



The Shepherd's Voice

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MINUTE WITH MIKE

Philippians 2

Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,

but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² So then, my beloved... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory...

End of Summer Greetings to you and yours,

Praying this newsletter finds you and yours looking to Jesus; The only True and Living God!

The times in which we live continue to prove difficult in so many ways. Not the least is the growing tension in the country, and even in families, as we draw nearer to the national elections in November. By the way, please be sure to fulfill your civil duty and vote!

As contentious as these times are, it provides us children of God a very rare and important opportunity to look to Jesus not only as our strength, hope and joy, but also to point others to Him as well. He is The One, The Only One who rules and because we know this, we trust Him and worship Him. I am continually reminded that God is in full control of all things; I am not.

There are, however, certain things God wants from His children in good times and in bad. He wants us to behave like children of God, sons and daughters of The Light. We are called, for example, not only to talk about and seek unity, but we are called to live it. For me that means I am to purposely choose to love all people no matter who or what they are. And I am to have a special love and comradery with and for all other Christians.

We are also called over and over again to humble ourselves. That is not so easy in a time and culture in which most of us think we've got all the answers. Humility for me means that I am intentionally careful with other people; how they feel and with what they believe. Difference will exist, no doubt, but respect and kindness ought also exist in even larger measure.

Mike

SESSION NEWS

Treasurer's Report –

\$ 27,858	Cash on Hand as of 7/31/2020
+ 25,442	Certificate of Deposit (Fifth/Third) (less following committed funds)
- 21	Accrued Joyful Noise offerings
<u>- 11,000</u>	Building Fund
\$ 42,279	Uncommitted Funds Available

Notes: Uncommitted funds as of the end of June were \$41,067. *Our cash GAIN in July was + \$1,212.*

Consent Agenda -

Approve the Clerks and Treasurer's Report and the minutes of the Stated Session Meeting of July 16, 2020. **A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

Pastor – Pastor Mike offered the following for consideration and discussion:

- He provided updates on health issues affecting members.
- Discussed possibility of inviting the Gideons to address the congregation in early winter.
- Led a discussion on the rental situation at the Seminary for August. Elder Jim Miller will follow up with the Seminary on this point.

Other Business –

- Worship – the outdoor service is now scheduled for August 30th.
 - o The Adams family to provide acoustic music.
 - o Service will be at 11:00 AM.
 - o Church will provide grilled burgers and dogs, with buns and bottled water; individually packaged condiments and chips will be made available, as well as paper products (plates, napkins, utensils). Mike has a list of other items needed.
 - o Church members will be asked to bring any side dishes they would like to have on their own; NO dishes to be passed.
- Fellowship – discussed; decided to table restart of coffee hour until sometime in September; to be determined.

Missions – the new fall schedule for Joyful Noise offerings is:

- Sep/Oct Pregnancy Resource Center
- Nov/Dec Forgotten Man Ministries
- Note: Warming Ears has moved to 2021.

Brooks Memorial Scholarship Fund – All scholarship distributions have been completed for the fall semester: Fikre Norcha, Amanuel Norcha, Turah Adams, and Liam Adams; \$1,000 each.

Next Presbytery Meeting – The fall meeting will be by Zoom conference on October 3, 2020; 9 AM to Noon. Elder Jim Miller was previously selected as the voting commissioner.~~~~~

Next Session Meeting – The next Stated Session meeting will be on **Thursday, September 10** at 1:30 PM at the Seminary.

DATES

Thursday (3rd) Bilyea’s Home Group meeting
1:00pm
Friday (4th) Men’s Breakfast – Bob Evans (M6 @
Kalamazoo) 9:30am
Sunday (6th) Worship and Communion at 10:00am
Monday (7th) Labor Day Holiday
Thursday (10th) Session 1:30pm
Sunday (13th) Worship and Installation Service at
10:00am
Thursday (17th) Bilyea’s Home Group meeting
1:00pm
Sunday (20th) Worship at 10:00am – Rev. Dr. Laura
Smit preaching
Monday (21st) Newsletter deadline
Friday (25th) Ladies Luncheon – Grand Traverse Pie
Company 1:00pm
Sunday (27th) Worship and Dedication of Prayer
Shawls at 10:00am

21 Leesa Lehmann
Cathy Jo Wolters
27 Glenda Williams
28 Rose De Young
29 Dorothy Postema
30 Jaxson Vanderberg

MEMBERS/FRIENDS IN NEED OF PRAYER

Elaine Miller, Jean Bailey, Cathy Jo Walters, Joan Walstrom, Donna Baynai as she mourns the loss of her mother Connie, Fikre and family, and Bob & Bev Schaafsma

A WORD ABOUT REOPENING OUR CHURCH

The Session has discussed at length when and how to carefully reopen all of the activities and programs we are accustomed to experiencing. We, of course, want to keep all of us safe and healthy. To that end we have decided to take up the matter at our September meeting and then, perhaps, specify dates for reopening the following:

- Sunday morning 8:00am Prayer Meeting
- Sunday morning 9:00am Bible Study Class
- Children’s Church
- Congregational Fellowship after the 10:00am worship service

BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

5 Julie Koenes
6 Donna Baynai
7 Dana Lehmann
8 Turah Adams
10 Alem Tekalgn
15 Yesem Hamilemariam
17 Richard Soward
19 Diane Solomon

TAKEN FROM iBELIEVE

By Nylse Esahc, iBelieve Contributing Writer

Below is a segment of an article appropriate for the times in which we are living. The article itself was too lengthy to include in its entirety. The title of the article was “10 Things Black Brothers and Sisters Most Need to Hear from the Church.” Included here are the “ten things” expressed by the writer who is herself a “Black Sister” of faith. Should you desire to read the entire article, a copy is available on the information table.

10 Statements That Refresh a Black Brother or Sister's Parched Soul:

- 1. I see you** – Let's not be colorblind; instead, let's acknowledge the totality of a person. It's the equivalent of tossing the gift wrap to get to the gift. We're part and parcel of the gift, and since our melanated skin is probably what you see first, there's no use in trying to ignore it. We're Black—it's the skin we're in.
- 2. I hear you** – As you would with anyone else, listen to understand. When we speak, recognize that my experiences are mine, and somewhat unique to me.
- 3. I love you** – Show your love by your actions—invite us to be a part of your life without any awkwardness. Truly love as Christ loved without conditions or restraint.
- 4. Please forgive me** – As you become more aware of your Black friend's life, be open and honest with them. Please acknowledge that you may have conveniently overlooked many parts of their experience because it was too painful for you to deal with or because delusion was better than reality. If you can ever bring this up in conversation, it will go a long way towards cementing a friendship.
- 5. I want to know you** – Not as a curiosity or a caricature, but as a person that you have a genuine interest in. When you want to know someone, you'll go beyond the superficial, empty greeting making your attempts sincere.
- 6. I acknowledge privilege** – Acknowledging the flawed premise on which this country was built does not reduce a person's stature but rather is the start of equity in conversation. When we all start from the same place, it's easier to see the hurdles others have had to overcome.
- 7. I don't understand** – With acknowledgment comes an opportunity to learn and clear up misunderstandings. Your Black brothers and sisters may not be able to help in this regard, but you can also avail yourself of other resources. Don't expect them to teach you everything about what it means to be Black because there are many Black experiences.
- 8. I will walk alongside you** – When we fellowship together regularly, we're all fellows in a ship together walking along, sitting beside, and bearing each other's burdens as if it were your own. Coming alongside another is essential.
- 9. I'd love to help** – By extending an offer to help, whether it is a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, or a service that is more tangible, your help is an expression of sisterly or brotherly love.
- 10. Your life matters just as much as mine** – Never diminish another's life by uttering that repugnant phrase in response to a Black person's value of his life. Once you know the history of this country, you'll begin to realize that all lives have not mattered. In the body of Christ, my life has equal value and matters just as much as yours.

THIS IS MY STORY

By Dana Bilyea

Pastor Mike asked me if I would tell my story of learning to text and the results of my texting.

A little over three years ago my youngest grandson Caleb was about to graduate from high school. He had been training with the local fire department as a fireman's cadet, and he had been talking with an Air Force recruiter for some time. He decided to join the Air Force and was sworn in before high school graduation. He left for Lackland Air Force Base two weeks after graduation!

I am so proud of this young man for deciding on a path and making it happen! To support Caleb in his chosen path, I decided to text him daily with a scripture reference to encourage him to spend time with Jesus and in God's Word. My decision (guided by God, I assure you) was to send Caleb a text message every day with instructions to look up the verse in his Bible. He has been faithful in doing so ever since! And I get a thank you almost every morning. Eventually, he was transferred to Missouri and then transferred to Warner-Robins AFB south of Atlanta, Georgia. At this point, Caleb is forwarding my texts to a high school friend in Michigan.

After many months of this activity, it suddenly occurred to me that I could be doing this for his family (my son Brian's) also, so I started group texting his family here in Michigan. Then a few months later, I added

all of my son James' children. About a week into this, I got a text message politely saying that the number I was using for a granddaughter no longer belonged to her. This message, however, said he enjoyed the verse, and maybe he'd like to be adopted.

That surprised me; I texted him back and said I'd have to sleep on that one. I pondered on this a few days, talked to Jesus about it, and then said to myself, why not? I'm sure God was prompting me. So I texted the young man (Cody) back and said you are on my list. He's been on my list ever since.

Two of Jim's children asked to be taken off the list. One was brief and with no explanation. The second was because he did not want to be in the group—so I text him separately! Prior to all of this I was pestering God about why was I still here. I had no mission that I was aware of. **NOW I DO!!** Thank you, Jesus!!! I am texting seventeen people daily with a verse I hope and pray will inspire them, give them peace, and draw them closer to the One who loves us all!

I hope and pray you enjoy this story and that it inspires you. God always has a plan!

God Bless all of you!

Dana Bilyea

LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

You know people joke about men and the remote surfacing TV? The same can be accomplished with the internet. This article by Michelle Rabon, a contributor to "iBelieve," reflects the feelings of many today. The article itself, however, is too lengthy to include it in its entirety in this issue so the "5 Disciplines" will be spread through ensuing issues. As you read the article below, you will encounter the first Discipline: **PRAYER**.

5 SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

Michelle Rabon, iBelieve Contributor

There have been many days in the last few months that have felt as though I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. I have felt weighed down by all of the things I was seeing and hearing. It is beyond overwhelming most days. Heaviness. That's the feeling we are carrying.

My heart aches as I even begin to fully process what 2020 has thrown at us and will continue to throw our way. How do we handle it all in the right now? How do we attempt to lighten the heaviness that we are carrying around with us?

The reality is that we can never bear this burden by ourselves. We aren't that powerful. No one is immune to the ache of the beating this world can unleash. No one is immune to dark and hard days that try to tangle us up. No one is immune to health issues, grief, financial trouble, job loss, the list could go on infinitely.

Trouble in this life is a surety that we can count on. How we respond to it will reflect what we believe to be true.

Some spiritual disciplines can aid us in walking through heavy seasons like the one we find ourselves in. They are not a prescription to perfection, but like all spiritual disciplines, they are meant to steady us, and put our eyes on the focal point: Jesus.

When we fix our minds on Christ, we can rest in His presence and strength rather than our own.

[2 Corinthians 12:9](#), Paul tells them that our weakness is where God is the strongest. When we are weak, we acknowledge that we cannot do this on our own. It grants God the room to step in, to be strength where we have none.

1. Prayer

It sounds simple, I know. But one of the greatest spiritual disciplines we need to master is prayer. Praying Scripture, emptying our hearts of its burdens, asking for help and strength, praying for others. All of these

things will help us hand over the ache of our hearts to God rather than trying to keep ahold of it all for ourselves.

Create a prayer journal where you can keep your prayers written down and see the progress of what God is teaching you, revealing to you, or answering. The power of prayer isn't that the stronger they are the easier they will change the mind of God. No, prayer is to change us. To align our hearts with God, who knows what we need better than we ever will.

**Michelle Rabon is a wife and homeschooling mom of three who feels called to help women thrive in their walk with Jesus every day. In 2012, she started [Displaying Grace](#), a ministry that is focused on helping women engage with God's Word. Michelle has also served in women's ministry for the past five years seeking to equip women in the local church through Bible study. When she is not writing or teaching, she enjoys reading, being close to the ocean, and drinking a lot of coffee.*



Fikre's Family Celebrating Amanuel's High School Graduation

