

# MAIN STREET TALK

MainStreet Covenant Church

Summer 2024

## Imago Vita Contemplating Our Future Self in Christ

By Jeremy Berg

As a boy, I wanted to be secure. As a teen, I wanted to belong. In my twenties, I wanted to be respected. In my thirties, I wanted to be faithful. Now in my mid-forties, I just want to be happy in my own skin and joyful in my calling. That's my inner work these days with my spiritual director.

We believe in doing the hard work of "soul formation" at MainStreet. Around here, you're weird if you *do not* have a therapist. Spiritual direction is encouraged. Huddles at their best call one another to face the "thing" rather than avoid it.

The primary weapon we wield in the spiritual battle and interior work is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. We "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) and "we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). We try to walk in the light of God's truth by immersing ourselves in God's Word. But words alone are not enough.

Cramming Bible verses and doctrinal truths into our brain doesn't automatically change our heart, attitude, behavior and self-perception. I know from experience. God has wired us for a deeper, more multi-sensory experience of Him and approach to spiritual transformation. The Word became flesh and blood in Jesus, and "we have heard" and "seen with our eyes" and "our hands have touched...the Word of life" (1



John 1:1). God's Law etched on stone tablets wasn't able to change human heart in Moses' day any more than the ink printed on the pages of your Bible (alone) is able to change you today. Bold claim, I know. Bear with me.

Many of us *know* the Bible's promises, but don't *experience* God in a dynamic way. Our prayer life is dull. We're bored singing worship songs while others dance with hands in the air. We're brought to tears watching a Hollywood movie, but feel nothing reading the Bible. We feel bad. We want a more dynamic faith. But we're stuck. We ask, "What's wrong with me?"

*It's time to come to our senses—literally.*

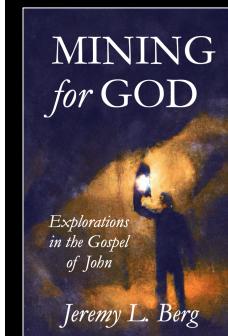
This May we're going to spend a few Sundays exploring how Western Christianity forgot how important our imagination is in spiritual transformation and experiencing God. Beginning with a sermon by Greg Boyd on May 5, we'll explore the role imagination can play in prayer and moving us toward a more multi-sensory experience of God and spiritual truth.

This series is personal for me. I'll be sharing how God has deepened my faith and guided me through difficulties by way of visions, sacred images, and imaginative prayer. I watched this sermon by Greg Boyd some 15 years ago, and I'm still coming back to it today! I can't wait to share it with you.

Back to my inner work and desire to be a more joyful servant of God. This past year, God gave me a word/phrase *and* an image that captures the person He is inviting me to become as I yield to the Spirit and do the inner work. Using AI technology, I recently had fun creating the image above that beautifully captures this self I am moving toward. I call it my *imago vita*, or "image for life." Like a personal "life verse" to guide my way, this image is framed in my study as a daily reminder of who God is making me.

In this series, we'll invite you to seek God for your own *imago vita*, and use AI to generate your own special image to print and frame if you wish. Perhaps we'll spend a Sunday sharing our images and describing what they mean—wouldn't that be fun?! Join us May 5, 12, and 19 at 5pm at St. Martin's.

## NEW BOOK COMING SOON!



*Mining For God: Explorations in the Gospel of John*  
A collection of sermons and personal reflections exploring the dazzling heights and hidden depths of the Gospel of John.

## Echo Chambers of Grace & Truth

We hear a lot about unhealthy media echo chambers feeding us a stream of negative, polarizing political narratives. These echo chambers cultivate in us a posture of suspicion and anger toward "the other" and an attitude of self-righteousness for being on the "right team." Others avoid the political rancor but instead find themselves in echo chambers of envy, doom scrolling and ogling other people's seemingly perfect lives full of luxurious vacations and perfect children. These echo chambers leave us feeling inadequate, insecure and unhappy.

MainStreet Huddles and Spiritual Direction offer sanctified chambers where messages of God's grace and biblical truth echo through the living room. We currently have three women's huddles meeting regularly to "speak truth to one another in love" and combat the negative messages that bombard us daily. Other MainStreeters are meeting with a Spiritual Director regularly, where the director and directee seek the loving voice and gentle nudges of the Spirit together. Here's some feedback on the impact of these Echo Chambers of Grace and Truth:

**"My huddle nourishes my soul, heals my heart, and strengthens my faith—a place of grace and love."**

**"Spiritual Direction has helped me see and hear God working in my life when I've been too busy (or blind and deaf) to see and hear Him myself."**

**"Huddles allow you get to know people on a deeper level."**

**"My hidden and thirsty inner self feels seen, affirmed, and replenished in Spiritual Direction."**

**"Huddles bring our lives to each other for perspective and clarity, but doing so to honor Jesus and not 'depending on our own understanding.'**

**"Huddle has meant the world to me! Showing up just as we are has been so life giving. I always leave feeling connected and encouraged!"**

**"I'm reminded that God loves me no matter what, because I see that reflected in my huddle."**



## Summer Bookshelf

*What we're reading ...*

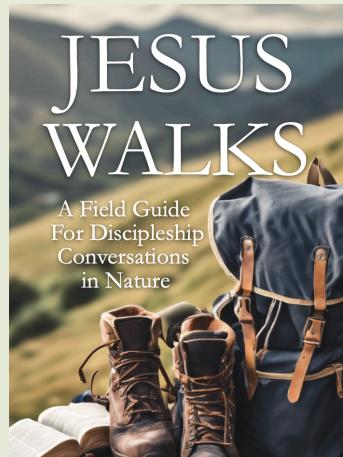
**Keri:** *Accidental Saints*  
by Nadia Bolz Weber

**Jeremy:** *Showings*  
by Julian of Norwich

*Seeing Is Believing*  
by Gregory Boyd

**Mike:** *Life on the Mississippi*  
by Rinken Buck

**Ethan:** *Tress of the Emerald Sea*  
by Brandon Sanderson



A Field Guide  
For Discipleship  
Conversations  
in Nature

The essence of pastoral leadership is not preaching sermons or growing an organization, but shepherding souls in life-on-life relationships. This summer we're again inviting folks beyond the classroom and sanctuary for a more immersive discipleship experience. Join me for weekly Nature Walks and Kingdom Talks in locations designed to let nature amplify Jesus' teachings. There are a few ways to join us for Jesus Walks. You can walk with me and Pastor Mike Wednesdays afternoons (2pm) or join me Friday mornings at 9:30am. In July we're bringing church onto the trail for group walks!

**WEEKLY WALKS**  
Fridays 9:30am  
Wednesdays 2pm

**"Church on the Trail"**  
July 21 & 28 5pm



**Harrison Bay**  
5.5 6.9 7.7 8.4 9AM

Our son Isaak will be baptized this August. When is the right time, age, and maturity for baptizing a child? This is a moot question for those who were baptized as infants like me. The Evangelical Covenant is a safe place to be muddled and in process about baptism. We respect both dominant views practiced through church history as derived from Scripture. Covenant pastors honor the preference of the family.

Eschewing my Lutheran heritage, we chose to "dedicate" our children as infants and let them decide when to be baptized. My view has shifted back over the years, concerned that the popular sentiment of "That should be *MY* decision, not my parents" is often rooted more in Western individualism than a serious theology of baptism or understanding of the sacraments.

To oversimplify a complex debate, the two views differ primarily on who is the

# SUMMER CALENDAR



"The warmth and authenticity of MainStreeters creates safety and helps heal past church hurts. I am so grateful to be in a place where my voice and gifts are welcomed."

—MainStreeter

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



**Potluck & Outreach**  
Invite friends and neighbors to our annual outreach potluck featuring food, fun & Super Slip 'n Slide at the Berg's.



**Baptism Sunday**  
Celebrate Isaak Berg's baptism at 5pm at the Berg's home. Talk to Jeremy if interested in baptism.



## Jesus Walks: All Church Edition

You've heard about them, and now it's time to experience it. We're going to spend a couple Sunday evening gatherings on the trail together, and letting God's creation bring the sermon and give us reminders of his unfailing love. We will meet at Gale Woods Farm behind the Wedding Pavilion at 5pm. Kids will join us for these!

July 21 & July 28 5PM Gale Woods Farm

## SUNDAYS 5PM

Note: We will move Sundays to the Berg's June 2. Schedule subject to change based on when The Chosen episodes 5-9 are released.

5/5	Harrison Bay 9a
	Imago Vita 1
5/12	Imago Vita 2
5/19	Imago Vita 3
5/26	No Gathering (Holiday)
6/2	Chosen 5 @ Berg's
6/9	Harrison Bay 9a
	Chosen 6 @ Berg's
6/16	Chosen 7 @ Berg's
6/23	Chosen 8 @ Berg's
6/30	Chosen 9 @ Berg's
7/7	Harrison Bay 9a
	TBD
7/14	Jesus Walks @ Berg's
7/21	Jesus Walks @ Gale Woods
7/28	Jesus Walks @ Big Stone
8/4	Baptism Sunday @ Berg's
8/11	Harrison Bay
	Potluck & Slip n Slide @ Berg's
8/18	TBD / Family camp
8/25	TBD

## Thoughts on Baptism: When is my child ready?

By Pastor Jeremy

main actor in the waters. A Sacramental View believes God is active in the waters, cleansing us, cloaking us with grace, sealing us with the Spirit, welcoming us into the Body of Christ. Believer's Baptism, on the other hand, emphasizes the individual's decision and intention to follow Christ. The waters are more a symbol of one's decision to die to self and live for Christ. Both are beautiful and communicate biblical truth.

Our oldest son, Peter, seemed ready to be baptized at age 10. He showed interest in the Bible, and could articulate a desire to be Jesus' "first mate" on the high seas of faith. I wasn't as sure about Isaak's motives at first. Did he just want to keep up with his brother? Was he trying to please his pastor dad? I hesitated initially, and delayed it a year so we could do some prep and have monthly baptism chats...which have sort of, kind of, not really, happened as planned.

Then in the hospital last fall, watching him fight for his life, my perspective shifted. Daily I would wrap a prayer shawl, or "Jesus blanket" as he called it, around his embattled body and ask God to infuse him with His healing grace. We didn't have him recite the Apostles' Creed first, or fuss about his motives. We simply trusted God to clothe Isaak with Christ like a warm blanket. This summer in baptism, Isaak will publicly ask God to clothe him with Christ's love, grace, and protection forevermore.

Let's do our best to honor the unique contours of each child's faith, as well as the mysterious interplay between God's activity and our response in the sacrament of baptism.

**Let us know if we can help you and your child discern and prepare for baptism.**