



## NEWSLETTER

### News & Events

#### Prayer Gathering

The whole church family is invited to the Prayer Gathering on Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 PM in the Family Life Center for a time of prayer and worship.

#### Foundations Bible Study

Join us for our Adult Bible Study every Wednesday at 7:00 PM in Room 201.

#### Toddler Gym

Parents and Caregivers are invited to bring their little ones for a time of indoor play and fellowship every first, third and fifth Wednesday at 10:00 AM in the Stables.

### Making Plans

There is a story about a man who stopped to chat with a farmer who was erecting a new building. He asked, "What are you putting up?" The farmer replied, "Well if I can rent it, it's a rustic cottage. If I can't, it's a cow shed." This farmer had a plan for what he was doing. We all need plans. We need to plan for our retirement, for our vacations, for what we are going to wear today, for what we will do if our car does not start, and for things we are required to do at work. We plan for all kinds of things. Sometimes our plans work out and sometimes they do not. The book of Proverbs has some guidance about good planning.

Proverbs 15:26 says, "Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD..." The Lord knows of our plans. They are not hidden from him. He is not pleased when our plans have evil intentions. Evil plans are plans that cause harm to other people. The Lord is aware of our motivation in coming up with a particular plan. As we plan, we must ask ourselves, "Will our plans be harmful to another?"

Proverb 16:3 says, "Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established." This proverb tells us that for our plans to be successful, we need to depend on the Lord. Many of our plans are not committed to Him but rather are committed to ourselves. We tend to plan in our own strength. These kinds of plans are ultimately unsuccessful in the spiritual sense. All our plans no matter how insignificant should be committed to the Lord.

Proverb 20:18 says, "Prepare plans by consultation..." The Writer of this proverb tells us that effective plans require sound advice. In the making of plans, it is indispensable that guidance and advice is sought. Council from others can give us a different perspective on things. Their advice can help us see the flaws or obstacles that may prevent our plan from being successful.

Proverb 27:1 says, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." No matter how well we plan, we need to be careful not to become overconfident of the outcome. Our wise planning does not allow us to control the future. It is God's future and only He can control it. We must never plan as if we have full control or power over our future.

God is in control of our future not us.

Obviously, good planning is not something to be dispensed with. It is necessary and useful to every person. However, our planning will be spiritually successful and pleasing to God if we follow the guidance of the proverbs.

-Pastor Greg Uhrich

## Raise Our Ebenezer

Welcome 2021. Many of us express gratitude that 2020 is over. A lot happened last year with COVID19, masks, social distancing, TP shortage, racial injustice, riots, elections, job loss and business closures, Zoom fatigue, loss, grief, and death. While we breathe a sigh of relief that 2021 is now here, the reality is that the ghost of 2020 still follows us. A change of year does not eliminate the effects of 2020. We continue to press into the new year wearing masks, social distancing, quarantining, and Zooming.

In the process of moving forward, it is tempting to forget 2020. Yet, I wish to pause and challenge this natural tendency. The challenge is to view 2020 as an "Ebenezer" stone in our lives. In 1 Samuel 7, we learn that after twenty years since Israel lost the Ark, the prophet Samuel gathers the Israelites together at Mizpah and calls them to repentance, to forsake their idols and worship only Jehovah. Hearing Israel at Mizpah, the Philistines comes together against the Israelites. The Israelites plead with Samuel to intercede on their behalf for the Lord's deliverance. As Samuel offers sacrifices, the Lord responds by displaying His power through thunder. This causes the Philistines to flee in fear from the Israelites. It was a great victory for Israel.

*"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Sam. 7:12). Samuel knows how forgetful Israel is and sets up the stone of Ebenezer. The Ebenezer stone served as a visual reminder to all Israel how the Lord Jehovah demonstrated His power, protection, and provision for Israel. It reminded Israel to keep themselves humble before the Lord and worship Him only. Lastly, the stone gave opportunity for Israel to retell the story of God's greatness to the next generation.*

Likewise, we also ought to pause and reflect, "How has the Lord helped us till now?" Do we remember how the Lord helped and sustained us in midst of trials? The Lord God became our Helper, Provider, Sustainer, Comforter, and Healer. Moments of the past serves us as anchor points when new storms come, and darkness does not seem to lift. Therefore, we are encouraged to humble ourselves before the Lord, confessing the idols in our own heart and depending upon Him for our daily need.

Secondly, "What do we want to share to the next generation about God's faithfulness, goodness, sovereignty, and power?" Ten or twenty years from now, we will have a story to tell each other and to the next generation. "Remember 2020 when we survived a pandemic... the Lord was faithful and helped us even till now." We remember and share who God is and all that He has done so that His glory is proclaimed throughout all the earth (see Psalm 145:4-7).

So, let us book-mark 2020 as a year of remembrance that "Till now, the Lord helped us" and continue to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). As we walk onward into the new year, let us be encouraged by these words that Robert Robinson nicely penned:

*"Here I raise my Ebenezer hither by Thy help I'm come. And I hope, by Thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God. He, to rescue me from danger, interposed His precious blood."*

-Grace Palmisano