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# GRATITUDE AND SERMON JOURNAL

## **Remember**

May 27 – June 30, 2019

## **Raised with Christ**

July 1 – July 28, 2019

## **Renewing Strength**

July 29 – September 8, 2019



Dear Church,

The purpose of this “Gratitude and Sermon Journal” is to help us connect with the Lord through daily prayer and study. Furthermore, we want to help connect others to the church. The daily readings support the Sunday sermon. (The reading on Monday is the sermon text for the following Sunday). I’m pleased that some of our groups, including Adult Discipleship Communities and prayer groups, use this journal to talk about the texts (and the preaching on Sunday mornings).

Asbury is deeply rooted in our “Ancient” traditions (scripture and the church) while also being focused on what is happening today and will happen in the future. If we lose touch with our past, we have no guidance. If we fail to have an application, then we become “rear view mirror” people. This Gratitude and Sermon Journal looks back at scripture and the teaching of the church while looking forward to the Lord to discern His will for us.

We have three sections we’ll look at. We want to focus on our vows when we join the church. This will be a pragmatic series on “Next Steps.” Here’s why we do these things and here’s how each of us can participate. We continue our study in the book of Romans. I really want to emphasize the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ and the difference He makes in our lives (Romans 6) even if we can’t get it right (Romans 7). God’s grace is over all. Finally, we’ll look at renewing our spiritual and emotional health. Sometimes we need more to help us heal than by keeping our “prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.”

I hope you’re ready for a big challenge. As Jesus told His disciples after washing their feet: “Now that we know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Let’s do this journal well!

*Tom*



Consider using this journal not only for yourself but also as an opportunity to meet with others in a small group. The Christian faith is about making disciples of Jesus. This journal provides a mutually blessed way for you to do precisely that. Below are questions your small group may use for weekly discussion.

### **Weekly Sermon Reflection Questions:**

- Review the key scripture(s).
- Review the key point(s) from the sermon.
  - How were you encouraged?
  - How were you challenged?
  - What questions did it create?
  - What convictions did it bring?
- What is the pastor asking of you, even expecting you to do in response?
- How has the Lord spoken to you through this sermon?
- What are you going to do as a result?

# Scripture Readings

## REMEMBER

### *PRAYERS*

- 5/27 Revelation 8:1-5
- 5/28 Luke 6:12-16
- 5/29 Acts 10:1-8
- 5/30 Romans 1:8-15
- 5/31 2 Corinthians 1:11  
1 Thessalonians 1:2-3  
Philippians 1:18-20
- 6/1 James 5:13-18
- 6/2 Revelation 8:1-5

### *PRESENCE*

- 6/3 Hebrews 10:19-25
- 6/4 Nehemiah 8:1-9
- 6/5 Psalm 116
- 6/6 Acts 27:35  
John 20:30-31
- 6/7 1 Timothy 5:20-21
- 6/8 1 Timothy 6:12-16
- 6/9 Hebrews 10:19-25

### *GIFTS*

- 6/10 Ephesians 4:1-16
- 6/11 Matthew 2:7-12
- 6/12 Luke 16:1-13  
Luke 21:1-4
- 6/13 Romans 12:3-8
- 6/14 Philippians 4:14-20
- 6/15 1 Timothy 6:6-10
- 6/16 Ephesians 4:1-16

### *SERVICE*

- 6/17 Mark 10:35-45
- 6/18 Psalm 100
- 6/19 Matthew 4:1-11
- 6/20 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
- 6/21 Galatians 5:13-15
- 6/22 1 Peter 4:7-11
- 6/23 Mark 10:35-45

### *WITNESS*

- 6/24 Acts 1:6-11
- 6/25 Luke 24:44-49
- 6/26 John 1:1-8
- 6/27 Acts 2:29-36
- 6/28 Acts 3:11-16
- 6/29 2 Timothy 2:1-3
- 6/30 Acts 1:6-11

# Scripture Readings

## RAISED WITH CHRIST

### *NEWNESS OF LIFE*

- 7/1 Romans 6:1-14
- 7/2 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
- 7/3 1 Corinthians 15:12-19
- 7/4 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
- 7/5 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- 7/6 Galatians 2:17-21
- 7/7 Romans 6:1-14

### *BEARING FRUIT*

- 7/15 Romans 7:1-6
- 7/16 Matthew 7:15-20
- 7/17 John 15:1-17
- 7/18 Colossians 1:9-14
- 7/19 Galatians 5:16-26
- 7/20 Hebrews 13:7-16
- 7/21 Romans 7:1-6

### *SET FREE*

- 7/8 Romans 6:15-23
- 7/9 John 17:6-19
- 7/10 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
- 7/11 Galatians 5:1-6
- 7/12 Colossians 3:1-17
- 7/13 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8
- 7/14 Romans 6:15-23

### *ENOUGH IS ENOUGH*

- 7/22 Romans 7:13-25
- 7/23 Psalm 19
- 7/24 Acts 7:54-8:3
- 7/25 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- 7/26 Philippians 3:2-11
- 7/27 2 Timothy 4:9-18
- 7/28 Romans 7:13-25

## Scripture Readings

# RENEWING STRENGTH

### *WHEN LIFE DISTRESSES US*

- 7/29 Genesis 32:1-8
- 7/30 Psalm 88
- 7/31 Psalm 91
- 8/1 Ecclesiastes 12:1-8
- 8/2 Mark 14:32-42
- 8/3 Philippians 1:18b-30
- 8/4 Genesis 32:1-8

### *WHEN LIFE DEPRESSES US*

- 8/5 1 Kings 19:1-8
- 8/6 1 Kings 19:9-18
- 8/7 1 Kings 19:19-21
- 8/8 Psalm 34
- 8/9 Isaiah 53
- 8/10 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- 8/11 1 Kings 19:1-8

### *WHEN LIFE SHAMES US*

- 8/12 Luke 5:12-16
- 8/13 Zephaniah 3:14-20
- 8/14 Romans 5:1-5
- 8/15 Romans 9:30-33
- 8/16 1 Corinthians 4:14-21
- 8/17 Colossians 2:8-15
- 8/18 Luke 5:12-16

### *WHEN LIFE MAKES US ANXIOUS*

- 8/19 Mark 5:24-34
- 8/20 Leviticus 15:19-33
- 8/21 Numbers 15:38-41  
1 Samuel 24:1-4
- 8/22 Isaiah 40:27-31
- 8/23 Matthew 6:25-34
- 8/24 1 Peter 1:3-9
- 8/25 Mark 5:24-34

### *WHEN LIFE DISAPPOINTS US*

- 8/26 1 Samuel 1:12-18
- 8/27 Nehemiah 2:1-8
- 8/28 Psalm 113
- 8/29 Luke 18:18-30
- 8/30 Luke 24:13-35
- 8/31 John 6:60-71
- 9/1 1 Samuel 1:12-18

### *BECAUSE LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER*

- 9/2 Acts 20:17-38
- 9/3 Proverbs 14:21, 31  
Proverbs 19:17
- 9/4 Luke 12:35-40
- 9/5 Acts 2:42-47
- 9/6 Romans 12:3-8
- 9/7 1 Corinthians 16:15-18
- 9/8 Acts 20:17-38



# **REMEMBER**

May 27 - June 30, 2019

## Remember

Simon Sinek wrote a terrific book entitled, “Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action.” His premise is we must answer the “Why?” question first. Failure to do so creates confusion. Applied to our faith, “Why” should we be Helping Others Follow Jesus? My answer is, I believe Jesus Christ is the most magnificent human being who has ever or will ever live. Furthermore, Jesus is not JUST a human being – He is God in the flesh. He has the power to forgive our sin, to give us meaning and purpose in life, and to bring us into His community of the Holy Spirit and the church. When this life is over, Jesus ushers us into an entirely new home in heaven. This is why I follow Jesus and why I want others to follow Him, too.

I think the second question is “How?” How will we implement our “Why?” In the United Methodist Church we have membership vows. These are solemn promises we make to uphold our loyalty and commitment to Jesus Christ. They are specific, intentional and varied. The intent is to engage us as followers of Jesus and to give meaningful direction. I always look for application. I always ask, “Where do we go from here?” Prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness provide our next steps in Helping Others Follow Jesus.

PRAYERS

Monday, May 27, 2019

Revelations 8:1-5

Eugene Peterson’s commentary, “Reversed Thunder,” opened the Book of Revelation to me. In particular, his idea that our prayers are like incense that rises to God, who collects them and hurls them back to earth with a powerful effect, helped me see prayer in a new way. Philip Yancey’s book, “Prayer,” is one of my all-time favorites.

We may take vows when we desire to make a commitment to something beyond ourselves and want to grow and be better in various ways. Every time someone joins Asbury and takes the vow, we also remember our vows. Hope is essential, but there is great power in memory, too.

Prayer is our starting point. It is our first vow. The Gospels demonstrate how Jesus was a man of prayer, and He continues to intercede for us. We desire to be like Jesus, therefore we vow to be people of prayer. Prayer may be a solitary act (Jesus exemplified this) but it is also an essential act of community. We learn to pray by being with others who pray. Turning scripture into prayers is another excellent place to start. This journal can help, too.

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**APPLICATION:** Asbury desires to be a “house of prayer.” Asbury has three prayer rooms, a prayer walk and monthly prayer meetings. We have a vibrant prayer ministry that desires your participation. Here is a “yes or no” question: *Are you praying for Asbury?* Beginning today, how will you uphold this promise you made?















## REMEMBER

Monday, June 3, 2019  
Hebrews 10:19-25

Presence has both vertical and horizontal components – God’s presence and our presence. We respond to God’s gracious initiative by showing up and having a worshipful spirit. Our faith begins in worship. Everything else within our faith (evangelism, discipleship, missions, etc.) will someday end, but worship never ends. Worship is eternal. We will be present with God forever. If we have learned to love God in this life, heaven is our best news ever. If we have not learned to love God, the idea of being united with God forever may seem like eternal punishment. When we come together to pray and worship, God is honored, His people are blessed, and we are energized and deployed for mission.

When students do not attend class, the outcome is predictable. Likewise, influence and impact are damaged when Christians neglect to come together to be the church. Schools aren’t perfect. Work environments always need improvement. Families have dysfunction. The church, like all human institutions, has imperfections, but if we drop out of school, work, family or church because of limitations, we lose our ability to grow and to influence for good. God moves in special power when His people are present and attentive to the things of God. Great things happen when God’s people show up. Presence builds Christian community in worship and in the world.

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**APPLICATION:** Asbury’s strategic initiative for 2019-20 is *“Helping others follow Jesus by strengthening worship attendance.”* I ask our people to keep their vows. We should only miss a Sunday worship service for a reason we know God approves (there ARE those times). Here is a three-part challenge to go with this series: Challenge yourself, your Christian friends and your family to have perfect attendance in worship. Challenge yourself to be fully present and engaged in the worship (singing, prayers, liturgies, sacraments, offerings—all of it). Challenge yourself to come with the expectation God is present and eager to be with you. Bring your Bible, wear your nametag and a smile on your face, and find your place with the people of God.















## GIFTS

Monday, June 10, 2019  
Ephesians 4:1-16

We are recipients of the greatest gift the world has ever known - God's love and grace through the most magnificent Person who has ever lived: Jesus. God's grace should not turn us into self-absorbed hoarders, but to release those gifts to bless the church and the world. We need money to live, but it easily turns into an idol. That is why giving is so important - it releases us from idolatry's grip.

Stingy, greedy and self-absorbed paranoia is the spirit of Herod. Herod's scarcity mind-set is a dead end. When filled with the abundance of Christ, we explode with generosity. Jesus commended a poor widow and constantly warned about money's hold on our hearts. The Christian life truly begins when we, who have received freely, learn to give freely. God owns it all. We can never out-give His supply. One of the most exciting things develops when we discover we have received gifts from God, and we get to pass them on.

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**APPLICATION:** Asbury depends on the financial generosity of our people. It is a simple question: when was the last time you gave financially to the Lord through Asbury? How well does your financial giving represent your relationship with Jesus? We all have to learn generosity - who has taught you? How are you growing? How are you sharing your spiritual gifts with the body of Christ? If you are remembering your vows, you should be able to answer these questions. A class we offer is "Financial Peace University." It can help you not only gain financial freedom but can help you learn generosity. Our next FPU class begins on September 15.













REMEMBER

Monday, June 17, 2019

Mark 10:35-45

Jesus said so many counter-intuitive things. Most every individual wants to be served, not to serve others. Jesus told His self-absorbed and competitive disciples a direct counter to our natural bias of “me first!” Serving others in meaningful ways can be great therapy. Meaningful service shifts our focus from inward to outward. Service introduces us to the struggles, pain, adversity and hardship of others. Service releases gratitude and joy. The New Testament emphasizes that love, joy and peace isn’t a consumer item taken off the shelf but is best given by service. Letting others go first demands humility, maturity and wisdom. Serving the Lord with gladness by serving others releases the blessing of God in our lives. People who love God have great energy for the things of God and deeply desire to serve Him. But servants beware – serving comes at a price and includes its share of hardship.

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**APPLICATION:** Our Pastor Emeritus, Bill Mason, always told our congregation: *“Every member needs to serve some place.”* What is God calling you to do? One of my axioms is: *“Kids come first.”* It is a paraphrase of what Jesus said, *“Let the children come to me...do not hinder them, for such belongs the Kingdom of God.”* Will you serve in children’s ministry? If not, where are you serving? Asbury has hundreds of places where you can find meaningful service. We can help you find your place.















## WITNESS

Monday, June 24, 2019  
Acts 1:6-11

WE are not the story. Jesus is the only One who can wear the T-shirt, *"I'm kind of a big deal."* We aren't commissioned to call attention to ourselves – but to spread the good news about Him. Witnessing is simply sharing how great Jesus is and how our lives have changed because of His love, acceptance, forgiveness and empowerment. That is not complicated. Witnessing isn't arguing. St. Francis of Assisi noted that sometimes when we witness, we even use words. I like the description of faith-sharing as *"one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."* We are witnesses of the great things God has done through Jesus. We want others to know this great story and surpassing good news. We should not be hung up on having all the answers (the blind man in John 9 didn't, but Jesus certainly changed his life). Jesus commissioned us to be His witnesses.

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**APPLICATION:** I trace my conversion to other teenagers (not preachers) sharing their faith with me. Letting others know that we can be forgiven, comforted, empowered and given eternal life is a wonderful gift. Letting others know they are loved is powerful. How is your witness at home, school, work and recreation? For whom are you praying that they might know Jesus Christ as Lord? Would you be willing to share with them how God invited you into His story? Are you ready?

















# **RAISED WITH CHRIST**

July 1 - July 28, 2019

RAISED WITH CHRIST

Monday, July 1, 2019

Romans 6:1-14

The theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the righteousness of God. Human nature errs in two opposite directions: **un**righteousness (listed in 1:18ff) and **self**-righteousness (Romans 2:1ff). "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" describes not just the son who sinned prodigiously (enormously) but also describes the elder son who was full of contempt for his lost brother. Jesus said about both the Gentiles and the hypocrites, "*Don't be like them!*" (see Matthew 6:5-8). Don't be "unrighteous" (breaking the Law) and don't be "self-righteous" (trying to save yourself by following the Law). Instead, Romans 3:21-26 stresses the love, acceptance and forgiveness of God through His truly righteous son, Jesus. We all have sinned. We all are guilty. We cannot save ourselves. We are only saved because Jesus died for our sins and rose again. That means His crucifixion was not in vain. His resurrection means we have forgiveness, meaning and purpose in this life, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the companionship of His church and eternal life.

There are appropriate ways to respond when someone gives us a gift. Paul encourages us not to trifle with God's grace but to apply it to our lives. The old has gone, the new has come. Live in that way—with the newness of life in Christ. Do not give in to sin. We don't have to sin. We can let the life of Jesus live in us.

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**APPLICATION:** Where are you on the unrighteous/self-righteous spectrum? What is your area of struggle in your walk with the Lord? How are you finding grace to overcome it? Baptism gives us a picture of burying the old life and being raised to newness of life. Do you believe Jesus has broken the power of sin in your life? How are you helping others find victory in Jesus, too?















SET FREE

Monday, July 8, 2019

Romans 6:15-23

True freedom is not a kid banging on a piano keyboard. True freedom is forged through discipline. Freedom is not the right to do what we want to do, but the power to do what we should. God courted us into a relationship with Him (like going from dating to a wedding), but once we are married to God, let's not blow up that relationship. The "wedding" is called various names ("born again, conversion, salvation, justification by faith) but has basically the same meaning. As "Amazing Grace" states it, *"I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."* We call this "justification."

So, what happens to a Christian AFTER the wedding with God? The purpose of conversion is not to return to the old ways, but to grow the relationship. Just as couples should try to have the best possible marriage, so we should strive for the best possible union with Jesus. The theological word Paul uses for the first time in the Bible is "sanctification." It comes from the Old Testament and refers to vessels used in the temple that were set apart for special (sacred) use. God wants His bride (the church) to be holy, consecrated and given entirely to His purposes.

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**APPLICATION:** How is your "marriage" with Christ? In what ways are you actively seeking Him? How might you grow closer to Him? How can you help others grow, too?















RAISED WITH CHRIST

Monday, July 15, 2019

Romans 7:1-6

Paul valiantly strove to establish his own righteousness but was confronted and condemned by his inability to keep the Old Testament Law (even though the Law is good). This brutal fact confronted him – he was a sinner. He was married to the Law before something extraordinary happened – a new relationship with the resurrected One. Paul never strayed from this central topic – Jesus was raised from the dead. The Law was necessary. It had its place. However, like a set of training wheels on a bicycle, the Resurrection removed the training wheels. It was time for a new way.

Paul fell short of his expectations. Like his “thorn in the flesh,” his struggle was unidentified. We all struggle. Those challenges vary over time and circumstances. However, I’ve yet to meet a person who doesn’t carry something – even the great Apostle Paul. As such, that gives me hope. Even though I am not perfect, I am loved by Jesus. Paul concludes that we should “*bear fruit for God.*” Instead of living in the old way of trying to be good and earn God’s favor, it’s time to shift into God’s grace. The old way brought guilt, fear, condemnation and self-righteousness. The new way brings freedom, joy, community, life and fruit.

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**APPLICATION:** Christians live with a tension. On the one hand, our salvation is 100 percent a gift. On the other hand, Jesus wants a response from His investment in us. How do you respond to this tension? In what ways do you try to earn God’s favor? How are you at accepting God’s grace? Jesus chose us for the purpose of bearing fruit. How are you doing in this regard?















ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Monday, July 22, 2019

Romans 7:13-25

I agree with Psalm 19 - the Law of the Lord is perfect, sure and right. However, the Law (i.e. the rules) can remind me of a “tattletale.” After we mess up (i.e. sin), the Law runs off and tells God we’ve been bad. The evidence is indisputable – we ARE guilty. The Law is for our benefit, but nobody can keep it. The Law is like a parent, teacher, coach, boss, etc., telling us we are not good enough and don’t measure up. Paul tried so hard to keep the Law that he led in persecuting Christians because he thought they no longer were obeying the Law. His zeal was unenlightened. Until he became a follower of Jesus, he didn’t understand he was BOTH self-righteous and unrighteous.

It is hard to believe Paul wrote this chapter. After his conversion it seemed he always had it together. We see some of his struggles here (also in 2 Timothy 4). It’s comforting knowing even the greatest among us have “feet of clay.” His strong deliverer was Jesus. In his famous “thorn in the flesh” passage (2 Corinthians 12), Paul explains that God’s grace is sufficient in our weakness. This is a wonderful introduction to one of the greatest chapters in the Bible, Romans 8.

Enough Law and sin is enough. Enough of God’s grace is also enough. Enough is enough in more ways than one.

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**APPLICATION:** Aren’t you grateful for Paul’s confession? He, of all people, couldn’t keep the Law. Nobody can. Our efforts of trying to establish our own righteousness collapse like a cheap tent. Our Celebrate Recovery ministry builds upon the premise that all of us have “hurts, habits and hang-ups.” Confessing our need is a huge step toward ending shame and receiving healing. Is there a confession you need to make? Who can you talk to about your struggles? How are you at being a safe person for others?

















# **RENEWING STRENGTH**

July 29 - September 8, 2019

## RENEWING STRENGTH

Monday, July 29, 2019

Genesis 32:1-8

Jacob's name literally means "grabby." He was a thief from the beginning. His brother, Esau, was a real doofus who was easily doofed (I just made up a word). First, he swiped his brother's birthright ("*Hey, he wanted to sell it for a bowl of Wolf Brand chili – I can't help it if he's that stupid!*") and then his mom coached him into the big heist – Esau's blessing. He donned his favorite Halloween costume ("rough and hairy") and deceived his brother. Knowing he was dead meat, his colluding momma kissed him goodbye and told him to run like the wind. Years later, he's "greatly afraid and distressed" because he's going to meet the brother who swore he would kill him. Jacob thinks this could be the end, so he throws himself to his estranged brother's mercy.

There have been times when I have been very frightened, unsettled and tremendously insecure. When I came to Asbury to be your senior pastor in June of 1993, I followed Bill Mason. He was legendary. Some ministerial colleagues told me I would be an interim until they could find someone who could handle the job. The great fright happens when we are overwhelmed and out of our league. Fear builds upon itself. "What if?" becomes our constant companion. The rear-view mirror is repeatedly checked. Like the Apostle Paul (Philippians 1:19), I'm convinced I will make it because of the presence of the Holy Spirit and because of the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus and the empowerment of the church—these help strengthen me.

Psalms 88 is what I read in "the pit" in Jerusalem, while Psalm 91 gives a better response to "the terror of the night." Ecclesiastes 12 describes the aging process using the "T" word. "Terror" is a type of extreme distress and can be a catalyst for change, too. When angels show up in the Bible, people are usually "sorely afraid" (King James Version language). Jesus had His own experience with this emotion.

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**APPLICATION:** How about you? When have fear or distress been part of your life? I don't mean to stir up bad images, but I'm genuinely curious what your story could be. Can you finger it? Was it physical, emotional, relational or spiritual? What were your resources? Who helped you? How might the Lord redeem your distressing experience?















## WHEN LIFE DEPRESSES US

Monday, August 5, 2019

1 Kings 19:1-8

Sequels usually disappoint. The second is seldom as good as the first. After the miracles of 1 Kings 17 and the triumph by the greatest prophet in the history of Israel in 18, Elijah got the “yips” when wicked Queen Jezebel sent him a nasty e-mail threatening his life. After calling fire down from heaven and disposing of the evil prophets in the previous chapter, what was Elijah thinking? He crashed and burned. Rather than confront evil, the Mt. Carmel conqueror collapsed into a cowardly cave man. “Wilderness” is not only a physical place, it can be a spiritual one, too. Frightened and alone, Elijah forgot God, lost his momentum and didn’t send out invitations to his pity party. It is easy to tank emotionally after great victories. School, work, family, friends and circumstances can easily wear us out. God intervened at Elijah’s lowest spot and strengthened him. Elijah hears he was not the only person faithful to God in the land. In fact, the conclusion of this chapter marks a transition – Elijah’s successor is appointed.

Do you spot a connection between his isolation and his depression? Depressed people tend to withdraw and isolate. This is THE great prophet of Israel. Even the greatest have limitations. While the word “depression” doesn’t appear in the Bible, the concept shows up a lot (Moses, Job, Hannah, David, Ruth and Jonah to name just a few). There is even a book in the Bible called “Lamentations.” Jesus was a “*man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*” Fellow believers and the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:10-17) help strengthen us.

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**APPLICATION:** Feeling sad, lonely or scared is a normal reaction to stressful situations such as losing a loved one, losing your job or going through a divorce. When a person experiences depression, the feelings are more intense and prolonged than with ordinary sadness. More than 322 million people worldwide live with depression (it’s more common in women than men). The symptoms may include “overwhelming” feelings of sadness, changes in appetite or sleep, inability to concentrate, no longer enjoying things you used to, feeling worthless and thoughts of death. It is important to know if you are feeling sad or truly depressed. If you think its depression, seek professional help to get the treatment you need.















RENEWING STRENGTH

Monday, August 12, 2019

Luke 5:12-16

Most all of us have felt shame as children, students and adults. Some grew up in families where shame was prominent and powerful. Our sexuality is often rooted in shame. We feel shame when we have disappointed someone we care about (or ourselves). Addiction tends to feed shame.

Jesus might confront people with direct and hard questions, but He always respected that all people were created in the image of God. He didn't label people as "tax collectors and sinners" but saw people as people. Jesus really fought with the religious people who tried to shame others. Jesus called them names not used to "win friends" or influence enemies.

Of all the statements in the New Testament there might be nothing more shocking to a person in that culture than this sentence, "*Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him...*" Lepers were NEVER touched. But Jesus didn't deal with people like anyone else did. He was (and is) His own man.

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**APPLICATION:** There are "untouchables" among us, too. They may be homeless panhandlers, of the opposite political party, of a different religion (or lack thereof), of a different lifestyle or income. They may have mental or emotional health issues. They may be caught by addiction. They may be firmly nailed to their past identity. There are people who require "extra grace." Who is an "untouchable" in your life? Have you ever felt like an "untouchable" yourself? What was your source of strength? How does Jesus help you see yourself and others as being loved and accepted?















## WHEN LIFE MAKES US ANXIOUS

Monday, August 19, 2019

Mark 5:24-34

We are mostly English-speaking American Gentiles living in a modern era with access to the greatest medical resources in the world. We need help understanding the background this hopeless woman experienced 2,000 years ago. Leviticus 15 gave strict instructions about women like her. There was also great significance that she touched the hem of his garment (Numbers 15). It makes me wonder what part of Saul's robe David cut off (a tassel) at Engedi? The tassel represented God's covering and protection, so when David cut it off, Saul "got it." This poor woman had exhausted her money to remedy her health issue over a 12-year period. She had spent all her money on doctors and was not only still sick but was broke. She was stuck in a chronic pattern of discomfort. This is another glimpse of the magnificent and noble Jesus of Nazareth. He never ceased to amaze His disciples. No wonder they followed Him – seeing these things would make us echo Peter's words, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."*

In the Gospels, sometimes people had faith. Sometimes they didn't. Sometimes Jesus marveled at their faith. At other times He supplied the faith. There is no magic faith-formula in the Gospels or the New Testament. The miracles are always different. Sometimes we resist change until we have exhausted all other remedies and can no longer put it off. Our problems can be incentives to change. Just as ambition can be godly, I believe normal anxiety can be good when it forces us to get up and try something new.

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**APPLICATION:** Normal anxiety is a fleeting reaction to stressful situations such as a test, interview or starting a new job. When we have an anxiety disorder it is ongoing and can cause us to feel anxious almost all the time, even when there is no obvious stressor. Anxiety disorders affect more than 40 million adults and 25 million children. Only about 36 percent of sufferers receive treatment (nearly half the people diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder). It is important to know if you are dealing with normal worry or something more serious. If you think you are suffering from an anxiety disorder, seek professional help to get the treatment you need.















## RENEWING STRENGTH

Monday, August 26, 2019

1 Samuel 1:12-18

Even when people witness miracles, they tend to still be disappointed. Think of all the stories and people in the Bible. It is a book about disappointment. Some are minor setbacks; others are not. The Israelites were disappointed when they left Egypt. The spies were disappointed when they saw the enormous inhabitants in the land they would conquer. The period of Judges was disappointing for those who were supposed to be prospering in “the Promised Land.”

However, with heartache and sadness, God raises up redeemers. During the period of the Judges, we learn the tender story of Ruth and Naomi. Naomi’s husband and both sons died. Ruth clung to her mother-in-law and blessed her. After the books of Judges and Ruth end, we meet Hannah. She is the fifth woman so far in the Bible called “barren” (Sarai, Rebekah, Rachel and the woman who became Samson’s mother). Elizabeth, John the Baptist’s mom, was also “barren” in the New Testament. “Barrenness” had a deeper meaning in the Bible than being childless. It carried a stigma that God’s favor was not upon a person.

All people suffer. It is inevitable. It means different things to different people at different times. Some wish they could marry. Some want children. Some with children are very disappointed with their kids for many reasons. The most difficult loss is the death of a child.

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**APPLICATION:** What unfulfilled dreams do you have? Are you disappointed with a specific person or event? Are you disappointed with yourself? Does God seem silent, unfair or hidden? How can you begin to find renewal in Him?















BECAUSE LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER

Monday, September 2, 2019

Acts 20:17-38

We express our membership vows to be loyal to Jesus through Asbury by our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Service is a great way to “*Help Others Follow Jesus.*” Service not only helps others, but it helps us move the focus from myself to the needs of another. We truly are “Better Together” because of our “Day of Service.” In addition to more than 10 years of “Second Saturday” local outreach, Asbury has celebrated a “Day of Service” since 2008.

It took a LONG time for me to understand Jesus’ words: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” (Acts 20:35b) That seems nonsensical. That’s because I was born as a “taker,” not as a “giver.” However, integrity demanded that I must practice what I preached. I must give before I could ask others to give. I slowly learned. Others in the church told me how they did it. While in a Doctor of Ministry class at ORU, Dr. Bob Tuttle said he not only gave 10 percent (a tithe), he ALSO randomly gave cash to others. He claimed it was fun. I didn’t copy his practice then (with a young family and very limited finances) but his comment stuck. It was another lesson in moving me to live with abundance and generosity, not scarcity and greed. Indeed, if I can give, it means I have surplus and excess and am not dependent upon the charity of others – that’s why it’s BETTER to give than to receive. (And it IS so much more fun!)

Our lengthy text records the affection between Paul and the Ephesians. Affectionate service fits our Day of Service, too. While I’ve memorized Acts 20:35b, look at 35a: “*In all things I have shown you that by **working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said....***” Let’s work hard on our Day of Service because we have been blessed and we have the privilege to give back.

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**APPLICATION:** How are you serving Jesus? How are you helping on Day of Service? How can serving others build strength? Service isn’t just “a day” but is a lifetime. This fits Asbury’s theme: “*Helping Others Follow Jesus.*”













