

Name: _____

GRATITUDE AND SERMON JOURNAL

GROW UP

May 31 - June 27, 2021

GROW TOGETHER

June 28 - August 1, 2021

GROW OUT

August 2 - August 29, 2021

Dear Church Family,

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 reading on Monday is the sermon text for the following Sunday. The daily readings support the Sunday sermon. I'm pleased some of our groups, including Discipleship Communities and prayer groups, use this journal to talk about the texts and the preaching on Sunday morning. Asbury is deeply rooted in our "ancient" traditions (Scripture and the church) while also being focused upon 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.

Tom

Small Group Discussion Questions

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 helping others follow Jesus. This journal provides a mutually blessed way for you to do precisely that. Below are some questions your small group may use for discussion each week:

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 was the pastor asking of you, even expecting you to do in response?

SYNERGIZE: Creative Cooperation

Bill Mason served as Asbury's senior pastor from 1964-1993. The quote from our chronology in the hallway by our front office tells us Bill emphasized three New Testament principles based on these scriptures: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (authority of Scripture), Ephesians 4:11-13 (the body of Christ), and Matthew 28:18-20 (sharing of faith). This Gratitude and Sermon Journal will revolve around these scriptures and concepts.

Bill repeatedly said he only wanted to be part of a growing church. Luke 2:52 notes how we grow in different ways: *"Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."* Bill certainly wanted Asbury to grow numerically. He wanted us to grow into mature disciples who are on mission to share the greatest news: our Creator God loves us, and desires a relationship with us. We are privileged to share with others the magnificent story that Jesus is wonderful and gracious. The redemption of the world is only possible because of God's great love.

Scripture insists we must grow together in our efforts. Jesus pointed out, *"If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."* (Mark 3:25) He prayed for unity among His disciples. *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* (John 17:20-21) Discord among teammates, business associates, family or the church family compromises the success of the mission. We have different gifts to use together. The sixth of "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," is "Synergize." The Principle of Creative Cooperation is what Paul described in Romans 8:28: *all things work together for good for those who love God.* The sum is greater than its parts.

The early church modeled growth and unity. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."* (Acts 2:42-47)

Growth happens personally and corporately. I grow. We grow. We grow **up** into mature believers and **deep** in understanding of doctrine, **together** with others in the body of Christ, and **out** in ministry and mission. We grow and unite; we do not shrink and divide.

We want church history to repeat itself. We will spend our summer pursuing this through scripture, community, mission and worship. We will provide resources to help you and your families grow. Commit to be present. Commit to grow. Only miss worship for a reason you know the Lord approves. You need it. We need it. We are Better Together.

Scripture Readings

GROW UP

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-INSPIRED

- 5/31 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- 6/1 Psalm 119:1-8
- 6/2 Psalm 119:9-16
- 6/3 Matthew 26:47-56
- 6/4 Mark 12:18-27
- 6/5 Romans 15:1-7
- 6/6 2 Timothy 3:10-17

SCRIPTURE IS OUR TEACHER

- 6/7 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- 6/8 Ezra 7:7-10
- 6/9 Psalm 119:33-40
- 6/10 Acts 1:1-3
- 6/11 2 Peter 1:16-21
- 6/12 Hebrews 5:11-14
- 6/13 2 Timothy 3:10-17

SCRIPTURE CORRECTS US

- 6/14 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- 6/15 2 Kings 20:12-19
- 6/16 Proverbs 8
- 6/17 Proverbs 12
- 6/18 Acts 18:24-28
- 6/19 2 Timothy 4:1-8
- 6/20 2 Timothy 3:10-17

SCRIPTURE EQUIPS US TO SERVE

- 6/21 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- 6/22 Matthew 20:20-28
- 6/23 Ephesians 2:1-10
- 6/24 Philippians 1:3-11
- 6/25 Philippians 2:12-13
- 6/26 Titus 3:1-11
- 6/27 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Scripture Readings

GROW TOGETHER

WALK IN UNITY

- 6/28 Ephesians 4:1-3
- 6/29 Proverbs 15:1-4
- 6/30 Micah 6:6-8
- 7/1 Romans 2:1-11
- 7/2 Colossians 3:12-17
- 7/3 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
- 7/4 Ephesians 4:1-3

UNITY TELLS THE TRUTH IN LOVE

- 7/19 Ephesians 4:15-16
- 7/20 Matthew 5:21-26
- 7/21 1 Corinthians 1:10-17
- 7/22 2 Corinthians 13:5-14
- 7/23 Galatians 2:11-14
- 7/24 1 Peter 1:22-25
- 7/25 Ephesians 4:15-16

UNITY IS ONENESS

- 7/5 Ephesians 4:4-6
- 7/6 Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- 7/7 John 17:6-19
- 7/8 John 17:20-26
- 7/9 1 Corinthians 3:1-9
- 7/10 1 Corinthians 12:12-13
- 7/11 Ephesians 4:4-6

STEWARDSHIP OF THE BODY

- 7/26 Ephesians 4:15-16
- 7/27 Genesis 1:26-31
- 7/28 Psalm 139:13-16
- 7/29 1 Corinthians 3:16-23
- 7/30 1 Corinthians 7:1-16
- 7/31 1 Corinthians 7:17-40
- 8/1 Ephesians 4:15-16

MATURITY CREATES UNITY

- 7/12 Ephesians 4:7-14
- 7/13 Romans 12:3-8
- 7/14 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- 7/15 1 Corinthians 12:14-31
- 7/16 1 Corinthians 14:1-12
- 7/17 1 Peter 4:7-11
- 7/18 Ephesians 4:7-14

Scripture Readings

GROW OUT

OUTREACH MEANS "GO!"

- 8/2 Matthew 28:16-20
- 8/3 Genesis 12:1-3
- 8/4 Psalm 72:17-19
- 8/5 Luke 19:1-10
- 8/6 Acts 13:44-52
- 8/7 Galatians 3:7-9
- 8/8 Matthew 28:16-20

OUTREACH PAYS ATTENTION

- 8/16 Matthew 9:35-38
- 8/17 Matthew 22:1-14
- 8/18 Mark 4:21-25
- 8/19 Acts 8:4-13
- 8/20 Hebrews 2:1-4
- 8/21 James 2:1-7
- 8/22 Matthew 9:35-38

OUTREACH MEANS WITNESS

- 8/9 Acts 1:6-11
- 8/10 Luke 24:36-49
- 8/11 John 1:6-13
- 8/12 Acts 10:34-43
- 8/13 2 Timothy 2:1-7
- 8/14 Hebrews 12:1-2
- 8/15 Acts 1:6-11

OUTREACH MEANS INVITATION

- 8/23 John 1:43-51
- 8/24 Matthew 11:25-30
- 8/25 Luke 5:27-32
- 8/26 Luke 18:15-17
- 8/27 John 1:35-42
- 8/28 Colossians 4:5-6
- 8/29 John 1:43-51

GROW UP

May 31 - June 27, 2021

GROW UP

When Paul wrote “*All scripture is breathed out by God ...*” he was referring to the Old Testament. He knew the Hebrew Scriptures had purpose before Jesus’ fulfillment. Paul did not dismiss them as irrelevant or say they were not the Word of God. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament had its time and place, but that system set up our need for Jesus. He completely fulfilled what was needed. The New Testament makes no sense without the Old.

Some claim Scripture should be placed in one of three buckets. The first bucket contains the Word of God and should be kept. The second bucket holds what was once good but is now discarded. In the third bucket there is no place for Scripture. We must be careful in handling God’s Word. We need to know what others have thought in the past and think presently. We bring reason and experience to the text. However, we must defer to Scripture’s authority—not our own. As the founder of Methodism said, “*I am a man of one book.*” John Wesley was well-educated, but the written Word served as the core of his faith and life. In the Wesleyan tradition, Asbury is committed to the **written** Word of God. We believe it reveals the **living** Word of God—Jesus. We must study it to have guidance for life. Our experience and opinions fall under the authority of Scripture, not vice versa.

The new part of the Bible was written more than 1,900 years ago in a language and culture far different from ours. If we desire to help others follow Jesus, we will be passionate about learning and applying God’s written Word. We do not insist on perfection. Nobody knows it all. Nobody lives it perfectly. However, our lack of knowledge and application does not excuse us from making a serious commitment to it.

Over the next four weeks, our foundational text is 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-INSPIRED

Monday, May 31, 2021

2 Timothy 3:10-17

“Inspired” literally means “breathed into.” We believe God divinely influenced the writers of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. About 40 different authors wrote the books of the Bible over approximately 1,500 years. They wrote in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic on three different continents (Asia, Africa and Europe), yet it has amazing unity. The books of the Bible do not always present its characters in the most flattering light. Many of its prophecies have already been fulfilled (others are not completed yet). Archaeology cannot prove the Bible is true, as that is beyond its ability, but it does show these are not mythological books. Thus, the Bible is unique. The doctrine of inspiration stresses the authority of Scripture for Christians.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he was referring to what we call the “Old Testament” or the “Hebrew Scriptures.” Paul wrote the bulk of the New Testament. His letters were accepted by the early church. Nobody knows for certain the exact dates, but Paul’s writings were early.

The Bible can be hard to understand, but we can break it down in simple terms. We have *The Bible in Five Words: Creation, Fall, Israel, Jesus, Church*. The overall purpose of the Bible is redemption.

APPLICATION: What is the source of authority for your faith and life? How are you engaging in scripture? What is your method for learning and growing? Asbury wants to help followers understand and apply the teachings of Jesus. You will hear sermons from the Bible. We ask our Kids, Students, and Adult Ministries to teach scriptures in age-appropriate ways.

Monday, June 7, 2021
2 Timothy 3:10-17

We all need to learn so we can grow. When we love the subject matter, learning is enjoyable. I'm reminded of the Paul Simon song, "Kodachrome," when he recalled all the stuff he had to learn in high school and concludes, "... it's a wonder I can think at all." I remember intentionally trying to forget the material after some tests in college classes. In my immaturity, I thought it might waste space in my brain. It was trivial information to me. Since it had no application, I was not motivated. My spirit was not teachable in these classes. My attitude was, "What's the least amount of work I have to do to pass this class?" I believe "Humility is the essential virtue; pride is the essential vice." A teachable spirit opens doors to growth and opportunity. A teachable spirit unites. It recognizes that: *I do not know it all. I need others to help me grow.*

Not only do we need to learn, but we also need to teach. This philosophy aligns with our mission statement of *Helping Others Follow Jesus*. It's not enough just for us to follow Jesus, but we should be helping others follow, too. We can teach the scriptures to others in a wide variety of ways. Parents have a great opportunity to be teaching their kids. If we don't teach children God's Word, they will learn from other things that are often opposed to the teachings and tradition of the Christian faith.

APPLICATION: What am I learning? Who or what am I learning from? How is it affecting me? Who am I teaching? Asbury has many opportunities to learn and to teach. The study, "Grow at Home: A Beginners Guide to Family Discipleship" by Winfield Bevins is recommended for families. Asbury is making these available to you for free.

Monday, June 21, 2021
2 Timothy 3:10-17

One of the biggest disappointments for Christians in the western world is the lack of mission and godly ambition. We naturally gravitate toward this secular worldview: *“What’s in it for me? What do I get out of it?”* This is how infants and children think. No wonder Paul said, *“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”* (1 Corinthians 13:11)

Salvation is both personal and missional. Salvation is from the Lord, but we have to receive it. Paul talks about salvation in personal terms in Ephesians 2:1-9, but he emphasizes that our salvation must result in “good works.” We must sequence this properly. We do not work for our salvation, but we do work it out.

Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. He expects all His disciples to do ministry. His followers are on mission. Our gifts and blessings are not merely for us—we are sent to others.

We do not have to understand all scripture before we start applying it. Be proactive. Do what you can do with what you have.

APPLICATION: How are you serving the Lord? Where in your church are you serving? How are you serving others? What do you think the Lord is calling you to do? What is keeping you from getting started? Are you using your “talents” (Matthew 25:14-30) in a God-pleasing way?

GROW TOGETHER

June 28 - August 1, 2021

GROW TOGETHER

Part of understanding the faith is learning doctrine and theology. A poor understanding of the foundation of our faith creates trouble in some way. On the other hand, if all we know is doctrine and theology, we end up compromised. Proper theology is called “orthodoxy” (“ortho” means “right” and “doxy” means “opinion or belief”). Proper application is “orthopraxy” (“praxy” means “practice”). These fit together hand-in-glove. Many Christians want to choose one or the other: it is not an either/or selection, but both/and.

We began this journal focused on “orthodoxy”—right understanding of Scripture. The next two months will focus on “orthopraxy”—right practice of the faith. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the churches he had started or nurtured, this was his tact. For instance, in Romans 1-11, Colossians 1:1-2:5, and Ephesians 1-3, he stressed the importance of staying true to the right doctrine. However, in Romans 12-16, Colossians 2:6-4, and Ephesians 4-6, he gave practical advice on how to live out that doctrine. Doctrine without practice makes us Pharisaical and turns scripture into trivia. Practice without doctrine leads to confusion, heresy and/or emotionalism. As Paul stressed, we need to understand and apply our faith. Obedience is supposed to follow grace.

Unity is an essential understanding and practice of our faith. In 1 John 3-4 we see the vital role of loving one another. Orthodoxy tells us we should love; orthopraxy is the practice of love.

Worship may be the best way we unite as followers of Jesus. When we remember and experience all God’s grace in Jesus, and when filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, it is hard to hold grudges, gossip, give in to grumbling, bitterness and rivalry. When Jesus Christ is exalted as Lord and the love of God is known in that community—unity will result. Let us be one in Christ.

WALK IN UNITY

Monday, June 28, 2021

Ephesians 4:1-3

Some images affect us when we see the word “walk” in the Bible, such as the “hide and seek” game in Genesis 3:8: *“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* And the beloved verse from Psalm 23: *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...”*

In his book, “Sit, Walk, Stand,” Watchman Nee says Christians SIT (Ephesians 2:6) in the heavenly places, WALK (Ephesians 2:8, 4:1, 5:2) in a worthy manner with the Lord, and STAND (Ephesians 6:11) against the wiles of the devil. There are certain things we must oppose, resist and refuse to compromise on. These are primary issues of doctrine and behavior.

Paul lists five characteristics of a “worthy walk” in Ephesians 4:1-3. Four out of five (excluding humility) are listed as fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Our readings this week focus on these. Humility, gentleness, patience, love and peace help us to maintain the unity of the Holy Spirit in the church.

APPLICATION: How are you doing with these five traits of following Jesus? What does eagerness to maintain unity mean to you? How willing are you to agree to disagree agreeably? What are you doing to help the church be unified? How are you growing in your faith? How are you reaching out to others in love? What do you need to remove from your life that is preventing unity?

Monday, July 5, 2021

Ephesians 4:4-6

Paul uses the word “one” seven times in Ephesians 4:4-6. Thus, “oneness” is crucial to the Lord and His church. While the word “trinity” does not appear in the Bible, the concept is frequent (beginning in Genesis 1:26, *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’—using the plural rather than the singular pronoun*). Jesus called God “Father,” but God is not a male with human-type anatomy. God is Spirit. God transcends gender. While God is not male, the Bible uses a masculine term to make God personal. As the hymn goes, *“God in three persons, blessed trinity.”* God the Son, and God the Spirit (the Greek word for Spirit is feminine) are all used in our text. Note the emphasis on the unity of the Godhead—three in one. What is known of the godhead is what the Spirit wants us to embody in Jesus’ church: unity. Certainly, one of the most important passages and a vital prayer in Judaism is the “Shema” from Deuteronomy 6:4 (shema is the Hebrew word for “hear”): *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”* Love prompts unity; unity promotes love, not division. God is love. God is three-in-one. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 goes on: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.”* The result of love is action: *“You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”*

“Oneness” was critically important to Jesus in His prayer in John 17. Note the final verse (26) emphasizes love: *“that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”* Love was essential to the maturity and mission of the church.

APPLICATION: How often do you pray for the unity and mission of the church? How can you grow in this area of your spiritual life? How often do you fast and pray? What do you need to do? What breaks down unity? How can you promote unity?

MATURITY CREATES UNITY

Monday, July 12, 2021

Ephesians 4:7-14

This is a rich passage. The source of our unity is the grace of Jesus Christ which was given to us freely. We must always begin with Jesus. However, Jesus calls each of us to “orthodoxy” (right doctrine) and “orthopraxy” (right practice). To help us build up the body of Christ, His church, He has given us gifts. The gifts help the church, not as an end to itself, but as a means to reach the world for Christ. The church does not function like a bus, with a driver (the pastor) and passive passengers (church members), but like the human body where we all have a distinct function. Every Christian should be involved in the ministry of the church somewhere. The church becomes “ours” when we get involved. There is a place and need for everyone.

Maturity is stressed here. No church ever reaches maturity because the church should always be birthing spiritual infants. The church has a wide range from the mature “spiritual redwoods” to babies in Christ.

The five groups he lists (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) all have distinct functions and purposes but are unified with the same goal—to help others follow Jesus.

APPLICATION: How are you maturing in your faith? What are you doing to grow in your understanding of Christian orthodoxy? How are you involved in the ministry of the church? How are you using your spiritual gifts (do you know what they are)? Remember the first habit of “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” is: Be Proactive.

Monday, July 19, 2021

Ephesians 4:15-16

Our five-part series on unity re-emphasizes Jesus is “the head” of “His body,” the church. Jesus is in charge, but the church has a huge role. Paul emphasizes three basic needs for the church:

- 1.) Strong and gifted leaders who teach the faith (Grow UP)
- 2.) Mature disciples who tell the truth in love (Grow TOGETHER)
- 3.) The practice of ministry and mission (Grow OUT)

We focus on No.2 this week. Paul Coughlin writes in his book, “No More Christian Nice Guy” (subtitled: “When Being Nice—Instead of Good—Hurts Men, Women, and Children”), that too often Christians are nice, but not kind. We often do not tell the truth in love. The church is full of gossip, sabotage, rumor and triangulation. *Did you hear what Tom told Bill about Joe?* Tom just “triangled” Bill. Tom needs to talk to Joe. What can Bill do?

Jesus was not always “nice.” He had difficult conversations with people. He was direct, honest and confrontational. We must tell the truth balanced by doing it in a loving way. We can communicate effectively or ineffectively. Failure to communicate can result in passive despair or aggressive and destructive patterns.

Be kind. Being “nice” often avoids telling the truth. Kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. “Niceness” is not. (*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* Galatians 5:22-24) Our passage ends with this phrase: *“makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”*

Like Jesus, Paul confronted. We can tell he was agitated at times for a variety of reasons. We will look at some of these situations in this week’s readings.

APPLICATION: When have you been successful and unsuccessful at telling the truth in love? Who do you need to talk to? Do you need additional resources to help you have a crucial conversation? “How to Have That Difficult Conversation” by Townsend and Cloud and “Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High” are both excellent.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE BODY
Monday, July 26, 2021
Ephesians 4:15-16

Last week we focused on the word “*rather*” in Ephesians 4:15-16. Instead of not speaking truth or speaking truth in an unloving way, we are to choose the third way: followers of Jesus are to speak the truth in love.

Jesus is the head of His church—we are His body. The concept of body is spiritualized here, but the physical use of our body is also an important part of our faith. From time to time, some have claimed only our spirit matters. Therefore, we can do whatever we want with our bodies. This is referred to as “Gnosticism.” The Greek word “gnosis” means “to know.” An “agnostic” is someone who does not know. Paul wrote strong words about the use of the body to the churches. Our message emphasizes “*rather*” (don’t live by what a secular worldview says) with the conclusion—“*make the body grow ... in love.*”

APPLICATION: In August, Asbury begins a study on Dr. Tim Tennent’s book, “For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body.” It addresses issues surrounding the human body. He presents a positive vision of our flesh and blood. Topics he addresses include marriage, family, homosexual practice, childhood, abortion, pornography, beauty, singleness and healthy same-sex friendships. We do not have to give in to other worldviews, nor do we have to respond in despair, become angry or hostile toward others. Like good parenting that avoids extremes of being absent or abusive, and favors being an active parent—followers of Jesus avoid extremes of “no law” or “all law” to focus on the empowering agent of grace. Grace is positive. Grace guides us. Grace is good news.

GROW OUT

August 2 - August 29, 2021

GROW OUT

Christians can get bored with the Christian life because of a lack of application. Going to heaven is a glorious gift, but God has purpose for us now. Christians tend to be notoriously self-righteous. The longer I have been a Christian the more Pharisaical I have become. Keeping the rules makes me feel superior to others who do not. The truth is, I fail, too. As the hymn goes, *“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.”* Grumpiness can easily replace gratitude and grace in us. Others often expect more of us. And few expect the disbelief of an atheist would compel them to do anything, yet it is confusing when atheists are more generous, gracious, and kind than Christians. *“I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ,”* is a famous quote attributed to Gandhi. It is easy to be self-absorbed and self-righteous—and miss the great mission the Lord Jesus gave to us. It is easy to seek comfort rather than engagement.

God has always been seeking to save the lost. We see the Lord’s outreach to the sinful, original pair in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). We see it at the beginning of the nation of Israel in the original “Great Commission” which the Lord gave to Abraham: *“Go from your country ... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 12:1-3). God desires to bless ALL the families of the earth. Jesus, who is the final authority on everything because of the Resurrection, repeated the Great Commission with more precision. He told His disciples to go into all the world to do three things: *make disciples of all nations, baptize them and teach them.* Jesus commanded us to reach everyone (all nations). If we accept Jesus’ authority, this is not open for debate. All people need the Lord. Asbury’s mission statement is: Helping Others Follow Jesus. Our mission statement is not self-serving preoccupation; it is about helping others become disciples of Jesus. Disciples are to reproduce.

We Grow Together by depending on the authority of God’s Word revealed in holy Scripture, by being part of the body of Christ, His church, and by “going” into all the world to make disciples.

OUTREACH MEANS "GO!"

Monday, August 2, 2021

Matthew 28:16-20

We cannot overemphasize God's heart for the whole world. God is missional. Aligning with God gives us missional hearts, too. The Lord's words to Abraham and to the disciples in the "Great Commission" both begin with the same word: "GO." They were told to be proactive, not passive. They were not to wait for others to find them. "GO" was their word. Jesus was literally "on the go." His punchline with the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector was: *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* The book of Acts tells the mission field: Jerusalem (local), Judea (regional), Samaria (national) and to the ends of the earth (global). Jesus' church incorporates every person and every people group. It begins at home and goes out.

APPLICATION: The Bible has two narratives. One is a "top line" word for personal salvation. The second is a "bottom line" word for mission. How are you doing in relating to these two concepts of personal salvation and witness to others? How can you grow in your witness? Who has God placed on your heart? Remember to pray first.

Tuesday, August 3, 2021

Genesis 12:1-3

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

This week's focus: "God" begins with GO. God has always been on mission to redeem the lost.

OUTREACH MEANS "GO!"

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Psalm 72:17-19

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

GROW OUT

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Luke 19:1-10

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Monday, August 9, 2021
Acts 1:6-11

I became a follower of Jesus when I heard someone a few years older tell me at our church: *“God loves you and I love you.”* These “witnesses” were total strangers. I thought they were weird. I had never heard anything like that before. We did not use that kind of language ... anywhere. It was confusing and deeply troubling. That weekend experience (called a “Lay Witness Mission”) did not teach Bible trivia, but the result was I had a personal experience with Jesus. God’s love transformed my heart: *“God loves you and I love you.”* Until that weekend, our youth group was just a fun gathering of kids my age where I found a place to fit in. Larry and Verla Richardson were our volunteer youth sponsors. Not only did my sister Kathy and I have conversion experiences, but my parents and the Richardsons did, too. Overnight, we went from a group of kids having fun to a group of people with a brand-new identity in Christ. A new and better way replaced my old life. Had my parents not insisted that I attend that weekend experience in April 1969, chances are slim I would be in ministry today. Had it not been for those witnesses who came to Rose Hill UMC in Tulsa that weekend when I was 14, we would not have found faith.

APPLICATION: All our experiences are different. What is your story? When have you felt God’s love? How have you opened your heart to the Lord? Is there someone you would like to talk to? How are you sharing your faith with others?

OUTREACH MEANS WITNESS

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

Luke 24:36-49

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

This week's focus: *"And you will be my witnesses."*

OUTREACH PAYS ATTENTION

Monday, August 16, 2021
Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus went to them whether they were in big cities or tiny villages. He taught, preached and healed. He met people where they were. Jesus had compassion for them. He told His disciples to pray for the laborers to go to work.

We live in an attention-deficit society. We have so much noise going on that it is easy to disconnect from others. COVID-19 did not help our isolation. It's disconcerting to see a family of four seated in a restaurant with all heads down and paying more attention to their devices than to each other. Technology is only a symptom of our deeper problem of not paying attention to the people we are with.

Prayer is paying attention to God. It involves being quiet. It is a move away from our own agenda into another's. Poor listening skills and habits break down trust. Teams do not perform well when they do not listen to the coach and their teammates. A failure to listen, to hear, and to heed instructions often results in poor decisions, errors, and hurt feelings.

As the saying goes, *Two ears—one mouth*. We should listen twice as much as we talk.

APPLICATION: How well do you pay attention to others? Do you tend to look at a screen instead of the person you are talking to? Do a word study on “listen” and “hear.” The Bible has a lot to say about paying attention. Here is a link: <https://www.biblegateway.com>

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

Matthew 22:1-14

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

This week's focus: Jesus paid attention to people.

Monday, August 23, 2021
John 1:43-51

We did not find Jesus on our own. Someone pointed us to Him. We need to point others to Him. In the first chapter of John, Jesus begins His public ministry by personally inviting a select few to become His disciples. Andrew became a disciple before his more famous brother, Peter. In fact, it was Andrew who always seemed like he was bringing people to Jesus (he also found a little boy with loaves and fishes in John 6:8-9, and a delegation of Greeks in John 12:20-22). After this story, John describes Philip having a conversation with a cynic, Nathanael, who asks, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” Philip does not try to convert Nathanael; he just listens to him and then invites him to “*come and see.*”

A witness knows the story is not about him or her. We are not the message; we are only the messengers. While we must know what we believe and why, we will be unsuccessful if we try to argue people into the kingdom of heaven. Paul had some great advice for us in conducting ourselves wisely and always having gracious speech. People are far more likely to be loved into the kingdom of God than preached into it. Kindness, gentleness, tenderness and humility consistently demonstrated are far easier to respond to than self-righteousness and condemnation.

APPLICATION: Andrew was all about helping others follow Jesus. That’s what this disciple did. His far more famous brother Peter got the credit, but Andrew was a connector. Who is on your radar that you can help connect to the Lord?

