

The Fast I Choose: *Living with Intentionality*

Presence

Weekly Lenten Prayer Service

Please see your Lenten Orders for Praise & Prayer booklet.

Check in

Participants are invited to share a bit of their soul each week by answering this check-in question.

What does friendship mean to you?

Sermon Focus

Participants should take turns reading the section below.

This week our topic and focus is **presence**. Showing up matters. How often we show up matters, yes. But also, how we show up matters. If we show up for a ministry and we are not really called to be there, we may find ourselves resenting the entire situation. Sometimes when I am encouraging others in their presence, they can easily tell me what ministries they do not like and what aspects of our congregational discipleship they struggle with. When that happens, discerning where they do feel called and where they do find joy often helps to clarify their calling for that season.

But, being part of the body of Christ together, being the church together, is more than just nice and fun feelings.

You can show up just trying to feel good, or you can show up as a passive spectator, but neither of those things are discipleship. That's one of the things Jesus was trying to explain in this text.

The disciples were not willing to hear that the cross was at least a possibility, if not an inevitability for Jesus. They didn't want to believe that suffering may be part of what Jesus would go through. But sometimes we suffer. We have to be aware of the suffering of different members of the body if we are to take seriously the suffering of the cross. We are not separate and we are not islands; we are "members of one another."

Peter was "uncomfortable" with Jesus openly talking about his suffering (his future suffering in this case). But Jesus explained to Peter that discipleship is not about making someone comfortable.

We don't show up for God and expect comfort.

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We are one body with many members. We connect through worship, small groups, and in friendships so dear they are like family. We are one body with many members, headed to the cross. We all have to be in this together.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it look like to intentionally participate in the life of the church by our *presence*?
2. Reflect on the quote from Rev. Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “God does not will that I should fashion the other person according to the image that seems good to me, that is, in my own image; rather in his very freedom from me God made this person in His image. I can never know beforehand how God's image should appear in others. That image always manifests a completely new and unique form that comes solely from God's free and sovereign creation.”
3. Promising our “presence” with and for the community is to deny ourselves and to remember that it isn't really about us. Where do you struggle living into that promise?

Spiritual Practice

Each week of Lent we will participate in a different prayer practice.

Last week's Spiritual practice was prayer journaling. Talk with your group for a few minutes about people's experiences. Do you like using a Prayer Journal? Why or why not?

This week's focus was presence. Our spiritual practice for this week is the Breath Prayer. These are prayers that you can say to yourself, or even whisper under your breath. The first part of the prayer you say as you inhale. You say the second part on your exhale. Choose a prayer on page 3 and try doing a Breath Prayer for a whole 60 seconds! If you're more comfortable with your camera off, that's okay. After, share what the experience was like with your group. You may even want to jot down a Breath Prayer in your Prayer Journal.

Breath Prayers

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Breath Prayers

Spirit of the Living God,
fall afresh on me.

Be still,
and know that God is God.

Create in me,
a clean heart, O God.

This is the day
that the Lord has made.

Jesus,
let me feel your love.

O Lord,
Show me your way.

Holy one,
heal me.

Holy Wisdom,
Guide me.

Father/Mother (Abba/Amma),
let me feel your presence.

Humble and gentle One,
you are rest for my soul.

True Vine and Gardener,
I abide in You.

Nothing can separate me,
from the love of God.

On earth
as it is in heaven.

Your grace
is enough for me.

There is no fear
in your Love.

I will not be afraid
for You are with me.

You are our refuge
and our strength.

Both day and night
belong to You.

I find rest
in Your shelter.

You surround me with love
and tender mercies.

You fill my life
with good things.

Peace of Christ,
guard my heart and mind.

Closing prayer

Have a new person lead the prayer each week.

Living God, we thank you for the way that you remain present with us. We want to feel you in each moment. Guide us and lead us in your ways so that we can better show up for you and for each other. **Amen.**