

GROW. PRAY. STUDY.
First United Methodist Church- Weekly Study Guide
"equipping people in becoming deeply committed Christians "

Five Simple Truths About LIFE: The Six Most Important Words
January 11-16

Yesterday we continued our sermon series, "Five Simple Truths about Life," by looking at the six most important words in life. These words of course are "I am sorry" and "I forgive you." On this surface this seems almost too simple to have an impact on our lives....but the truth is more often that not it is our refusal to use these simple phrases that makes our life so complicated.

We were taught as children to admit our wrongs and apologize, but as adults we spend most of our time trying to cover our mistakes and blame others for what we do wrong. Why is this? Why is it so hard to admit our failures and simply say, "I am sorry." On the other side, why is it so hard to forgive others who do wrong to us? We want to hold peoples mistakes against them. We say things like "I can forgive....but I will never forget" and that is nothing more than a refusal to forgive. God designed us to be people who are not ashamed to admit our mistakes, who are willing to apologize, and to be people who forgive and forget. And when don't we are missing out on the life we were meant to have.....one full of happiness and peace.

This week we are going to spend some time thinking about our own lives and attitudes. Everyone has areas in life where they either struggle to apologize or struggle to forgive. Most of us struggle in both areas. More than anything, this week I encourage you to be honest with yourself as you go through these readings. How would your life change for the better if you simply began to live life the way God designed it to be lived?

Monday

There is no escaping the fact our relationships with people affect our relationship with God. Is there a person you need to ask for forgiveness? How is this situation impacting your connection to God? Think back to the story in Matthew 18 you just read. What is Jesus teaching you in this story? Is there someone you need to forgive so that you can have a pure and whole connection with God?

READ Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:21-35. Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Tuesday

Often times we put lots of energy towards hiding what we are really struggling with from others. This psalm emphasizes that God is concerned not only with outward behavior but with your inner thoughts and motives. Have you ever done the right thing for the wrong reason? How can you open yourself so that God can create a clean heart in you?

READ Psalm 51:1-10. Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Wednesday

We don't like it when people are dishonest with us. We struggle to trust people who always seem to be hiding their real self from us. Yet, we can often see this in others better than we can see it in ourselves.....and trust me, there is an element of this in all of us! Think of a time when you tried to hide something you did wrong (perhaps even from yourself)? How does honesty, even about what you've done wrong, bring freedom and peace that cannot come from concealment?

READ Psalm 32:1-5. Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Thursday

Our reading today offers a list of things that stand in the way of us being who God has designed us to be. Paul, the author of Ephesians, tells us if we have any of these "things" in our heart or life then we need to put them away and forgive. Then, in a convicting statement for us all, Paul tells us to forgive...."just like Christ forgave us." We can come up with plenty of reasons why we shouldn't forgive someone we feel has done us wrong.....but Paul says Christ refused to embrace any reason NOT to forgive us and so we should do the same for others. Spend some time thinking about those you harbor ill feelings towards today. What reason do you have for not forgiving them and offering them kindness and love? Think about how Christ offers you forgiveness and love for no other reason than he loves you. How can God's love and forgiveness in Jesus shape your attitudes toward others?

READ Ephesians 4:31-5:2. Pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Friday

What are some of the forces that can blind you to wrong actions and attitudes, making them seem acceptable? How can you incorporate the prayer in verse 14 into your daily life?

READ Psalm 19:12-14

Saturday

Today we will be reading the passage we will deal with in worship tomorrow. As you read this Scripture pray that God cleanse your heart and prepare you for worship tomorrow.

Philippians 4:6-7

I invite you to pray the following prayer:

Dear God, As I read this passage today help me do so with an open heart, sincerely listening for your voice in my life. Use this passage to prepare me for worship tomorrow. As I read it help me to set aside my own agenda and my own desires so that I may come to worship tomorrow prepared to be molded by you as I continue my journey to becoming a deeply committed disciple of yours. In Christ's name I pray, AMEN

Here at FUMC we believe part of becoming a Deeply Committed Christians is praying daily. If you find yourself struggling with what to say, we suggest you try praying Wesley's Covenant Prayer.

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. AMEN
(United Methodist Hymnal, p. 607)