in times of doubt. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/74110/faith-in-the-desert>
- "When Storms Come." Length: 2:07. Cost: \$19.98 (\$11.99 before Aug. 20). Web license: Yes. Where is God when we feel lost in the storms of life? The Bible says our hope in God is the anchor for the soul. But what if we can't feel His presence during the storm? <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/26201/when-storms-come>

Music:

Children's Time:

Social media:

NOTE: Another phrase that people hear in difficult times is "I don't know how you do it." For those who are living through it, a response that they might want to give us "I don't have a choice."

Discussion points:

September 25, 2022: "God Said It..." – 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Half Truth: God said it, I believe it, that settles it.

Flip the script: *With faithful interpretation, God speaks through the words of Scripture to teach, guide, shape, and encourage us.*

Scripture: II Timothy 3: 14-17 (NIV) (refer to Deuteronomy 23: 12-14)

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Scripture: Hebrews 4: 12-13 (NIV) (refer to John 1: 14)

¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Synopsis: Scripture is the primary source of the revelation of God, but Scripture is always interpreted with an understanding of who wrote it, when, and why. No one takes every word of Scripture literally, but we seek to understand the truth of Scripture as it forms our understanding of who God is and what God wills for us. In our faith formation, we may end up with more questions as we learn and grow in faith.

Felt need: To move beyond "bumper sticker theology" and embrace the questions of faith

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Use a colander as a metaphor for how we listen to Jesus

Media possibilities:

Music:

Children's Time:

Social media: What Scripture passage gives you hope and encouragement?

NOTE: This is a good opportunity to share about the **Wesleyan quadrilateral** (*Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience*) as a basis for faith development - and the different parts of Biblical interpretation: scholarship, textual criticism, translation, hermeneutics, exegesis, biases, etc.

Discussion points:

October 2, 2022: "Just Love" – 17th Sunday after Pentecost

World Communion Sunday, CROP Walk

Half Truth: Love the sinner, hate the sin.

Flip the script: *Love your neighbor. Love your enemy. Love one another as Jesus loves you.*

Scripture: Matthew 7: 1-5 (CEB)

7 "Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. ² You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you. ³ Why do you see the splinter that's in your brother's or sister's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother or sister, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when there's a log in your eye? ⁵ You deceive yourself! First take the log out of your eye, and then you'll see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's or sister's eye.

Scripture: Romans 3: 21-26 (NIV)

Righteousness Through Faith

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Synopsis: Jesus is God Incarnate, came to save sinners, and calls us to love God and one another. As soon as we pay more attention to others' sin rather than focusing on our own, we're moving to a place of judgment and self-righteousness, which we're warned not to do. Instead, we can follow Jesus and focus on God's forgiveness and grace for ourselves and others.

Felt need: To pay more attention to our own spiritual lives, judge others less, and view one another as neighbors whom we're called to love

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Holy Communion

Media possibilities:

- “What If.” Length: 1:47. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. What if love was greater than the darkest night? This colorfully illustrated mini movie asks us to reflect on the reality that God’s love for us in Christ truly is far greater than any darkness, pain, or loss we might experience in this life. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/57535/what-if>
- “Love What Matters.”

Music:**Children’s Time:****Social media:**

Resource: “Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin?” Length: 1:20. A short clip from Adam Hamilton. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSBQ0TAhoXM>

Discussion points: