



SOUTHSIDE

MIDWEEK NEWSLETTER

4.1.20

Share Your Masks – Barrett

Many of you have shared with me about how much you appreciated the story I told on Sunday morning during the live stream. So, I thought I would retell it in the newsletter and briefly elaborate. This past Friday morning, I was using the online resource Zoom to study the Bible with my FriendSpeak reader. My reader has struggled mightily with the question, “Does God exist?” Almost every time we have met over the past two years, our conversation has concluded with our discussing this question. So, recently he was challenged by a mutual friend to take “Pascal’s Wager.” Blaise Pascal lived in the 17th century and was one of history’s greatest mathematicians. He was also a very committed Christian. His wager is a reasoning proposition to help those who are struggling with the question of the existence of God. Pascal said that a person should try living as if God exists even if he does not believe it. If it turns out that the person discovers that God doesn’t exist, there is very little to lose, while there is infinitely more to gain in discovering he does exist. In fact, even if the wagerer discovers that God doesn’t exist, they will still benefit from the moral improvements in their life. So, my friend decided to take this challenge. For now, he has set aside his questions about the existence of God and has simply decided to follow Jesus. He has enjoyed just learning about Jesus and attempting to follow Him.

This past Friday, we met for the first time in about two weeks and we were catching up and checking on one another’s families and friends. He mentioned his close friend in New York who has the Coronavirus. She has a mild case of it and has been quarantined in her apartment with her husband and children. She does not have any masks nor is she able to purchase them, so my friend wants to share his masks with her. He said to me, “Before I started reading the Bible and learning about Jesus, I would not have wanted to do this, I would have wanted to keep the masks all for myself. But, I have learned from reading the Bible that sharing masks is what Jesus would do.” Wow. I was brought to tears by the simple testimony of my friend. He doesn’t know if God exists; yet he knows Jesus would share his masks.

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I want to encourage all of you to find ways to “share your masks” during this time. Look for small ways to “love one another.” Call someone on the phone. Write a letter. Spend more time in intercessory prayer. Plan an online game night with friends. Run an essential errand for an older or immunocompromised neighbor. I would love to hear stories of how you “share your masks.” Please send them to me at barrettcoffman@gmail.com.

Discovery Bible Study

A few years ago I read a book entitled, "Move". This book detailed a few conclusions about spiritual growth. The research for this study included over 250,000 people who attended church regularly. About 1,000 churches were involved in this study. The most significant discovery for me from this research was this: Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture. If churches could do only one thing to impact spiritual growth for their members, they would inspire, encourage and equip people to read the Bible - specifically, to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives. Due in large part to this study, our Southside Adult Education team created Discovery Bible Study. Our aim is to equip, encourage and inspire people to read the Bible on their own to discover meaning in their lives. We have offered one or two Discovery Bible Studies in our adult education curriculum nearly every week for several years. The beautiful outcome of this effort hopefully is being realized in this season of our church family gatherings being put on hold. So many of you have experienced one of these Discovery Bible Studies so you have practice with studying the Bible on your own. Here's a reminder of the method we utilize in our Discovery Bible Study classes. We pose four questions for you to bring to the text you've chosen to read:

1. Read the passage. Re-write the passage in your own words.
2. What do you learn about God?
3. What do you learn about yourself?
4. What difference does the message in this text make in your life?

Following through on these four steps will benefit both your heart and your head. The best part - you can do this on your own. This method isn't intended to lead you on an intense dive into the text. The intent is to lead you into God's Word with a goal of gaining an honest view of yourself and seeing a fresh view of God. While we are unable to host Bible classes at Southside, give DBS a try. I think you'll discover great benefits.

Kevin

A Shepherd's Prayer – Dennis

We live in a time with a lot of messages and a lot of things vying for our attention; but this moment has raised this to a rare level. In all of this disruption and uncertainty I am reminded that God is not distant from us but instead is very near to us. Here's my prayer for this week: Father you have invited us to draw near and to know your presence and you have made that possible because Jesus has broken down every barrier. We pray that we will listen to your Spirit at work in our hearts to call us closer and draw us near. Speak to us in this moment of great turmoil and distraction to remind us that you are not far away but instead are very nearby. In your presence we receive the blessings of peace, comfort, strength, confidence, security and hope that you offer to us without limit. And while we are unable to meet together we ask for wisdom to know how we can encourage each other. We have put our trust in you and we are confident that you are always at work to call all men and women everywhere to be reconciled to you. We come to you today in the name of your son Jesus. Amen.