



# The Newsletter

## March 2025

**Glorify God in all we do,  
Grow with Him daily &  
Go with Him to share  
His love.**

## Good Luck! by "luck" I Mean: Living Under Christ's Kindness

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." ~James 1:17



HappyHealthyandProsperous.com

## March at a Glance

- 5: 6:30 am Men's Lenten Breakfast here at First Reformed Church
- 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Service
- 9: Youth Choir will sing
- 10: 6:00pm Elder & Deacon Meetings  
7:00pm Full Consistory will meet
- 16: Joyful Voices Choir will sing
- 17: 9:30am Faith Bible Study  
3:00pm Patience Bible Study
- 19: 6:30am Men's Lenten Breakfast at First Presbyterian Church

### \*Sundays:

- 9:00 am Praise and Worship Service
- 10:10 am Sunday School 4yrs - Adult  
Coffee Fellowship Time
- 6:30 pm Fellowship Bible Studies

### \*Tuesdays:

- 8:30 am Quilting Chicks will meet

### \*Wednesday Evenings:

- 6:30 pm Bible Classes 1st-5th grades
- 6:30 pm MS Remnant Youth Group
- 7:30 pm HS Remnant Youth Group

### \*Thursday Evenings:

- 7:00 pm Practicing the Way Class

**CONTACT INFORMATION: 712-754-2783**

sibleyfrcoffice@gmail.com

www.sibleyfrc.org



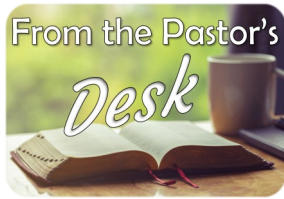
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YouTube @sibleyfirstreformedchurch566



## Building a Foundation for the Future

Last newsletter I began to sketch the outlines of my vision for the future. Mostly I talked about the future in terms of programs. If I had it to do over again, I might have arranged my thoughts into essays in a different order. But I have begun how I have begun, so I will plow forward and try to bring things into a better order.

One of the reasons why I think I should have talked about church programming later in our discussions is not immediately obvious to everyone, because they don't understand the difference between worldly wisdom and divine wisdom. What I mean by that is this: The world uses a certain array of techniques to persuade you to do things it wants you to do. You can study these techniques at any university that offers marketing or communications classes. Basically, these techniques appeal to the natural desires of human beings and seek to harness those desires to make money or achieve power, or some other goal. But it is not so with the things of God. One of the implications of the doctrine of Total Depravity is that there is no longer any natural desire for God as he actually is (as opposed to versions of God we make up for ourselves.) Paul states as much plainly in 1 Corinthians 2:14:

*"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."*

Notice Paul does not say, "He could understand them if he really wanted to," nor, "With sufficient education, the natural man could understand spiritual things." Most importantly, Paul is a hundred miles from the idea that the natural person can accept the things of God if he gets a sufficiently compelling presentation of them from a really talented speaker.

Those who fail to understand such things would rewrite the Parable of the Sower. Instead of one sower sowing the Word and four different soils, whose condition determines the fruitfulness of the Word, they would have only one soil and four different sowers. The varying results would be explained by differences in technique and talent on the part of the sowers. Maybe the sower that got the best results is the most charming and personable. Or the most educated, or the most attractive, or the cleverest and funniest. It's no wonder our least successful pastors are borderline suicidal, and our most successful pastors often flirt with narcissistic personality disorders. Both are convinced that human salvation and the wellbeing of the church depends on their sales presentation and performance, and they take blame or credit as they deem appropriate.

Instead, what Paul says is that the natural person is incapable of understanding spiritual things. He is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1), and one of the main marks of the dead is that they don't do anything. They are incapable of responding to the gospel message and the good news that the Kingdom of God is now available for people to live in right here and now, simply by placing one's whole confidence in Jesus. The natural person is only interested in worldly things that cater to his worldly interests. One of the greatest failures of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century church is the failure to understand this and adjust to it. The contemporary church really believes that selling Buicks and selling Jesus are fundamentally the same sort of thing. You just gotta have the right marketing strategies for both.

The trouble is, this is a totally inadequate understanding of spiritual things. For instance, God chose the "foolishness of preaching" of his living, active, sufficient Word to accomplish the spiritual heavy lifting of truly building the church: *"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."* (1 Cor 1:21)

There are a couple of other reasons for my regrets about placing programming first in our discussions. One of them must be that the metric of success we have in the church today could be described as "Bodies, Buildings, and Bucks." If your church has lots of bodies in the pews on Sunday mornings, a big building, and a lot of money, congratulations! Your church is a success! And by implication the pastor is deemed to be a worthy person who makes things happen. It's hard to imagine anything further from the spirit of Jesus than that. And of course, a crowd is not a congregation. Add to that the fact that a large group of mostly untransformed people knocking

about in the same place on a Sunday morning led by a man who is stuck on himself in the name of Jesus is just going to bring their worldly powers and forces and habits into the church.

Cathedral is an example most RCA folks are probably familiar with. Willow Creek is another. Mars Hill and James MacDonald's church are a third and a fourth. And there are hundreds of lesser-known ones. And this is where my first concern and this concern collide. Because you absolutely can build a large church on a pastor with speaking talent, coupled with well-staffed and well-funded programming. It just won't accomplish anything of any lasting value when it's built that way, and it runs the risk, perhaps, of making the church leadership into egomaniacs. But many people in the pews of "not successful" churches long for that experience of Bodies, Bucks, and Buildings in their own congregation. Now a few will end up leaving to go try to find it.

A successful church according to Kingdom standards is one that is reliably producing people who can walk humbly with God, in wisdom and power through a hostile world, bringing the blessings of God upon everyone they meet with, day in and day out, offering forth the words of life to the lost. It may be a congregation of 100 people, or it may be 1,000 people. Size is irrelevant when we live in the Kingdom.

Now, let me just give you a blinding flash of the obvious. By Kingdom metrics of success, there are very few successful churches of ANY size in North America today, either big or small. You need to let that sink in for a minute. You have probably never seen a successful church, if we measure success by the same standards the Lord Jesus uses. I'm not saying there weren't some fine Christians in those churches. I'm saying that when you consider the whole effect of the church's activity, it did not produce significant numbers of true disciples. That is in stark contrast to the first 400 years of the church's history. They focused on making disciples, transformed into the image of Christ, not on programs. They were often unable to meet openly. They were frequently persecuted. They were hated and considered foolish and vile by the culture. You could not stop them from growing. By 300 AD 50% of the population of the cities in the Mediterranean Basin were Christian, according to Professor Rodney Stark of Baylor University.

Which leads to my final concern. Because Jesus' standard of success is so radically different from our standard of success, the worst thing you can do is make the survival of a congregation its highest priority. It can be a priority. It must never be the highest priority. This is a cruel irony, for the death of a church is often one of the most painful things a Christian can ever experience. You fight like the dickens and expend huge energy, time, and treasure trying to keep a sinking ship afloat. Every nerve and fiber wants to preserve what the shrinking gathered handful thinks is most important. But they are sawing off the limb that they are sitting on the whole time. Keeping a congregation going is never most important. Ever. Jesus and his Kingdom are most important, and any church that loses sight of that for very long will have its lampstand removed. Such a congregation has lost its first love. It has replaced love of Jesus with love of itself and its own existence (see Rev 2:5).

The problem with a dying church or even a "maybe going to start dying soon" church is never that there are not enough people. It is always because of the character and the quality of the people who are there. Therefore, being who we should be must precede doing what we should do. This is where we must first focus our time and energy. If what we are speaks of a life and peace from a realm beyond this world, then anything and everything we do will be fruitful. If what we are does not speak of those things, nothing we do will be truly fruitful, no matter how impressive and successful it looks from the outside. Jesus is much more concerned with who you are than what you do. This is because if who you are is properly ordered, what you do will take care of itself.

Next month we will travel further along this path. I want to give you a crystal-clear vision for what a thoroughly transformed person looks like in some detail. I hope you have a great March.

I was once told, after having a bad day, "You never have to do today again." You know, it really is true! God gave you the strength to do today. Good job! It wasn't easy. Tomorrow may not be easy either, but at least it won't be today. Guess what else...God is already there waiting to walk you through it.



### Praise and Worship Greeters

- 2: E: John and Jan Juffer  
C: Dennis and Dar Jurgens  
W: Kevin and Laurel Klaassen
- 9: E: Greg and Deb Kusters  
C: Karen Keiper  
W: Mitch and Abby Kreykes
- 16: E: Pam Kruger  
C: Jodene Kruse  
W: Dave and Sandy Lamfers
- 23: E: Arnie and Diane Langstraat  
C: Mark and Melissa Langstraat/family  
W: Brad and Sarah Loerts/family
- 30: E: Brian and Megan Loerts/family  
C: Ken and Wilma Loerts  
W: Josh and Hannah Lucas/family

### Worship Service Nursery

- 2: Abby and Joselyn DeZeeuw  
9: Teresa Hurlburt and Maria Mans  
16: Maureen and Amelia Heilman  
23: Amy Van Marel and Jodi Wagenaar  
30: Ruth Ann Wiersma and Sandy Lamfers

### Fellowship Coffee Servers

- 2: Laura and Jordan Carpenter  
9: Merlyn and Karen Doorenbos  
16: Nate and Angela Buysman  
23: Ed and Jan Harskamp  
30: Bill and LaDonn Hartzell

### Library Volunteers



- 2: Jamie Hulstein  
9: Jan Juffer  
16: Jeannette Juffer  
23: Leona Meendering  
30: Janice Runia

### Willing Hands Group



**Group #3**  
will be responsible for  
services during the month.

#### Co-chairpersons are:

- Jamie/Scott Hulstein
- LaDonn/Bill Hartzell

### Children & Worship during the service



- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Leader</b>  | 16: Deb Kusters |
| 2: Deb Kusters | 23: Deb Kusters |
| 9: Deb Kusters | 30: Deb Kusters |

### Results of the Special Congregation Meeting

Of the 290 active members of FRC, there were 107 members present along with 56 members voting via absentee ballot. The results of the vote are as follows: **155 votes were cast in favor** of the motion to leave the Reformed Church in America and begin the process of joining with the Alliance of Reformed Churches, with **7 ballots in opposition** to the motion and **1 ballot declared by the tellers to be invalid. The motion passed with 95% approval.** As a result of this vote we will now begin the process of breaking ties with the RCA and moving toward affiliation with the ARC.



## Stewardship & Giving

### Offering Summary through February 28:

- **General Fund: \$60,951.80**

Budget: \$363,794.52; 16% of budget

- **Benevolent Fund: \$1700**

Budget: \$62,125; 2% of budget

- **Building Fund offerings to date: \$400**

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### Average Monthly Offering Needed:

**\$35,493.29**

### Total Ben./Gen. Offerings through Feb 28:

**\$31,874.20**

*Total Ben./Gen. offering does not include "Special Monthly Offering" donations as they are technically not part of the estimated budget.*

## Special Offering for February



## Faith In Action for March:

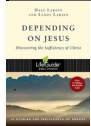
### Nursing Home Items

This month, we are encouraging everyone - children through 90 year olds - to bring at least one item for the residents of our two local nursing homes. Sibley Rehab needs items for bingo prizes: Little Debbie or other individually wrapped snacks and candy bars. Country View needs items for their general store: jewelry, small knick-knacks, shaving cream, shampoo, lotion, toothpaste & brushes, hard candies, etc.

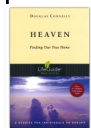


## Exodus Trivia Time!!

1. You were born in Egypt but eventually led your people out of that terrible place. Your father was of the tribe of Levi. What tribe was your mother from? (Judah, Reuben, Levi, Apache)
2. Who said, "Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."
3. I saved some girls from shepherds at the well today. They went home and told their dad, the priest. Do you know who they said I was? (an Egyptian, an Israelite, an Amalekite, a Midianite)
4. Which river, which provides hydroelectric power today, served as an important source of water and other resources for ancient Egypt? (Tigris, Nile, Euphrates, Hudson)
5. Who said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God"? (Pharaoh's daughter, Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh's magicians, Pharaoh's son)
6. Where were the Urim and Thummim located (West of the Red Sea, Near the Nile, In Pharaoh's castle dungeon, In a priest's breastplate)
7. Who said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"
8. What was the name of the place where the Israelites camped that had 12 Springs and 70 palm trees?



**Faith Bible Study**, will meet on **Monday, March 17 at 9:30 am**. We will be studying lesson #7, "Restoration Within Ruin" in our study book *Depending on Jesus*. Scripture will be Mark 5:1-20. Leader will be Anita and Rhonda will serve as hostess. All are invited! If you would like to join, please let us know! Hope to see you there!



**Patience Bible Study**, will meet on **Monday, March 17 at 3:00 pm**. We will be studying lesson #7 "Working for Your Father," in our book *Heaven: Finding Our True Home*. Scripture for the lesson is Matthew 25:14-30. Barb will lead and serve as hostess. Come for a time of fellowship and learning.

### **6:30 pm Sunday Evening Fellowship Bible Study Opportunities!**

#### **\*\*Message Discussion and Application Bible Study\*\***

\*FRC Fellowship Hall

#### **\*\*Digging into God's Word\*\***

This group is currently studying the book of **John**.

\*FRC Fireside Room\*

## **FRC Champion Cookoff!!**

**March 16:**

***"Your Signature Dish"***

***(Your favorite and most delicious dish)***



## **Consistory Meeting Highlights February 10, 2025**

- MMSA to approve baptism of Sarah Jordan, daughter of Josh and Hannah Lucas. Date set for 3/9/2025.
- Constitutional question was asked and reviewed.
- 158 were served communion on 1/26/25
- Voting procedures were reviewed prior to Congregational meeting scheduled for 2/12
- By-Law Review: will be taken up after denomination decision. MMSA to table to next meeting



# Celebrations

## ~~Birthday's~~

- 1 Arnie Langstraat  
Heidi Sayler
- 2 Laura Carpenter
- 4 Luella Eggink
- 5 Clint Klaassen
- 6 Blake Loerts
- 7 Sandy Heronimus
- 8 Dee Baker
- 10 Sofia Hisek  
Bryan Verdoorn  
Margarett Travaille
- 11 John Mc Dougall
- 12 Tim Kruger  
John Van Diepen

- 18 Addison Hulstein  
Darlene Jurgens
- 19 Cory Maxwell
- 22 MacKenzie Beyer
- 23 Chelsey Alexander  
Cole Hoekstra
- 24 Glenda De Boer  
Brian Loerts
- 25 Mitch Kreykes
- 26 Eden Joseph
- 28 David Calsbeek
- 29 Nash Loerts  
Kim McDougall
- 30 Logan Bruxvoort

*I have found*  
**THE ONE**  
*Whom my soul Loves*  
SONG OF SOLOMON 3:4

## ~~Anniversaries~~

- 13 Greg Tracy
- 14 Kevin Klaassen
- 15 Brianna Jacobsma
- 17 Abby Kreykes
- 8 Bobby and Dee Baker .....50 years
- 8 Joel and Angie Van Gelder .....7 years
- 11 Brayden and Alyssa Bruxvoort ..2 years
- 16 Mark and Rosie Hulstein .....6 years
- 18 Ken and Sandy Heronimus .....42 years
- 19 Ted and Eileen Schutte .....19 years



If you would like to be included in our Birthday and Anniversary Calendar and do not see your name, please contact the office (sibleyfrcoffice@gmail.com or 754-2783) and let us know your dates! We would love to recognize YOU on your special day! Thanks

BE A  
*Prayer*  
WARRIOR

## Our Missionaries

Dr. Bernadeth Kelly &  
Adrian Bobb  
Sayuri Kist—Okazaki  
Brian & Donna Renes  
J.J. & Tim TenClay  
Rowland & Jan Van Es  
Grace Covenant Ministries  
Jeff and Chelsea Lampen

# PRAYER JOURNAL





## PRAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Pray for our College Students                             | 16. Carl Berkenpas   |
| 2. Pray for our Church                                       | 17. Tony and Jamiey Bevers;<br>Grace, Elliot, Gabe, Olivia                     |
| 3. Ryan Wiersma  | 18. Davis and Kristen Beyer; MacKenzie, Aidan,<br>Dawson, Easton, Kavan, Tayah |
| 4. Gary and Jessa Wolter                                     | 19. Mike and Andrea Block; Michael   |
| 5. Renae Wolter  | 20. Troy and Meggan Block; Halle, Brady, Kolby                                 |
| 6. Derek and Megan Ackerman;<br>Quinnley, Sydney             | 21. Travis and Jill Boeke; Emma  |
| 7. Mitch and Angie Ackerman                                  | 22. Pray for our College Students  |
| 8. Pray for our College Students                             | 23. Pray for our Church  |
| 9. Pray for our Church                                       | 24. Alex Bosma   |
| 10. Brian and Chelsey Alexander;<br>Kimberlie, Riley, Brysen | 25. Jerry Bosma  |
| 11. Kim Alsip; Zoey  | 26. Daphne Bremer; Dalten, Tayler  |
| 12. Bobby and Dee Baker                                      | 27. Randy Bremer   |
| 13. John and Sharon Bartels                                  | 28. Marlyn Brink   |
| 14. Gretchen Bartelson                                       | 29. Pray for our College Students  |
| 15. Pray for our College Students                            | 30. Pray for our Church  |
| 16. Pray for our Church                                      | 31. Jerrad and Tracee Brouwer;<br>Grant, Carter, Madison                       |

<b><u>College Students:</u></b>	Marissa Ackerman	MacKenzie Beyer	Carter Brouwer
	Halle Block	Teddy Van Gelder	Andrea Leusink
	Tayler Bremer		
	Madison Brouwer		
	Regan Crichton		
	Keegan De Zeeuw		Dalten Bremer
	Makya Dykstra		Natalie Klaassen
	Maverick Elser		
	Jared Kruger		
	Emma Langstraat		
	Matthew McDougall		Grant Brouwer
	Gannon Rockman		Ryan Van Marel



## Education Schedule:

Please remember the following Weather Cancellations Procedure: If there is NO school, or school is released early due to inclement weather, there will be NO WEDNESDAY Night activities.

### Sunday School 3 yr - Adult:

- Sunday School Classes as normal

### ◇ Wednesday Bible Classes (1st-5th grades):

- Classes as normal

### ◇ MS and HS Remnant Youth Group:

- Meeting times as normal

## Middle School Envelope Fundraiser March 2-31st



**Step 1:** Select an envelope with a number

**Step 2:** Put the corresponding amount of money in the envelope to match the number on the front.

**Step 3:** Return envelopes to the basket provided.

All Funds raised will go toward a Summer Camp Retreat for the Middle School Remnant Youth Group

## College Addresses

**Andrea Leusink**  
BVU Box 2461  
610 W. Fourth Street  
Storm Lake, IA 50588

**Carter Brouwer**  
2013 Fox Run Trail  
Brookings, SD 57006

**MacKenzie Beyer**  
610 W 4th Street  
Storm Lake, IA 50588

**Ted Van Gelder**  
617 Jackrabbit Ave  
Brookings, SD 57007

**Grant Brouwer**  
1235 SE University Ave  
Apt. #205  
Waukee, IA 50263

**Marissa Ackerman**  
#313 Caldwell Hall  
Box 2805  
Brookings, SD 57007

**Halle Block**  
1343 SW Prairie Trail Pkway  
Apt. #302  
Ankeny, IA 50023

**Madison Brouwer**  
901 Rose Street  
Apt. #244  
Vermillion, SD 57069

**Keegan De Zeeuw**  
812 University Street  
Box #173  
Pella, IA 50219

**Makya Dykstra**  
1631 4th St NE  
Apt 115  
Watertown, SD 57201-8797

**Maverick Elser**  
612 S. 16th Street  
Ames, IA 50010

**Jared Kruger**  
410 Campus Drive  
Apt. 4  
Calmar, IA 52132

**Emma Langstraat**  
Meadows South  
#120C  
Brookings, SD 57007

**Matthew McDougall**  
Room #701  
IA Lakes Comm. College  
3200 College Drive  
Emmetsburg, IA 50536

**Gannon Rockman**  
3099c Nest Ave.  
Sheldon, IA 51201






**Ella Bruxvoort**  
405 5th Street  
Sibley, IA 51249

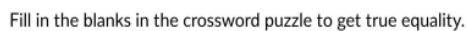
**Aiden DeZeeuw**  
Stalnaker Hall  
2875 University Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50311

**Michael Block Jr.**  
208 8th St. SW  
Unit 103  
Orange City, IA 51041

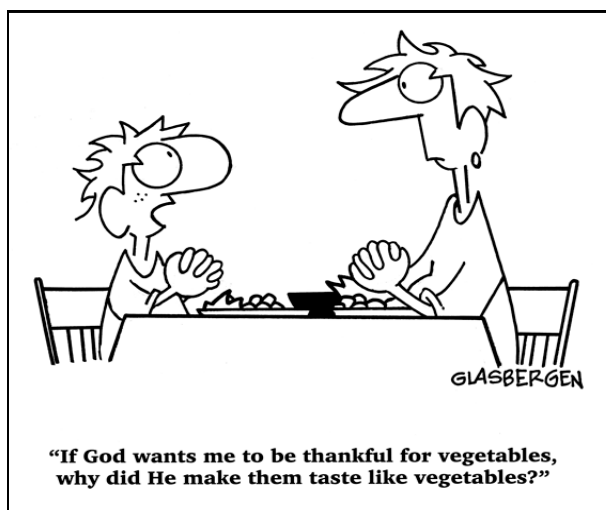
**Grace Bevers**  
Beede Hall  
Room 227-2  
702 E. Cherry Street  
Vermillion, SD 57069

If your student will have a different address for the 2024-2025 school year please let the office know.

	ST. PATRICK		SAVINGS	
	SUNSHINE		SEASON	
	TULIP		SHAMROCK	
	WINDY		SPRING	
				
BASKET	CROCUS	EASTER	IRISH	MARCH
BLOOM	DAFFODIL	EQUINOX	KITE	NEST
BUTTERFLY	DAYLIGHT	FLOWER	LAMB	RAIN
CHICK	EASTER	GREEN	LION	REBIRTH
		HATCHING	LUCKY	RENEWAL



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## Hello First Reformed Church,

What is your favorite account in the Old Testament? I personally love the Abrahamic account, just all of his adventures and things that God has him do. Abraham is a true example of making sacrifices. We all know the story of Abraham and Isaac when Abraham is given a test. Now I want you to think about this for a moment, because we teach on this account a lot in Sunday school and when you hear it on the pulpit there are a few different meanings behind it, but do we actually get it? Here is the SparkNotes version of the account. God made a covenant with Abraham that he will have children and they will become a multitude of nations. For years Abraham and his wife Sarai did not have any children. They even tried breaking what God said and Abraham had a son with Sarai's servant Hagar. This son was not the son that God was going to give to Abraham and Sarai, until Sari became pregnant with Isaac. One day God told Abraham that he is to take Isaac up on this mountaintop and sacrifice him on the altar. Abraham did as God commanded and before he could kill his son with the knife God stopped him and blessed him. Now this is a pretty intense account wouldn't you say. However, there is something that we tend to miss when it comes to this account. Everyone seems to think that this was a hard decision for Abraham and that it was the hardest thing he ever had to do. What would you say if scripture revealed that it in fact was not this horrific decision for Abraham? What if scripture reveals that Abraham was willing to do it because he knew who God was? Let's take a look at scripture and find out.

Hebrews 11:17-18 "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." Abraham had amazing faith in God, but why did he have this faith? He remembered what God had promised him. Isaac was the fulfillment of that covenant. Abraham knew that God is the God that keeps His promises and that never lies. God promised him and Sarah (now known as that name) Isaac and now for some reason God is asking for this. He may not know the reason, but he knows what? Let's look at verse 19, "He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." Do you see it? Even if he did kill Isaac, he knew that God was able to bring him back from the dead, because of the covenant He made with Abraham. Abraham knew His God and knew His character; he knew that by this sacrifice God was going to honor it and make it good. We as human beings, especially in modern times, are afraid of sacrifice. We are scared of giving something up that means so much to us. We are afraid of missing out on something precious, we are afraid that if we sacrifice it now, we may not get to experience it ever again. I am not talking about sacrificing our children. God would never ask any of us to sacrifice our children, but we have to ask ourselves this question, "Are we sacrificing our children by not giving this thing up?" How much time does your child have to be a child? I don't care if they are 5, 10, 15, 17, etc. Our kids are so eager to grow up they tend to miss out on their childhood.

I want you to sit down with your children and ask them to map out their 168 hours in one week. If you already have done this, great, do it again! This is something parents should do with their children every week. See where the priorities lie. Get technical about this too, see where your kids are doing Bible study, youth group, Wednesday night classes, prayer time, movie time, screen time, everywhere that they spend time map it out. Then do a split between "secular stuff" which means stuff that does not pertain to Christianity, and then their personal faith walk stuff. Where do the sacrifices need to be made for the furthering of our children's faith?

Blessings,  
Josh



## Dad Jokes with Josh:

Yesterday I had a date.... It was perfect..... Tomorrow..... I'll have a fig.



# Sportsmen's Devotional

Today's Photograph . . . .

God Only Gives So Many Days In The Field

## Bible Study Verse

Ecclesiastes 5:17-20

All his days he also eats in darkness, and he has much sorrow and sickness and anger. Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor-this is the gift of God. For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart. (NKJV)



## Thoughts

I was discouraged, dejected, and mad. The deer season was finished and I threw myself a pity party.

It was the first time in 15 years I ended a season deerless! I couldn't believe it - with all the time scouting, preparing, and hunting at every opportunity, the hours on stand - and I didn't take an animal.

I can throw a pity party with the best of them. I was short with my children, and mad at the world. No, God didn't shine down and grace me with the large 140" deer; but not even a single deer. I could be mad at God, but then He showed me Ecclesiastes.

## Action Point

I have to stop and look back on that season:

- My son took his first deer with archery equipment.
- I enjoyed seeing many deer.
- I made some new hunting friends. I spent an awesome Fall in the woods..

God graced me with an awesome hunting season. It may not have been one where I scored big; however, "It is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it." Thank you God for a wonderful hunting season.

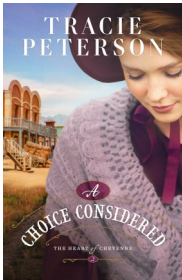
## Sportsmen's Tip of the Day

Enjoy every time in the woods and don't put pressure on yourself to perform. Hunting is supposed to be recreation, not competition. God only gives so many days in the field - enjoy every single one.

## **Genesis Trivia Time Answers:**

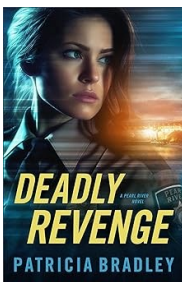
**1. Levi (2:1-10) 2. Moses (17:15-16) 3. An Egyptian (2:15-19) 4. Nile (7:15) 5. Pharaoh's magicians (8:18-19) 6. In a Priest's Breastplate (28:30) 7. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (18:1,14) 8. Elim (15:27)**

## *From the library--*



Two new books have been added to the library, the first one is in LARGE print and it is Book #2 in the **“Heart of Cheyenne” series by Tracie Peterson, A CHOICE CONSIDERED**. “Melody Doyle has spent years following her father across the country as the transcontinental railroad is built. When she announces her desire to settle down in Cheyenne, her father presents her with an unconventional challenge: he will allow her to stay if she finds a husband before his departure. As word spreads and the men in town vie for her hand, she wonders if she could ever be happy with a husband chosen in such a way.

Charles Decker, heir to a banking dynasty, has been sent west by his father to manage their family's new bank. His heart yearns for a simple life of teaching, but banking is the family business, and Charlie feels obligated to fall in line. When his friendship with Melody blossoms, he's drawn to this remarkable woman who defies conventions. Will he be able to come to terms with his growing feelings for her and confront the true desires of his own heart before it's too late?”



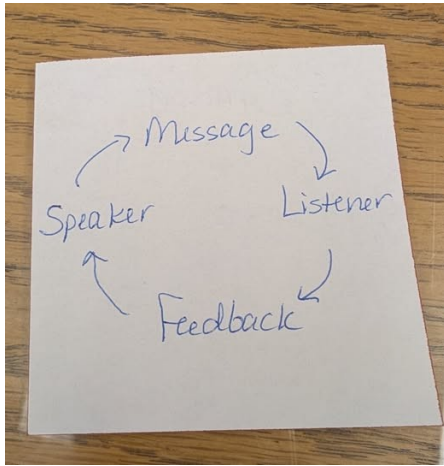
The other book this month is the last one in the **“Pearl River” series, DEADLY REVENGE by Patricia Bradley**. “Deputy Jenna Hart has only been working in her sleepy hometown of Pearl Springs for seven months when city officials begin to be targeted by a killer. With the former mayor of Pearl Springs now running for US Senate, Jenna will have to call in backup to ensure his protection.

Agent Maxwell Anderson used to work with Jenna in the Chattanooga Police Department, and there was even a smoldering fire of attraction. Now they team up to track down the killer before a big political rally that promises to bring not only the former mayor into the crosshairs but hundreds of civilians as well.

As the sparks of romance reignite and the threads of the investigation get tangled, Jenna and Max will have to draw on all of their skills to stay alive and prevent the wave of disaster poised to hit the community of Pearl Springs. The question is, can either of them fully trust that the other had their back?”

The library is always open—visit it soon!

Jeannette Juffer



## *Random Musings Devotional*

By Brenda Sandbulte

I'm a master multi-tasker. No, really. Most women are, but I'm particularly good at it. If I'm walking on the treadmill, I'm also listening to a book or watching television. If I'm cooking, I'm also putting dishes in the dishwasher.

If I'm on the phone with one of the girls, the call is on speaker so I can also fold a load of laundry. If I could figure out a way to harness the hours I sleep, I would.

I just think that if I'm doing this, I could also be doing that, as well as the other thing.

Suddenly I asked myself, "Do I do that with God?"

When I'm reading my devotion, am I fully engaged? Or am I also figuring what I need to take out of the freezer for supper?

When I'm at church on Sunday, am I listening and growing, or am I making my to-do list for the upcoming week?

When I pray, am I multitasking? Cough, cough...usually. Now I'm not saying that I can't talk to God while I'm doing something else. I've had some deep conversations with him while driving to work. I've put a lot of miles on my car with my new position, and I've had some animated conversations with my Lord. However, those conversations have usually been one-sided. I'm doing all the talking. If it's too quiet, I turn on the radio or listen to an audiobook.

In my speech courses, I taught students that communication is circular. First, you have the speaker who communicates the message to the listener. Then the listener provides the feedback, and the speaker takes that feedback and adjusts the message. And the cycle continues.

Often when I pray, I'm just spewing a message to the Listener, and He no doubt provides feedback, but I'm not listening ...because I'm multitasking.

I can't tell you the last time I sat and just listened. I've never had a lot of sit in me. I like being busy. If I don't think I'm busy enough, I'll volunteer for something so I can be even busier. I'm pretty faithful with my devotional reading, and I love the little prayers that are printed at the end of each entry, but I don't know when I've just sat and listened.

Why?

Am I afraid of what He's going to say? Do I cringe at His feedback? 1 Samuel 3:10 says, "Speak, for your servant is listening." But is she? No, she's not. She's too busy doing other things.

So this morning, after a not-so-subtle reminder, I'm going to try to sit and listen. Not fold laundry in silence, not drive home in the quiet, but I'm going to find a place to just sit and listen.

For as Deuteronomy 3:20 says, "Love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him." I definitely love him, and I sometimes hold onto Him with a death grip, but I need to work on listening to Him.

So Lord, I'm turning off the television, I'm waiting to fold the laundry, and I'm ready to listen. What have you been trying to tell me? I'm listening.



Bundled up with hats, coats, and gloves, backpacks packed with books, pencil cases, and lunchboxes, we step out of the stairwell of our apartment building into the predawn darkness and chill of Germany in January. As parents, Chelsea and I have braced for these moments that have been looming over us for over a year: the first few weeks of our kids attending the local public school here in Hanno-

ver. Time and time again, we've asked congregations to join us in prayer for our children, that they would be able to make friends and adjust well to doing school in a new language. This is where the rubber meets the road.

We walk a couple of blocks as the traffic flows by, wait at the intersection for a tram to cross, watch for the little red man on the light to turn green. A part of me wants him to stay red, to keep the kids on our side of the street, close to the little English-speaking nest of our apartment where they feel confident, expressive, joyful, and safe. But, the light turns green, and we continue on.

As we walk, my mind drifts back to a few weeks earlier. We did our final "big move" here to Hannover just a few weeks ago, just a week before Christmas. My parents came with us to help us get settled in and to see for themselves just where their son and daughter-in-law had brought their beloved grandkids. Members of Chelsea's family followed ten days later. They each discovered a place which was very different from home, but also filled with excitingly different opportunities. We said our goodbyes to them at the end of their trips at the airport, waving at the security checkpoint.

As the kids and I continue our chilly walk to school through the dark, I realize that my anxiety for my kids' well-being at school was probably the same feeling our parents felt for us. There comes a point where you have to say your goodbyes and give final hugs and trust them to God's loving hands.

As we walk, we begin to notice that we're no longer walking alone. A couple of girls and their mom march along in similar hats, coats, and backpacks a few yards ahead. A dad and his son follow along behind us. Children zoom along on scooters, shouting out greetings to their friends as they pass. Soon we find ourselves in a group of a couple dozen elementary school kids and their parents, all streaming to the school ahead.

I feel a wave of solidarity with these other moms and dads: in a few minutes, we'll all bring our children to the entrance to the school, give a squeeze and a word of encouragement, and send them off to be challenged and cheered by teachers and classmates, to wrestle their way through Deutsch and math, to navigate their way through friendships and playground politics as they each begin to discover themselves.

We get to the gate and I give them each a hug and send them on their way. As they walk through, I say a silent prayer that those teachers and kids will love them at least a fraction as much as I do. And then I turn, heading to catch the tram that will bring me to my office.

As pastors of the English-speaking RELISH community (Reformed English Language International Service of Hannover), we are a bit like teachers ourselves. Just as we entrust our children into the care of the teachers at school, brothers and sisters in Christ from abroad have been entrusted into our care. We have been given the opportunity to challenge and cheer believers from around the world who have found themselves in Hannover for a time, sent by families and communities who love them and who pray for their welfare. Chelsea and I get to walk alongside them as they wrestle with God, as they seek to follow Jesus faithfully, as they deal with the pressures of work and family and culture in a place that is often far from home. Just like our kids' teachers, we want to build these believers up, strengthening their minds and hearts so that they can not only survive in this world, but thrive as they follow the call of Jesus Christ to be salt and light.

A few hours from now, either Chelsea or I will walk back to school and gather our kids back at the schoolyard gate. And just as I pray that my kids will emerge a bit wiser, a bit kinder, a bit more confident and resilient, so I also pray for our RELISH community, that whenever they will leave us, God will have worked in their hearts to prepare them for the journeys ahead—planting fruits of the Spirit that will grow into a harvest that will bring glory to Jesus Christ over and over again.

P.S. If you would like to personally see what church planting in Europe looks like up close, we would like to invite you to attend the European Church Planting Retreat in May 2025, where participants can visit a church planting site—including with the Lampen family in Hannover—to discover the challenges and opportunities that God has provided in various places throughout Europe. Following these church plant visits, participants will come together at the Emmaus Centre in the Netherlands to discuss their experiences and to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit as they consider how to apply their learnings in their own churches and communities.