

What is Ordinary Time?

The study is meant to accompany the video "What is Ordinary Time?" To get the most from this lesson, you will need to be able to show the video to your class. The video is currently available, at no charge, from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary at www.pts.edu/Ordinary_Time.

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USING THIS LESSON GUIDE

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BEFORE CLASS

Read the Teacher’s Background on Ordinary Time and Handout before class. If you prefer not to use the handouts, you can teach this class with Bibles instead by reading the discussion questions out loud. The responses to the questions that have been provided are not intended to be “right” answers, but to help you think through how people may respond, and to give you a boost if your group has trouble with any of them.

- During Class:
- A. Open with prayer.
 - B. Distribute handouts and read Psalm 139:1-12.
 - C. Give group(s) time to talk through discussion questions on Psalm 139.
 - D. Show the “What is Ordinary Time?” video.
 - E. Give group(s) time to talk through discussion questions on the video.
 - F. Give the group(s) time to complete the group activity and report.
 - G. Close in prayer.

For your own background, it may be helpful to read Psalm 139 in its entirety.

If your class enjoys deeper engagement with larger passages of Scripture, it may be to your advantage to read the entire passage rather than the few verses included in the handouts for this lesson.

If you use this study, we would love to hear your feedback! You can reach us at SYI@pts.edu.

LESSON PLAN

TEACHER’S BACKGROUND ON ORDINARY TIME

Ordinary Time can refer to the Sundays between Epiphany and Lent, and also to the Sundays between Pentecost / Trinity Sunday and Advent. This designation is relatively recent, dating back to the mid-20th century.

Despite this recent terminology, the concept behind “Ordinary Time,” particularly following Pentecost, is much older. According to the Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, published in 1899, this portion of the Church calendar is about humanity’s “. . . appropriation of redemption. In this the lessons mark the Call to the Kingdom of God, the Righteousness of the Kingdom of God, and the Final Consummation of the Christians Life.”

Historically, some have considered the period following Pentecost as part of a Pentecost season. Others have preferred the terminology “Sundays after Trinity,” referring to the Sunday after Pentecost which is called “Trinity Sunday.”

DISCUSSION QUESTION GUIDE

PSALM 139:1-12

1. According to this passage, where can the Psalmist hide from the Lord?

Nowhere, at least not successfully.
2. What times of the year do you feel closest to God?

People may have a variety of answers for this. Any thoughtful answer is good.
3. Are there times that you feel farther away?

Answers to this question may be very personal, and may be connected to past loss or difficulty. It is important to be respectful of any of answers people share. On the other hand, answers may be simple. Either way, err on the side of respect.

VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are your favorite ways to celebrate special days at church?

Answers to this question will vary based on the congregation and individual. It may be worth asking “why” to get beyond the surface.
2. The color for Ordinary Time is usually green. What could that symbolize?

Life. Growth.
3. Some people prefer to think of the time between Pentecost and Advent as the Season of Pentecost. How might that change the way we think about that time period?

More focus on the Holy Spirit, longer period using red instead of green.
4. If you were to pick a different color to signify Ordinary Time, what color would you use and why?

Almost anything could work here as long as it’s thoughtful. Maybe blue to direct our thoughts heavenward every day, or orange to distinguish from Pentecost but remember the story of the flames.
5. How could Psalm 139 influence our understanding of Ordinary Time?

It can remind us that God is present every day.

WHAT IS ORDINARY TIME? HANDOUT



PSLAM 139:1-12 (NRSV)

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to this passage, where can the Psalmist hide from the Lord?
2. What times of the year do you feel closest to God?
3. Are there times that you feel farther away?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are your favorite ways to celebrate special days at church?
2. The color for Ordinary Time is usually green. What could that symbolize?
3. Some people prefer to think of the time between Pentecost and Advent as the Season of Pentecost. How might that change the way we think about that time period?
4. If you were to pick a different color to signify Ordinary Time, what color would you use and why?
5. How could Psalm 139 influence our understanding of Ordinary Time?

GROUP ACTIVITY

Plan three ways to celebrate Ordinary Time that could remind us of God's presence during the normal days of life. You get bonus points if they don't involve cake.

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Additionally, we encourage you to visit The Clifford E. Barbour Library, invite a faculty member or program director to your church or conference to preach and teach, and see our YouTube channel for video of recent events.

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