

LONGING FOR YOU TO FLOURISH

I. Ephesians 3:16-19

A. A New Year has begun. Despite our first week that included a Bomb Cyclone, sub zero temps, continued controversies in Washington DC, local folks battling life-threatening ailments, 2018 has arrived. How should that impact us? What does this year hold for us? What does God have in store? What will be the surprises? How will I be praying for you? How will you be praying for me?

B. Ephesians 3:16-19 (VOICE) represents my kickoff prayer for you: *16 Father, out of Your honorable and glorious riches, strengthen Your people. Fill their souls with the power of Your Spirit 17 so that through faith the Anointed One (Christ) will reside in their hearts. May love be the rich soil where their lives take root. May it be the bedrock where their lives are founded so that together 18-19 with all of Your people they will have the power to understand that the love of the Anointed (Christ) is infinitely long, wide, high, and deep, surpassing everything anyone previously experienced. God, may Your fullness flood through their entire beings. (And the people said: Amen!)*

C. Someone asked me recently what my pastoral plan was for the coming year. What would I like to see happen with this Family of Believers. I gave them a thumbnail sketch. But let me be a little more in depth as to what I'll be praying for:

1) That each of you know, love, and serve the Lord in growing measure and your relationships with Him grow deeper, stronger, and more and more alive and real. That those relationships would be authentic to the core.

2) That God blesses you with the gifts of repentance and faith--initially, progressively, and ultimately, while transforming you into the likeness of Christ.

3) That the Lord might increase your hunger for His Word, His call for you to pray and intercede, and His desire for you to love and fellowship with your brothers & sisters in Christ.

4) That God blesses you with daily bread, provision that will sustain you in doing His will, accomplishing His work, for the glory and honor of His name.

5) That the Lord would bless each one of you to be vessels of His life, love, and encouragement; His wisdom, insight, and understanding; giving you words, *like apples of gold in settings of silver*, so you'll be able to comfort, sustain, and gird up the weary, the needy, and all the thirsty souls you encounter.

6) That the Lord causes you to be asked about the *Hope* within you, that people would see your love for Jesus and one another, and long for the same.

7) That He blesses you with health and protection, in body, mind, and spirit, hiding you in the shadow of His wings while keeping you as the apples of His eye.

8) That you might be saturated with God's undeserved love and favor, enabled by His grace, in order to accomplish everything He asks of you, even more than you imagine possible, strengthening you through every trial and difficulty that comes your way, so that God is glorified no matter what you face.

D. I think it's important for you to know that I deeply desire to see this body of believers flourish. And I long to see that happen with me or without me as your pastor. But I long for and pray for it to happen. I'm hopeful you long for and pray for the same.

E. What will I do to help facilitate all of this? I will pray. I will preach & teach. I will encourage and exhort you with God's Word when we gather corporately, in small groups, or one on one. I will give you books and articles with the goal of building you up. I will put forth the names of those who need prayer. I will put forth the names of those who need encouragement. And I will put before you the names of those who need help. I will do my best to support you when God prompts you to serve, minister, and reach out to those in your respective spheres of influence and communities. I will root for you and ask God to bless you to flourish.

II. Communion

A. Before we take Communion together, I must ask you an important question, one you should take some time to consider: What will you do for your Church Family?

B. Read: "This is My Church" - Author Unknown...

C. So let's ready our hearts for the Bread & Cup. Let's examine ourselves and fix our gaze on what's most important. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NIV) declares the reason why we are a church, why God has made us a family of believers: 1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures... (The Bread & Cup remind us...)

*** Pray and Serve Communion...**

*** Benediction: 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV) takes us home with encouragement: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Ephesians 3:16-19 (VOICE)

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1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NIV)

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1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

This Is My Church

Author Unknown

This is my church

It is composed of people just like me.

It will be friendly if I am.

It will do great work if I work.

It will make generous gifts for many causes if I am generous.

It will bring others into fellowship if I bring them.

Its seats will be filled if I fill them.

It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these.

Therefore, with God's help, I dedicate myself to the task of being all these things I want my church to be.

Film Clips & Other Links

Millersport Covenant Church Sermon Podcasts (MP3s on iTunes)

<http://millersportcc.com/feed/podcast>

Bonus Stuff

Romans 2:4 (AMP)

4 Or do you have no regard for the wealth of His kindness and tolerance and patience [in withholding His wrath]? Are you [actually] unaware or ignorant [of the fact] that God's kindness leads you to repentance [that is, to change your inner self, your old way of thinking—seek His purpose for your life]?

Isaiah 50:4 (NASB)

4 The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples,
That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.
He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

Proverbs 25:11 (ESV)

11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NLT)

15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. **16** But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

Philippians 2:1-11 (NLT)

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from His love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? **2** Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. **3** Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. **4** Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. **5** You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. **6** Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. **7** Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, **8** He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. **9** Therefore, God elevated Him to the place of highest honor and gave Him the name above all other names, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

3 John 2 (NASB)

2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

Galatians 6:9-10 (NIV)

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. **10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Who Are You Anyway?

By Ray Stedman

"I am a son of God among the sons of men. I am equipped with the power of God to labor today. In the very work given me today God will be with me, doing it through me. I am gifted with special abilities to help people in various areas, and I don't have to wait until Sunday to use these gifts. I can use them anywhere. I can exercise the gift God has given me as soon as I find out what it is, by taking note of my desires and by asking others what they see in me and by trying out various things. I am going to set myself to the lifelong task of keeping that gift busy."

- Ray C. Stedman, *From Guilt To Glory*, Vol. 2, *Reveling in God's Salvation* (Portland, Oregon, Multnomah Press, 1978), page 118.

A Servant Attitude

By John Stott

People are illogical, unreasonable and self-centered.
Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.
Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.
Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds.
Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs.
Fight for a few underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build anyway.

People really need help, but may attack you if you do help them.
Help them anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.
Give the world the best you have anyway.

- John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait, Some New Testament Word Studies*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961, pp. 100ff.

Self-Righteous Service vs True Service

By Richard Foster

Self-righteous service comes through human effort. True service comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside.

Self-righteous service is impressed with the "big deal." True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service.

Self-righteous service requires external rewards. True service rests contented in hiddenness.

Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. True service is free of the need to calculate results.

Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve. True service is indiscriminate in its ministry.

Self-righteous service is affected by moods and whims. True service ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need.

Self-righteous service is temporary. True service is a life-style.

Self-righteous service is without sensitivity. It insists on meeting the need even when to do so would be destructive. True service can withhold the service as freely as perform it.

Self-righteous service fractures community. True service, on the other hand, builds community.

- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, "The Discipline of Service."