

WHERE OR HOW HAS GOD SHOWN UP FOR ME THIS WEEK?

HERE'S HOW I WILL RESPOND:

WEEK 3: BEYOND GIVING: GENEROSITY

JOHN 12:1-8 "SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER, JESUS CAME TO BETHANY, WHERE LAZARUS LIVED, WHOM JESUS HAD RAISED FROM THE DEAD. HERE A DINNER WAS GIVEN IN JESUS' HONOR. MARTHA SERVED, WHILE LAZARUS WAS AMONG THOSE RECLINING AT THE TABLE WITH HIM. **THEN MARY TOOK ABOUT A PINT OF PURE NARD, AN EXPENSIVE PERFUME: SHE Poured IT ON JESUS' FEET AND WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR. AND THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF THE PERFUME . . .** LEAVE HER ALONE, JESUS REPLIED. IT WAS INTENDED THAT SHE SHOULD SAVE THIS PERFUME FOR THE DAY OF MY BURIAL. YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE THE POOR AMONG YOU, BUT YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS HAVE ME."

The value of the gift before God is not determined by its dollar amount. God seeks gifts that accurately reflect our life, labor and love.

Have you considered that your generosity should touch your lifestyle as well as your bank account?

Do you see a correlation between investing your life in a worthy cause and giving generously to it?

Why does God value generosity as a part of the Christian lifestyle?

WEEK 3 INTRODUCTION

Through our practice of last week, we find ourselves noticing how God is at work in our lives and in our relationships. We begin to see how interdependent we are as a people. We see the face of God in our neighbors, co-workers, people we pass on the street, people who need our help. We realize that God is in the faces of the homeless, in the creatures that inhabit our communities and our church property.

How do we respond to God's face in each of these situations? How do WE be the face of God to them? This is our spiritual journey. This week we will take some of our moments of solitude and move. Intentional walking as a prayer form is as old as the exodus of the Jews from slavery to freedom.

People from all over the world and from all faiths make holy pilgrimages to the sacred places in their religions – Jerusalem, Mecca, Allahabad, Gangetic Plains, Rome. Our spiritual walk this week does this on a much smaller scale, but just as powerfully. It's a journey toward God who wants to be in relationship with us and who wants to show us how to live our lives to the fullest. Movement through walking frees our minds and creates space for God to speak to us.

WEEK 3 PRAYER

*Lord, you have opened my heart to the wonders of your ways. In this journey, You have shown Your face to me in the people I encounter and in my relationships. I see you in the sunrise, the scent of the garden after rain, the feel of the earth as I walk. Take the steps that I make as a sign of my desire to walk closer and more deeply with You. I may stumble or trip on this journey, but my focus is on You, Lord. My pace may be slow, but it is intentional. As I walk, I feel myself opening my heart to listen for Your transforming wisdom, so that I may always walk in your light. As my body moves through space, I ask you to create space in my heart for Your love. For I know that in this holy space, there is freedom. Freedom to live Your will. Freedom to live with a generous heart. Freedom to live **Beyond Giving**. Freedom to live as You would have me live. Take this journey and make it Yours. I humbly pray. Amen.*

WEEK 3 PRACTICE

This week, in your times of solitude, walk intentionally, slowly. Focus on slowing your breath, feeling the ground under your feet, noticing the natural rhythm of your walk. This isn't a race or a distance competition. Walk in a circle if you need to, but walk with a listening heart, listening to what God is trying to tell you. Maybe it is as simple as "Slow down;" "Take better care of yourself." Or maybe your walk opens your eyes to the needs of those you pass. Maybe your walk stimulates an appreciation for God's creation or a sense that you need to do more to protect it. Wherever your walk takes you, make it purposeful. You are on a spiritual journey, a pilgrimage to discern what God has planned for you. Open yourself through your walking. God is there waiting.

WEEK 3 PILGRIMAGE POINT

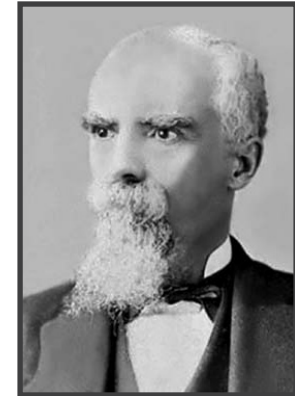
CARNTON CEMETERY

We now consider one of Franklin's darkest and most defining moments in its history. The McGavock Cemetery is a haunting and enchanting place of contemplation. Few people know of the deep tie this hallowed place has to the Methodist church and its beloved pastor E.M. Bounds. You can locate the cemetery by driving the new road into the Eastern Flank Battlefield Park that includes the Carnton Plantation.



E.M. BOUNDS Following the devastating loss of around 6,000 soldiers at the Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864, the dead were hastily buried in fields on the southern side of Columbia Avenue, down and across from the Carter House. It was a great burden that former Missouri regimental chaplain, now the Franklin Methodist's pastor, E.M. Bounds, carried to see

the brave soldiers were properly buried. He spearheaded the formation of the Carnton Cemetery on the McGavock plantation and personally supervised the relocating of the graves to the new site. He also returned to his native Missouri to raise funds for the Missouri regiment's marker. E. M. Bounds is reported to have carried a small list of his lost Missouri boys in his wallet throughout the remainder of his life.



Take the time to walk through this most beautiful of cemeteries and imagine the gruesome, yet purposeful work of relocating these graves. Imagine our pastor's deep love and respect for these young men, boys really, and his resolve to see that their death was appropriately respected with a proper burial.

FOR THE PAST 200 YEARS FRANKLIN FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HAS BEEN INTENTIONAL ABOUT RESTORING HOPE TO OUR COMMUNITY.

A GOD-SIZED INVITATION

“NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO IMMEASURABLY MORE THAN ALL WE ASK OR IMAGINE, ACCORDING TO HIS POWER THAT IS AT WORK WITHIN US.” **EPHESIANS 3:20**

The way you live your life is a reflection of your relationship with God. When you feel led to participate in a God-sized invitation, you will quickly realize you cannot do what God is asking on your own. This deepening of belief always requires faith and action. Here you are faced with a decision, trust God and keep moving ahead or choose another path. All of these feelings are perfectly normal, and what you do next is where faith enters the picture.

1. **STAY POSITIVE**

Just being on the journey is pleasing to God. Anytime you are in prayer and actively seeking God is a good thing. Keep moving forward and take note of how your perspective on daily events might be different when it is God-centered.

2. **STAY OPEN**

How are you listening? Continue to make yourself available to God through prayer and study. Observe how God may be working through conversations you have with others or circumstances that pop up in your day.

3. **STAY READY**

What is God asking you to do? Be aware of how God is working in your heart. Do you sense that God is asking you to take any action? Make a note of those thoughts and come back to them later to see if they still hold true. This could be an indication of how God wants you to act. Remember, your life is a reflection of your relationship with God that requires not only faith, but also action. When you sense a clear direction be ready to obey.