

The Way of Love Session One: February 25, 2024

Introduction

Welcome to The Way of Love, a 7-part Lenten series of practices we can adopt and develop for spiritual growth this Lent. The series comes from the General (“National”) Church; Emily Derco found it and thought it would be good for us to do together. Because we meet only four times in Lent because of vestry meetings, we are combining some of the modules. Each focuses on a verb, something we can consciously choose to do throughout the week, throughout Lent, and even throughout our lives.

TURN: Pause, listen and choose to follow Jesus

As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. – Mark 2:14

“Do you turn to Jesus Christ ...?” – Book of Common Prayer, 302

Like the disciples, we are called by Jesus to follow the Way of Love. With God’s help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom. In turning, we reorient our lives to Jesus Christ, falling in love again, again, and again.

Pete’s Comments: As a Church, we tend to avoid thinking too much about sin, punishment, and forgiveness. Our entire faith is built on the concept of repentance, which begins with recognition of sin in our lives, continues with a resolve to put an end to it, and then requires turning – changing the direction – of our thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes away from self and toward God.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What practices help you to turn again and again to Jesus Christ and the Way of Love?
- How will (or do) you incorporate these practices into your rhythm of life?
- Who will be your companion as you turn toward Jesus Christ?

Pete’s Questions (For open discussion or private consideration)

- 1. Taking all the personal time you need, would you have any interest in trying to identify areas of your life that could benefit from a “turn?” Things to turn away from, things to turn toward?*
- 2. We have all repented several times in our lives. Have you noticed a pattern of repeated sins? Sins, behaviors, and/or attitudes that prove more difficult to turn away from than others?*
- 3. Do you have any personal interest in trying to “give up” certain behaviors for Lent, or perhaps to impose a more stringent discipline on yourself to keep yourself turning away from them?*
- 4. The series asks about a companion: Do you feel a particular need for a spiritual companion, or is this something you can undertake on your own?*

LEARN: Reflect on Scripture each day, especially on Jesus' life and teachings.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." – John 14:23

Grant us so to hear [the Holy Scriptures], read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

– Book of Common Prayer, 236

By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God and God's word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.

Pete's Comments: Presiding Bishop (Boss Bishop in the Episcopal Church) Michael Curry has suggested that paying close attention to the actual words of Jesus in the Gospels is a great way to take this step in the series. Educators, particularly at the high school and college levels, extol the virtues of life-long learning, and our presence here together in this group attests to our own commitment to continuing learning. (Congratulations!!)

For Reflection and Discernment

- What ways of reflecting on Scripture are most life-giving for you?
- When will (or do) you set aside time to read and reflect on Scripture in your day?
- With whom will you share in the commitment to read and reflect on Scripture?

Pete's Questions

1. *While Holy Scripture is certainly the best source for learning the Word of God, what other sources have you found helpful in your own life that might also benefit others?*
2. *Have you ever Googled or looked up on You Tube how to perform a certain task or learn a new skill? What similar resources might be available to those of us who want to learn more about the Word of God?*
3. *We learn with our minds, but when we read the Bible, we ask the Holy Spirit to use it to turn our hearts. What tips and tricks have you learned over the years to keep your heart open while reading Scripture?*