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## LENTEN WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### Regular Sunday worship schedule:

8:15 a.m. Chapel; 9:30 a.m. Celebrate! Informal Service in Fellowship Hall; 10:45 a.m. Traditional Service in Sanctuary

- March 6** Ash Wednesday  
Imposition of Ashes 7 a.m. & 6 p.m.
- March 10** First Sunday of Lent—  
“God’s Generous Heart”
- March 17** Second Sunday of Lent—“Imitating”
- March 24** Third Sunday of Lent—“Repenting”
- March 31** Fourth Sunday of Lent—“Coming Together”
- April 7** Fifth Sunday of Lent—“Making a New Thing”
- April 14** Passion/Palm Sunday— “Preparing”  
Beginning of Holy Week
- April 18** Maundy Thursday Service 6:30 p.m.
- April 19** Tenebrae Service 6:30 p.m. Sanctuary
- April 21** Easter Sunday—“Believing”  
Chapel Service 8:15 a.m.  
Contemporary Service 9:00 a.m.  
Breakfast served 10:00 - 10:30 a.m.  
Traditional Service 11:00 a.m.

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# 2019 Lenten Devotional



Theme: With All Your Heart

## Wesley United Methodist Church

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**WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**



# A Journey Through Lent

As I was preparing for the 2019 Lenten Devotional, I couldn't help but reflect on the process, the time commitment and the blessings that come from putting this project together. Maybe I should have put the blessing part first—it might look better but the blessing comes from the thinking about and praying about the project and putting in the time to reflect and study on the theme Pastor Peter provided and then reading the heartfelt entries of all those who contribute to the project. This is a work of love, truly it is, and the inspiration comes from the giver of that love, Our Lord God.

Each year we have followed a theme and this year's theme is "With All Your Heart". Each week of Lent has a subtitle for the week that will help to guide us through this Lenten journey. It is my hope that these devotions have blessed the writer and that they will be a blessing to the reader as well.

Our 2019 Lenten journey begins...

## **Family Discussion Question for Lent:**

**What things keep us away from church? From joining a small group for prayer, service, or Bible Study? What steps can we take in a positive direction toward God?**

## **Ash Wednesday Theme: "Return to Me"**

### **Family Discussion Question for Ash Wednesday:**

**When have you experienced unconditional love from someone? Share about a time when someone you wronged was willing to welcome you back into friendship...and a time when you welcomed someone else.**

### **Wednesday, March 6, 2019—Ash Wednesday Jan Batt**

*"Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the Lord Almighty. Zechariah 1:3*

It sounds so simple—"return to me". But it's not always that easy or simple. I have baggage, baggage that weighs me down, baggage that makes me feel unworthy, baggage that creates a cavern between me and those I love. How can I simply return? How do I lighten my load? How do I return to the one who gave me life, the one I have surely disappointed, the one I have rejected and turned my back to? How can I be worthy of His invitation, of His concern, of His love?

There have been times in my life that I struggled with some of those feelings and those insecurities. And at my lowest times, I have felt that nudging to 'turn to me child, seek me and I will be there for you.' Did I always heed that nudging? I can honestly say that I didn't. And the times that I turned my back and ignored that nudging...well, let's just say those are not some of my proudest moments.

I now know and understand that I serve a God who loves me in spite of my imperfections, in spite of my sense of wanting to be in control, in spite of my weaknesses. And that's the beauty of this relationship—He gets me! He knows my heart and He knows my humanness and He loves me in spite of all that!

And that is why Ash Wednesday is important to me. It is my chance to physically come before God and turn over to him all that baggage. To let Him know that I love him enough to offer him control of my heart and my life. I may not be perfect and I will have struggles, but knowing that I can repent, that I can ask for guidance and strength,

allows me to grow, to be stronger in my faith and hopefully each Ash Wednesday I will have less baggage to lay before Him.

**Prayer:** Precious Lord, you have redeemed me over and over and I am grateful for your love, your guidance and the strength I receive from knowing you truly care. Help me to be a beacon of your undeniable love to others. Amen.

### Thursday, March 7, 2019 Rhonda Samples

*“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Joel 2:12*

Joel 2:12: Chapter one of Joel, tells how the nation of Judah has been ravaged by a locust plague. Joel warns the people of greater punishment to come if they fail to repent. The implication is that the locust plague was sent by God in an effort to wake up the people from their spiritual decline. They had grown apart from God and forgotten their dependence on Him. At their lowest, most vulnerable moment, God stood with outstretched arms, asking for their repentance and return to Him. Joel 2:12 states, “Even Now” (right in the middle of your trouble) “return to me with ALL your heart, with FASTING, and WEEPING and MOURNING.” He didn’t say half of your heart, but with ALL your heart. Our human nature is to seek a closer relationship with God only in crisis or during Lent (or other holidays). Imagine if we returned to Him whole heartedly in our daily lives, and during tranquil times. We are God’s children and He wants for us to come back to Him with gusto, humility and conviction today and every day. God wants our whole heart, not just what we reveal in our church traditions and religious rituals or in the outward actions of FASTING and WEEPING and MOURNING. These things are important but do not profit the person who has not changed his will or his heart.

I can distinctly remember God prompting me to “return to Him” seven years ago. My dad was nearing the end of his earthly life and my family was emotionally and physically spent. At the moment of dad’s passing, the Lord reached out his loving arms, asking for me to trust Him with my whole heart while He offered comfort, love and support. What could have been a devastating time, turned out to be a beautiful glorious moment of intimacy and relationship with God.

He restores us in our times of need and weakness. He wants us to be restored in our faith always. The season of Lent reminds us that no one felt the pain of sin and our lack of repentance more than Jesus. God’s invitation to return to Him is answered by our looking to the cross of Christ and asking for forgiveness through His sacrifice for us.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, You call us back to you with all of our hearts. Please, Lord, give me the wisdom to know how to return. Make my journey back to you this Lenten season one of grace, forgiveness and gentle love. Help me to use my life to reflect your glory and to serve others as your son Jesus did. Thank you for the guidance of your spirit. In Jesus name, Amen.

### Friday, March 8, 2019 Betsy Zuver

*“For if you turn again to the LORD, your brothers and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.” 2 Chronicles 30:9*

Here, King Hezekiah is encouraging the tribes of Judah and Israel to once again celebrate Passover. The traditions and rituals had been long forgotten (over 200 years had passed). They had suffered greatly from the invasions of Assyria: slavery, deportation, murder. They were ready to seek God again but were unclean according to the standards of the law. Hezekiah reassures them of God’s grace and mercy.

How many times in our relationship or walk with the Lord do we find ourselves feeling unworthy of His love and forgiveness after we’ve been “away” too long? This reminder that we will not be turned away is perfectly timed and perfectly comforting when we find ourselves needing to return to Him.

**Prayer:** Lord, I never feel entirely worthy or deserving. I’m broken and sinful, but I do seek you with all of my heart. I’m humbled by your grace and mercy. Thank you for allowing me to return to your love and forgiveness again and again. Amen.

**March 9, 2019      Wednesday Night JR High Group**

*"I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart." Jeremiah 24:7*

We best express our love for God with all of our hearts when we help others. We were created to be in relationship with God and one another. We show this in the way we treat each other.

Prayer: God, thank you for giving us the heart to know you. Help us to live our lives aware of your love for others around us. Amen.

**Week 1 Theme:  
"God's Generous Heart"**

**Family Discussion Question  
for the Week of March 10:**

**What do churches do that show the world that God is generous? How has God been generous to you?**



**Sunday, March 10, 2019      Rev. Peter Paige**

*"The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes." Psalm 19:8 NIV*

God delivered the law to us for his regard and our observance. We are to give God respect, honor, and show favor to God above ourselves by obedience to him. Our character will be developed, and we will receive joy for following. Doing so will purify our hearts, cleanse our conscience, and result in clarity of purpose.

It is by God's commandments that we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the necessity of redemption, so that we may love the Lord with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. For this is the end of the commandment, and thus to enlighten the eyes is its use. Showing what we should do and what we should avoid.

**Prayer:** Lord and Savior, help me to respond to your generous heart with all of mine. You have blessed me with joy and light all the days of my life. Even in the saddest and darkest times you were there with comfort and understanding. I know you more as I follow your precepts, as I obey your word. Be my guide when I set out in the morning and my savior when I am in need of rescue on the trail of life. All glory be yours, Amen.

**Monday, March 11, 2019      Denise Stollings**

*A peaceful mind gives life to the body, but jealousy rots the bones.  
~Proverbs 14:30*

Have you ever experienced a moment when you felt so loved you could physically feel your heart swell, filling your chest cavity? On Valentine's Day this year, I had one of those moments. It was exactly what that "Hallmark" holiday is supposed to be. My husband surprised me with a small spring bouquet and a card that couldn't have been more on-point. It was one of those singing ones with penguins on the front (I love penguins) and it played "Shake Your Groove Thing" (I've also got a thing for Motown music). But, what really got me...the twinkle in his blue eyes that said he loved me and hoped he'd gotten it right. That swelling in my heart moved right up to my tear ducts—just a little one that didn't quite make its way out.

Maybe you experienced such a heart-swelling moment as the giver of such love? The most common experience I can think of is swaddling a newborn child in your arms. What do you see? Innocence. Hope. Pure, unmasked Joy. Did you know you are that child to God?

Now imagine denying yourself that love. When might that happen? Where do you feel that? Is it more cerebral? An inner wrinkling above the eyebrows? A tense, constricting aching sensation? What might be happening to that life-giving blood flow that filled your chest?? Is it pulsing in your body? Drawn to wherever you have an ache or soreness? Is there an empty sensation in your chest? Almost like there's a valley created within you. Denying your heart the fulfilling nourishment it desires, that it desperately needs. Without nourishment, there is decay. "Rot."

Recently, I had a wondrous weekend, filled with many blessings for my children. Each was experiencing something special in their



growth journey and we travelled a great deal to take part and support them. I knew that the events were great gifts from above. But, it was also EXHAUSTING!!! Overwhelming, actually. I was weary. But, my heart was full. At the same time as I experienced all these blessings, I happened to notice some work colleagues, even perhaps ones I would call friends shared a photo outside the Ohio Theatre as they attended Hamilton, the critically acclaimed musical. Tickets are pricey and obtainable primarily through a lottery system. I have no idea when I might ever see that show. They looked so relaxed.

There were no offspring in tow. My weary self saw them and felt a twinge.

Alas...What if I did not know God's love? What if I did not know the fruit of the spirit in appreciation of my own weekend filled with an 11 p.m. soccer match, 10 hours in the car spread between two separate visits to Ft. Wayne, plus a 24 hour whirlwind visit to Cincinnati? What would become of that "twinge"?

**Prayer:** Gracious and merciful Father, I give you thanks for all my many blessings. The life-giving blood of your Son flows through me and for that I have no reason to envy or feel anything but the fullness of your love. Please embrace me daily with that peace that surpasses all understanding so that I will forever remember your love with every ounce of my being, numbing all earthly pains and decay. Amen.

## **Tuesday, March 12, 2019      Martin Killgallon**

*"May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed." Psalm 20:4*

When we think of "God's Generous Heart", it makes us think about the fact that God, our Father, always wants the best for all of us. In good times and bad, it is important to remember that God is ever present and provides us with a road map for life through his teachings in the Bible.

Psalm 20:4 reads, "May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed." At first, we might read this passage as, "whatever your earthly desires might be; a promotion, a new car, a winning lotto ticket or a life of total leisure, God is there working to make all your dreams come true", but if we truly take a minute and

reflect upon the words, this passage has deeper meaning.

What should be the true desires of your heart? Perhaps those desires should include things like helping others in need, raising children to be kind and productive adults, becoming a better husband or wife, working to find a true inner peace and spiritual connection with the Lord that allows you to disconnect from the trappings of material wants. These deeper and more spiritual desires of the heart are, most likely, where God would like to see our plans succeed and flourish.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Please help us to have a deeper understanding and appreciation for your generous heart. Help us to prioritize your teachings in our life and work to establish life goals that bring peace, joy and love to our lives and the lives of those around us. Thank you for all the blessings that you have generously given to us and we pray that you will lovingly touch our hearts in a way that will inspire us to walk in your ways and become positive forces of love and goodness each and every day of our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

## **Wednesday, March 13, 2019      Cindy Fritch**

*"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." Ezekiel 36:26-27*

As part of God's New Covenant he promised us a new heart to change us from the inside out. He wanted us to have a new nature patterned after Jesus, changing a heart of stone (full of stubbornness, willfulness and unopen to kindness) to a heart of flesh (submissive, compliant, feeling, able to love all men). The Holy Spirit cannot live in an old heart so we must build up a new one that can give us a strong foundation.

There are physical health issues that can cause us to have problems with our heart (high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.) but with medication and/or changes in diet and exercise we can sometimes reverse those affects and live a healthy life for a long, long time. Just like feeding our bodies with junk food and highly processed meals, we can be feeding our spiritual bodies with wrong music, bad news, too much TV, social media, etc. So to keep our hearts spiritually healthy

we need to read the Bible, examine who we are spending time with, what we are listening to and what we are watching so that we can have a healthy spiritual life for a long, long time.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, help to guide us in making good choices about what we fill our minds and hearts with so that we stay spiritually healthy. Amen.

### Thursday, March 14, 2019      Deb Gordon

*“Blessed are the pure at heart, for they will see God.” Matthew 5:8*

Blessed is the person who knows where he or she is going in life, who has priorities and lives by them. We live in such a time in which we are exposed to so many things that could be spiritually harmful.

God is offering you true happiness, which to HIM it doesn't matter how much you have, but on whom you know. If you don't get your life properly aligned with God, you always will be chasing a dream. But if you get your life aligned with God and start seeking Him with all your heart, you will find purpose in life. You may live your life in such a way that you see God in everything you do. If you see God, he will open up many blessings for you not only for eternity, but for your life now.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father—I pray, those that are pure in heart are truly blessed, but Lord I know that of myself I can never attain the standard of purity that You require. Lord, I know that only as I allow the Holy Spirit to live in me, work through me—to teach and train me will I come to that purity of heart that only comes from You—as You conform Your children into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

### Friday, March 15, 2019      Valerie Plouck

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...” Matthew 25:35*

Today's scripture message is a very familiar one that I have heard/read many times; however in preparing this devotional I realized something. This message is not given as a directive, or a command

that, as Christians, we should follow. Oh, we should definitely be feeding the hungry and welcoming strangers, but not because Jesus tells us to. We should be behaving in this manner merely because it is a result of our relationship with our risen Savior. God's abundant generosity should be evident in us by our actions towards His creation. The Holy Spirit should be evident in us by how we treat our brothers and sisters daily. In other words, “They should know we are Christians by our love.”

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for pointing out to me today that the closer I am to you, the more evident it will be that I am yours. I cannot thank you enough for being such a loving and generous Father. Amen.

### Saturday, March 16, 2019      Shelley Agee

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28*

Being raised in the Waterville United Methodist Church from my earliest memory, I heard much beautiful music and learned many wonderful hymns and Sunday school songs. Miss Lois taught me some of those first songs. In her loud and sometimes off key voice, she taught every child who came into her Sunday school class “Jesus Loves Me” and “Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam.” I can still hear her singing. There was no doubt in my mind that not only did Jesus love me, but so did Miss Lois.

As a little kid, I used to sit with Miss Lois in the back pew scribbling while my parents sang in the choir. As I got a little older and began listening and paying attention to regular worship services, I learned many other hymns about the love that God has for us. I learned that my father's favorite hymn was “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less,” and I remember his singing “The Lord's Prayer” not only as a soloist in church, but also at many weddings. Again, each time I just THINK of those songs, I can hear my dad's beautiful voice and feel his love wrapped around me!

Within the past 10 years or so, I heard a large church choir in Florida sing “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” and was in awe not only of the music, but also of the words about how God provides. I had heard

the hymn many times, but this was the first time I REALLY LISTENED to the words. Since then, it has become one of my personal favorites.

Throughout my life, God has seen me through some very difficult moments, some dark times. Yet because of God's faithfulness (and a very long story), Mark Agee and I were united in marriage last August. Steve Miller incorporated this special hymn into our wedding music to make it truly a day filled with light, hope, promise, love... and faithfulness. It was a special day indeed!

My faith continues to grow. As I listen to the music and rhythm of my church, I feel a huge swelling in my heart and such love for my God who has given me His grace because HE LOVES ME UNCONDITIONALLY. Period.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for all the mercies I see each morning and for the ability to worship you with ALL MY HEART. I feel your loving arms wrapped around me. I give thanks for your precious gift of Jesus Christ who laid down His life for me so that I may always be with you. Amen.

## Week 2 Theme: "Imitating"

### Family Discussion Question for the Week of March 17:

**God is trustworthy and Abraham was right to keep on believing God would eventually fulfill his promise. When was a time you trusted in someone or something and then questions, confusion, and fear entered your mind? How did you get through that time?**



**Sunday, March 17, 2019**

**Steve Brooks**

*"Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God." 3 John:11*

Imitate means to take or follow as a model, or pattern one's self after. Certainly for us, there is no one to follow as a model other than

our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We should all try to follow his life and teachings as we live our lives. Showing love and mercy to all we meet. As Jesus did, we should walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

**Prayer:** Dear God of all that is good, help us to follow the example of your son, Jesus Christ. May we do all in our power to emulate His life as we live out our lives. May the Holy Spirit strengthen us to do so. In His name we pray, Amen.

**Monday, March 18, 2019 Kelli and Steve Alspaugh**

*"But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7*

Our teenage daughter loves the British accent. She spends an inordinate amount of time listening to and attempting to imitate it. People see attributes in others they wish to imitate: hair color, the way they wear their makeup, or even certain abilities they may have, like singing or dancing. But God does not want us to look at and attempt to imitate the outward appearance of others, He wants us to look at what He sees, a person's heart. He wants us to imitate the attributes of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ so that we may in turn be the hearts that others want to imitate.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Thank you for always being with us and for sending your Son so that we have the ultimate example in which to imitate. Please be with us as we spend an inordinate amount of time studying and developing the characteristics and attributes of Christ so that we may be living examples of His love. Guide us in the path to diligently strive to be worthy of imitation. Amen.

**Tuesday, March 19, 2019 Rick Mettert**

*"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" 2 Timothy 2:19 KJV*

At this crossroad of life I have taken on many projects for the house but even that gets tedious so this assignment could not have come

at a better time and blessing. Pondering and researching the Scripture, allowing the Holy Spirit to inject his thoughts into my heart and mind, has brought so many things alive that they are too numerous to mention here so let me get to the Scripture at hand.

Verse 19 can be the culmination of the whole chapter it is taken from: The truth of God stands as the foundation we are to build our lives in Christ on for it was before...anything, declaring Christ as the foundation through which He created those things that are seen out of things that did not appear (Hebrews 11:3), infusing his essence throughout. For those who name Jesus Christ as Savior and seek him with all their heart and soul through faith in all aspects of this life (Deuteronomy 4:29), God intimately knows us as His. Knowing this and being familiar with human behavior, regardless of the shipwreck we make of our lives, God expects us to strive towards that perfect life with him, turning away from wickedness and building on his foundation, which we will be judged on. But (there is always a but) we can thank him for his patience, enduring along with us even when our fellow pilgrims will not. For if we persevere and stand the test, the crown of life is bestowed upon us as promised (James 1:12).

**Prayer:** Father I love you with praise to you above all others. Thank you for your patience and understanding, never leaving us to our own demise. Help those who seek with their heart for it is the heart you see through all the ugly of this world. Send the Holy Spirit our way to help us achieve the true fellowship with you for always and receive the crown as promised. Through Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

### **Wednesday, March 20, 2019      Deb Opdycke**

*“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.” 1 Chronicles 28:9*

A young child’s ability to imitate the behaviors of others is a key mechanism for social learning and acquiring knowledge. Scientific studies reveal that even in the first few weeks of life, newborns are mirroring behaviors of their caregivers. The importance of imitation continues to be essential to learning new things throughout our lives.

To serve, love, and trust God with all of our hearts we must know Him. God reveals who he is through the Word and the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. In sending His son to earth, God provides us with a perfect model to imitate. While we are never able to imitate Jesus perfectly, He certainly sets for us the example that we are called to strive for in our lives.

For me, consistent, focused Bible study has helped me to know God better. Many times I feel like the newborn in my attempts to gain a better understanding. Through study of God’s Word I see the many examples of how much he loves me. As I live my daily life, I work towards imitating Jesus’ love and service to others.

**Prayer:** Dear Loving Father, as your children, we have the ability to imitate the behaviors of others. Help us to look towards the perfect model of Jesus Christ as we choose how to act and interact. Keep us mindful that to serve, love, and trust you with our whole hearts, we must know you through your Word. Amen.

### **Thursday, March 21, 2019      Amy Brock**

*“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:1-2*

I find it funny that when I pulled up Ephesians 5 on my computer to read this verse, the sides and bottom of my screen were filled with pictures and advertisements for new boots. Now maybe my computer knew that I had been looking for some shoes the other day, but I like to think it was really preparing me more for thinking about ‘walking in the way of love.’ The verse tells us to walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us, and sometimes, that does require putting on some new (figurative) shoes! Sometimes walking in the way of love is difficult. We may find ourselves trying to deal with a difficult co-worker or a frustrating family member. But showing Christ’s love to them might require us to pause and try to ‘walk a mile in their shoes.’ Put yourself in their situation and try to see how and where they need love the most, like Christ would love them.

Sometimes we find that we need to love ourselves a little more during a particular season in our life. Loving ourselves may be a new concept that also requires a new pair of ‘shoes.’ You may need



to give yourself a little more grace like Jesus does for you every day. Whatever your life situation is that requires you to ‘walk in the way of love,’ make sure you have the right figurative ‘shoes’ for the occasion! Extend some grace today to someone you dislike, someone you love, and maybe even to yourself. But remember to do so because Christ first loved you!

**Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son, Jesus to teach us to love. Help us to always remember to ‘walk in the way of love’ just as Christ does for us. Help us to see situations in our lives as You would, and point out how we can love others as You love us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**Friday, March 22, 2019      Brian Bradbee**

*“Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”*  
*Philippians 2:6-8*

Today’s passage is a lesson on our ability to exemplify Christ and the intention for us to live as God intends. The focus is on humility. I cannot think of a better way to help unite mankind than starting with the belief that no one man is better than another. Jesus took the form of man, and further sought to identify with the outcasts and oppressed. He did not place himself above others. Even when making the ultimate sacrifice, he endured a physical and emotional torture without anger, hatred, or a promise of vengeance.

I find that the concept of humility is one of the most important traits we must not only learn, but constantly revisit within our own experiences, actions and decisions on a daily basis. We will never be as humble as Christ, though we were never meant to be. We can learn from His actions and refrain from judgment and greed. We can embody His will through approaching others with a sense of equality, empathy, and understanding. However, we do not need to be submissive or allow others to take advantage of us. God wants us to be strong. Jesus proved his strength not by being submissive to his oppressors, but by being an obedient and humble servant of God.

Now that I have children of my own, I want to teach them the value of hard work, gratitude, and most importantly the belief that they are equal in the eyes of God. They will encounter conflict throughout their lives. As they learn and develop in their faith, it is vital that they take on conflicts with a sense of humbleness. By working to embody this in my own thoughts and actions, I am hopeful that they will embrace this way of living and imitate humility in an effort to grow in Christ.

**Prayer:** Dear God, Thank you for sending your son so that we may identify with and imitate his character, so that we may live in peace through an ability to understand others. Amen.

**Saturday, March 23, 2019      Kieron Dillon**

*“We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*  
*Hebrews 6:12*

Have you ever thought “Why don’t I feel as convicted as that person seems to be?” It can be puzzling when you don’t feel as moved over projects or activities as others appear to be. You may be left with thoughts like “What is wrong with me?” or “Why doesn’t God use me in the same way?” It is a wonderful feeling when you have that moment where you know this is what you are supposed to be doing, where you feel this is what God wants. If you’re like me, those knowing moments are few and far between. What about the rest of the time? Am I “becoming lazy” like the scripture suggests?

When we had the pleasure of Bishop Palmer preaching to us, I heard a comfort in his message: God puts us where we need to be. I have no doubt that I’m where I need to be, it was one of those few times I mentioned where I could feel God guiding me. Sometimes you must wait until your role becomes evident, and perhaps it isn’t always when “the big stuff” comes up that you should be paying attention. The quiet in-between times are important too. Everybody has a different role to play, perhaps your role is to be a strength to two or three people, maybe even one person, or perhaps it is to be an inspiration to dozens or hundreds of people. Through faith and patience trust that God will guide you and use you as designed, even if that isn’t always clear when we want it to be.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, give us the faith and patience to be used as and when You see fit, to trust that You put us where we need to be, an to help guard us against becoming complacent in what we do. Amen.

### **Week 3 Theme: “Repenting”**

#### **Family Discussion Question for the Week of March 24:**

**First, read Isaiah 58:6-11—and remember that each person wants comfort and security, to know that everything is going to be okay. What can we do for those in need?**



**Sunday, March 24, 2019      Amy Brace**

*“Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Matt 7:7-8*

When I ask, seek and knock for things that are promised in God’s Word, I’m assured that I am asking, seeking and knocking (or calling on) things that are also in God’s will. So, what can I ask for that will be given to me? For what should I seek that I will find? Whom am I calling on as I knock? Below are some scriptural references to our seeking, asking and knocking; of course there are many, many more. These are just a few:

Matt. 6:38 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Isaiah 55:6 “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.”

Deut. 4:29 “But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

John 14:12-13 “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”

James 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

Psalms 27:4 “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.”

Psalms 105:4 “Look to the Lord and His strength. Seek His face always.”

Rom. 10:13 “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The Lord is continually showing us through His written Word and through Jesus, the Living Word, that He finds pleasure in intimate fellowship with us. Jesus is encouraging us to seek Him, ask Him and knock...and ultimately to believe, to love and obey Him. It becomes our joy to surrender to Him as Lord, calling on His Name. Upon believing, we receive the right to become His children (John 1: 12) and He, our Good, Good, Father who desires to give good, good, gifts. The best of all gifts being His very presence in our hearts and lives. (Matt. 7:9-11)

**Prayer:** Father, it’s amazing that you tell us and want us to come into your presence asking and seeking. You *“let us come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need.”* (Heb. 4:16) We seek **You** first and foremost and are so grateful that You, through Jesus’ sacrifice, made the way for us, as sinful repentant children, to enter with confidence into Your holy presence. The truth is, that only *“In Your presence is fullness of joy!”* —Even more true (if that’s possible 😊) in our times of need. (Psalms 116:11b) We are forever grateful and humbled. Amen! And Amen!

**Monday, March 25, 2019      Joanne Moats**

*“Love God, your God, with your whole heart, love him with all that is you, love him with all you’ve got.” Deuteronomy 6:5 The Message*

We are to love God with every aspect of our life—love him above all others and all other things in our lives.

Love God with your whole heart—not just saying we love God, but with all our passion, our thoughts, and our actions.

Love God with all that is you—not only with our hearts but also with our entire beings—through our actions with other people, what we think and do and how we use our talents to help others.

Love God with all you've got—with all your heart, with all your soul, with everything you have and do in your life. God just wants us to love him as he loves us.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for always being with us, wherever we are or whatever we are doing. We know you love us, help us to show you our love for you through our thoughts and actions throughout the day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Tuesday, March 26, 2019 Jerry Stollings

*“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*  
Titus 3:5-7

Repentance is hard. It is sometimes hard to admit when we mess up and we need to change. It is also sometimes hard to change behavior that is so entrenched in us. But I think the hardest part about repentance is that in order to change we must first forgive ourselves for our past mistakes and failures. We often say we understand God's love and mercy and may even be free with extending that same love and mercy to others but we rarely give it to ourselves. We are rarely as kind to ourselves as we are to those around us. Why? I think sometimes we do not feel worthy of God's love and mercy.

This passage in Titus highlights the fact, yes fact, that we are loved exactly as we are. Brennan Manning wrote “God loves you unconditionally, as you are and not as you should be, because nobody is as they should be.” In a beautiful passage in Romans 8 Paul writes this: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We do not have to get there, we are already there. Paul's letter to Titus is reminding him and us that there is nothing we can do to earn God's love and mercy and the good news is this very truth: We are loved.

The beauty of the heart that has accepted they are loved is that they can freely show the love of God to others. I believe that is the main

message of Titus. And I think Paul knew that such a message would change the world. Paul certainly knew it changed him. Repentance is hard but when you know you are loved as you are then maybe change becomes easier. And when you are able to rest in the knowledge that you do not have to attain some level of perfection to be loved you can then learn to forgive yourself for those mistakes that so cloud your ability to see yourself as God sees you.

**Prayer:** God, please help me to see myself as you see me. Help me to rest in the knowledge and confidence that I am loved by You and that I have no reason to strive for Your love and mercy that is so freely given. Amen.

## Wednesday, March 27, 2019 Jackie Boyd

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”* 2 Corinthians 5:17

Many of us have read or heard today's devotional reading. In trying to comment on this scripture, I wasn't sure exactly what was meant by being “in” Christ. Further study brought me to the term “reconciled”, or being reconciled to God through Christ. God brings us back to Himself when we trust in Christ. Jesus presents us to God through our faith and trust in him as he became a sin offering for us. Therefore, we can be righteous before God. As sinners, we cannot be righteous before God, but after repenting of our sins and being cleansed of our sins, we can be.

The “old” or sinful part of us has gone away through Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. He took our sins upon himself so we can be brought back to God as sinless beings. Without Jesus' sacrifice, we would not be able to be reconciled, or brought into relationship with God because of our sins and sinful nature.

Through Jesus, we are re-created as righteous beings— “...the new has come!” Our sinful nature has gone from us and a new person, connected to God, is created. God re-creates us into righteous beings before Him as we accept and declare His son, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Savior, whose blood on the cross became the sacrifice for our sins. God knows we are not perfect. He knows we will make mistakes and fall short of who we should be. However, as long as we continue to trust in Jesus and stay connected to God through our

belief in Christ as our savior, we will continue to receive God's mercy and grace. As we declare our faith in Jesus, admit our sins, and ask God to forgive us, we are re-born into a new spiritual creation in the image of God. When we repent and seek God with all our heart, we are letting Him know that we believe in Jesus as His son and the living sacrifice that will cleanse us and forgive us of our sins.

God so badly wants an up close and personal relationship with each and every one of us. When we seek to communicate with Him through prayer of our love, faith, and repentance every day, we can't even imagine the wonders He has in store for us. This is the perfect time to begin to find out.

**Prayer:** Dear Father in Heaven, Thank you for hearing our prayer. We come seeking you with all of our heart. We confess that we are sinful beings, yet we know that through our faith and trust in your son, Jesus, who gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins, we will be re-created in your image and righteous in your sight. Help us each and every day to seek you anew and to call upon you and know that you will listen. Loving Father, we give you all the glory. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Thursday, March 28, 2019      Marty Manett**

*"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." Proverbs 16:9*

Have you ever made plans for your day, or planned for an activity or event, only to have things not turn out quite the way you wanted them to. This type of situation gives us a glimpse of what is described in today's scripture. We may think we are in charge of our lives, but the truth is, God, our creator, is now, always has been, and always will be in charge of this world. It's important to seek God's will before we make our own plans. Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope". Before you begin your day and make your plans, ask God what his will is for you today, and how you can accomplish his will. We never have to face our day alone. Let God walk with you and establish your steps.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I have so much to do today, but I cannot do it on my own. I need you to guide my way. Help me listen to that still

small voice that speaks to my heart to guide my way. Whatever I do, may it be to your glory. Amen.

### **Friday, March 29, 2019      Tom Gearhart**

*"I delight to do Your will, O my God. And Your law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8 NKJV*

I interpret this verse as Jesus saying we should eagerly take on the attitude & desire to walk with GOD, obey HIS commandments, and faithfully serve HIM. Jesus came as King David and others had prophesized and HE was proclaiming the Good News of God's righteousness and HIS willingness to forgive us of our sins. We are human and occasionally stray from doing the right things, so it is important that we intentionally ask, with all our heart, for repentance of our sins.

In order to help me stay on GOD's path, I attend the WUMC men's small group at the Bryan Hospital on Tuesday mornings at 7 AM. Not only is this a great and fun group of guys to be a part of, we also read scripture that applies to current events. Our discussions help me view things from other's perspective. Just by attending weekly, it helps me keep GOD in the forefront of my mind and makes me more accountable.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, as we progress through Lent, and prepare our hearts for the celebration of our Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, we pray that YOU will give us the discipline, desire, and guidance to do YOUR will. Please help fill our hearts with the Love that YOU showed us by sacrificing YOUR only Son and please grant us forgiveness as we repent for our sins. Help us to honor YOUR only Son, whom YOU gave to us so that we may live with YOU now and eternally. In Your name we pray, LORD. Amen.

### **Saturday, March 30, 2019      Jan Batt**

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21*

How many of you have seen the movie, "Pirates of the Caribbean"? The character Jack Sparrow spends his time seeking adventure on



the high seas and searching for treasure. It is obvious that Jack's heart belonged to the sea and the adventures that he found there.

For most of us, our lives are not about having wild adventures or seeking treasure or are they? What are the things we treasure most? Time, money, travel, family...? How much time do we invest in the things we treasure? How much time do we spend seeking ways to create more time, more money, more of everything?

I get a pop-up on my iPhone every Sunday morning that tells me how much time I have spent on my iPhone that week. I don't think that I spend as much time as this pop-up tells me I do. This is certainly time that I could be doing other things. How much time do we waste seeking out things that bring us brief pleasure—looking at posts on Facebook, Pinterest, Google and such? Could some of this time be spent in God's word, seeking His truths and guidance? For me, this is something that I intend to work on because, I know that when I do spend time in prayer, reading scripture and applying those teachings to my life, I am happier and more fulfilled.

I know that I don't want to go through life like Jack Sparrow always seeking the next big adventure. I want to know that my treasure is secure, that my heart is right and the time I spend doing God's works is all the adventure I need.

**Prayer:** Precious Lord, life with you by my side is an adventure in growth and understanding and the treasure lies in the promises you made when you gave up your Son for us on the cross. Amen.

### **Week 4 Theme: "Coming Together"**

#### **Family Discussion Question for the Week of March 31:**

**When was a time when it was good to be alone? See if you can name ten times it is good to be with other people. How can we be there for others when it would be better for them not to be alone?**



### **Sunday, March 31, 2019      Chip Wood**

*"He tends His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart. He gently leads those who have young." Isaiah 40:11*

We are created in God's image. We are called to shepherd His people, especially the young and defenseless. The image of God carrying the lambs in His arms is all I need.

There is a story of two friends walking on a beach after a heavy storm at sea. Starfish have been washed up on the beach as far as the eye can see. The tide is going out and it is obvious that the starfish will be parched in the hot sun. As they walk along one of them picks up a starfish with each step and throws it back into the ocean. The other person remarks that there must be thousands of starfish on the beach and you can't possibly make a difference. To which the friend replies: I made a difference to that one.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I pray for the energy and wisdom to be your good and faithful servant each day. May I be especially mindful of the needs of the young and the defenseless among us. Please enable me to care for others with all my heart. Amen.

### **Monday, April 1, 2019      Georgetta Kuhman**

*"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13*

Today is April 1, "April Fool's Day", a day people like to trick or surprise others. As a second grade teacher, I experienced many silly tricks by my students. They loved to "fool" me! My two daughters also took great pride in finding clever ways of tricking me on this day. Some I will never forget! But, as I think about today and read the scripture, I do see a connection. (Bear with me!) When we are on our personal faith journey following the Lord, we need to use ALL our heart and soul. If we do, we will find eternal peace. If we don't, we might be surprised, disappointed or "fooled." In life, we all have things to accomplish, projects or assignments to complete. When we use all our energy and talent to complete these, no matter how small or large the task, we take pride in the results. We know it was a job well done.

The same is true when we seek the Lord in our lives. God gives us HOPE for the future in this uncertain world, especially when we find ourselves in darkness. He provides RESTORATION when we fail or get off track. He picks us up when we fall down. He always WELCOMES us home. There is no single event in our lives we have to face alone. He will be there for help and guidance in our making decisions. He shows us the way to FULFILLMENT. He will always be there for us! So, what do we have to do? All we have to do is be fully committed and open our hearts and trust in “seeking” Him. If we don’t open our hearts completely, we will be disappointed and “fooled” into thinking everything is “OK” in our lives. SEEK THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART!

**Prayer:** Creating and Loving God, thank you for your unconditional love and guidance, even when we have not given you our best. Help to remind us that YOU ARE THE WAY and when we follow your footsteps, with all our hearts, we will be the light of hope, joy and love in a world that desperately needs it. Amen.

## Tuesday, April 2, 2019 Dana Smith

*“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Colossians 3:12 (NIV)*

Reviewing this scripture, two thoughts came to mind for me. First, it seems like a perfect instructional guide for the second Great Commandment that Jesus gave us: Love your neighbor as thyself. These are the ways we show our love for others!

My second thought was, how we badly need these loving actions today, in our church, our communities, and our country and throughout the world. Even just a little more compassion, kindness and gentleness would be such a welcome change to the hostility and stubbornness we see every day!

After more contemplation, a third realization hit me... that I’m often not so great at following these instructions myself. I’m a pretty nice guy, and don’t scream and carry on very often, but I admit my mind

has raced ahead with some pretty nasty thoughts sometimes when things aren’t going well or someone just doesn’t seem to see things the way I do! A good dose of compassion and humility would help me at those times, to remind me that I’m holy and dearly loved by God, and He expects me to show that love to those around me.

**Prayer:** Father, help me share Your love with all those who I may touch each day, and recognize that we are all your children, created in your image and equal in your eyes. Let my loving actions be a reflection of your endless love in my heart, bringing joy to you as well as those around me. Amen.

## Wednesday, April 3, 2019 Patty Burkholder

*“...and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:19*

In the verse above, “this love” refers to the love that Jesus Christ has for every, yes EVERY, person on earth and throughout all time. He showed his love for us by taking our sins upon himself and dying on the cross to save us. That is the “love that surpasses knowledge”. “Amazing love, how can it be that you, my King, would die for me?” are some of the lyrics of a song by Hillsong United. On Easter morning, Jesus conquered death to provide a way to eternal life for EVERY one of us.

Do you come together with family and/or friends to celebrate special times in your lives? Does your heart feel immense joy when you are gathering for a happy reason? Even if you are sharing a time of sadness or sorrow, do you find comfort in the love shared by those around you? These times are mere glimpses of the love that Jesus Christ has for us. We can’t even imagine the fullness of His love, but we can accept it and accept Jesus as our Savior. In eternity we will then “come together” to live with him and God, our father.

**Prayer:** Dear God, help us to accept the love that you offer us, love that surpasses knowledge, when we say, “Yes, Jesus, I want you to be my Savior and the Lord of my life.” In His name we pray, Amen.

**Thursday, April 4, 2019 Sarah Vashaw**

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

*Romans 8:28*

IN ALL THINGS...really? All things? I mean, there is quite a bit of suffering going on in this world, to Christians and non-Christians alike. In fact, there's quite a bit in this very community where we live and worship including addiction, poverty, domestic violence, child abuse, sickness, broken relationships, and so much more. Where is God working when people experience such physical and emotional pain? I can't say for sure, but I guess that one way God works is through the ones who reach out in love to help ease the hurt. When a person walks alongside the sufferer, takes her hand, and welcomes God to take the other, together they are lifted and encased in God's loving grace. As Christians we are called to serve and comfort the ill, the depressed, the poor, and the marginalized in order to illuminate God and his holy presence IN ALL THINGS.

**Prayer:** Lord God, remind us that you are always near, even in our darkest times. Help us to align ourselves with your spirit, to invite others into our suffering, and to reach out to those in need in order for us to know your love for us all. In your Son's name, we pray. Amen.

**Friday, April 5, 2019 Crystal Goodnight**

*“My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

*Colossians 2:2-3*

We cannot escape differing opinions. Paul wanted the believers to be “encouraged in heart and united in love,” not divided by arguments or factions. Only in the unity of the Spirit we enjoy the “full riches of complete understanding” of God's plan. When we see the Spirit of God in one another, we more fully grasp the mysteries of the Gospel. Stand sure and strong of heart about what connects us; not what divides us. The same Spirit in your sister or brother in Christ, is also in you. The same Spirit. We are not to be at war with

one another. Jesus, who unites us all, is mightier than what divides us. We are ONE in Christ. We are UNITED together in and through Christ JESUS, our Lord. The heart of Christ in one another will recognize itself, if we are open to it. Look for it. Be open. Be united. Love.

**Prayer:** Almighty God, You have given us Your Spirit. You have joined us together, all over the world, as one Body in Christ Jesus. Your Spirit flows in and through us. Open our hearts to stand together in the love we've been gifted. In Jesus name, Amen.

**Saturday, April 6, 2019 Jan Batt**

*“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* Matthew 11:29-30

My Aunt had a collection of antiques and one in particular always caught my attention. It was an old oxen yoke that hung on the wall in their living room. The wood appeared weathered and worn, the heavy steel ring still intact. It was explained to me how it was used—two oxen would wear this in order to share the workload evenly allowing them to be more productive than a single oxen pulling a load. Sometimes a younger oxen would be partnered with a more experienced animal so that the older animal could train the younger animal while they worked together.

Fascinating that Jesus would use such an object to illustrate his point. When we choose to follow Jesus, we are entering into a partnership with him—partners in his work, in his ministry, and in his service. Partners...I like that idea. He is also implying that he will walk alongside us and train us - show us the way. He will also be there to encourage us, to equip us, to guide us, to lift us up when we are weary and offer us rest.

When we place the yoke of Jesus on us, we are entering into a partnership with him. A secure relationship that promises that we are not alone in this endeavor. By being in partnership with Jesus, we will find rest and refreshment for our souls. And each of our yokes is 'custom fitted'—we each have been allocated for a particular ministry, purpose and role in life. And by actively partnering with Jesus and following his teachings we can be the disciples he intended for us to be.

**Prayer:** Lord, when we place the yoke of your love and grace upon us and follow your teachings, we are equipped to do your good works. Help us to fulfil our role with Jesus close to us, sharing the load because if we do things in this way, in his strength, our work will not become burdensome but rather a work of love. Amen.

**Week 5 Theme:  
“Making A New Thing”**

**Family Discussion Question  
for the Week of April 7:**

**It has been said that anyone can master anything, given 10,000 hours of deliberate practice. What would be an awesome thing to get good at? How could you use that new talent to bring a smile to God’s face?**



**Sunday, April 7, 2019 Kurt Plouck**

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10*

We live in a society where we are constantly upgrading or replacing our material things: new phone, new TV, new car, new house...etc. What I hope and pray is that we are all aware, after reading Psalm 51:10, is that we can request a new heart! This is not asking God to scrub clean our old heart, but rather, create a new one. Our sins and ugliness will be gone and we can live a new life! A life with love, grace and mercy! It as simple as bowing before our Lord and asking.

Along with that new heart comes a steadfast spirit! A spirit that will help support us in keeping that new heart focused on what God has in mind!

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that we all may seek you out and be willing to ask for a new heart, one that will always be connected to you and your will! Thank you for giving us this opportunity through your son Jesus Christ! Amen.

**Monday, April 8, 2019 Marcy Rosendaul**

*“Let my words and my thoughts be pleasing to you, Lord, because you are my rock and my protector” Psalm 19:14*

As I write this devotional piece I am also looking ahead to my lesson for the kids in JC903 for the third week in February. The lessons for this month are about serving others. The lessons have talked about Jesus serving his disciples by cleaning their feet. Looking for the gifts that God has given us to help in serving others and the third lesson is about the feeding of the five thousand- giving just a little bit. They all exemplify ways that we help and serve others through God’s grace and love. We have been stressing to the kids in JC903 that simple gestures can make a big difference in someone’s life. Helping others whether in school, at home or hanging out with friends need not be a hardship but a gift from God.

Why are we so caught up in the ways of the world, so much so, that we forget to reach out to others? Why is it so hard to take that one step forward in love and compassion? Something as simple as a smile helps to brighten the day of that person struggling with depression, relationship struggles, and financial stress.

My hope and my own commitment during this Lenten season is to step forward in faith through God who I seek out for guidance and strength daily. May my words and my thoughts be from Him and may I be there to help others that may be struggling from day to day.

**Prayer:** Father God, please continue to guide us and strengthen us. May our words and thoughts be pleasing to you as we reach out to others in need. May we recognize the gifts that you have given us and use them in helping others. In Jesus name, Amen.



## Tuesday, April 9, 2019 Betsy Mejia

*“And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires and I will put a new Spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart.” Ezekiel 36:26*

God promised Israel a new covenant to restore them. A renewal and purification. This remarkable act cannot be done by man for himself or others. It is by God alone. As we know, grace is a gift offered as we willingly return our hearts to God for his Law to be written on them. With this new beginning there is empowering transformation. Our corrupt, unfit and hardened hearts are removed and replaced with a flexible one that bends and complies with God’s Will. How does a heart of this holy nature feel? A soft heart is impressionable and can be filled with new purpose, affections and desires. Void of evil and rid of old troubles and stubbornness, our hearts are unburdened, relieved of all wrong and selfish needs. Sanctified. A tender, receptive heart is not a vulnerable heart, but it is made strong with spiritual sense and able to experience new joys.

**Prayer:** Father of goodness and graciousness, your promises greet each morning and retire with us each night. Your promise of restoration offers strength and creates a newness within us. Father, we delight in being obedient to you, and we surrender our old hardened hearts for your great purpose. We ask for your Spirit to open our hearts and make us receptive to your righteousness. Amen.

## Wednesday, April 10, 2019 Al Noel

*“Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.” Proverbs 7:2-3*

Solomon, the youngest son of King David of Israel, was chosen by God to communicate what God expected the sons of God, as he called all men, to do or not do if they would have God’s blessings. Solomon wrote the proverbs for that purpose. In them he told them what was expected of them to do or not do as God directed. About six hundred years later, God sent his son, Jesus, to do the same thing, but in a different way. Jesus traveled along with his disciples

to educate all people about what God expected them to do, if they would hope to go to Heaven when their time on earth was over. These teachings are being taught by many more persons now, but for the same purpose.

**Prayer:** Father God, it is our hope to be able to carry on this work of Jesus by being the Christians we have been taught to be, and help others to find the way to the Heaven we have been told to expect if we do as Jesus taught us to do. Amen.

## Thursday April 11, 2019 Dave Gordon

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” Colossians 3:23 (NIV)*

Being excellent simply means that we do the best we can with what we have. God is excellent, and He has called us to be excellent too. We should never be satisfied to just do what we have to do in order to get by. We should always go the extra mile and do an excellent job at whatever we are tasked to do.

Just getting by seems to be normal in society today, but it isn’t the will of God. If we are going to do a job, we can and should give it our best. We can take excellent care of all that we have. We can have excellent attitudes, treat family and friends with value and realize that we represent God at all times.

It is important not only to do the best you can when people are watching, but to do so when nobody is watching. God sees all that we do and we would be wise to remember that our reward comes from Him.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I know that You are excellent in all Your ways. Help me be an excellent person who brings glory to You. Amen.

## Friday, April 12, 2019 Caleb Weber

*But God has laid a foundation-stone, and it stands firm, bearing this inscription: ‘The Lord knows his own’ and ‘Everyone who takes the Lord’s name upon his lips must forsake wickedness.’ 2 Timothy 2:19*

To love the Lord with all of your heart involves casting aside your prejudices and creating something entirely new. Our Savior recognizes the faithful, and helps those willing to heed his call with each fresh beginning. Rejoice in each day that brings newness. Our Lord loves us for our faith and willingness to bow down to His voice.

The Lord works through us to bare witness to his name and to never forsake him. We shall not judge those that are different than us, but rather love them. We should never forget that we carry the word of the Lord where ever we go. Lift your neighbors up through Christ. Never use your voice to shame others. Separate yourself from persons or idols that do harm.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord. Find in us the patience to believe in Your everlasting love each and every new day. Cast the negative thoughts from our hearts, and renew them with an unending faith and service to others. Allow us to praise Your name where life leads us. Amen.

**Saturday, April 13, 2019      Jan Batt**

*“I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.” Psalm 119:32*

I also like the Life Application Bible translation: “If you will help me, I will run to follow your commands.”

I am not a runner. Never have been and at this point in my life, I probably never will be. I could run when I needed to, like conditioning for sports in my younger days, but it is not something I ever really learned to do well and thus my frustration and lack of passion for running.

But, I think that if I had had proper instruction and had learned to run for pleasure rather than a “have to” for sports conditioning, I may have enjoyed it. I like challenges, I enjoy being outside and I enjoy alone time to think. All these things seem possible for those that run.

The analogy to my faith journey can be found in this scripture. Studying God’s word, being involved in Bible study, Sunday school and hearing speakers and sermons breaking down scripture have opened my mind to what God is saying to me in His teachings. It has broadened my understanding and has allowed me to incorporate

it into my every day. Like a runner, engaging in a daily practice of prayer, studying God’s word and trying to live as God intends, I am training for a Christian life. When I stay on the path that God sets before me, my growth is steady and soon I find myself running to a more ‘Christ like’ way of life.

So, put on your sneakers, tie up those laces and start out on the race that God has put before you...it may be a slow start but soon you will be jogging along, running towards the final victory found only in Christ Jesus!

**Prayer:** Lord, in this race for glory help us to stay the course, to be patient and train steadily, to enjoy the journey and relish the victory in following your commands. Amen.

## **Week 6 Theme: “Preparing” Passion/Palm Sunday**

**Family Discussion Question for the Week of April 14:  
If Jesus wanted to visit Bryan, what would you do to show how much you love, respect, and wish to serve him?**



## Sunday, April 14, 2019     Zoe Brooks

*“Now May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep equip you with every good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever Amen.” Hebrews 13:20-21*

In this letter to the Hebrews, the author has been warning and encouraging his readers. He ends in the above verses with a benediction and summary of the entire book, reminding us that God is the source of our peace. This includes God's blessings of preparation, purpose, and the result of our peace. God has made peace with us by the blood of Christ's death.

God does these things for us through Jesus Christ, our Great Shepherd who cares for us. He equips us with everything good—everything we need, so we may do His will. If He calls you to do something, He will give you what you need to do it. I think we've all been in a situation where we say, “I can't do it.” But yes, we can if God works in us to do what He wants! He does this through Jesus Christ and the faith He gives us. A faith that will help determine our choices and focus our trust in God. He promises to give us what we need to do His will with results pleasing in His sight.

All glory, praise, honor, and admiration belong to God, our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ and not us. We receive His care, protection, guidance, and provisions...the joy of being loved like this. God receives the glory!!!!

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, it is with great joy we give you all glory and praise. Thank you for Jesus Christ our Great Shepherd. Through our faith, help us to realize all you have equipped us with so we may do your will in ways that pleases you. Show us how to reveal our true faith by the way we live our lives, in all that we are and all that we do. Amen.

## Monday, April 15, 2019     Sarah Paige

*“But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Deuteronomy 4:29*

The Lord is a jealous God. The Lord is a merciful God. Both are true. All of our choices in life are preparing us to be with God for eternity. We must understand that we are asked to keep seeking God with our whole heart and soul. How do we prepare ourselves for this?

Seeking God means turning away from error and all ungodliness. Instead of being indifferent to God's claims—we are to honor, revere, and serve God sincerely. Thinking of God aright, adoring God's perfect love for all, and serving others is doing God's will. The Bible tells us how and what our attitude should be.

We don't always prepare or act the way God asks us to. However, God is longsuffering and of tender mercy. That should encourage us to return to God again and again—we will find God faithful. Why would we seek God half-heartedly?

**Prayer:** Lord help me to be ready to do good things in your name, for your glory. When I doubt you are asking me to do something, make it clear what you want me to do. May the word of truth be my guide and may your Holy Spirit empower me. Amen.

## Tuesday, April 16, 2019     Mona Harsila

*“Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.” Psalm 86:11*

My Sunday school days at West Franklin United Methodist church bring back so many great memories of Lois Borton. Lois was my Sunday school teacher and she was awesome. She let us color and do crafts making Sunday school fun. God was training me without me knowing it, “Teach me your way, Lord that I may rely on your faithfulness”. I can remember lots of bible verses being memorized, songs being sung and stickers for attendance. Lois was God's tool that was shaping my spiritual life at a young age. I felt God's love and faithfulness through many years of my childhood and then following into my adult years as I kept on my journey of faith. There have been times when my faith waivered and I questioned what God was doing with my life. God was tender and kind, he showed me immense love and never quit on me. He looked me in the eye and gave me, his servant, the strength to go on and he saved me. God gently and powerfully put me back on my feet and on the path he chose for me. Raising two daughters to be faithful and kind was important to Larry and me. Our spiritual backgrounds helped us to

shape and form, with the help of Wesley teachers, to make them the young women they both are today.

**Prayer:** Heavenly father. Thank you for the nurturing spirit that was given to people like Lois Borton and countless others that shaped my life. It is through my faith journey that I have become closer to you and given me the opportunity to be your faithful servant. I have felt your love and guidance throughout my life and know I have many more years ahead to share this love. Amen.

### Wednesday, April 17, 2019 Larry Zuvers

*“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.” Deuteronomy 11:18-21*

We have just had Palm Sunday with Good Friday this week and Easter on Sunday. When I prepared this devotion, I had currently been reading in the book of Deuteronomy. This chapter 11 sees the Hebrews preparing to cross the Jordan into the land God was giving to them. After 40 years of wandering, God had prepared His people to enter their new land. But in this chapter 11, God also expects them to Love the Lord, obey his commandments and laws, and serve Him; so that God will bring rains to bless their new land. Thus, today’s scripture calls for them to have the Lord’s words both inside their heart and mind, and also externally all around them. Therefore, both adults and their children would be continually reminded of the Lord’s blessings.

As we get closer this week to Jesus dying on the cross for our sins on Good Friday; we can celebrate for the resurrection and the Life of Jesus on Easter morning.

**Prayer:** God help us through your Holy Spirit to keep your words and your love inside us so that we may share them with those around us every day. We ask this in the bold and strong power of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

### Thursday, April 18, 2019 Vicki Rathbun

*However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9*

Do you ever want to know all about something? Why? How? What’s it like? As Christians we know that God has prepared the most wonderful things for those who love him. We may try to understand what His plan for us may be, but it is far beyond our comprehension. Only by faith and His Spirit can we know of these things. I think of this as “heart knowledge” rather than “book knowledge.” We can’t even begin to imagine the great things God has prepared for us!

We have a God who loves us and a Savior who gave His life for us. We have life, breath, grace—what more can we want? What more can we imagine?

With faith let us open our hearts to His Spirit, share His love with others, and rejoice in the great things He has in store for us.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, grant us peace to know your love for us is real and everlasting. Your marvelous plans are beyond our imagination. We thank you for your Spirit that reveals all this to us. We know that You are all we need. In your name we pray. Amen.

### Friday, April 19, 2019 Steve Brooks

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” Psalm 139:23*

God knows each of us by name. And he knows our heart. He is with us through all of our anxious moments and our trials and tribulations. It has been said that God will not give us more than we can handle. Sometimes we find that hard to believe. God does test us. He tests our faithfulness and our willingness to sacrifice. But He will never test us unfairly or leave us alone. He is always with us, sharing our burdens and making our loads lighter and easier to bear. It is always so.

**Prayer:** Oh God of Grace and Mercy. Be with me always and help lighten my heavy load as I will and lighten the load of those in need here in your earthly kingdom. Amen.



Saturday, April 20, 2019 Beth Bowers

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5*

To trust with all your heart is to have confidence in, rely on, and believe in without a doubt.

Recently I read a story about a missionary who was translating the Bible into a new language.

He was striving to find a word that would translate a word that was the equivalent of this word that Solomon used. There was none that he could find. One day a native came in to his hut. And saw a chair for the first time. He asked the missionary, “What is that?” The missionary replied, “A chair. You can put your weight on it and it will hold you. “ The Native sat in the chair trusting the missionary. That is when the missionary thought, you can completely trust God even if you don’t know what will happen.

Trusting God with are whole heart is stepping into the waves and trusting God will be there for us.

**Prayer:** Dear Father God, Thank for always being there for us. Help us to trust you with are whole heart that might be blessed with the gifts you have in store for us. Help to receive salvation by believing in the gift of your Son. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.



Easter Sunday Theme: “Believing”

**Family Discussion Question for Easter Sunday:**

**Every year, we share the same story over and again: empty tomb, confused mourners, unexpected and unbelievable encounters with angels. Every year, the story moves us along from searching in sadness, to shocking disbelief, and finally to joy. Every year, we meet the challenge at the heart of Easter Sunday: to persist through fear and darkness, to believe beyond what would be normal, to welcome Christ, God’s perfect son, our savior, the first-born from the dead!**

**Will you trust Jesus today? Every day, we must decide whether hope is stronger than despair, whether God’s love is stronger than death. That is the Good News of Jesus is all about. How will you describe your level of trust in Jesus? unbelievable encounters with angels. Every year, the story moves us along from searching in sadness, to shocking disbelief, and finally to joy. Every year, we meet the challenge at the heart of Easter Sunday: to persist through fear and darkness, to believe beyond what would be normal, to welcome Christ, God’s perfect son, our savior, the first-born from the dead!**

**Will you trust Jesus today? Every day, we must decide whether hope is stronger than despair, whether God’s love is stronger than death. That is the Good News of Jesus is all about. How will you describe your level of trust in Jesus?**

## Sunday, April 21, 2019 Easter Sunday

*“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:5-11*

The commentary, in part, below by Dr. David Nelson helped me to better understand this scripture written by the Apostle Paul:

“...The idea is that transformation begins in our minds. The way we think impacts the way we live and relate to others. If we think we are better than others, we will treat others as inferior...Believers are to think the way that Christ thought...

We will see three characteristics of Christ’s mindset. First, selfless humility does not demand one’s rights and privileges...Second, believers must choose to serve God and others. Christ did not demand these privileges, but He emptied Himself of His glory and heavenly privileges by taking the form of a slave. From absolute glorious King, Jesus released this by becoming a servant...Believers also today can live in the same way as a servant to others...Third, believers must follow Christ in the path of obedience, even when it goes against our desires and plans...Christ’s obedience stemmed from His humility. He came not to do His own will but the will of His Heavenly Father. We must follow the path of humility as well in relationship to one another.”

And this is my interpretation of this scripture: It was one of those days—busy, many interruptions, and when I sat to write this devotion, I realized how God puts things into perspective for us in our day to day when we give thought to our actions and see God at work in our lives.

Serving, being a servant, and not considering oneself to be above or better than another, these are not always easy things to accomplish

and today was one of those days that challenged those very things. Any job that deals with people, especially persons in stressful situations, requires a certain level of compassion, a willingness to let your personal feelings go and to look at the person or persons through ‘Jesus eyes’.

Looking back over the day, I feel I could have done a little better, maybe more than a little better. Did I show honest compassion? Did I put aside my personal judgement and look at the person in my care with ‘Jesus eyes’? Inside I just willed this person to stop complaining, I was frustrated not so much with her, but with the way the day was going—did this show in my words, my expression, in my touch? I pray that I was able to put on the face of compassion, the touch of one who heals and that my ‘Jesus eyes’ allowed me to let this person know that I truly did care and had her best interest at heart. Today was a humbling realization of my humanness, my imperfections and my need for grace. It was also an opportunity to learn how to deal with that type of situation differently, to learn and grow, and to hopefully do better the next time.

So how does this relate to Easter Sunday? It’s about relationship. It’s about our relationship with God and our relationship with those we encounter each and every day. Whether it’s our family, our neighbor, our friends, co-workers, or the cashier at the grocery store—how we interact, how we relate, how we live our day to day is a reflection of our relationship with our Lord. And though we may celebrate Easter with baskets and flowers, family gatherings, Easter egg hunts and colored eggs—Easter is more than all that. Believing that through Christ’s incarnation, his humility, and obedience to God, that God’s purposes were accomplished. Our sin debt was paid off. God’s holy demands against our sin were fulfilled. Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the Old Testament Law of a sacrifice in behalf of sinners.

I believe that as we follow Christ’s example of humility and obedience, we too, can accomplish God’s purposes.

**Prayer:** Father God, may we, your people, truly believe and understand the magnitude of this Easter message. May we strive to have the mindset of Christ Jesus in our relationships with one another, and may we strive to live as humble servants, willing to show the world the love that you so generously give to each of us. Amen.