

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Winter 2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Spoken by millions of Christians every Sunday, this sentence seems like a simple request. But what does it really mean?

This phrase speaks to the omnipotence of the Eternal God. Give us **this day**... There is no past or future – all things are present with the Almighty God. Perhaps, God wanted to introduce this concept to the Israelites with the manna in the desert: *don't occupy yourselves with what is to come and don't save things from the past. I will provide you with what you need each day!* And He also does this for us today. (Matthew 6:34)

From time to time, one hears the expression, “That congregation is old-school,” or “That minister is very progressive.” Using labels like these to characterize our brothers and sisters only serves to polarize and separate us. This is a danger. At times we can feel bold and want to try something new and at other times we seek the comfort of our tradition and familiarity. Depending on the topic of conversation, our upbringing, or our stage in life, we can experience both extremes. Let us not lose sight that no matter what the situation is, God will always provide *today* what we need *for today*.

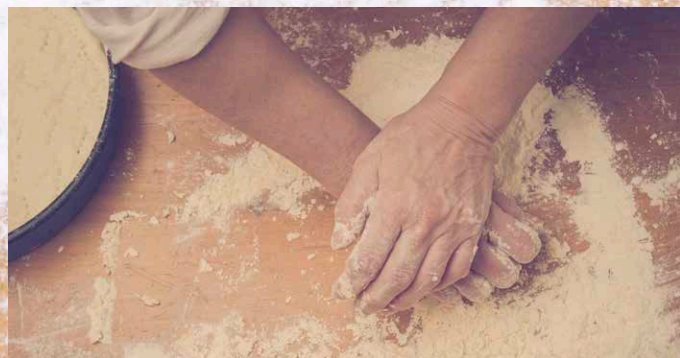
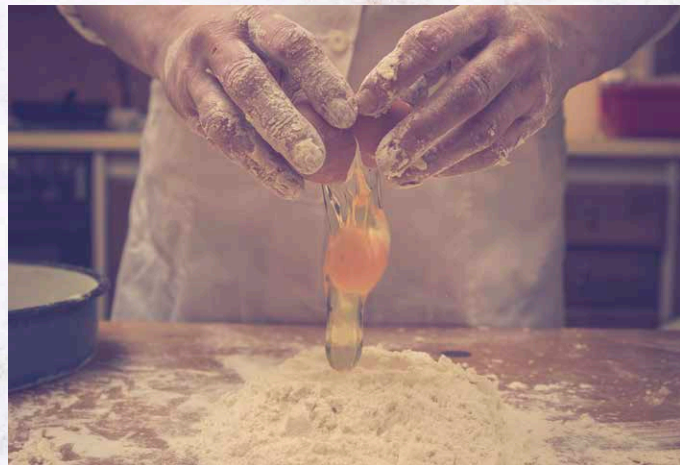
What is vital is that we focus on growing into the nature of our Father by accepting each other *in the present*. Jesus also gave indication of this when He said, “...the hour is coming, and now is.” (John 4:23) We express a similar sentiment, also in the Lord's Prayer, when we say, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God's kingdom is coming, but is also now. We must practice living in the kingdom today, here on this earth. God loves and wants *all people* to be saved, and that must be visible in our acceptance and love for our fellow man. We must be people of reconciliation, examples of what it means to love and serve our neighbors. We can be confident in God's provision, assured that He will give us the proper instruction and guidance, through the Gospel with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This is our daily bread, our sustenance to keep moving forward. And it will always be the right message for the current time.

Let us be people of the present, people of today.

With best wishes for wonderful experiences in the year ahead,

Yours,



What is the Bible? This seems like a simple question. We know the Bible is made up of the Old and New Testaments. We know the Gospel of Jesus Christ is recorded in the New Testament. We know many writers contributed to the recording of the Bible. And we know that our church is Bible-based. But that is not all there is to know about the Bible, especially since we are continually encouraged to dig deeper into it to learn about our God.

So how can we begin to understand the Bible? We can look to the Catechism as a starting point. In section 1.2, we read that the author of Scripture is God and the text of the Bible was written by humans who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. God used these people's abilities to commit to writing that which was to be passed on in accordance with His will. Although the contents of the biblical books have their source in the Holy Spirit, it was not dictated to the authors word for word by Him. This means that each book of the Bible bears the mark of each writer's perceptions. Their writings were influenced by conceptions of the world at their time and by the form of expression that was available to them. We only ever encounter God's word through the people who professed it, both in the past and today. God knew this and this is a signal to us that we may treat the Bible critically and use a scholarly approach when reading and interpreting words that were written by people in a different time than us. Not only that, but these authors lived in an ancient world and the Bible is a piece of ancient literature. It came into being in a world that is completely foreign to us. This makes it difficult to fully grasp the worldview and perceptions of the

writers. However, this isn't a reason to let the Bible just stay in the ancient world, so to speak. We have to bring it into the present. So, how can a historical text become a present, relevant text to us today? Even if He didn't pen them, God is the author of the books of the Bible. If God, who is eternal and always has a plan, is the author, then this text has the ability to be present to us again and again because it is His word. This is what makes the Bible real for us today.

The Catechism reminds us that the writers didn't create the Bible all by themselves, it came into being through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God filled imperfect humans with the words to record His plan of salvation in effect. If we believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible and that the same Holy Spirit dwells within us, then we can be sure of the possibility to understand Scripture. With His help, the Bible can be found to have relevance in our lives and the task of shedding light on scripture in the present is taken on by the apostle ministry. What the apostles highlight with Scripture is the incarnation, death, resurrection, and return of the Son of God. This is who it always comes back to: Jesus. Even with the Old Testament, the purpose is to prepare the incarnation and work of the Son of God. He is the central being of importance. Through Scripture, the apostles lead us back to the basics of our faith, which rest upon Jesus.

When we read and study the Bible, we also have to always bring the focus back to Jesus. We don't read the Bible to only look for answers to our problems or to figure out what is right and wrong. As Christians,



UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

anytime we read the Bible, we have to ask some important questions: What is the relation of the verse or passage to Jesus Christ? And, what is the connection of the verse to Him as the Redeemer of mankind? The answers to these questions have a direct impact on our lives as Christians, and this needs to be our focus when studying the Bible. Not everything in the Bible is equally relevant to our lives and so we only acknowledge the statements that are consistent with the Gospel. We have to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us when we are looking at different verses so that we can see Jesus in them.

There are many tips on how one can read and study the Bible. The church's method often involves what can be called the four-fold method. With a Bible passage, one first looks at the literal sense and what the verse says about the past. Next is the allegorical sense, which deals with how the verse relates to salvation history. Then one looks at the moral sense of the passage and how it relates to their own self. Finally, the prophetic or eschatological sense is studied and what the verse says about the future. With this way of analyzing a Bible passage, we can attempt to see the bigger picture, instead of just focusing on the literal meaning of the words in any given verse. The Bible is multidimensional and it should be understood that way, which is why we want to recognize its original, intended meaning and also its present meaning for our lives.

The four-fold method is not the only way to look at the Bible. There are various methods and resources one can use to read and study the Bible. All of these

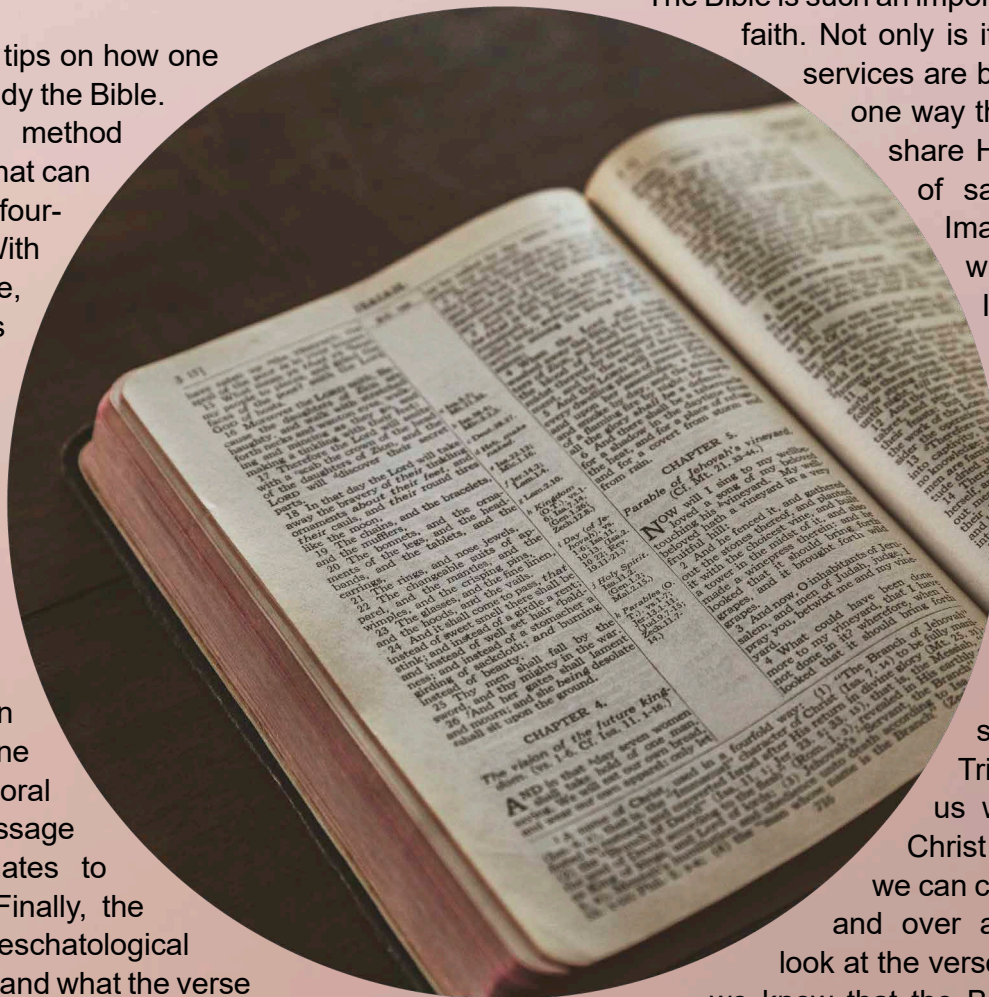
methods, including the four-fold method, can help you to look at the Bible in a way that makes it bigger than just one or two verses.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE COMPLETE, THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

The Bible is such an important aspect of our faith. Not only is it what our divine services are based on, but it is one way that God chose to share His love and plan of salvation with us. Imagine Christianity without the Bible. It's impossible! Without the Bible, we would never know of Jesus. The Bible is what gives our faith the proper language and the standard on how we should speak about the Triune God. It gives us written stories of Christ and His love that we can come back to over and over again. When we look at the verse from 2 Timothy, we know that the Bible is a gift that God has given us to equip us to be the people that He wants us to be.

Let this glance at how we understand the Bible encourage you to keep reading it, studying it, and using it as a tool to grow in your discipleship of Christ. - **LRK / VAA**



BEARING OTHERS' BURDENS

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We then who see suffering ought to bear with the scriptures of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ²Let each of us please his neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. ³For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."^a ⁴For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have **hope.** ⁵Now grant you to be like-minded and comfort another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶that you may with one mind and one mou

ROMANS 15:4

18^aNU-Text reads *this*. 14:21^aNU-Text

its or is offended or is made weak

2^aNI-Text reads *The faith*

WOMEN IN THE BIBLE



EXAMPLES OF PASTORAL CARE



In the Summer Vision it was stated that pastoral care isn't confined to the responsibilities of the ministers, but it is also the task of the entire congregation. Pastoral care can be provided by the young and the not so young, men and women alike. The New Testament provides us with several examples of women providing pastoral care that helped people grow in their relationship with the Lord and helped facilitate the growth of the early Christian church. Five

women who played a part in the work of the first church were Lois, Phoebe, Lydia, Priscilla, and Mary Magdalene. From each one of them we can find encouragement for pastoral work today.

Pastoral care begins for all with our own families. How can we expect to care well for people when we leave behind those who God has given us to care for within our own households? **Lois** was a devout Jewess who took care of her household and brought up her daughter and her grandson in faith by teaching them from the Old Testament Scriptures. We learn this from Paul's second letter to Timothy: *"when I call to remembrance that genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."* (2 Timothy 1:5) Timothy became Paul's "son in the faith." He had been prepared for his work by his grandmother who wasn't afraid to share with her family what she believed. We cannot be afraid today to speak about our faith in Jesus Christ with our families. We must tell them why Jesus is the hero of our life and one must take the time to share God's Word with them by reading the Bible on a regular basis. The foundation for a strong faith begins with the work of faithful women who seek to build up those closest to them with the truth and knowledge of Jesus.

Life is busy today and we spend a significant amount of time away from home. That's why it is important to firstly spend time teaching our families about Jesus.



In all places you, have the opportunity to teach others about Jesus because you have the honor of being servants of the Most High. **Phoebe** was such a servant of Jesus as we can read in Romans 16:1-3 – *"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of man and of myself also."* Phoebe occupied a position in the church that gave her the opportunity to be a teacher to all female inquirers of the faith and to give aid to the temporal needs of the poor. We have the opportunity today to walk in Phoebe's footsteps and care for other women who are in need of encouragement, friendship, hope, and teaching. When prompted, listen, smile, speak, and act in the best way you can to shine the light of Jesus into the lives of those around you.

THE FOUNDATION FOR A STRONG FAITH BEGINS WITH THE WORK OF FAITHFUL WOMEN WHO SEEK TO BUILD UP THOSE CLOSEST TO THEM WITH THE TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

Sometimes you may hold yourself back from getting involved because you feel like you have nothing to offer, but as followers of Jesus, you can be assured that you've been blessed with spiritual gifts and therefore have all you need to jump in and help others. In addition to your spiritual gifts, take stock of all else you have been blessed with: your house, car, job, etc... and

remember that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Allow the example of **Lydia** to encourage you to become an effective steward of all you have been given so that you can become a blessing to others. Lydia lived in Thyatira and was a producer and seller of purple dye. Due to the water in the area being so well-adapted for dyeing, no other place could produce this unique type of purple cloth. The purple dye made the city universally renowned and very prosperous. As a producer of this dye, Lydia became a successful business woman and was able to own a spacious home that was cared for by servants.

In Acts 16 we can read how Lydia came to faith in Jesus Christ as God opened her heart to the Gospel she heard about from Paul's preaching. Her transformation of life was evidenced by her eagerness to give Christian missionaries shelter in her home. She displayed her love for Jesus through the kindness she showed for others and her willingness to share what she had been blessed with to further the work of the early Church. Even Paul and Silas' imprisonment for being accused of causing trouble in the city did not deter her from serving and receiving them into her home after their release. As a business woman, welcoming these prisoners back into her home may have not been the best plan, but she recognized that salvation work was more valuable. Whether it is opening your home for a small group, forming a women's ministry, or assisting in mission work, there are many opportunities to share what you have been given for the glory of God.



Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:19 that *"Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."* In the days of the first church, poverty and persecution made separate buildings for worship almost impracticable, and so private, sanctified homes became the house of God. **Aquila** and **Priscilla** consecrated their home to God as a gathering place for the saints. As humble and simple tentmakers, they made a decision to serve the Lord with all that they had. They didn't allow their modest belongings to hinder their serving. As a husband and wife team, Aquila and Priscilla together chose to set apart their home as a holy place where all who would enter could learn about Jesus Christ. Perhaps one could ponder whether our home is a place where all who enter can experience Jesus Christ through what is talked about and shared by those who live there. Be encouraged today to set apart your home as a holy place for Jesus.



One last example of women playing roles in pastoral care is **Mary Magdalene**.

In Luke 8 we learn that she had been healed from being plagued by seven demons and had become a companion of Jesus and His disciples. Being set free from her affliction, she became a loyal follower of Jesus and sought to do much for the One who had done so much for her. She first showed her devotion and gratitude by practicing her faith in her following and ministering to Jesus and His disciples, and later by being a proclaimer of His resurrection. She was given the honor to be the first one to see Jesus after His resurrection. After the Lord appeared to her, she went and told the disciples what she had seen and heard. She announced to them the good news that He had defeated the grave and had risen on the third day as He had taught. (ref John 20:18) Caring for others includes the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The proclamation of the Gospel isn't something that is reserved for a limited group of people, but is a message that should be shared by all who have accepted the offer of grace from Jesus Christ. Allow the good news of Jesus to be on the tip of your tongue as you seek to encourage and edify others through pastoral care. There is no better news to share than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and as Mary Magdalene modeled, it's a message to be shared by women and men alike.

PASTORAL CARE CAN BE PROVIDED BY THE YOUNG AND THE NOT SO YOUNG, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE

For pastoral care in our congregations, all are needed and none are excluded. Be encouraged by the five women mentioned. Let us learn from their example and discover how you can make a difference in your home, congregation, and community by:

- Talking about Jesus with your family
- Teaching
- Being an effective steward of all you've been blessed with
- Setting apart your homes for the Lord
- Proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ

- MJB

RECENT EVENTS



FALL FAMILY DAY

On October 2nd, congregations around the country participated in Fall Family Day. After service with an interactive children’s message, members gathered for fellowship and a brainstorming session on what they can do to better serve each other and the community. Based on Matthew 25:34-40, the goal of Fall Family Day was to unite the congregation in their approach to serving and sharing God’s love with their families, congregation, and community.



RETIREMENT

Bishop Gary Morse was placed into retirement on October 2, 2016 by District Apostle Kolb. The District Evangelist Alvarez was ordained and appointed as the new district leader for the Texas region.

WG Children

Children grow to know and love Jesus as their Savior in our multi-faceted Children's Ministry. The first component is our graduated Sunday school program that progresses with children from Kindergarten to Middle School. These Sunday morning classes offer creative, age-appropriate Bible and Christian-living lessons, hands-on activities, music, and an "at home" pre-lesson for parents and children to share together. The WG Children researches, writes, and edits these lessons for posting on our national website. Additionally, the WG Children make a parenting newsletter template available every month that can be customized to the needs of your congregation.

WG Youth

The New Apostolic Church youth group offers a place to belong and share life. In addition to the exciting social element, the youth group also provides a safe place to ask questions and grow spiritually as teens continue to develop a personal relationship with Christ. The WG Youth helps create content for youth small group discussions, as well as yearly youth retreat weekends. Currently, the WG Youth is working on improved training and tools to help youth leaders better minister to the students in their care.

As parents and families are important elements of the Faith Arc, both the WG Children and WG Youth are currently in the process of creating tools to help better equip parents and families for discipleship. This not only applies to parents of young children or teens, but also the relationship between parents and their adult children.

WG Worship

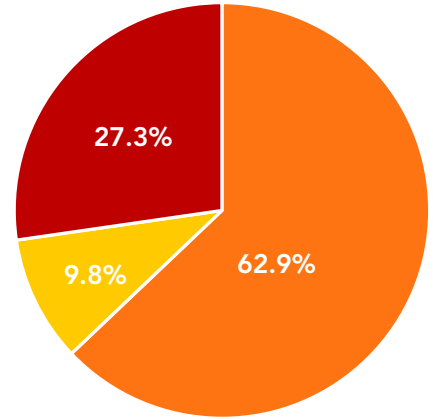
In 2014 and 2015, WG Worship participated in a number of Regional Workshops across the country in order to enliven and strengthen the culture of worship in our congregations. We strive to help congregations in finding new ways to blend and unify their worship in the divine service experience, worship evenings, and in their lives. Our next steps will be two upgrades to the Music Companion website: the first, to fix the technical issues that we have been having, the second to expand the website into a robust resource for musicians, choir leaders, and A/V teams with more content and communication.

If you have experience or interest in any of these areas and would like to help, please email communications@nac-usa.org to see if the group has any available seats.

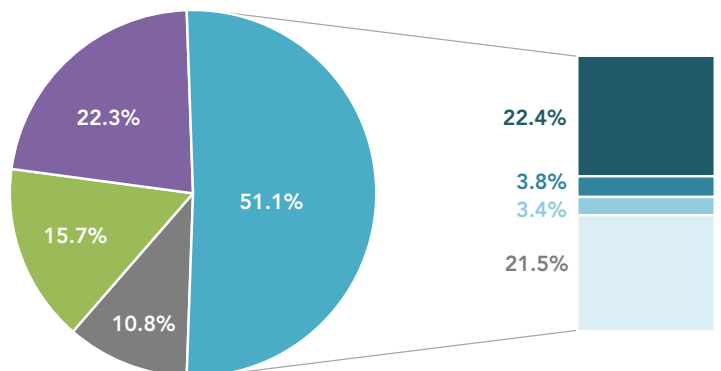
FINANCES 2015/2014

OPERATING CHURCH RESULTS

SOURCES OF FUNDS	2015	2014
Regular Offering	\$11,570,763	\$11,553,003
Thanksgiving Offering	\$2,360,995	\$2,484,883
Special Donations & Bequests	\$1,058,724	\$890,336
Other Revenue	\$54,465	\$131,492
Church Revenue	\$15,044,947	\$15,059,714
Net Endowment Income	\$1,645,565	\$2,212,176
Real Estate Income	\$702,522	\$546,524
Reserve Management Income	\$2,348,087	\$2,758,700
Sale of Buildings	\$6,524,385	\$4,630,814
Total Church Funds Available	\$23,917,419	\$22,449,228



USES OF FUNDS	2015	2014
Congregational Supplies & Support	\$3,913,825	\$3,818,411
Church Programs & Events	\$657,934	\$688,131
Benevolence	\$597,985	\$639,136
Church Building Operations	\$3,742,049	\$4,146,915
Total Domestic Church Funding	\$8,911,793	\$9,292,593
International Mission Activities	\$1,889,861	\$2,328,663
General Administrative Support	\$2,744,115	\$2,913,278
Total Church Expenses	\$13,545,769	\$14,534,534
Church Building Activities	\$3,892,615	\$8,443,843
Total Church Funds Used	\$17,438,384	\$22,978,377



NEW CHURCH BUILDINGS



Denver Metro

The Denver Metro flagship congregation was formed in 2014 from the Northglenn, Littleton, and Denver congregations. A building was purchased in the center on the area's church population and was renovated. On April 17th, the new church was dedicated for this flagship congregation.



Astoria

After the Astoria and Ridgewood congregations in New York merged into the existing Astoria building, it was decided that an extension would be added onto the building. This extension would serve as the sanctuary, while the original structure would serve as a fellowship space. This new, expanded building was dedicated on December 4th.



Bethpage

The Beth Page Worship Center was dedicated on July 3rd of this year in New York and is now the home to the Amityville and Westbury Chinese congregations. The building used to be a synagogue.

Sterling Heights

The Sterling Heights congregation in Michigan became the home of six area Detroit congregations. An existing church was purchased and renovated. A fellowship hall was added and the completed church will be ready for dedication by the beginning of 2017.



HUMILITY



In March of this year, Chief Apostle Schneider offered his thoughts and guidance on the subject of humility. Following are extracts from this message.

Jesus made humility before God an essential condition to receiving salvation, and hence, it is central to our doctrine. The writings of the New Testament present humility before others as a characteristic of the elect. Since humility is such an important aspect of being Christian, let's look at three different aspects of it more closely and see what they mean for us today.

HUMILITY BEFORE GOD



When we are humble before God, we recognize that we are entirely dependent on His grace. There's nothing that we can do better or more of in order to gain God's grace. Have you ever thought that if you just do something nice for someone, God will look upon you more favorably? While we should always want to help and serve our neighbor, we need to work on changing our mindset so that we don't focus on trying to sway God's opinion of us. He loves us and He always will.

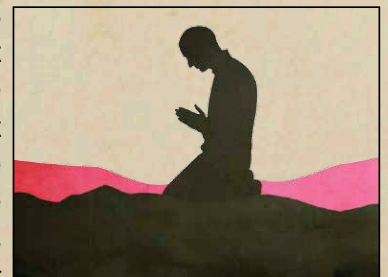
Understanding that we cannot change or force God to do anything also shows that we have God-fear. We know that God is perfect and infallible and we can neither comprehend nor compel Him. Expressing our God-fear further demonstrates our humility before Him.

We also express humility by surrendering completely to God's love. His love for us is what has the power to transform our lives. But this change can only happen if we are open to His love, if we allow it to fill us and influence all parts of our lives. Surrendering to God's love and having humility before Him does not mean that we reject ourselves. We see that God doesn't forbid us from taking care of ourselves in the commandment, "love your neighbor as yourself."

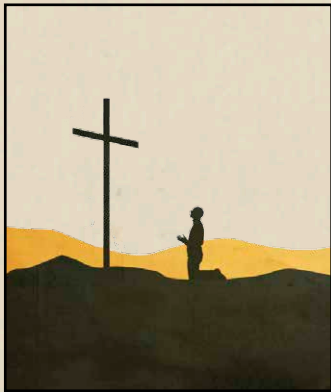
When we are humble before God, we must also be careful that we do not take it too far and fall into the trap of "false humility," meaning that we use the excuse that because God is so much greater than us, we are unable to accomplish what He asks of us. When one is truly humble before God, they know that God knows them better than they know themselves and with His help, can do anything that is asked of them.

HUMILITY BEFORE OUR NEIGHBOR

To have humility towards our neighbor is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit teaches us that God loves us because He is love, not because of what we are. This means that He loves our neighbors as much as He loves us, even if they are completely different from us or even if we don't like them or think they don't deserve to be loved. One does not have to become like us in order to be loved by God. Regardless of who we are and our merits, we are all dependent on grace.



In his letter to the Philippians, Apostle Paul says, “in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself (Philippians 2:3). At first, this passage seems unrealistic: it would require us to consider ourselves as being consistently lower than others. However, this simply isn’t true. Evidence of this is seen in the following verse, where it says, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4). This shows we can make decisions based on our own interests, as long as they take into account the interests of others, as well.



Paul continues to speak about our humility before our neighbor, using Jesus Christ as the ultimate example. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation,

taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus was fully aware of His position and authority, yet He completely obeyed the will of His Father. He humbled Himself to the level of the sinners, dedicated Himself to their service, and suffered for them in order to raise them up with Him.

We want to look to Jesus as our example and bring ourselves to our neighbor’s level. Like them, we are sinners who need grace to be saved. We also know that we have been sent to be at their service, to guide and support them on the path of salvation. This cannot be done without humility in our hearts.

HUMILITY IN MINISTRY

When we are engaged in a ministry, we have to keep both our humility before God and humility before our neighbor in mind as we lead and serve others with the gifts that God has given to us.

As a humble servant, we need to always be aware of who we are doing our work for: God. Keeping this at the forefront, we want to always follow His will in our

ministries. In every situation, Jesus’ teachings should always be applied.

When we serve in ministry without humility, we can become focused on how our efforts could give us an outcome that we want. However, while it is our responsibility to think about the future, develop plans, and implement, them, no one can force God to give us the outcomes we want. He always decides what the outcome will be of our work and efforts.

When we allow God to be at the forefront of our ministry, this also allows us to be humble before our neighbor. In a leadership or ministerial position, we never want to think that our outer authority gives us permission to abuse our position by imposing our own opinion or by implying that if our instruction is not obeyed, that there will be eternal consequences. We want to be careful to not attach too much importance to our title because it can lead to a breakdown of the trust between us and the people we interact with in our ministries. We want to always be humble before those around us and be open to the Spirit’s guidance in our ministry.



After exploring what humility before God and your neighbor looks like from an individual perspective and from a ministerial and leadership perspective, consider how your interactions with those around you give you the opportunity to express humility. Are there aspects of your life where you could practice humility more?

