

Devotions for the Week of August 13, 2017
Lessons From Shenandoah: STEP UP
North East United Methodist Church
By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, August 13, 2017

Read Matt. 6:33; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:1-3; & 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

In the book, The Love Dare, the author writes, “When a man is trying to win the heart of a woman, he studies her. He learns her likes, dislikes, habits and hobbies, but after he wins her heart and marries her, he often stops learning about her. If the amount he studied her before marriage was equal to a high school degree, he should continue to learn about her until he earns a college degree, a master’s degree, and ultimately, a doctorate degree. It is a life long journey that draws his heart ever closer to hers.”

Our relationship with our Heavenly Father is no different. We need to study everything about him, learning what God likes and dislikes, what is pleasing to God and what is displeasing to Him. James 4:8 tells us, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Hebrews 1:3 tells us, “The Son reflects God’s own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly.” Looking at Jesus allows us to understand the character of God. The life and teachings of Jesus allow us to understand the character of God. If we want to know God we first have to get to know Jesus.

We are called to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds”...To “seek first the kingdom of God...” We are called to STEP UP, to look up, to draw near to God...getting to know who He is, going “deep” with our Savior, Jesus Christ, coming to understand what Jesus taught, and coming to understand God’s Will for our lives. We cannot stay where we are and go with God. We must constantly be taking the next step in our relationship with Him.

What is the next step that you need to take in your relationship with God? Are you reading His Word, seeking to know Him more deeply? Can you spend more time curled up in prayer with Him? You cannot stay where you are and go with God.. What is the next step God is calling you to take in your relationship w/ Him? Go ahead...STEP UP!

Monday, August 14, 2017

Read James 4:8; Psalm 107:9; and Romans 15:13.

James 4:8 tells us, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (NKJV). Psalm 107.9 tells us, “For He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.”

If you are feeling worn down or you are frustrated about someone...or perhaps you are anxious about a situation at work...or your ministry has become a chore instead of the joy it once was...or perhaps you find yourself stressed and looking at things negatively...perhaps the answer doesn’t have to do with fixing the problem outside, but perhaps the answer has to do with fixing the problem inside...perhaps the answer is that you need to refuel...you need to renew your commitment to spending time alone with God. As Jesus tells the Pharisees, “First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too” (Matthew 23:26).

“Step Up” the mountain and spend some time with God this week. Allow God to quench your thirst, filling you with His living water.

Tuesday, August 15, 2017

Read 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 and Philippians 2:12-13.

On a past Emmaus weekend in which I served as Spiritual Director, one of the speakers stated, “Maybe after we accept Him [Jesus] we think that is all we have to do—we have crossed the finish line, but really we have just begun—we have just stepped into the starting gate...”

When we accept Christ, the work begins. Paul tells us to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and

trembling.” As Rev. Bruce Goettsche writes,

“We are to work at making sure that our hope is truly grounded in Christ and not on our own efforts. We are to work at taking advantage of the ways that God has given us to help us grow. We should read the Bible, pray, worship, serve, give, fast and so forth. We should work to make a break with sin. We are not to just sit back passively, but are to work at repentance and renewal. We are to work at adopting and applying the positive behaviors that the Bible admonishes. In other words, we are to work at love, compassion, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, endurance and others. We are to guard against the influence of the world. In other words we will adjust our friendships, our amusements, our use of time in order to combat the real presence of sin in our lives.”

We are to “STEP UP,” working out our faith...working at taking the “next step” in our relationship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

What is God asking you to work on in your life? What is God asking you to do differently? Remember that: If you always do what you’ve always done, you will always get what you’ve always got. Let us not be satisfied with where we are in our relationship with God...Pray that God will help you take the “next step,” being transformed from one degree of glory to the next into the likeness of the Son. “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*”

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Read Matthew 17:1-8.

Peter, James and John “stepped up,” and followed Jesus up the mountain. It was there that Jesus was transfigured before them...It was there God spoke and said, “*This is My beloved Son...*” Peter, James and John got a glimpse of who Christ was...they took a “next step” in their relationship with Jesus...they went from a high school diploma to a Master’s degree in moments...and Peter wanted to capture the moment...he wanted to stay there...“*Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles...*”

Now God did not want Peter, James and John to stay there...to rest in this new knowledge...but instead God wanted Peter to learn about Christ...this was the Messiah...and to move on...to walk down from the mountain, into the valley, where there was work to be done. We will talk more about coming down the mountain this coming Sunday.

I am sure there were many times throughout Peter, James and John’s ministry where they remembered that moment with Jesus atop the mountain, when they remembered Jesus being transfigured before them. I am sure remembering this moment energized them, strengthened them, and reminded them of whom they serve.

We, too, must “step up” the mountain, coming into the presence of God through prayer, retreats, spiritual disciplines, worship. These “God-moments” will energize, strengthen, and helped us remember the God we serve.

Are you taking time to “step up” the mountain? Are you taking time to “step up” and remember how awesome and beautiful is God? To remember how Jesus is “*dazzling light*” that breaks up all darkness?

Thursday, August 17, 2017

Read Isaiah 40:27-31.

How do we “step up” the mountain and meet with God? Charles Stanley offers three practical steps for effective quiet time with God. Each day is always a wonderful time to recommit ourselves to these three simple steps to grow in our relationship with our Creator, to begin to spend time each and every day with God, allowing Him to, as Paul writes in Romans 15:13, “*to fill you will all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*”

Stanley tells us to first, schedule time with God. How many times have you told someone, “Hey, let’s get together” only to never follow through. When one is serious about getting together with someone, you make an appointment. Each night when you go to bed decide on a time and place to be alone with God the next day, a time and place to refuel. Write it down in your planner, on your calendar, make a note and then follow through.

Secondly, Stanley says to choose a place that is off the beaten path of your daily activities; you need a place where the only thing you do there is meet with God. This spot will take on special significance and being there will affect your mood and ability to concentrate.

Lastly, use a variety of methods. Stanley suggests a devotional book...when that becomes stale...journal your thoughts and prayers...if you are on a Bible reading plan taking you through the scriptures, switch it up one day and focus on one book of the Bible...Stanley writes, “*This is a relationship. Look for ways to keep it fresh.*”

The main step toward refueling is to commit to doing it...commit to sitting down with your Heavenly Father each day and allow Him to fill you, to quench your thirst...Listen to how God describes, through the prophet Isaiah, what He will do to those who “*wait upon Him.*” Read again, Isaiah 40:27-31.

Friday, August 18, 2017

Read Hebrews 11:1-40; Hebrews 12:1-3; & John 15:1-17.

Today, we look at a list of some of God's past heroes, heroes of scripture. The one thing that each of these heroes have in common is that they were all ordinary people, just like you and I. They stand out, not because they were some sort of "superman" or because they were endowed with "superhuman" qualities or talents, but because they loved God, committed themselves to God's will, and devoted themselves to God's work. Because of their faith, God was able to accomplish great things through each of them.

Phillips Brooks said, *"It does not take great men to do great things; it only takes consecrated men."* Consecrated means to be dedicated to God's Word & purposes. Consecrated men and women are men and women who "step up" and spend time on the mountaintop with God.

John Wesley once said, *"Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I will shake the world. I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; and such alone will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and build up the kingdom of God on earth."*

May we be heroes of the faith, heroes for our families, our husbands and wives, our children, our neighbors. May we surrender ourselves to God and allow God to work through us to do amazing, miraculous, and heroic things. May we draw closer to the One who is able to do through us *"immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us"* (Eph. 3:20).

Take time tonight to ask God to work through you to accomplish great things for the kingdom. Recognize that you do not need to have amazing gifts or talents. You just have to "step up," *"connect to the vine,"* visit the mountaintop. God will do the rest.

Saturday, August 19, 2017

Read Psalms 7 & 8.

Be in prayer tonight & Remember to invite someone to church!

***If Need To Contact or Set An Appointment
With Pastor Drew...***

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