

Thursday, March 26, 2020

Dear Friends,

I miss you and our time together! We have suspended worship services and opportunities for communal prayer, study, fellowship, ministry and stewardship as we maintained "social distancing." During this strange Lenten season we have been forced to discover strategies for independent spiritual development and enrichment.

In our Lenten series, based on *The Walk*, the author Adam Hamilton proposed the exercise of five spiritual disciplines. Each discipline has a corporate or group expression and an individual expression. The COVID-19 pandemic has curtailed our group experience, but it does not limit our personal practice. In fact, the enforced solitude has allowed attention to our personal application of the disciplines. To "walk with our Lord," we should practice those five disciplines.

**The first discipline was WORSHIP.** We are called to thank, love and praise our God. Prayer is a major component of that discipline. The assignment was to pray at least five times each day.

**The second discipline was STUDY.** We are encouraged to discern our God's will through general and special revelation. We may encounter God in the arts, nature, human experience and conscience. More specifically, we may discover God's way through the Holy Spirit, scripture and Jesus. The assignment was to read at least five chapters of scripture each week.

**The third discipline was SERVE.** If we are to walk with Jesus, we must be about the work of the kingdom. "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." (Ephesians 2:10) The assignment was to extend an intentional act of kindness toward someone else at least five times a week. Bless, encourage, help someone else or speak up for those who could not speak up for themselves.

**The fourth discipline is GIVE.** The grace of God calls us to an extraordinary generosity. (Give and it will be given too you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38). The assignment was to perform at least five acts of extraordinary generosity towards others each month.

**The fifth discipline is SHARE.** "Most people who choose to follow Jesus do so because of the positive witness of Christians through whom they experienced love and from whom they heard a compelling witness and example of what it means to be a Christian." The author reminds us that we are inundated with surveys. Many practitioners, stores, manufacturers, and businesses inquire and ask us to rate, score, judge, evaluate their services, products, experiences. Millions on Facebook are invited to "like" entries. When we are considering a book, a movie, a worker, we look to reviews and references and recommendations. When we consider restaurants and residences, we look at the number of stars or comments. We pay attention to and respect referrals.

As followers of Jesus, we have been commanded to share the good news. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) As disciples, we have been instructed to share the good news by word and actions. Paul wrote that "we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us." (II Corinthians 5:20) What does your faith mean to you? How has your journey of faith affected your life? How has following Jesus transformed or made a difference in your life? Are you prepared to give testimony to your discipleship, to be a witness to your relationship with our God? We are all a little timid when it comes to sharing. It is so personal. Others are reluctant to speak or hear about spiritual trials or growth. Confession is never easy. But we serve a great God. Shouldn't we let others know about the blessing, grace, forgiveness, love that is available and accessible to them? Shouldn't we share our faith that provides joy, peace and comfort? Who is it that shared their faith with you? Are there people who would say that you played a key part in their becoming a follower of Christ?

How is our church thought of by the people in our community. “What leads the unchurched to take notice of a church is when that church and its members genuinely care about them and when they are actively engaged in seeking to have a positive impact on the community. They notice when a church serves others selflessly, when it gives generously, when it loves radically.” When others see our good works, when we’ve demonstrated radical, selfless love, this can draw others to Christ. We are to continue the ministry Jesus pursued: healing the broken, searching for the lost, announcing and embodying the good news of the Kingdom. If you were to share the Christian gospel with someone else, what would you say? Our assignment, our challenge, is to identify five people whom you know and are unchurched. Pray for them; let your light shine before them by your good deeds; and finally for you to either share your faith story with them, or at the very least, to invite them to church with you...at least five people in a year. Our goal is five personal face-to-face conversations about faith with others each year.

Please continue to practice “social distancing” and other recommended precautions to stunt the spread of the virus. We do not want to endanger ourselves or our neighbors. Find ways to stay connected with others, who may also feel isolated. Support our church with your prayers and continued contributions (if possible). I miss you, and I look forward to the time when we can assemble together safely.

You can also look on our churches website for updated information or to give electronically [Church Website](#)

Keep in touch and be well!!

Peace,

“Pastor Kelly” —interim