



First Reformed Church News & Views

January
2023

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First...

**Big
Thank
You!**

**Let's give thanks to
MaryAnn Fokken for her
many years of serving as
the newsletter editor.**

Second ↓

Resolution Making vs. Habit Formation

What is your practice as you enter a new year? Are you into resolution making? "I'm going to exercise more and eat less junk food." "I'm going to make those updates to my home." "I'm going to buy less and pay down my credit cards." "I'm going to read through the Bible this year." "I'm going to..."

What happens next for you? How long does your resolution last? Do you ever get started? Do you start to give up part way through the year? How has Covid affected your ability to not just form new habits, but to reestablish some of the good old pre-pandemic habits?

As we entered into 2021 and the world was still not getting back to normal, I knew it would be hard to get people back into the habit of attending live church services. It was too convenient to leave the kids in their jammies and sit in the recliner with the breakfast of choice in hand. While social media allowed us to continue to worship remotely, it's not the same as being together in person. Covid made life a lot more challenging than most of us have every experienced. Covid was hard on the Church as well.

People who study human behavior have asked: How long does it actually take to build a habit? Healthline.com reports:

"While historically, people have thought that it takes 21 days to create a new habit (or change an existing one), recent claims have pushed that number up to 66 days. In fact, the most recent significant study shows that it can take anywhere between 18 and 254 days to form a new habit –which averages to about 66 days."

Now I'm guessing these numbers apply if one is going to practice a given habit every day. But what about a once a week event like Sunday church services? Even if we take the 66 day average it's going to take over a year to form or re-form the Sunday habit. So...

...what if we offer more ways to connect? What if we offer options on others days and times and not just Sunday morning? (Don't worry I'm in no way advocating for canceling Sunday morning worship—that's not going to happen on my watch.) But what if there's options for young couples to get together to learn about the practical things of life from a Biblical perspective? A once or twice a month gathering to learn about marriage or parenting or finances or time management. What if we have a monthly meeting for seniors to hear about different areas that apply to their current chapter of life? I'm sure there would be food involved with some or all of these meetings. What better way to get to know one another than to share a table.

And don't lose sight of the big-picture goal: to get people connected to Jesus. Doing life with God at the center, right? The goal is not just to get people to fill the pews and add their names to our membership list. To make it happen, it's going to take your prayers and your participation. Most likely, it's going to push you beyond your comfort zone. Be praying specifically about how we can engage those connections you have now: neighbors, friends, co-workers. Also, be praying that God will open your eyes to see someone new that He will bring into your path. Look for people who don't have Jesus as a part of their journey and share life with them.

It will take awhile to form this new habit of looking for divine appointments; but don't just try it for a day or a week or even a month and give up. *Jesus said, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest...Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."* (John 4:35ff)

Pastor Rob



**Sow a thought
and you reap an action;
sow an act
and you reap a habit;
sow a habit
and you reap a character;
sow a character
and you reap a destiny."**

Ralph Waldo Emerson



P.U.S.H.
PRAY UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS

- 1 Jerry Marcus
- 1 Jerry Meyer
- 1 Beth Van Den Einde
- 4 Doug Oxenreider
- 5 Fredric Damhof
- 5 Marlyn Tebben
- 8 Vern Petersen
- 9 Kelcie Underland
- 12 Harlan Dragt
- 13 MaryLou Van Den Einde
- 14 Benjamin Underland
- 15 Don Bents
- 18 Kathy Marcus
- 27 Phyllis Williams
- 28 Macee Bobzien
- 29 Cindy Fischer
- 31 Gary Faber

January

- 6 Mel & Kathy Brouwer

The Power To Bless

A beloved physician of the 1600's, Sir Thomas Browne, was an example of constant payers of blessing. He said, "I have resolved to pray more and pray always, to pray in all places where quietness inviteth, in the house, on the highway and on the street; and to know no street or passage in this city that may not witness that I have not forgotten God. I purpose to take occasion of praying upon the sight of any church which I may pass, that God may be worshipped there in Spirit, and that souls may be saved there; to pray daily for my sick patients and for the patients of other physicians; at my entrance into any home say, 'May the peace of God abide here'; after hearing a sermon to pray for blessing on God's truth and upon the messenger; upon the sight of a beautiful person to bless God for His creatures, to pray for the beauty of such an one's soul, that God may enrich her with inward graces and that the outward and inward may correspond; upon the sight of a deformed person to pray God will give them wholeness of soul, and by and by give them beauty of the resurrection."

Prayer is God's gift of power to bless others. O fill every day with prayers of blessing and take hold of the tremendous power God has given you!

Touch The World Through Prayer Wesley Duewel

Another year for God

Another year is dawning; dear Father, let it be, in working or in waiting, another year with thee....
Another year of progress, another year of praise, another year of proving thy presence all the days.
Another year of service, of witness for thy love; another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning! Dear Father, let it be, on earth, or else in heaven, another year for thee.

—Frances Ridley Havergal

Women's Circles



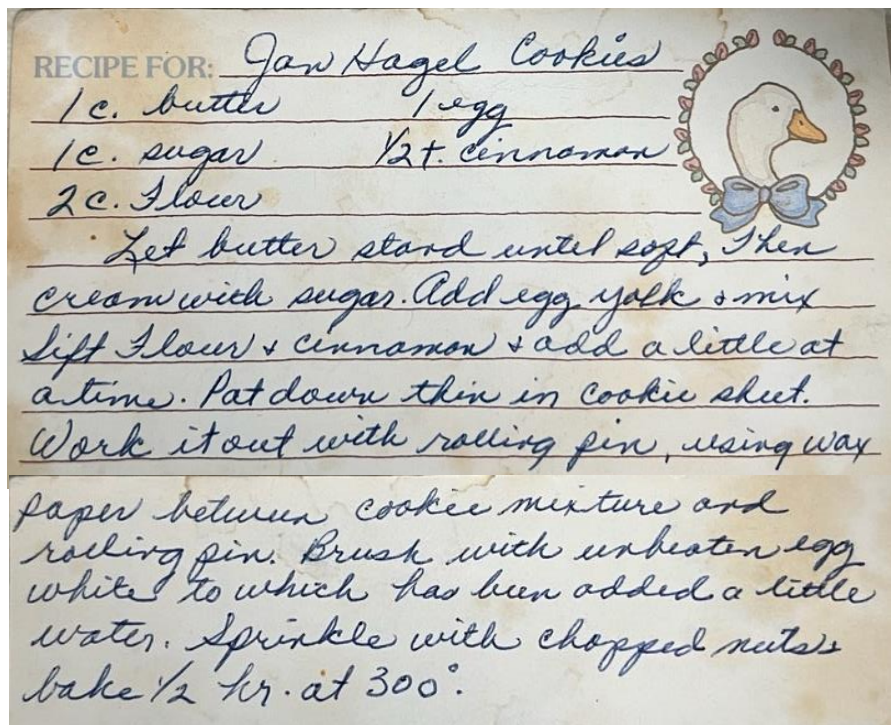
Mary Circle:
No January meeting

Deborah Circle:
No January meeting

Rebekah Circle:
Tuesday, Jan 10th @ 2:00 pm

Naomi Circle:
Thursday, Jan 12th @ 6:30 pm

Karen Ford's Dutch Cookie Recipe

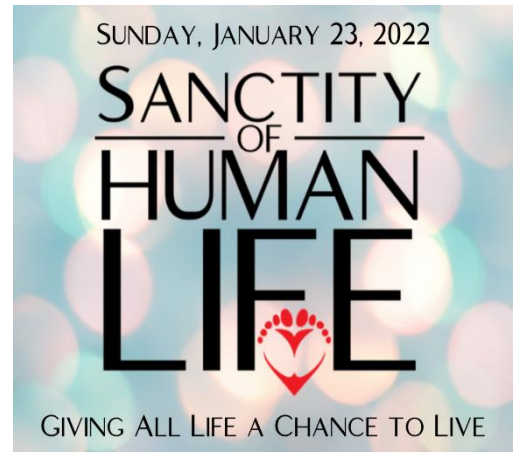


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Recognizing the Sanctity of Human Life

On January 13, 1984, President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation designating January 22nd as the first National Sanctity of Human Life Day, noting it was the 11th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion in all 50 states.

January 2023 will commemorate the 39th year our nation has observed the sanctity of human life, and this year, we are celebrating the overturning of Roe v. Wade. However, the need to pray for a culture of life in our communities and our nation is still vitally important. Abortion, especially chemical abortions, continue to occur – even in states where abortion is now illegal.



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Pray for the local work done through the Hope Pregnancy Center in Willmar.



I've been a financial coach in my church for several years, and I've seen many financial situations. I've learned that some people pay too little attention to their financial affairs; others too much. Some routinely budget and plan and save; others don't. Some give generously; others withhold.

Most can offer reasons (or excuses) for their decisions. Yet often they're acting based on misconceptions about what Scripture teaches. We need to have an accurate, comprehensive view of biblical personal finance.

To that end, here are five common misconceptions I've come across.

1. God cares more about my heart than what I do with my money.

God certainly cares about the condition of our hearts. And yet there's a "faith and works" connection with money that can't be ignored. A heart transformed by the gospel will result in changes not just to what we *believe* about money but also what we *do* with it ([Jas. 2:14-17, 26](#)).

Money is a big deal in the Bible. We're given more instruction in the Bible about money (more than 2,000 verses) than almost anything else. Jesus told many parables about it, and the apostles had a lot to say about it. We're told to avoid the love of money ([1 Tim. 6:6-10](#)) and to choose God over money ([Luke 16:13](#)), so we can be generous and ready to give ([Matt. 6:2, 5, 16](#)) and put our trust in God, not riches ([1 Tim. 6:17-19](#)). We're also encouraged to plan and save ([Prov. 21:20](#)) and look after the needs of our families and others ([1 Tim. 5:8; Heb. 13:16](#)).

2. I know I need to give, but how much doesn't matter so long as I give something.

There's little disagreement among Christians that giving is encouraged, even commanded, in Scripture ([Mal. 3:6-12; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 16:1-2](#)). But when we start talking about "how much," things get tricky.

Some say we're free to give as little or as much as we want based on how we "feel led," because we're free from the "legalism" of the tithe. It's true that New Testament giving shouldn't be legalistic. But Jesus and the apostles taught proportional and even sacrificial generosity from a heart of gratitude and worship, which for some may be more than a tithe ([Mark 12:41-44; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:5-6](#)).

Christians are a long way from obeying this teaching. Depending on which study you read, among professing Christians who attend church regularly, only about 5 percent give at least 10 percent of their income (the traditional "tithe"). Of those who do give, the average is approximately 2.5 percent of income.

3. Debt is unavoidable and not a problem so long as I pay it back and maintain good credit.

Debt is common these days; all forms of consumer debt are on the rise. Some debt may occasionally be necessary, but most kinds can be avoided with careful planning and discipline.

Scripture doesn't explicitly prohibit lending and borrowing, but it does teach that debt is a form of "bondage," since it makes the borrower a slave to the debt payment itself (Prov. 22:7). It also makes the borrower a slave to the lender in the sense that the lender has partial "ownership" of the time the borrower must work to pay the lender back.

Unless there's an overwhelming need to borrow, we shouldn't put ourselves under the bondage of indebtedness. At a minimum, we shouldn't frequently borrow, and we should always pay off debt as soon as possible (which is the wise thing to do regardless).

4. God will prosper me financially if I work hard and have enough faith.

Historically there have been two perspectives on financial prosperity and the Christian life. The first teaches that because love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10), the more money you have, the less righteous you can be. The second teaches that God wants all Christians to be prosperous and wealthy. If we aren't prosperous, it's because we don't have enough faith.

A more accurate biblical perspective is that God in his sovereignty gives some people more, and others less, to steward on his behalf (1 Sam. 2:7; Matt. 26:11). How and why he does so is his business, not ours. Mature believers may be either rich or poor (Prov. 22:2).

5. God has promised to take care of me, so I don't have to worry about money.

God promises to take care of his children (Matt. 6:25-27; Phil. 4:19). But he also instructs us to take responsibility (and action) for our situation (Prov. 10:4-5). When it comes to finances, we have to do our part.

In light of his promises, we can be free from worry since we know God will take care of us. And given the wise instruction we've received, we need to resist passivity and inaction, which presume on God's kindness.

Money is an important part of our lives, so it's important that we clearly grasp what the Bible teaches about it. Take time to study the Scriptures for yourself and see how they apply to your situation. Read good books on biblical stewardship. Above all, strive to be a faithful steward of all that your King has entrusted to you (1 Cor. 4:2).

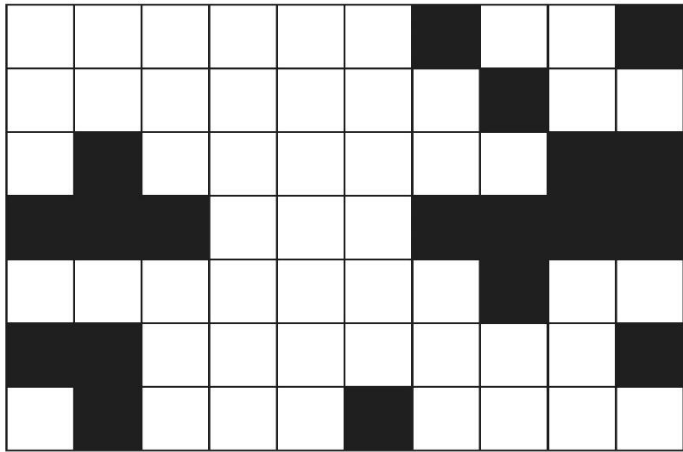
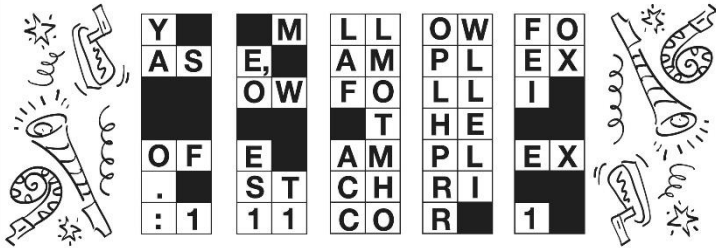
Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7



Puzzle!

Match the blocks of spaces and letters to complete an NIV Bible verse about an important commitment.



Baptism is serious business!

Baptizing people into God’s family has always been a ministry highlight for Pastor Stan Purdum. One Sunday, he had the privilege of welcoming three infants and two young boys to the baptismal font, along with all their parents. After baptizing the babies, Purdum turned toward the families with older children, who’d been instructed to have their boys step forward one at a time.

Immediately, the 3-year-old shouted, “Not me!” and bolted for the exit. His father caught the youngster and carried him back as the congregation chuckled. This time, Purdum wasted no time completing the sacrament.

“Maybe this young boy was not greatly wrong to try to duck baptism,” he later pondered. “Far from being a harmless little ceremony, baptism begins a lifetime commitment to God, which over the long haul is no easy thing. It lays upon us the responsibility to live up to the vows we have made.” How seriously do you take your baptismal vows?

Writing our life — with God's help

A journalist once said you can measure the quality of a piece of writing by the quality of what has been cut. No matter how beautiful or interesting a phrase or sentence is, the piece may be stronger without it.

Rabbi Evan Moffic applies this wisdom to life in general. Too often we refuse to let something — a habit, a memory, a process — go, even when it no longer serves us. Thinking of our life as a book, we can cut out, edit or rearrange some pages or sentences to reflect our new learnings and growth.

This is not always easy, but we don't have to do it alone. “God is our ‘editor-in-chief,’” says Moffic, “and we are part of God’s story. [While] God ... gives us free will to decide what to write on the pages of our lives, ... God is always there for conversation and consultation. And God left us a great guidebook called the Bible. Its lessons make our writing shine with truth and beauty.” With God’s guidance, what will you “write” in the new year?



Parenting is hard work.

Sometimes the days are long and you feel challenged at every turn. You may feel like you're making no progress at all and your joy is fading. Hopelessness threatens to fill your

heart. How can a parent keep moving forward, providing love, and nurture, and direction when the path ahead looks so ominous? When you're tired or you've solved too many problems already and you're faced with yet another challenge, having your own clear philosophy of discipline will motivate you to persevere and be consistent. Your calling as a parent will give you the ability to press on no matter what.

At various times in your children's growth, you'll find some strategies working well, and others not so well. Some types of discipline will work with one child but not with another. There are no easy discipline "formulas" guaranteed to work all the time. So it's important to give yourself some grace, keep learning new things, and trust God to help you as you do the best you can.

Even When You're Tired

All parents struggle from time to time, feeling overwhelmed or too tired to follow through with what they think they should be doing. One of the strongest things to keep you going in those moments is a clear purpose. All parents need something to hold on to when they're tired, discouraged, overwhelmed, or simply too busy dealing with the demands of life. Some parents burn out—even on a daily basis, because they don't know why they're doing what they're doing.

Once you understand and apply a clear philosophy of discipline, however, you can reverse the trend of burnout and use it to strengthen your family. This philosophy will allow love, rather than anger, to be your motivation, and your children will know what to expect. Developing a clear philosophy of discipline can give you a foundation that will energize you when day-to-day problems seem overwhelming.

Tip 1: Focus on the Goals

You may develop a number of goals for your children over the years, but your children's primary job is to learn to obey and honor. Ephesians 6:1–3 reads, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Sometimes parents think that the goal of family life is closeness. But the reality is that closeness only happens when the individuals in the family have the character that contributes to that. Selfish people have a hard time with closeness. Obedience and honor help children learn to give, not just take, and contribute, not just receive.

Tip 2: Endure the Pain

In the same way that an athlete embraces pain in order to reach a goal, parents must not be surprised by the “pain” encountered in raising children. Adjusting your expectations can help you not take resistance from kids personally but recognize that you have a goal to see your children become disciples, grow in maturity, have integrity and develop the life-skills necessary for their future. Some parents are shocked by their children’s poor responses. It’s as if they expect their children to say, “Thanks, Dad, for sending me to my room; I really appreciate the limits you set for me,” or “I appreciate it, Mom, when you make me clean up my toys and make my bed.” Children don’t naturally respond this way. Parents who expect their children to appreciate their discipline will be frustrated.

Tip 3: Look for Ways to Make it Positive

You may be thinking, “Yes, I know discipline is supposed to be positive, but how can I be positive when my kids are doing the wrong thing?” Perhaps you are tired and discouraged because you feel you’re being too negative with your children. If so, it’s time to break that cycle and focus on the positive.

For example, you might try to state rules and requests in positive terms whenever possible. Instead of saying, “Don’t shout,” you might say, “We need to talk quietly in this store.” Clearly stating or restating a rule in positive terms gives your child a clear picture of what’s expected and keeps your interaction on a positive note. This simple adjustment can help you as a parent focus on what you want your child to do instead of what you don’t want.

Tip 4: Think Long Term

You’re training your children for the future. You’re not simply changing their behavior to make present circumstances easier. One reason children need to learn to obey their parents is so that they can obey God. Obedience is bigger than a parenting issue. It’s a God issue. When your daughter’s ball rolls into the street and she starts to run after it, you yell, “Stop!” You don’t want her to evaluate your instruction. You want her to instinctively stop at the sound of your voice. This is the kind of obedience children need to develop so they will respond to God in the same way.

Parenthood is partnership with God. Your teaching of godly character provides the basis for spiritual development in your children. Key attitudes such as obedience, submission, and honor toward God are best learned as children and practiced throughout life.

Perhaps your kids have developed some negative character traits along the way. If so, this is not a time for you to beat yourself up with guilt because of the way you’ve disciplined (or not disciplined). Make adjustments now and begin to emphasize different things with your children. You’ll see new changes that will help to round out their development.

This parenting tip comes from the book [*Home Improvement: The Parenting Book You Can Read To Your Kids*](#) by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN. <https://biblicalparenting.org/>

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul. —Gilbert K. Chesterton

When you were a child, your parents probably made you take their hands before crossing a street, and they reminded you to “look both ways.”

New Year's Day is a good time to look both ways — backwards and forwards. What do you see when you look back on the past 365 days?

Perhaps the year 2022 seemed to go by rather quickly. As oldsters, this is a common impression. It doesn't seem to matter how we spend the time. We can waste it or put it to good use. One day, we wake up and it's a new year, and just like that — we're speeding forward into a new year!

Tempus fugit. Yes, time flies, but, as someone said, fortunately, you're the pilot.

Maybe. Often, I feel as though I don't have much control as to the course I am flying and that, when flying into the future, I find that the destination is always changing. Truth is, usually I am not certain about where the flight is going to end up, and I am a bit nervous about it..

This is what it is like when we try to look forward into the coming year. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that we can expect almost anything to happen.

As we gaze into 2023, let's remember to put the controls in the hands of the only Pilot who knows the way, who in fact once said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Edward Hopper, the 19th-century hymnwriter and pastor of the Church of Sea and Land, a church for sailors, wrote a hymn that might be in your hymnal:

*Jesus, Savior, pilot me, / Over life's tempestuous sea:
Unknown waves before me roll, / Hiding rocks and treach'rous shoal;
Chart and compass come from Thee – / Jesus, Savior, pilot me!*

*When at last I near the shore, / And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest – Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me, / “Fear not– I will pilot thee!”*

May 2023 be a year of God's richest blessings for you and those you love!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for being at the controls, for knowing the way, for charting my course and for being my Pilot “over life's tempestuous seas.” Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Genesis 1-5
- Monday:** Genesis 6-12
- Tuesday:** Genesis 13-18
- Wednesday:** Genesis 19-23
- Thursday:** Genesis 24-28
- Friday:** Genesis 29-32
- Saturday:** Genesis 33-36

READ
THROUGH
THE BIBLE
IN ONE
YEAR!

Each week, *HomeTouch* will provide daily readings from the Bible that will take you through the Bible in one year. Sometimes, we will suggest a **Verse to Remember**. Many *HomeTouch* readers try to memorize these verses; memorization stimulates both the mind and the heart!

Find the missing words using the code below:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

"As a _____ looks after his _____
H S V K S V I W H X Z G G V I V W

flock when he is _____ them, so will I look after my
D R G S

sheep. I will _____ them and _____ them. I
I V H X F V K Z H G F I V

will _____ for the lost and bring back the _____.
H V Z I X S H G I Z B

I will bind up the _____ and strengthen the _____.
R M Q F I V W D V Z P

You are my _____, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your
H S V V K

God, says the Lord God." —Based on Ezekiel 34

January 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



Scripture Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Words express what's on your mind, but your actions say what's in your heart.
—Frank Sonnenberg

There is an old Spanish saying which goes, “Por la boca muere el pez.” Literally, this means “the fish dies by its mouth.” If the fish had kept its mouth shut, he would not have ended up in the frying pan or mounted on a wall.

We can get into a lot of trouble sometimes because we open our big mouths. Truth is, it is more important that we *do* the right thing, than say the right thing. We are defined by what we do, not what we say.

Let's say that a man comes home one day, and his wife, who had arrived from her job only minutes earlier, notices that the expression on his face is grim. He marches past her on his way to the kitchen. He opens a cupboard and slams it shut. He rattles a drawer looking for some-thing. He kicks at the dog. She asks him, “What's the matter?”

“Nothing.”

“How was your day at the office?”

“Fine!”

Do you suppose the wife believes the *words* her husband chooses, or the *behavior* he has acted out since he came home? *The behavior*. The *non-verbal action* will always be believed rather than the verbal when the two are in conflict. Truly, actions do indeed speak louder than words.

Francis of Assisi once invited a young monk to join him on a trip to preach in a nearby town. The monk was honored and readily accepted the invitation. All day, the two monks walked through the streets and alleys of the town and even ventured into the suburbs. They rubbed shoulders with hundreds of people.

At the end of the day, the two headed to a monastery for the night. The young monk was puzzled that Francis had not even once addressed a crowd, nor had he talked to anyone about the gospel. Greatly disappointed, his young companion finally said to Francis, “I thought we were going into town to preach.”

Francis responded, “Oh, but we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. Many saw us and our behavior was closely watched. It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!”

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: May my life, O God, be a living witness to your love, grace and mercy. Help me to act out the good news so that both my words and my life are in harmony. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Genesis 37-39
Monday: Genesis 40-42
Tuesday: Genesis 43-46
Wednesday: Genesis 47-50
Thursday: Matthew 1-4
Friday: Matthew 5-7
Saturday: Psalms 1-3

Verse to Remember

Happy are those ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. —Psalm 1:1-3

ANAGRAM ADVENTURE!

An *anagram* is a word made of the same letters as another word. In the lists below, find each word's anagram by rearranging the letters in each of these real words to form a new real word. Example: LISTEN = SILENT (SILENT is an anagram of LISTEN).

Master = _____	Ignores = _____
Generate = _____	Abroad = _____
Weather = _____	Diaper = _____
Earnest = _____	Scared = _____
Glean = _____	Alerted = _____
Outside = _____	Gallery = _____
Nerve = _____	Praised = _____
Direct = _____	Beard = _____
Priest = _____	Ideals = _____
Roasting = _____	Lameness = _____
Reveals = _____	Lament = _____
Strut = _____	Decimal = _____
Forest = _____	Serpents = _____
Resist = _____	Observe = _____
Grown = _____	Petals = _____



ANAGRAM ADVENTURE: Left column — master=stream; generate=teenager; weather= wreathe; earnest=eastern or nearest; glean=angel or angle; outside=tedious; nerve=never; direct=credit; priest=stripe; roasting=organist; reveals=several; strut=trust; forest=softer or foster; resist=sister; grown=wrong. Right column — ignores=regions; abroad=aboard; diaper=repaid; scared=sacred; alerted=treadle, altered or related; gallery=allergy or largely; praised=despair; beard=bread or bared; ideals=ladies; lameness=salesmen; lament=mental or mantle; decimal=medical; serpents=presents; observe=verbose; petals=staple.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 40:1-11
*Patience is not simply the ability to wait; it's how we behave
while we're waiting. —Joyce Meyer*

Look at the first three words of this psalm. The first two are fine: “I waited.”
The third word is a problem: “Patiently.”

Why is it important that when one waits on the Lord, that she or he waits patiently? What's the big deal? What difference does it make if you are patient or impatient?

Perhaps it should not matter. The thing is, if waiting is necessary, one might as well wait patiently rather than impatiently. It's much better for one's blood pressure.

The amount of time we invest in waiting often is a telling sign of the value we place on the object for which we are waiting. This doesn't apply to situations in which waiting is thrust upon us — situations in which we have no choice ... like having to wait in a dentist's office for an appointment in which your teeth will be introduced to the drill.

But if we're willing to order a book and wait for delivery, this means we value the book.

If we order a new, special wheelchair and wait for delivery, we clearly value the wheelchair we want.

If we order an electric, weighted blanket, we need to wait for delivery. We don't mind because we value the blanket.

If we wait upon the Lord, we do so, because there's value in doing so.

There is value in waiting when the object of waiting has value. Waiting with patience expresses 1) utmost confidence in the outcome, 2) our trust in God, 3) that we're at peace with the process and 4) that we are unafraid (v. 3).

No wonder that David, the psalm writer, could cry with joy, “I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry ... He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God ... Happy are those who make the LORD their trust” (vv. 1,3-4). Amen!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Increase my patience, O Lord, so that like David of old, I too might have a song in my mouth and peace in my heart. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Matthew 8-11
- Monday:** Matthew 12-15
- Tuesday:** Matthew 16-19
- Wednesday:** Matthew 20-22
- Thursday:** Matthew 23-25
- Friday:** Matthew 26-28
- Saturday:** Psalms 4-6

Verse to Remember

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

—Matthew 16:15-16

Can you do this in two minutes?

Here are 10 short words, all with the letter F in them. Can you unscramble them in two minutes? That's about 11 seconds per word. Try it!

yfl _____

tefe _____

hsfi _____

gofr _____

ofx _____

nfa _____

rouf _____

rokf _____

evfi _____

fcea _____

EMPTY BOXES

Arrange the numbers 2 through 10 in the boxes so that each column, row and long diagonal add up to 18. One number is already given.

			Can you do this in two minutes? fly, feet or fete, fish, frog, fox, fan, four, fork, five, face.
	6		

EMPTY BOXES: Top row: 9,2,7; Middle row: 4,6,8; Bottom row: 5,10,3.



MLK DAY
 Monday,
 January 16, 2023

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4:12-23

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. — Theodore Roosevelt

I was born on the southern plains of Saskatchewan, but also lived in Minnesota and Colorado. What do these locales have in common? They get a ton of snow in January and all of the winter months. No wonder I have numerous memories of walking through deep snow with a parent or friends.

Did you ever do that — walk through deep snow?

Perhaps you learned quickly that there is a simple solution to the problem of pushing through knee-deep snow: *you place your feet into the steps of the person ahead of you!* Of course! Why go to all the trouble of creating a new path, when you can walk in the impressions already left by others?

Only a few weeks ago we were singing Christmas carols, one of which might have been “Good King Wenceslas.” The carol relates the story of the medieval Bohemian King Wenceslas. On a cold and snowy night, according to online sources, the good King Wenceslas is enjoying the Feast of Saint Stephen. He looks out over his land, illuminated by moonlight, and notices a poor man gathering firewood for his home. He asks a page if he knows who the man is. The page responds that the man lives a long distance from here at the base of a mountain.

King Wenceslas immediately wishes to share the warmth of his own home and the food of the holiday with him. He orders the servants of his household to bring him food and firewood, that he may bring them into the poor man’s home. Thus begins the king’s journey of goodwill through the wintery night with one of his servants. Off they go together, carrying a heavy load and trudging through heavy snowfall and cold wind.

The page soon tells the king, “Sire, I cannot go any further.” Good King Wenceslas, replies, “Mark my footsteps, good my page. / Tread thou in them boldly. / Thou shalt find the winter’s rage / freeze thy blood less coldly.”

In today’s Bible reading, Jesus calls his disciples. “Follow me,” he says.

What he means is, “Follow in my footsteps. Tread thou in them boldly.”

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O Lord, you have called me to be one of your followers. But too often I struggle. Now I realize I too easily forget the first rule of discipleship: “Follow the Leader.” Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Job 1-4
- Monday:** Job 5-7
- Tuesday:** Job 8-10
- Wednesday:** Job 11-13
- Thursday:** Job 14-17
- Friday:** Job 18-20
- Saturday:** Psalms 7-9

PALINDROME PUZZLE

Directions: A *palindrome* is a word that reads the same backward or forward, like *radar*, *sis*, *Bob* or *racecar*. But here are short sentences with the words mixed up. Rearrange **the words** so that the sentence is the same spelled forward or backward. Write your answer on the line provided.

has ham Ma a

was Sue I Euston saw not

**What well-known
expression do you see
here?**

litttlelitttle

latelate

Answer: Too little, too late.

Answer: Ma has a ham; Euston saw I was not Sue.

UNSCRAMBLE THE MINOR PROPHETS

Our readings this week take us into the Minor Prophets, so called because most of them are short books. The list below contains all 12 of the Minor Prophets. Unscramble their names to discover their identities!

OJEL _____

AZAEHINPH _____ O

M CIAH _____

NJHAO _____ O

ABKUKKAH _____ O

AGIAGH _____ O

DHAIABO _____ O

OASM _____ O

MUNAH _____

AHRIZAHCE _____

OAESH _____ O O

IHCMALA _____

Unscramble the circled letters to reveal the secret word (the first letter is provided).

K _____

Answer key to UNSCRAMBLE: Joel, Zephaniah, Micah, Jonah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Obadiah, Amos, Nahum, Zechariah, Hosea, Malachi. Secret word: KINDNESS.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

*Blessed are those who can give without remembering
and take without forgetting. —Elizabeth Bibesco*

The Bible reading for today is from what is popularly called “The Sermon on the Mount.” The preacher is Jesus, and the congregation are farmers, mothers with their children, some curious onlookers, his disciples and perhaps some other, early followers of Jesus.

The sermon covers three chapters in Matthew, chapters 5-7. The first 12 verses which comprise today’s lesson are known as “The Beatitudes.” This word comes from a Latin word which literally means “blessed” or “happy.”

There are nine beatitudes in these verses, or nine “happies,” as I like to call them. As you read this paraphrased list, watch for *paradoxes*.

Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Happy are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Happy are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Happy are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Elsewhere in the Bible, we learn that when we are weak, we are strong. That a soft answer turns away anger. That God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise (1 Cor.1:27). That in dying, there is life, as when a seed falls to the ground, or when the cross gives way to an empty tomb.

Living the life of a Christian is not for the fainthearted, because it is full of paradox. A godly life is a counterintuitive life. But it is also a blessed life. It is the ultimate happy life.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, help me to lean into the paradoxes of godly living ... loving, not hating; mercy, not judgment; peace rather than anger; kindness, not spite. This is the life I truly want. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday: Job 21-24
- Monday: Job 25-27
- Tuesday: Job 28-31
- Wednesday: Job 32-34
- Thursday: Job 35-37
- Friday: Job 38-42
- Saturday: Psalms 10-12

Verse to Remember
*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and
 that at the last he will stand upon the
 earth.*

COMPOUND INTEREST

Take all of these words and create compound words using all the words once! 32 words = 16 compound words. EXAMPLE: flower + pot = flowerpot.

TUB

FOOT

FIRE

MOON

BOY

DOG

MAN

GRASS

BUTTER

BRUSH

BALL

SHINE

FLY

HOUSE

SUN

LIGHT

COW

GROUND

TOOTH

FISH

KEY

PLAY

BOARD

WRITE THE COMPOUND WORDS HERE:

SHOE

BOWL

JELLY

BATH

BEAN

HOPPER

PAN

HORSE

CAKE

ANSWERS:
 doghouse,
 fireman,
 fishbowl,
 toothbrush,
 football,
 sunshine (OR
 sunlight),
 moonlight (OR
 moonshine),
 keyboard,
 cowboy,
 playground,
 horseshoe,
 bathtub,
 jellybean.
 butterfly
 grasshopper
 pancake

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘ Please be Praying for... ⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

Our Missionaries

Jeremy & Susan Beebout ~ Niger
Rawee & Nui Bunupuradah ~ Thailand
John & Lynne Hubers ~ Ethiopia

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