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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
The Hand of God
Exodus 1:1-2:10
October 8, 2017, Jeff Germo

We have covered a huge amount of ground in the past four weeks in our year long journey through the Bible. Our goal is to cover the main themes over the next year and a bit. So far, we have worked our way all the way through Genesis, hitting some of the key points along God's narrative. It is impossible, of course, to have a complete understanding of Genesis in just four sermons, so it is imperative that you read the back story as we go along. Don't let me spoon feed you.

I've heard from several of you how much you are enjoying getting this bird's-eye view of Scripture. We need to remember that the Bible is a narrative. It is not a bunch of disconnected isolated stories. It is one epic storyline of what God has been doing in history, and continues to do now, and into the future. In order to really understand the Bible, you need to know this. Even as we get to the New Testament you will see that God's story simply continues on. Jesus did not come to start a new religion called "Christianity". He is the fulfillment of what God had been doing all along.

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The Bible, from beginning to end, is God's great rescue mission. If we don't understand this we will miss the main point at every turn. God has been up to something from the beginning of time and he continues his great rescue mission right now, with the church being the instrument he is using to introduce the world to Jesus. God is gathering for himself a people who will be fully committed to his mission. We are the body of Christ on earth bringing people to God. That awesome privilege, joy and responsibility is why we exist as a church.

Let's do a bit of a recap of where we have traveled in our journey thus far so we stay up to speed.

We started at the beginning, in Genesis, at the creation of everything, where God made the whole universe, including humankind, with purpose in mind. He put the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden. There was perfect peace and paradise until Adam and Eve believed the lie of Satan that they could be satisfied and reach their full potential without God. Things went from paradise, love and *shalom* to... I tried to find a word that would describe the opposite of paradise and the only word I could find was "hell." It wasn't hell actually, but relationships did spiral downward and had some hellish traits to them.

In hell, whatever it is, there is an **absence of God**, which means there is an **absence of any good**, since all good things come from God. Hell will be **devoid of love**, since all love comes from God. Things on earth did not get so bad as to say it was literally hell, but from the point of The Fall onward there would be a battle between good and evil, and many times in history it has looked like evil has been on the winning side. But we know from reading the narrative of Scripture, and the end of the story, that **God ultimately wins**. He will vanquish all sin, death, and Satan.

It's like watching a recorded hockey game that you have already seen. You know how it ends. There is no tension when you watch it. I know there have been many great epic hockey games in the last several decades. I think my favourite though was the 2010 Olympic gold medal final between Canada and the U.S. It was an amazingly tense series. It was *the* most watched game in Canadian history. About 80 percent of Canadians were watching that final game in 2010. We were all on the edge of our seats cheering Canada on, not knowing what the end result would be. In the previous Olympics, Sweden won Gold and we weren't even in the medals. We did not want anyone to take our game again.

I remember where I was when I was watching the game. We were displaying it on our big screen at our church in Richmond. Most of us were standing through the whole game because it was so intense. Canada was ahead 2-0 at the end of the second period. We thought we had it in the bag. Then the US got a couple goals. The last one tied it up with only 24.4 seconds left in regulation time, which put the game into overtime.

It was the most intense game in decades. We know now how it ended. Sidney Crosby put one past Ryan Miller and Canada won the gold. Ruthie and I went to downtown Vancouver with some other people who were watching with us. The streets were packed. It was the biggest celebration we have ever been a part of.

If we were to rewatch the recorded game, it might be sort of exciting to reminisce, but we wouldn't worry or fret or feel any angst at all. We wouldn't be sitting on the edge of our seats, biting our nails. We know how it ended. We won.

It's the same with the direction history is moving. We know, from reading God's Word, that in the end, he wins. So, we don't need to feel any angst about that at all. However, we each have subplots in God's greater narrative. It's those subplots that cause us angst. But, even in our subplots, we can know that God will make everything turn out for our good and his glory (Romans 8:28).

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Jesus said to his disciples in John 16:33, just before he went to the cross, "***Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world.***" He specifically said that he told them this so they could have peace [*shalom*] in the middle of their trouble. That, we can take to the bank.

What we will continue to see from going through the biblical narrative over the next year is that God is up to something. He is working towards a final conclusion. He is all about restoring his creation back to it's original state of *shalom*. He has a mission and a purpose. He has called us to be a part of that mission on purpose.

He called Abraham and his wife Sarah in Genesis 12, out of a pagan, idol worshipping family and told them that he had chosen them to be conduits through which all peoples would be blessed. Abraham and Sarah were already old and unable to have children, so this was a humanly impossible dream that would be made real by the God who keeps his promises and is able to make the impossible possible.

Let's rewind and read a passage that will set the scene for for what we are looking at today.

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Genesis 15 (NLT)

¹ Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.” ² But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth.

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³ You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.” ⁴ Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵ Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”

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⁶ And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith...

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...¹³ Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵ (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶ After four generations your descendants will return here to this land...”

This is really important stuff.

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The Bible is not just a historical account of the life and times of the Jewish people. It is that, but so much more. It is God’s narrative of how he is reconciling all creation back to himself. It is all about how God is gathering for himself a people who will be fully committed to his project to save humankind from their destructive downward spiral.

From Adam to Noah there was a whole bunch of drama.

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Then Abraham and Sarah had their miracle child, Isaac. Isaac and Rebecca had twins, Jacob and Esau. God’s covenant to Abraham was carried through and confirmed to Isaac, and then to Jacob. Jacob had a bunch of kids. Pastor Adrian dealt with that last week. Joseph was one of his kids. He was hated by his other brothers because, well, he was a spoiled brat, or so he seemed. But, he was also chosen by God for a very special assignment. As are we. That is what we want to talk about as we go through this series.

God gave Joseph a bunch of dreams that predicted he would become a great ruler. He loved to tell his family about his dreams...

...which is why his brothers became a wee bit peeved with him and threw him into an empty cistern, and then sold him to some slave traders. In an unusual turn of events, directed by the hand of God, he ended up rising in the ranks from slave to ruler of Egypt, second in command only to the king. Providentially, Joseph and his siblings ended up settling in Egypt because of a famine in Mesopotamia.

Again, make sure you read all of Genesis for that back story. If you have never read this narrative you are missing out. It is full of intrigue, suspense, twists and turns and so much drama. It is a page turner.

We fast-forward again to many years later. Like every other passage in the Bible, when you read it, you need to keep in mind that these are not isolated stories just to teach us good morals.

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What we see in the complete biblical narrative is that **1. God is up to something. 2. Satan is working to destroy what God is up to. 3. And without the grace of God and the power of his Spirit, we naturally move away from him.** These three threads weave their way through, not only the biblical narrative, but all of history. Keep that in mind as we read this.

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Exodus 1–2:10 (NLT)

¹ These are the names of the sons of Israel (that is, Jacob) who moved to Egypt with their father, each with his family: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, ³ Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, ⁴ Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵ In all, Jacob had seventy descendants in Egypt, including Joseph, who was already there. ⁶ In time, Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation.

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⁷ But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land. ⁸ Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. ⁹ He said to his people, “Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are.

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¹⁰ We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don’t, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country.” ¹¹ So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king.

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¹² But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. ¹³ So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.

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¹⁵ Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: ¹⁶ “When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live.” ¹⁷ But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king’s orders. They allowed the boys to live, too.

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¹⁸ So the king of Egypt called for the midwives. “Why have you done this?” he demanded. “Why have you allowed the boys to live?” ¹⁹ “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women,” the midwives replied. “They are more vigorous and have

their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time.”²⁰ So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful.

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²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. ²² Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live.”

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¹ About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married. ² The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months. ³ But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River.

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⁴ The baby’s sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him. ⁵ Soon Pharaoh’s daughter came down to bathe in the river, and her attendants walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it for her. ⁶ When the princess opened it, she saw the baby. The little boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This must be one of the Hebrew children,” she said.

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⁷ Then the baby’s sister approached the princess. “Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” she asked. ⁸ “Yes, do!” the princess replied. So the girl went and called the baby’s mother. ⁹ “Take this baby and nurse him for me,” the princess told the baby’s mother. “I will pay you for your help.” So the woman took her baby home and nursed him.

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¹⁰ Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh’s daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, “I lifted him out of the water.”

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Again, this is not just one of a bunch of isolated inspirational stories. I am going to remind you of that over and over again as we go through this series. This story, along with every other story in the Bible, is a part of God’s meta-narrative, his epic story. As with Noah, and Abraham, God specifically saved Moses for a purpose. His story, in God’s bigger story, is a part of God’s plan to reconcile all creation back to himself.

Joseph’s family had escaped a famine and providentially ended up living as slaves in Egypt. They multiplied like rabbits. The Bible says there were about 600,000 men of military age. Estimates are that there would have been over two million Hebrew men, women, and children living as slaves in Egypt at that time. They were brutally oppressed. God had a plan to free them. But again, this was not just another story to remind us that God is big enough for all our problems. Although that is true.

God specifically saved Moses, and had him raised up in an Egyptian home so he would know the customs of the Egyptians. God prepared him to liberate the Israelites from bondage, after over 400 years of slavery, so he could use them as part of his great rescue mission to liberate all of humankind from bondage to sin and Satan. That is the bigger story here. God is sovereign over all history. He is bringing it to a final conclusion where he will once and for all

vanquish all evil, sin, death and Satan. That will be the end of the story. We are somewhere in the middle of that story.

Ever since The Fall, back at the beginning of time, humankind has been in bondage to sin, death and Satan. We all know that things are not as they should be. We see it when we read the headlines of what is happening with North Korea, Syria, South Sudan, the Ukraine and Russia. And closer to home, in the shootings in Las Vegas last week, and even closer with the terrorist attack in Edmonton.

We see it even closer to home here with the fentanyl crisis. In BC alone, from January to July there were 876 deaths from fentanyl. That's up over 80% from the same period last year. And Campbell River is just as hard hit as the rest of BC. This is a direct result of the Fall and God is up to restoring the *shalom* that people try to replace with whatever their drug of choice is.

We can get even closer to home to what's happening in our own homes and relationships, and then zero in to the very core of our hearts. We know things are not as they should be, don't we? Ruthie and I will sometimes have disagreements where we can't seem to understand each other. We spent a couple years in Japan as short-term missionaries, and what we noticed was that the day before a big outreach event we would inevitably get into an argument that we had difficulty making headway on. We started to recognize that Satan loves to cause disunity when God is at work. We have been learning to head it off as we mature in our relationship, and pray together preemptively on purpose. But we still always have to be vigilant.

All of these things are a result of The Fall. Things do not work as they were intended. Satan is at work trying to destroy unity in families and in the church so the name of Jesus will be discredited. But, at the same time, God is actively working to bring his *shalom* to all relationships. In the end we know he wins.

I would guess there is not one person here who has not been touched either directly or indirectly by cancer. We all know someone who is struggling with cancer, or has succumbed to the terrible disease. That is a direct result of The Fall. One day there will be no such thing as cancer. The conclusion of the story will be God putting an end to everything that devastates relationships.

Since the Fall, God has been up to something. From the call of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to Joseph being sold as a slave by his brothers, and rising through the ranks in Egypt where God could use him to save the rest of his family, to the call of Moses to free Israel from slavery, so God could continue his story with them and use them to bless all the nations of the world, and so on and so on and so on, we see God purposefully at work with his plan of restoring his *shalom* back to creation.

The story continues to this day. God has not stopped writing his story. He is up to something. He is now calling us at Campbell River Baptist Church to be a part of his greater story to reconcile humankind back to himself and to each other. He is inviting us into his story. That is why we and every other Bible believing church exist in Campbell River. He is continuing his epic story through us. Everything we do as a church is because we believe that God has something redemptive for us to do in his greater story so more people can get to know Jesus and be a part of his kingdom. That mission drives every ministry at CRBC.

Every Sunday morning before church Pastor Adrian meets with our Welcome Team to discuss how they can be a part of that mission. Emma meets with her River Kids team before church to make a plan for how they can be a part of that mission when they go to Rockland after church to minister to kids and families. Pastor Adrian does the same thing with his River Kids team that goes to Robron. Ryan and Emma meet with their youth leaders each Tuesday night before youth to do the same.

Our Growth Groups have the same mission. Leora, in Christ Kids and Powerhouse have the same goal. Adrian with Young at Heart, the same mission. Irwin has the same vision for the worship ministry, to lead all the worship teams and in turn, everyone on Sunday mornings to be on mission for Jesus. Callista, with everything she does, including keeping in touch with the missionaries, and making sure that we as a church are aware of what is happening with them all over the world, is so that we do not forget why we exist. We have hundreds of people, serving in these ministries purposefully engaged in the mission of Jesus on purpose. You are all a part of God's story to bring people to Jesus.

When you joyfully give your tithes and offerings on Sunday morning, you are not just giving to keep the lights on and pay salaries. You are a part of what God is doing to carry on his grand epic rescue mission to redeem all of creation back to the *shalom* that was lost in the garden at the beginning of time.

When you purposefully allow Jesus to transform your character as you walk in relationship with him and others so you can become a blessing, you are being a part of his mission. The mission of Jesus should drive everything we do as individuals and as a church. God is up to something. He is calling us to live our lives on purpose with Jesus.

I want to close today by reading to you from Peter's second letter in which he encourages followers of Jesus to purposefully live their lives for the sake of the mission of Jesus.

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2 Peter 1 (NLT)

¹ This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. ² May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

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³ By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

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⁵ In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance,

and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

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⁸ The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

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¹⁰ So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. ¹¹ Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹² Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught.

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¹³ And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. ¹⁴ For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, ¹⁵ so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone. ¹⁶ For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷ when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” ¹⁸ We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

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¹⁹ Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

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²⁰ Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, ²¹ or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

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The entire biblical narrative, from Genesis to Revelation, was and is inspired by God. The same theme runs from beginning to end. God is up to something. He is inviting us to join him in his mission to rescue the world through the power of the resurrected Jesus, the Messiah. He wants us to live our lives purposefully with that end in mind.



***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
The Hand of God
Exodus 1:1-2:10***

Week of October 8, 2017

Objective of this study: To understand God's overarching purpose in history and our part in it and to allow him to change our hearts so we are living our lives on purpose with him.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 24** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Describe the most exciting game you have ever watched, or the most memorable celebration you were a part of.

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Recap the biblical narrative in Genesis from creation to the death of Joseph. Make this a group activity. Make sure each person who wants to contribute has a chance.

Sermon Quote: *“What we will continue to see from going through the biblical narrative over the next year is that God is up to something. He is working towards a final conclusion.*

3. Is this idea of the Bible as a complete narrative with an overarching purpose new to you? What has been your view of the Bible to this point?
4. Read Exodus 1:1-2:10
 1. Find all the ways God worked purposefully in this part of the biblical narrative.
5. Read 2 Peter 1:5-12 and look for ways God has been at work in history and ways that the writer encourages us to live our lives on purpose.
 1. Look at verses 8 and 9 and flesh out the meaning. Don't give pat answers.

Work (30-45)

Sermon Quote: *“What we will continue to see from going through the biblical narrative over the next year is that God is up to something. He is working towards a final conclusion. He is all about restoring his creation back to it’s original state of shalom. He has a mission and a purpose. He has called us to be a part of that mission on purpose.”*

1. You are a part of a Growth Group because you want to live your life on purpose with Jesus. No matter where you are at in your spiritual journey, what is one thing you could do to take your walk with Jesus deeper?
2. What is one verse from today that you would like to take with you into the coming week?
3. Pray for each other. Pray specifically for ways that we can live our lives on purpose with Jesus this week.

4. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:

- a. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
- b. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
- c. **Our missionary of the month:** - Ngorika Children’s Home in Kenya - check them out on our website and on the big chalkboard in the foyer. Pray about how you might be a part of supporting them.
- d. **Our missionary of the week:** Ken and Debbie Dewar with New Tribes Mission
- e. **Local CR church:** Gateway Foursquare Church (Matt and Deanna Delblanc) - that God would use them to reach people for Jesus in Campbell River.

Reminder: This year as God leads us forward, we want to **Connect - Engage - Grow**. To get started, would you commit to **Connecting** with newcomers, by introducing yourselves to at least one person you don’t know yet, each Sunday morning. Don’t worry if you don’t know who is a newcomer. Start by introducing yourself. Discuss in your group how you could do this.