

Friday: Remember...marriage takes work...

Read: 1 Corinthians 7:32-32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

<p>Reflect: You may be thinking, “Why mention an unmarried man when writing about marriage?” Because we need to realize single people are not broken. We do not need to “fix them” and “find a spouse” for them. Some people have been gifted with the ability to remain single (Mt19:11-12; 1Cor7:7) and the reality is they can serve God’s Kingdom in ways a married person cannot. We need to honor (and praise God for) this.</p> <p>Yet all of that does not negate the blessing a marriage can, and in fact is designed to be. In reality, getting married is easy. Many choose to get married every day. Another reality we must remember is we (i.e., <u>everyone</u>) make marriage difficult because we often focus on the wrong things and do not understand basic differences between men and women.</p> <p>It would be nice if this went without saying...but for some reason it does not. So I will say it. EVERY marriage has difficulties (just as EVERY relationship has them). Yes, even my marriage to Melissa has them (I hope this does not come as a shock for anyone reading this). In short, do not be deceived into thinking your marriage is hopeless simply because you are having difficulties. Trust me (and anyone else willing to admit it), you are not alone.</p>	<p>Respond: If you are currently single, how will you use this time for God’s glory?</p> <p>What personal changes can you make in order to improve your marriage?</p> <p>Did you participate in Love & Respect last fall? Have you let the Konrade’s know you appreciate their efforts?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp and the National Missionary Convention; missions New Life supports. Pray for Jason and Monica Konrade as they continue to serve by investing in marriages. Pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.</p>	

Saturday: Remember...if we don’t pray...

Read: 1 Timothy 2:1-4 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

<p>Reflect: Remember...God has acted first. As we continue to realize this it will continue to instill in us the realization that He knows what is needed in every situation. Another way of saying this is we need to be stop making plans and then asking God to bless them. If we are honest with ourselves we have all fallen into that trap. A reality is we will all likely repeat it...</p> <p>Yet God is gracious and will forgive. In fact, there are times when He will bless our plans. Also, there are times when we get it right and our quick reaction was in fact His desire. Yet none of those negate our need to continually turn to Him in prayer. And we must continue to grow in our realization of the things which need prayer.</p> <p>If we are not a praying people...then we are a faithless, disobedient people. Granted, we have all likely struggled with prayer at one time or another in our lives – so why not start with those who need to “See, Hear, or Experience” God’s love? If you are a woman I hope you will consider going to A.S.K., the city-wide prayer meeting, as you make time.</p>	<p>Respond: What if all we did on a Sunday morning was pray? Would you come if you knew that beforehand?</p> <p>Do you have difficulty praying? Try writing them out for a while. It helps to collect thoughts.</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Strong Tower Ministries and LCREF; missions New Life supports. Pray for more women to attend A.S.K. – from a variety of congregations. Pray for our worship tomorrow at the Church Building. Thank God for desiring all sinners to come to Him.</p>	

We Are All Needed

February 21 – 27

As you (likely) know, most of our Annual Meeting took place during the regular worship service. If you are like me you were grateful for the number of people who took part in the service yesterday. It is good to see the body being the body (e.g., serving in a variety of ways).

A beautiful reality is – we all need each other. A hard reality is – we all need each other.

- It is beautiful because this is God’s design. He is on a mission to restore all of creation to its original intent (harmony with each other, harmony with creation – no exploitation of humans or creation – harmony with Him, etc.)
- It is hard because what we are experiencing is not God’s design. It is hard because our sinful choices make it hard.

Yet hard does not mean hopeless...

Keeping in step with the sermon series, we must *Remember...* we are all needed and we all need each other. I am unaware of anyone who has ever come to a saving faith in God on their own (I have heard of and read reports of visions for people in other parts of the world bringing them to faith in God...**but** that is still not on their own). Furthermore, I know no one will ever continually mature in their faith on their own. This is impossible because the Bible calls us into community (in other words a person who thinks they are mature, but is not living in community, has somehow been deceived).

We must always remember God has acted first. When we remember that, and trust it to be true, then we can allow a text like Ephesians 4 to speak to us. In this chapter Paul tells us unity within the church is a gift from God – and we are to guard/protect/keep it. In other words, any divisions within the body are our fault. Therefore, differences must be talked about. Likewise, our “togetherness” needs to be celebrated!!

In light of all of that, one of the many things I do want to say (write), is that I am an approachable person. I am fine when people come and talk to me. Yet an unfortunate reality is since I am typing this, perhaps it betrays a reality that sometimes I do not appear to be approachable... My hope is with continued trust and service together I will **a)** truly become more approachable and **b)** people will accept me saying I am.

With that said, feel free to ask questions of the insert (or any insert), or sermon this week (or any sermon). We all need each other if New Life is going to be the blessing God desires Her to be. Yet do not expect an immediate response in the form of an answer. Another thing I continue to learn is if we are not a praying people...we will never be the blessing God desires us to be. So my response to a question may be, “Well, let’s pray about that for a while and then discuss it.”

Monday: Remember...we were saved for...

Read: 1 Peter 2:12 ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

<p>Reflect: Yesterday you heard about some of the community service projects we have done together as a church body. These projects are in step with our purpose statement: <i>Enhancing God's reputation by reflecting Jesus in the world through relationships, good works, and worship.</i></p> <p>While praying about and discussing our (at the time potential) Purpose Statement, we realized "good works" might turn some people off. It is possible there are some who think <u>we think</u> we are "earning our salvation." Far from it. We are merely seeking to do what the Bible tells us to do – work <u>because</u> we are saved (e.g., Eph2:10; Mt5:16; Tit2:14).</p> <p>Furthermore, we do not do "good works" in order to be noticed. In addition to them being our response to salvation, we do them because we are following the example set by our Savior (e.g., Mk10:45). If we get noticed, well, we get noticed. But our prayer is for God to be glorified. God constantly pursues people to be in a relationship with Him. If our good works (cf. deeds) play a part in someone's turning to God when His Spirit "visits" their life...then praise be to God!!</p>	<p>Respond: What have you enjoyed about our Community Service projects?</p> <p>Do you know people who are "not interested" in "church" because they think it is irrelevant? Might their perspective change if they joined us as we serve?</p> <p>Are you willing to invite someone to serve the next time we do a service project?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson and "33 Church" in Olathe; he is the latest "church planter" hired by the CEA. Pray our community service projects will positively shape people's perspective of God. Thank God for our time of worship together yesterday at the Church Building. Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: Remember...why it is we do anything...

Read: Deuteronomy 6:20-21 ²⁰ "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?' ²¹ then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'

<p>Reflect: God acted first. This is vital for us to continually remember. If we forget, we run the risk of not shaping the next generation in response to our faith (let alone those around us in our own generation). This example from Deuteronomy shows it is a given children will ask questions. It is also a given adults will ask questions too. Are we ready to give an answer when people ask us about our lives (cf. 1Pet3:15)?</p> <p>On Sunday you heard about hopes for those involved in Children's Worship to work more closely with Cookson Hills (which is a mission we support). Chances are good if you ask them "why" this is desired, they can tell you.</p> <p>The topic of remembrance in the text from Deuteronomy is the Hebrew exodus from Egypt. We often gloss over these realities, but the exodus brought about liberation in political, economic, social, and spiritual areas. Is it possible we devalue the mission of God if we focus on only a single (e.g., spiritual) area?</p>	<p>Respond: Will you be willing to help, if needed, in order to make the desire to help Cookson Hills a reality?</p> <p>How good are you at basing answers to life's questions on the fact that God has acted first?</p> <p>Should the Christian message be all-encompassing like the exodus from Egypt was? Why? Why not?</p>
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Pray: Pray for God to continually be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Thank God He has acted first. Pray for the oppressed, neglected, and exploited all around the world. Pray for our Children's Worship time and all of the servants who make it a possibility. Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: Remember...God sees everything...

Read: James 1:27 ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

<p>Reflect: On Sunday you heard some of what the Men's Ministry at New Life does. You may recall how it was initially started to help meet needs within our church body. Lately the focus has shifted more outward as there are (apparently) not those needs within the body.</p> <p>As our text today shows, taking care of needs (inside and outside of the body) is necessary. The word for "visit" is not merely a stop in and chat type of word. It is a word which indicates involvement and a watchful eye – both of which may lead to sacrifice.</p> <p>God is concerned for all people, and when people are neglected or taken advantage of...it upsets Him. Due to Israel's neglect of people (e.g., Isa1:16-17), God says He will not even listen to them (e.g., Isa1:14-15). That is frightening to say the least. But He is compassionate and offers forgiveness if they will only turn to Him (Isa1:18f), which implies they would, in turn, take care of those who had been neglected.</p>	<p>Respond: Do you know of needs within the New Life body with which the men's ministry might help?</p> <p>If you are not skilled in handyman labor types of ways, what other ways can you help those in need in our body and area?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Pray for the day when there will be no needs being unmet within the body of New Life. Pray those we help will be convicted by the reasons we are helping...because we love God, and more importantly, He loves them. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: Remember...relationships are needed...

Read: Titus 2:3-5 ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

<p>Reflect: The list here in Titus is quite impressive – and perhaps a bit shocking. After all, who would think a wife would need to be trained to love their husband...or children? Yet when we consider many of the role models set forth in our culture (e.g., Desperate Housewives, most Hollywood stars, etc.), the need to be trained becomes more clear.</p> <p>The word for "train" (v4) can mean "to bring back to one's senses" – which was needed if younger women were being seduced by false teachings (cf. Tit1:11). This is not the place to launch into a "woman's role" (and dare I even say this is not explicitly defined in Scripture?), but it is the place to make an observation that is just as true for men as it is for women. (In the form of a question...) Why is it we fool ourselves into thinking we can grow and mature in our faith on our own?</p> <p>(Also feel free to note how men were to be taught as well in the opening of chapter two.) No one has become the person they are today in a vacuum. External factors like people and the culture (and hopefully God's Word) have shaped us. We need each other – but note how our text does not say every older "person" is a good example. They need to be godly before you follow their lead.</p>	<p>Respond: While not designed specifically for what Paul wrote about here in Titus, the women's Heart 2 Heart does provide an avenue for godly relationships to start. Have you invited anyone to a Heart 2 Heart?</p> <p>Do you know anyone who just needs a friend? Godly wisdom can be applied to any aspect of life, and in turn who knows where that may lead...</p>
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Pray: Pray for the ministry of Cookson Hills (a Christian Children's home and mission New Life supports). Pray New Life will be a body where healthy relationships are the norm. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6).