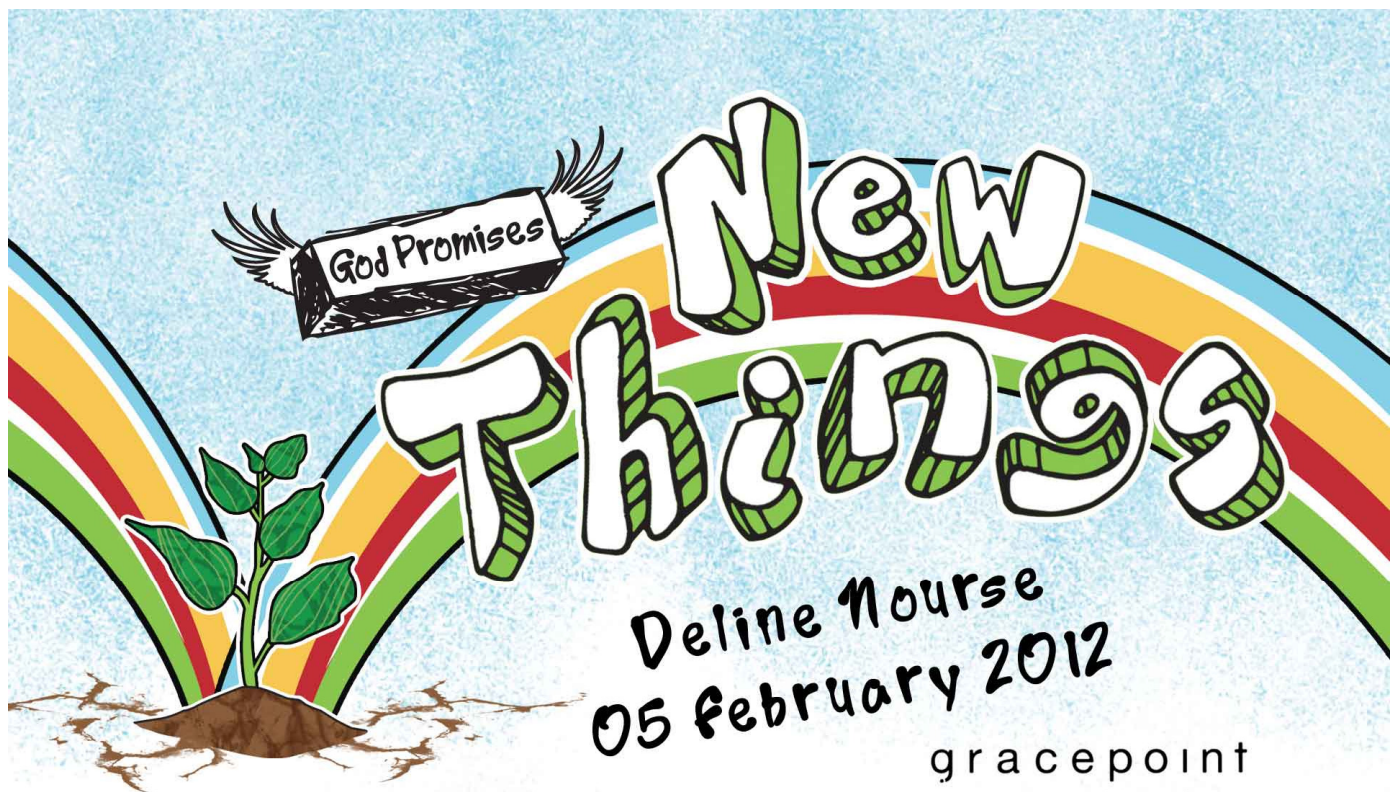


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A M E T H O D I S T C H U R C H

Homegroup material



i. Introductory Discussion Questions

1. What stood out for you most about the “God promises new things” sermon?
2. Read the following Scriptures. What do they reveal to you about the new things God does or is doing?

- **Isaiah 32 vs 1-15:**

“I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King. This is what the LORD says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honour me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.”

- **Revelation 21 vs 1-5:**

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new!”

3. Why do you think it is important for us that God is a God of new things?
4. Have you experienced the renewal and restoration of God in your life? What things has He made new for you in the past?

ii. A new heart

1. Read Ezekiel 36 vs 24-28 below. What do you think God means when He says He will give us a new heart?

- **Ezekiel 36:24-28:**

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.”

2. If you honestly examine the state of your heart right now, do you think it is a hard stony heart, or a receptive, soft heart?
3. In this passage from Ezekiel, God is speaking to the rebellious Israelites who have gone astray and have been disobedient to Him. He says that even though they have turned from Him, He will restore them and give them hearts that love Him and want to follow His commands. God knows that with our fallen human nature, we cannot live according to His will. We need His Spirit at work within us and so He promises us a new heart and a new Spirit. How do you think we go about receiving this new heart and Spirit from God?
4. On the one hand, the new heart we receive from God is an instant transformation that happens in us when we accept Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. On the other hand, however, learning to live by our new heart and not our old desires requires consistent time and practise. See the Scripture from Galatians 5 below. How do you think we can learn to walk by the Spirit or live by the new heart and Spirit God has given us?

- **Galatians 5 vs 16-26:**

“I say, then, Walk in *the* Spirit and you shall not fulfil *the* lusts of *the* flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary to one another; lest whatever you may will, these things you do. But if you are led by *the* Spirit, you are not under law. Now the works of the flesh are clearly revealed, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, fightings, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelings, and things like these; of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law. But those

belonging to Christ have crucified the flesh with *its* passions and lusts. If we live in *the* Spirit, let us also walk in *the* Spirit. Let us not become glory-seeking, provoking one another, envying one another.”

5. In Mark 4, Jesus taught the parable of the sower and spoke about how some people’s hearts are hard and unreceptive to the Word, some are not deep enough for the Word to take root and others are crowded with worldly things. Finally, some hearts are receptive and open to God’s Word and will receive it and reap a harvest from it. How do you think we can ensure that our hearts are not hardened but that that they are open and receptive to God?
6. At the time the Scriptures were written, someone’s heart was understood to be the very core and essence of their being. Therefore, when God talks about giving us new hearts, He is really talking about a complete transformation that He wants to work within us. Paul talks about God making us an entirely new creation. (See 1 Corinthians 5 vs 17 below). What does it mean for you to be a new creation in Christ?

- **2 Corinthians 5 vs 17:**

“If anyone is in Christ he/she is a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.”

7. God tells us that when we come to Christ, the old has gone and the new has come. God chooses to put our past behind us and in order to really live a new life, we have to be willing to let go of or die to the old one. How do you think we can let go of the past and learn to die to those parts of ourselves that God is asking us to let go?
8. God is continually at work in us making us new. What are the things that you need to leave behind right now in order to become a new creation in Him again?

iii. A new way

1. At the Last Supper, Jesus said to His disciples that He was instituting a new covenant. When He gave them the wine, He said: “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28) What do you think Jesus meant when He said that He was bringing about a new covenant?

2. Throughout history and the Scriptures, we see how God has made a way for people to relate to Him and be in relationship with Him. In the Old Testament, the covenant between God and His people was based on law-keeping. In order to be in relationship with God, the people were required to keep and fulfil the law. Jesus, however, came to give us a new way and to institute a new covenant that is not based on what we do, but on accepting what He did for us. He brought about a new way of relating to God. If you have accepted Jesus as your Saviour, what do you think it means for your life that you are in this new covenant relationship with God?
3. When we receive and accept the New Covenant of grace, we are called to a new way of living – a way that is often very contrary to the way the world lives. What is the most challenging thing for you about living the new way Jesus calls us to live?
4. If you honestly examine your life right now, do you really stand out or look different from the world around you and the prevailing culture? How?
5. Jesus calls us to live in a different way because His way is the only way that leads to life (see Mathew 7 vs 13-14). How do you think we can ensure that we are constantly seeking God’s way and not being conformed to the ways of the world?
6. Jesus also gave His disciples a new commandment. Read John 13 vs 34-35 below and discuss whether you think you are living out this commandment right now. Why or why not? Is evidence of Jesus’ radical love evident in the way you live your life?

- **John 13:34-35**

“A new commandment I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

IV. A new story

1. With God, our current story does not have to be our ultimate story. When we come to Him and really encounter Him, He gives us a new story. How would you describe your story at present?
2. God invites us into His grand and everlasting story. What do you think is holding you back from really letting go and allowing God to shape your life and be a part of His eternal story?

3. In order for God to write our stories, we have to be willing to surrender control and give Him the pen, i.e. we have to stop writing our own story before God can start writing it. Do you feel like you are surrendered to God right now? Why or why not?
4. Sometimes we feel like our story is filled with too much shame, disappointment and pain and so we don't feel like we can bring them to God to use or to change, but God makes all things new! What is a practical step you need to take in order to invite God into your story or to hand it over to Him?

V. Call to action

1. What will we do with what we have discovered in this session?
2. How will we hold each other accountable to this?