



MCG
Study Guide
The Atonement wk2
Dates February 28th - March 6th

Wednesday February 28th – Rescue

Reading: Colossians 1:9 – 13

“He has rescued us...”

One of the ironies of God saving us, is that we didn’t realize we needed help. It was as if He was reaching out to us, to take hold of us and we kept slapping His hand and yelling at Him to “go away!”

In the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*, produced by Mel Gibson, featured the true story of Private first class Desmond T. Doss, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor despite refusing to bear arms during WWII on religious grounds. Doss, a Christian who wouldn't touch a weapon or work on the Sabbath, enlisted in the Army as a combat medic because he believed in the cause, but had vowed not to kill. The Army wanted nothing to do with him. His fellow soldiers considered him a pest, questioned his sincerity, and threw shoes at him while he prayed. Doss' commanding officer, Capt. Jack Glover, tried to get him transferred. In a documentary based on Doss' life, Glover says Doss told him, "Don't ever doubt my courage because I will be right by your side saving life while you take life."

At Okinawa in the spring of 1945, Doss' company faced a grueling task: Climb a steep, jagged cliff—sometimes called Hacksaw Ridge—to a plateau where thousands of heavily armed Japanese soldiers were waiting for them. The terrain was treacherous. Under a barrage of gunfire and explosions, Doss crawled on the ground from wounded soldier to wounded soldier. He dragged severely injured men to the edge of the ridge, tied a rope around their bodies and lowered them down to other medics below. In the documentary, Doss says: "I was praying the whole time. I just kept praying, 'Lord, please help me get one more.'" Veteran Carl Bentley, who was also at Hacksaw Ridge, once said, "It's as if God had his hand on [Doss'] shoulder. It's the only explanation I can give."

Pfc. Demond T. Doss saved 75 men—including his captain, Jack Glover—over a 12-hour period. The same soldiers who had shamed him now praised him. "He was one of the bravest persons alive," Glover says in

the documentary. "And then to have him end up saving my life was the irony of the whole thing."¹

It is one thing to save those who are asking for help, it is completely another for someone to help those who are undeserving. Such is the kindness of our God towards us. As the apostle Paul explains, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."²

Meditation/Application

Think back to the ways you resisted God. Try to recall times you spurned his rescuing advances. Take time to thank Him again for His persistence in rescuing you while you were still a sinner, rejecting Him.

Reflecting on the reading:

Paul writes that our heavenly Father "has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom of light." In what ways do you think God had qualified you?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for & consider attending tomorrow nights Worship Gathering
- Kari Stefanidis has an interview; pray for wisdom to discern God's direction in how Kari uses her gifts & abilities

¹ Adapted from Elizabeth Blair, ["The Real 'Hacksaw Ridge' Soldier Saved 75 Souls Without Ever Carrying A Gun,"](#) NPR Morning Edition (11-4-16)

² Romans 5:8

Thursday March 1st – Eagerness

Reading: Titus 2:11 – 14

“...who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

The word translated “eager” in the NIV bible is often translated as “zeal” or “zealous”. It indicates great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective.

For her role in *Black Swan*, Natalie Portman trained with New York City Ballet dancer Mary Helen Bowers for eight hours a day, six days a week for the twelve months before the film started shooting.

For his role in *My Left Foot*, Daniel Day-Lewis interacted with disabled patients at the Sanymount School Clinic in Dublin, Ireland. Between takes during filming, he remained in his wheelchair and was spoon-fed and carried around by the crew.

For his role in *The Revenant*, Leonardo DiCaprio plunged in and out of icy rivers, ate raw buffalo meat, and slept in a simulated horse carcass.

For his role in the film *Fury*, Shia LeBeouf trained with the U.S. National Guard and was a chaplain's assistant in the 41st Infantry. During the filming, he didn't bathe for 4 months.

To better imitate Ray Charles, Jamie Foxx wore prosthetic eyelids, leaving him blind for most of each day. Occasionally, he was inadvertently left alone on a set, the crew forgetting he was blind. He also learned all the piano parts and lost 30 pounds in one week for the role.

For her role as Fantine in *Les Misérables*, Anne Hathaway shaved her head, lost 25 pounds and subsisted on a daily diet of two thin squares of dried oatmeal paste.

To play a drug addict in *Jungle Fever*, Halle Berry visited a real crack den and got to know the addicts. During filming, she abstained from bathing for ten days.

In his role for *The Pianist*, Adrien Brody familiarized himself with despair and hunger. He moved to Europe, bringing only two suitcases of personal belongings and living a meager lifestyle. He lost 30 pounds and took piano and dialect lessons. Brody said: "There is an emptiness that comes with really starving that I hadn't experienced. I couldn't have acted that without knowing it. I've experienced loss, I've experienced sadness in my life, but I didn't know the desperation that comes with hunger."

If these actors gave of themselves so fully so zealously just to entertain others. How much more should we be *eager* to do what is good for the sake of God's Kingdom.³

Meditation/Application

Think about your own eagerness in doing good. Imagine if everyone in the church sought to imitate you. Or imagine that people who do not know God are watching. Would they see your eagerness to do good as a reason to be curious?

Reflecting on the reading:

Today's passage tells us that God's grace "teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions." As you look back over your life what are some of the things that He has taught you to say "no" to?

³ Emily Zemler, "15 Actors Who Went to Seriously Extreme Measures for a Role," February 5, 2016; <http://www.elle.com/culture/movies-tv/a33861/extreme-role-prep/>

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for the various people in your community; LGBT, Single parents, person with disabilities, aboriginals, refugees and others who may feel or be marginalized. God's desire is to redeem all people groups to Him.
- Did you know it is a Jewish Holiday today called Purim?
"Purim is a Jewish festival that celebrates survival in a foreign land or in exile. Many Jewish Canadians, especially children, listen to the Megilla (or Megillah). When the story of Esther is read out loud, graggers (or groggers), which are Purim noisemakers, are used to drown out the name of the villain in the story. This man, named Haman, planned to kill the Jewish people in ancient Persia. Queen Esther worked together with her cousin Mordecai to stop Haman's plans.
- Tonight we worship together from 7:30pm at the church building.

Friday March 2nd – The Law

Reading: Galatians 3:10 – 14

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...”

The law refers to the Old Testament rules that governed Jewish life and taught them what a life pleasing to God was like. The problem was the demand was so high and the law did not provide what was needed to live up to the standards that were required. It seemed as if the law only reinforced how far from pleasing God they really were.

The law which was supposed to help them please God ended up becoming a curse because it was a standard they could not reach and would not budge. But then we discovered grace.

One person describes the situation in this way:

We were married to Mr. Law. He was a good man, in his way, but he did not understand our weakness. He came home every evening and asked, "So, how was your day? Did you do what I told you to? Did you make the kids behave? Did you waste any time? Did you complete everything I put on your To Do list?" So many demands and expectations. And hard as we tried, we couldn't be perfect. We could never satisfy him. We forgot things that were important to him. We let the children misbehave. We failed in other ways. It was a miserable marriage, because Mr. Law always pointed out our failings. And the worst of it was, he was always right! But his remedy was always the same: Do better tomorrow. We didn't, because we couldn't.

Then Mr. Law died. And we remarried, this time to Mr. Grace. Our new husband, Jesus, comes home every evening and the house is a mess, the children are being naughty, dinner is burning on the stove, and we have even had other men in the house during the day. Still, he sweeps us into his arms and says, "I love you, I chose you, I died for you, I will never leave you nor forsake you." And our hearts melt. We don't understand such love. We expect him to despise us and reject us and humiliate us,

but he treats us so well. We are so glad to belong to him now and forever, and so we long to be "fully pleasing to him" (Col. 1:10)! Being married to Mr. Law never changed us. But being married to Mr. Grace is changing us deep within, and it shows.⁴

While the law shows us what we ought to do, it is powerless to change who we are. But Jesus' extended God's grace to us. A grace that changes who we are so that we can begin to do what God desires.

Meditation/Application

Sometimes it can feel as if the change we long for is so slow in coming. We often can't see changes in ourselves. Yet, others can see those changes. Have you noticed a change in someone? Consider writing them a note, sending an email or text, or call them or meet them for coffee and let them know. Encourage them as they grow in grace.

Reflecting on the reading:

We do not live in a nation that subscribes to the laws of the Old Testament but there are other standards, codes of conduct and expectations (i.e. laws) that are often projected of society. What are some of these societal laws that govern people today?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for table time this week
- Pray for families and homes to connect over the weekend

⁴ Ray Ortlund, ["Who are you married to?"](#) *The Gospel Coalition blog*—Ray Ortlund (2-15-15)

Saturday March 3rd – Emptiness

Reading: 1 Peter 1:17 – 21

“...you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors...”

I am always caught by surprise when I hear famous, wealthy and publicly adored people give an interview one on one to a seasoned journalist.

The message that often comes through loud and clear from these interviews is that these famous people all had a goal: to get to the top. They worked hard and consistently for their success and the fame and fortune that came with it. When they reached the top – often after years and years of struggle – they did not find that it was anything like they thought it was going to be.

Most of them quote the well-known saying: “It’s lonely at the top.” Oh, at first they loved everything about it – but with the passage of time they learned that gaining fame and fortune came with the loss of other, deeply held, familiar and comfortable things: old friends, a simple home where they knew the warmth of love and support from family and friends, the memories of those struggling years when they ate a lot of Kraft dinners and together – they dreamed!

How they slowly lose contact with their old friends as they are too busy doing the interview tour, book tour, movie tour, attending various gala events and award presentations. They now have tons of new friends, but they always wonder: is it me they like or is it the fact that now I am famous! When the lights go out and the adoration of the audience dies out – they find themselves at home in their now luxurious environment and wonder: why do I feel so empty? Is that all there is?

Most of us ask these same questions, but when people who apparently reached the pinnacle of success and have no day-to-day material struggles ask it – there is a lesson for us, if we are willing to heed it.

If you ask these questions, you are blessed as they indicate that you are searching for something no worldly riches can provide. You are

searching for peace within, a quiet heart and a content spirit. These are gifts you cannot create for yourselves: they come exclusively from the Prince of Peace.

C.S. Lewis said it better than anyone I know:

“One of the dangers of having a lot of money is that you may be quite satisfied with the kinds of happiness money can give, and so fail to realize your need for God. If everything seems to come simply by signing checks, you may forget that you are at every moment totally dependent on God. Now, quite plainly natural gifts carry with them a similar danger. If you have sound nerves and intelligence and health and popularity and a good upbringing, you are likely to be quite satisfied with your character as it is. “Why drag God into it?” you may ask. A certain level of good conduct comes fairly easily to you. You are not one of those wretched creatures who are always being tripped up by sex or dipsomania or nervousness or bad temper. Everyone says you are a nice chap, and between ourselves, you agree with them. You are quite likely to believe that all this niceness is your own doing, and you may easily not feel the need for any better kind of goodness. Often people who have all these natural kinds of goodness cannot be brought to recognize their need for Christ at all until one day, the natural goodness lets them down, and their self-satisfaction is shattered. In other words, it is hard for those who are rich in this sense to enter the kingdom.”⁵

Meditation/Application

Peter says this “empty way of life” has been “handed down to us.” We see this in society today as people flippantly use pat answers and quaint sayings to pacify deep issues. For example, people will say, “If it’s true for you, go for it.” Or “As long as it makes you happy.” What other “sayings” have you heard that pass on the empty way of life?

⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

Reflecting on the reading:

In today's reading Peter says we should "live out your time as foreigners here..." Why do you think Peter says this? What do you think living as foreigners looks like?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Mark Zammit who is in Beaver Creek Institution (that he would know God's presence through people and the Holy Spirit)
- March 4th NBBC celebrates its 39th anniversary; pray for God's continued mercy and presence in and through us

Sunday March 4th – The Slave Price

Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1 – 7

Sermon Notes:

Our Bondage...

- Required a _____ be paid.
- Held us in slavery both _____ and _____.
- Could only be paid by _____.

To whom was the ransom paid?

- _____.
- _____ powers.
- It is _____ the point of the metaphor.

Three truths about the Ransom:

1. Freedom comes at a _____.
2. We cannot pay _____.
3. Gratitude is best expressed by _____ our _____.

Meditation/Application

As you think about today's sermon what is one action point that you are taking away?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Karen Flegg who is one of our elderly suffering with pain and not sleeping well
- Pray for your neighbours that their eyes would see the need for redemption and to find it in Jesus.

Monday March 5th – Obedience

Reading: Romans 6:15 – 18

“...you are slaves of the one you obey.”

Ultimately, we will have to choose between competing desires of our hearts. Such choices force us to declare our allegiance. Do I choose the donut or the fruit? Do I choose to do homework or watch TV? Will I choose to sleep in or work out? The struggle is not always with what we want because we want both, the struggle reveals what we are enslaved to.

As a boy, Chiune Sugihara dreamed of becoming Japan's ambassador to Russia. By the 1930s, as ambassador to Lithuania, he was a step away from fulfilling his dream.

One morning a huge throng gathered outside his home. Sugihara learned they were Jews who'd fled there from Poland, seeking Sugihara's help for Japanese visas that would permit them to escape the German Gestapo.

Three times Sugihara wired Tokyo for permission to provide the visas; three times he was rejected. Sugihara, a committed Christian, had to choose between his dream and the lives of the crowd. Sugihara chose to disobey orders. For the next 28 days he wrote visas by hand, barely sleeping or eating. Recalled to Berlin, he departed still writing visas and shoving them through the train window into the hands of refugees running alongside.

Ultimately his work saved 6,000 lives. Back in Japan, Sugihara's remaining days were spent selling light bulbs. When his story was finally told, his son was asked, "How did your father feel about his choice?" "My father's life was fulfilled. When God needed him to do the right thing, he was available to do it."

Each day we are placed in the position of making choices. You've chosen to take time with God and His word having a devotional time by reading this guide. These choices help us to determine to whom our hearts are

ultimately bound. It is the small, consistent choices of doing what is right and what pleases God that builds the muscle of obedience so that when the choice is harder, we have the strength to still choose what is right.

Meditation/Application

At the end of this study guide we list our shared practices. These are disciplines we engage in order to help us grow the muscle of obedience. They help us to practice doing good. Look over the list and evaluate how you have been at engaging these disciplines.

Reflecting on the reading:

Paul writes to that Romans that “you have come to obey from your heart.” Do you think it matters if we are simply obedient in our actions as opposed to obeying from our hearts? Why or why not?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Pray for the concerns of your MCG group this week (hopefully you have written them down)
- Pray that your obedience to Christ is from your heart and head in connection with the truth of who He is and who we are becoming

Tuesday March 6th – The Accuser

Reading: Colossians 1:21 – 23

“Now he has reconciled you... without blemish and free from accusation.”

One of the names for Satan is “the Accuser”. He delights in making Christians feel secure in the salvation that God has provided for us. He wants us to doubt, worry and continue to wallow in guilt.

In his book *By Grace Alone*, Sinclair Ferguson identifies four major “fiery darts” Satan uses to unsettle believers and rob them of their assurance and peace in the gospel:

- Fiery Dart 1: “God is against you,” Satan says. “He is not really for you. How can you believe he is for you when you see the things that are happening in your life?”
- Fiery Dart 2: “I have accusations I will bring against you because of your sins,” Satan argues. “What can you say in defense? Nothing.”
- Fiery Dart 3: “You can say you are forgiven, but there is a payback day coming—a condemnation day,” Satan insinuates. “How will you defend yourself then?”
- Fiery Dart 4: “Given your track record, what hope is there that you will persevere to the end?” Satan asks.⁶

Do you recognize these accusations that he whispers or sometimes yells in your ears? Although His accusations are not true they can still hurt. The 17th century English cleric, Jeremy Taylor, once said, “An unjust accusation is like a barbed arrow, which must be drawn backward with horrible anguish, or else it will be your destruction.”

Confronting the lies of Satan’s accusations can be difficult, but what choice do we have. Part of the hard work of wrestling with His deception is meditating on God’s word. Allowing the truth of God’s Word to overpower Satan’s falsehood.

⁶ Sinclair Ferguson, [By Grace Alone](#) (Reformation Trust, 2010), p. 68

A great place to start is the story of Satan’s accusations of Joshua the High Priest. The story is found in Zechariah 3. Perhaps, you might consider an extended quiet time to meditate on this story and apply it’s lessons to your life.

Preparing for your MCG

As you come for you MCG be prepared to share:

- **POTLUCK:** Be mindful about a story you might share regarding the importance of MCG regular group meeting together. (ie. What it means to you, or how the group has seen God work through them or in them)
- **STUDY:** Share from your time of Meditation/Application from each day study. What from chapter 5 of Daniel made an impression on you or what confused you.
- **PRAYER WALK/ACTIVITY:** be creative and intentional as you pray/work together.

Prayer Request:

Record the prayer requests that are shared at your MCG to inform your prayers this coming week.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Missional Community Group (MCG) Covenant

We desire to grow as followers of Jesus who represent Him and His Kingdom well in all of our life. We recognize that God's plan is for us to grow in and through relationships with other like-minded disciples. As those who identify as neighbourhood missionaries we enter into this covenant so that we might be transformed by God's grace and that together we might be transforming agents in our neighbourhood.

To this end, this year, we therefore covenant to:

- Meet regularly for weekly encouragement, accountability, and fellowship in our Missional Community Group and corporately with all of NBBC.
- Seek to grow in likeness to Jesus by engaging in NBBC MCG's shared practices.
- Nurture loving relationships within our Missional Community, accepting others as Christ has accepted us.
- Faithfully steward the resources that God has given us: time, abilities, resources and energy.
- Together discern where God is at work and join Him in His mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our neighbourhood.

In all that we covenant, we recognize that we are dependant upon the grace of God to enable us and so we joyfully enter this covenant in hope of what He might do in and through us.

Missional Community Group Shared Practices

1. Daily engage in reading Scripture and pray for God to bless NBBC in its missional calling.
2. Weekly purposely and intentionally bless another person.
3. Monthly practise table fellowship with someone in your Missional Community.
4. Respond to the Spirit's prompting as you sense Him leading and directing.
5. Share with others the stories of what God is doing in your life as opportunities arise.

