

The Mustard Seed

Congratulations

December Birthdays

Dolores Miller, December 9th
Delores Leichty, December 12th
Lois Swartzendruber, December 13th
Ed Hershberger, December 22nd

Community Bible Reading

Curt Wyse

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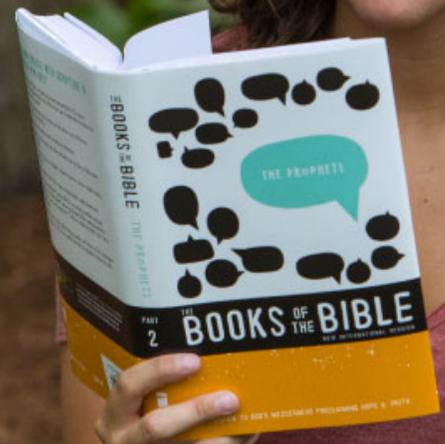
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Three P's to Ponder

Dawn Wyse

Are you ready to start Community Bible Experience?



Starting in January, we will again be doing a community Bible reading. This year we will complete the books of the Bible we did not cover the last three times we did this. That means we'll be reading together through Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ester and Daniel. As we read through the Bible together, we'll encourage discussion and sharing of what we are learning. Our sermons during the eight week duration of the readings will also focus on the passages we are reading. If Sunday School classes or Bible study groups want to discuss these passages, we encourage that as well. Kalona Mennonite is getting books for the reading that have no chapters or verses. While we cannot explain why, we find it amazing how differently the Word of God reads when you omit these, so we encourage everyone to be on the lookout for the Bibles and grab one when they arrive. We will also have "reader" (children's) versions of the Bibles available for children or anyone who finds this amount of reading daunting. It is the intent of the Worship Commission to continue this practice yearly, meaning that once every four years we'll read through the Bible together as a church community. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Curt Wyse, Worship Commission Chair,

Three P's to Ponder

Dawn Wyse

As the season of Advent is here I find myself arguing with myself over the importance of Advent. Advent brings me through a time of focused contemplation of the amazing and outrageously loving gift from God in the form of Baby Jesus. Yet I wonder if all too often I use advent to isolate that moment in time from the much bigger and richer picture that God intends for us to see. If we find ourselves getting stopped at the edge of the manger, worshipping God, but never moving forward, we miss out on the salvation God will provide down the road at His resurrection. There again, if we cement ourselves at the cross and resurrection, never to move forward, we will again miss out on more incredible things God has intended for us to experience. If you don't believe this, open your Bible to Acts and take in the words of the angel after Christ's ascension. He basically tells them to quit gawking and go do what they were told to do.

Recently, I listened to a short clip where Jen Wilkin spoke of the three p's of salvation/sanctification. When we accept Christ, repenting of our sins and turning from them towards obedience to God, we are saved from the penalty (1st P) of our sins. Then as we walk in obedience to God, the sanctification process protects us from the power (2nd P) of sin. We now have the power of God in us so that we have the ability to overcome the power of sin. Finally, when Christ returns we will be saved from the presence (3rd P) of sin. Sin will no longer be around us. We will be completely enveloped and permeated with the presence of God.

Saved from the penalty of sin. Being sanctified so the power of sin doesn't rule over us. No longer being in the presence of sin. The penalty, power and presence of sin . . . three things from which God wants to save us. It's a lot to take in, isn't it. I find myself grateful for the release from the penalty of sin and I find myself yearning for the time when I will no longer be in the presence of sin. But it's the power of sin being powerless because of God's power in me that I find myself forgetting . . . or maybe struggling to fully believe in my day to day life.

It has been all too easy for me to buy into the idea that I am involved in a losing battle with the sin around me . . . and in me. I must admit this is a place where I have found myself living the last few months. At first I struggled under my own power trying to 'fix' things. Then I started believing the voices telling me I was failing . . . falling short . . . not living up to my responsibilities and potential. It's paralyzed me in more ways than I could have ever imagined. I found myself stuck in a small slice of the story of God, forgetting to allow Him to show me the whole story He has laid out for us.

I fixated on my lack of power against the brokenness and sin surrounding me. Forgetting to lift my eyes to God and His invincible power that He has so lovingly placed inside me . . . power He intends for me to allow Him to use through me.

Retraining myself to turn to God's power first is going to take some time. I have to keep turning to God's word, asking Him to show me His power in His People. What would have happened to Israel if they hadn't taken the first step into the Red Sea? What if David hadn't been willing to throw that stone? What if Esther hadn't gone before the king? What if the boy hadn't shared his lunch?

Also, I need to keep turning to God in prayer, asking Him to remind me His power is there. Plus, I need to surround myself with people who remind me that God's power is in us and we need to use that power. That is its purpose. One exercise I have found helpful from reading a booklet "Putting An X Through Anxiety" by Louie Giglio. As I breathe in, I tell myself 'God the Father can'. As I breathe out, I tell myself 'I cannot'. Breathe in, 'God the Son can'. Breathe out, 'I cannot'. Breathe in, 'God the Holy Spirit can.' Breathe out, 'I cannot'. Repeating this over and over I find a peace resting upon me. And I find myself having a better focus on the ending of the story where we, as disciples of Christ will no longer be in the presence of sin. . . oh, such incredible hope we can have!

As you approach the edge or the manger in worship this advent, I encourage you to take in the three P's Baby Jesus saves us from if we accept it . . . freedom from the penalty of sin, freedom from the power of sin and eventually freedom from the presence of sin. O Lord, I pray we all turn to You and accept these precious gifts You hold out to all of us . . . all we need to do is repent and follow you. Thank You, Jesus! As always, in pursuit